



International Social Theory Consortium

18th Annual Conference 2019

Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy in the 21st Century:
“System” as the Future of Modern Society?

www.socialtheory.org

Program & Abstract Book

June 5-7, 2019

Inter-University Center, Dubrovnik

Welcome to Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik is a stunningly intact walled city on the Adriatic Sea coast of the extreme south of Croatia. Although its population barely exceeds 40,000, it's one of the most prominent tourist resorts of the Mediterranean and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1979.



Picture: Steffen Roth

City Map of Dubrovnik



dubrovnik-guide.net

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Conference organization

Harry F. Dahms

University of Tennessee-Knoxville, USA

Steffen Roth

La Rochelle Business School, France, and
Kazimieras Simonavičius University in Vilnius, Lithuania

Ilaria Riccioni

Free University of Bolzano, Italy

Frank Welz

University of Innsbruck, Austria

Krešimir Žažar

University of Zagreb, Croatia

Abstract book

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18th Annual Conference

“System” as the Future of Modern Society?

International Social Theory Consortium (ISTC)



The theme of this year’s conference pertains to affinities and complementarities between systems theory and critical theory for purposes of analyzing modern societies in the twenty-first century as social systems whose stability, functioning and future increasingly is in doubt. Conventionally, critical theory and systems theory have been regarded and treated as mutually exclusive treatments and modes of analyzing of societies undergoing transitions from premodern to postmodern conditions. Yet, as suggested – for instance – by Adorno’s extensive reliance on the concept of “system” in many of his writings, by the well-known Habermas-Luhmann controversy of the early 1970s, or by undeniable parallels between the modes of theorizing pursued by Niklas Luhmann (in terms of his critique of sociology as the social science of modern society) and by Moishe Postone (in terms of his critique of traditionally Marxist critiques of capitalism), there is an affinity between systems theory and critical theory that deserves to be explored, not least as it is undeniable that modern societies resemble “non-human”, heteronomous systems to a growing extent, as opposed to forms of social organization that emanate from and reflect modes of interaction, sociality and (non-regressive) forms of solidarity between humans as social beings. This affinity is evidenced in an expanding related literature, especially in Germany, but also in research agendas that are being pursued by scholars in other countries, such as Australia and Brazil.*

By contrast, in the U.S., despite the erstwhile influence and prominence of Talcott Parsons, and the growing recognition of the contributions of Niklas Luhmann, systems theory has remained marginal in recent decades. Critical theory, as it took shape as “critical theory” in the United States during the 1930s (despite its origins in Germany during the 1920s), and in the aftermath of Habermas’s reconfiguration of this tradition’s research program, has been more prominent than systems theory, but still is far from penetrating and influencing mainstream approaches to research in the social sciences and humanities in a discernible fashion. In fact, the latter have become increasingly ahistorical, as well as oblivious to distinctive features of American society among modern industrialized societies, and thus more or less complicit in the accelerating erosion of modernity (as exemplified in material democratic values and principles, an emphasis on progressive education, constructive perspectives in the future as qualitatively superior to the past and present, etc.), in favor of promoting formal processes of modernization according under the aegis of neoliberalism. Meanwhile, in the UK, both critical theory and systems theory have been tolerated, but also regarded as of minor (or no) use for illuminating the condition of modern societies in the early twenty-first century. The result has been an ability to acknowledge and confront what has been called the dark (or darker) side of modernity in ways that would translate into sociological practice and theory.

The present is a time of proliferating crises and the accelerating collapse of notions and standards that took hold during the second half of the twentieth century, and which erroneously came to be taken for granted in the social sciences and humanities. Consequently, opportunities are being overlooked and lost to theorize both persistent and increasingly important issues and trends in – and key features of – modern societies. The 2019 ISTC

conference will focus on the need to develop a kind mindset that will be required for social theorists to “face facts” to a greater extent, especially where and when “facts” are undesirable and in conflict with theorists’ established working assumptions and preconceived notions, with the latter constituting barriers to grasping the contradictions, paradoxes and irreconcilables that were characteristic of modern societies from the start (at the turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century), and which are more and more difficult to ignore. We must acknowledge the costs associated with the established practice of overriding/pre-interpreting facts – particularly those that are, or appear to be, unpleasant and undesirable – on the basis of previously adopted stances, theoretical positions or frames, implicitly accepted notions of good and evil, especially of the normative and political stripe, e.g., that humans are “inherently good” and “well-meaning” and concerned with the welfare of all, etc. We must ask whether and how in light of recent developments around the globe, such as the resurging appeal of authoritarian approaches to governance, social theorists’ perspectives on individuals, human nature, the link between individuals, social groups, and society, politics, culture and economics must be examined and reformulated, compared to the views that took hold during the decades following World War II.

In order to provide a foil for addressing this nexus of issues, participants are encouraged to focus especially on the field of tensions described in terms of capitalism, socialism and democracy (or business, labor, and government; or economy, society, and the state), and how the meaning of – and differences between – these concepts have changed over the course of the last century. As usual, all submissions that fall into the general area of social theory will be considered, and papers are not required have to address directly the critical theory-systems theory link – but it will be preferred if they do address in some form the issue of modern societies increasingly turning into “systems” – and how in this sense, “capitalism”, “socialism” and “democracy” ALL appear to be increasingly outdated concepts, or concepts in need of major revision. To the extent that we continue to rely on these concepts without rigorous critical reflection, they are likely to fulfill important ideological functions – implicitly or explicitly – e.g., in the interest of legitimating neoliberalism and of delegitimizing democracy and modernity. The clash between agendas of undermining or destroying the social as a productive feature and force in human civilization and the values according to which individuals are being socialized and supposed to structure their lives and relations to “other” – other humans, nature, the planet, etc.) appears to foster emerging and intensifying hostile attitudes toward what used to be called capitalism, socialism, and democracy. This hostility may result from societies increasingly turning into non-human systems and from individuals’ concern that the challenges looming in the future will require draconian approaches to “solutions” – along authoritarian or proto-totalitarian lines – the more so the longer we refrain from contemplating and pursuing constructive strategies to increasingly planetary challenges.

Debates on integrating critical theory and system theory relating to the need to develop new categories would benefit from novel approaches to established methods in theoretically informed ways, in sociology especially with regard to field research. If we are to re-think categories such as capitalism, socialism and democracy, social research would benefit from appreciation and reliance on “field,” and re-categorize the above concepts from bottom up, in strict dialogue with particular theoretical frames. To overcome stagnation in grasping established and emerging social issues, via integration of critical theory and system theory, employing qualitative field research as a tool would keep sociological knowledge stay close to current social trends and their interpretation, from both a social-theoretical and a critical point of view

Program

Plenaries: room2 (2nd floor), Sessions: room 1 (1st floor) & room 3 (1st floor)

Wednesday, June 5

14:30-15:15 Opening Keynote **Theorizing Society as a System of Systems -- Harry F. Dahms**

15:15-16:00 Keynote R.2 **Pragmatism and the Digital Mind: Some Thoughts -- Scott Lash**

16:15-17:45 Sessions R.1 **"System" in Adorno and Luhmann**

16:15-16:45 Adorno and Luhmann: some internal connections --
Laurindo Dias Minhoto

16:45-17:15 Adorno and Luhmann: theorizing the arts -- Ilaria
Riccioni

R.2 **System as the Future of Modern Society? (Dahms/Roth/Welz;
special session)**

16:15-16:45 Models of social systems. How can they be recognized?
-- Angelo Zotti

16:45-17:15 "Systems" versus Ideal Type Models (ITMs): A Neo-
Marxian/Neo-Weberian/Neo-Peircean Perspective --
Johannes I. (Hans) Bakker

17:15-17:45 Society without Anthropologie: On the Genealogy of
Systems Theory -- Kevin S. Amidon

18:15-20:00 Panel R.2 **The Challenge of Transformation in an Age of Reaction**

From Nihilism to Ethical Life: Toward a Radical Double
Movement -- Michael Thompson

The Corporate Economy under Neoliberalism and
"Populism": "System," or the return of discretionary
rule? -- David Ciepley

Pockets of Possibility: Beyond the Fragmented Nation -
- Jim Block

Thursday, June 6

9:00-10:30 Sessions R.1 **Humans between Community and the State in the 21st Century**

9:00-9:30 On the role of the State in the age of Homo Vulnerabilis:
critical reflections from two comparative studies --
Andrea Bellini

9:30-10:00 The disease model of addiction, structural violence, and
epistemic injustice: Lessons from the Irish experience -
- Shane O'Mahony

10:00-10:30 Searching for new community engagement approaches
in the Netherlands -- Esther de Weger, Natascha van
Vooren, Katrien Luijkx, Hanneke Drewes, Caroline Baan

R.2 **In Defense of Democracy: Political Implications of Contemporary Social Theory (Schlembach; special session)**

9:00-9:30 Post-globalization: the end of "the end of History and the new model of the future -- Yury Asochakov

9:30-10:00 Democracy and the Fact of the "Thou": From Simmel to Schütz and Beyond -- Christopher Schlembach

10:00-10:30 Exploring the Neoliberal Turn Through Social Theory: From Parsons to Habermas and Luhmann -- Roderick Condon

R.3 **Theorizing the Darker Side of Modern Societies**

9:00-9:30 Observing Precarious Society: On the Diagnosis Function of Sociological Systems Theory -- Saburo Akahori

9:30-10:00 Self-destruction in critical and systems theory -- Morten Knudsen

10:00-10:30 Genocide and the Multiplicity of Modernity -- Jack D Palmer

10:45-12:15 Sessions R.1

Critical Theory, Fascism, Administered World and False Myths

10:45-11:15 Critical Theory on the relationship between fascism and capitalism: Was National Socialism a new social system, and could it re-emerge? -- Christos Memos

11:15-11:45 Administered world: domination and conformism in Max Horkheimer's representation of capitalism- Pier Paolo Motta

11:45-12:15 The False Myth regarding Internet as New Agora- Antonia Cava, Marco Centorrino, S. Nucera, Maria Eugenia Parito

R.2 **The Tension between Form and Content in Social Theory**

10:45-11:15 From the dominance of critical paradigm towards 'yet-unaware positivism' – overview of general tendencies in developments of social theory in Croatia -- Krešimir Žažar

11:15-11:45 Functional differentiation as middle-range theory in empirical research -- Kosuke Sakai

R.3 **Political Economy and/of Social Systems**

10:45-11:15 Ideology as a means of critical transformation of social structure -- Natalia Mateeva

11:15-11:45 Pristine, Green, and Gated: Ecological Gentrification and Neoliberal Globalization -- Rhiannon A. Leebrick

11:45-12:15 Revising Systems Theory with Critical Theory to Analyze Politically Relevant Correspondences between Engineering of the Human Genome and Engineering of the Planet -- Benjamin Gregg

- 15:00-16:00 Keynote R.2 **Digital Transformation of Social Theory. A Research Update -- Steffen Roth**
- 16:15-17:45 Sessions R.1 **Theorizing Paradoxical Modernity**
 16:15-16:45 Rethinking the Chronopolitical Foundations of Modern Society and Social Thought: Toward the Practice of a Critical Afrofuturist Sociology -- Joel Crombez & Caroline Loftus
 16:45-17:15 Spiralling Into Control: Rationalisation as Operational Closure -- Jan Overwijk
 17:15-17:45 Why don't we read Baudrillard? Why Should we? -- Robert Leonard
- R.2 **Critical Theory Today**
 16:15-16:45 Herbert Marcuse's Critical Theory and Dialectics of Modernity -- Dmitry Ivanov
 16:45-17:15 Civic Sociology as (Post) Critique -- Eric R. Lybeck
 17:15-17:45 Critical Theory, Systems Theory, and Prospects for a Reasonable Society -- Patrick O'Mahony
- R.3 **The Future of Capitalism (Krier; special session)**
 16:15-16:45 The new sustainable-contributory capitalism -- Laura Gherardi, Monica Martinelli
 16:45-17:15 What defines capitalism? What is wrong with it and how to fix it -- Shann Turnbull
 17:15-17:45 Economic Theology and the Future of Capitalism -- Daniel Krier
- 18:00-20:00 Panel R.2 **Weber, Lukács, Adorno, and the Future of Dialectical Theory**
 The Inheritance of Weber and the Reception of Lukács in Adorno's Thought -- Michael Thompson
 Ideology and the Real: The Avant-Garde as a Critique of Realism as Reification -- Jeffrey Halley
 Weber, Lukács and Adorno Reconsidered -- Ilaria Riccioni
 The Challenge of Politics and the End of Progress: Lukács and Adorno Reconsidered - Harry F. Dahms

Friday, June 7

- 9:00-9:45 Keynote R.2 **Liberalism and the Administrative State - Stephen Tuner**
- 10:15-11:45 Sessions R.1 **Southern Perspectives on Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy: Feminist and Global (Desai; special session)**

- 10:15-10:45 Navigating Neoliberal Capitalism and Hindu Nationalism via Phule Ambedkarism: The Right to Pee Campaign -- Manisha Desai
- 10:45-11:15 On the Women's Magazine Cover but Not Facing the Camera: Confronting the Socialist Past of Albanian Women through Visual Methodology -- Eriada Cela
- 11:15-11:45 Sociological Analysis of Institutional Aspect of Global Sociology of Michael Burawoy – Ivan Kislenko

R.2 **Reconsidering the Nature of Democracy in the 21st Century (Panageotou; special session)**

- 10:15-10:45 A New Challenge in Democracy Debates Today: Democratization Discourse and Its Gramscian Criticism based on the Cases of Turkey and Egypt -- Özgür Olgun Erden
- 10:45-11:15 Discussion of Democracy from a Functionalist Viewpoint -- Jaanika Erne
- 11:15-11:45 Obscene Democracy: Corporations, Spectacles, and Identity Politics -- Steven Panageotou

R.3 **The Legacy of Historical Avant-Gardes (Halley/Riccioni; special session)**

- 10:15-10:45 The Legacy of Historical Avant-Gardes: the Case of Pussy Riot -- Jeffrey Halley and Ilaria Riccioni
- 10:45-11:15 Public Art for Reshaping Contemporary Urban Life -- Kasturi Hazarika

12:00-12:45 Keynote R.2 **Two Forms of "Systems": Social Theory as Social Practice - Frank Welz**

13:15-15:30 Closing R.2 Plenary **The Current Crisis of (Western) Democracy -- A Discussion**

Manisha Desai
 Daniel Krier
 Steven Panageotou
 Christopher Schlembach
 Frank Welz

Abstracts

Saburo Akahori

Observing Precarious Society: On the Diagnosis Function of Sociological Systems Theory

This paper questions how sociological theory can diagnose the illness of contemporary society. For this purpose, we concentrate on the social systems theory proposed by Niklas Luhmann. The reason why we utilize the systems theory is that it can be seen as a strong tool of sociological imagination, by which we can think differently. According to Luhmann's theory, social systems are constructed from and produce meaning through communication; that is to say, social systems observe by indicating something through drawing a certain distinction. Adding that, the second-order analysis of social systems focuses not only on the system's observation, but also on the distinction drawn in the first-order observation.

On the basis of the above-mentioned framework, we then move on to deal with the precariousness of society by regarding society as an observing system.

Firstly, we question what kind of observation by society would be precarious. Through some case studies, it can be demonstrated that excessively simplified observations of society make a lot of problems invisible, therefore they endanger society. In other words, the self-description of society based on stereotypes or clichés are self-destructive.

Secondly, through the second-order analysis of social systems, we explore what kind of conditions are needed that enable to solve societal problems and to describe heterogeneity inside society.

We conclude that sociological systems theory can diagnose the illness of society by regarding society as an observer. The precariousness of society can be understood as the consequence of insensitivity of society as an observing system.

Kevin S. Amidon

Society without Anthropologie: On the Genealogy of Systems Theory

Systems theory exists in multiple liminal disciplinary and historical spaces. Closely associated with just a few major scholars, it has developed outside resonance across a range of disciplines. The concept has condensed most clearly around Niklas Luhmann's prolific writings emerging from sociology, but it has its roots in, and has proliferated widely among, scholars and disciplines far afield from inquiry into the social. My argument is that systems theory, therefore, cannot be understood to have a "history." It is a field that can only be adequately understood as having a "genealogy" – primarily in Foucault's disciplinary sense, but also with resonances reaching into the spheres of anthropology, biology, and genetics. The key figure around whom the genealogy of systems theory can be elucidated is Ludwig von Bertalanffy. Bertalanffy began his career in the 1930s seeking, largely unsuccessfully, to build a compelling system of "theoretical biology" – law-based arguments about biological processes and

organisms that appear to be time-independent. I contend that this theoretical biology (also pursued by numerous other scholars) further represented, in its most rarefied form, an attempt to develop laws of social interaction – a kind of Anthropologie without history. Bertalanffy's postwar writings developed this systemic thought in a more abstract direction, loosening the links to the biological. Thus, I contend, both Luhmann's reconstruction of a socially-embedded systems theory and Foucault's genealogical-historical methods represent attempts to answer Bertalanffy's de-historicization of social thought.

Yury Asochakov

Post-globalization: the end of “the end of History and the new model of the future

This paper is intended to discuss the prospects and the ways of constructing a new model of global development in a situation of factual and theoretical uncertainty indicated in social and political science by the concept of post-globalization. It aims at analyzing the critical and theoretical potential of the concept of post-globalization for understanding the direction of shifting the paradigms of conceptualization of the future.

My research is based on contextualization, theoretical analysis, and conceptualization of the post-globalization critique of the results and further prospects of globalization.

My paper analyzes the heuristic and political erosion of neoliberal concept of globalization as “the end of history” scenario and follows the development of the new alternative model of the future abandoning the prescribed unilineal logic of the latent unipolar geography/class/ideology interests and based upon the dialectics of the complexity of the real historical development. I describe three paradigms of theoretical constructing of the future – revolutionary, historical, and critical - aligning the post-globalization conception with the critical approach.

I argue that revolutionary, historical, and critical paradigms are based on different correlations between the present, as the obvious object of the research, and a hypothetical project of the future, as its implicit subject.

The revolutionary paradigm suggests viewing the present as a moment on the eve of the arrival of the future, whose models become a dominating subject of the research and are constructed as a negation of the basic characteristics of existing society as the observable object of the research.

The historical paradigm is focused on systematization and interpretation of the past as a precursor of both the present and the future, making these three stages of temporal progression isomorphic and turning the statements about their nature into the formal historical universals.

Both the revolutionary and the historical paradigms need a narrative to express themselves through “telling a story” of either epochal disruption or epochal progression of events directed to the realization of a project of the future. This makes both approaches result in different

kinds of grand/emancipation narratives organizing knowledge as well as social and political actions and thus becoming ideologies. At that point theoretical paradigms lose their heuristic value as they lose their intimate connection with the reality and serve as mere projections of the idealistic, already conceptualized future and/or the past.

The critical paradigm, in its future-oriented study of the social dynamics, focuses on the present as a research object. It constructs the models of the social future as positive outcome of the resolution of the contradictions in the actual trends of the present.

The results of this research contribute to developing the methodology of examining alternative models of future sustainable development. If the rumors of “the end of history” were exaggerated, where are we going now? The post-globalization concept highlighting the limits of the globalization project serves as a possible heuristic tool for transcending its boundaries. As most of other “post-” concepts, it summarizes and indicates the uncertain, unstable – negative - aspects of its pre-“post” counterpart revealing the conflicting elements and thus can serve as a starting point of the critical analysis.

Johannes I. (Hans) Bakker

“Systems” versus Ideal Type Models (ITMs): A Neo-Marxian/Neo-Weberian/Neo-Peircean Perspective

This paper examines the use of Ideal Type Models (ITMs) and Peirce’s Triadic Semiotics. An ITM consists of a set of “Ideal Types” (IT’s). {ITM/ (ITM = IT-1, IT-2, IT-3, ... IT-n)}. Weber and Peirce were considering very similar methodological ideas. Such ITMs are more heuristic than any academic discussion or debate based on the use of “Systems” terminology that dates back to Plato and Aristotle, if for no other reason than the Ancient Greek terms have subtly changed in their meaning. Journalists use terms like “dictatorship” and “constitutionality” in ways quite different from Plato and Aristotle. In everyday life conversations and even in many pseudo-academic books by people like Anne Coulter and Steve Bannon the terms become jumbled. This paper is part of a larger book project on Max Weber’s ITM’s of Patriarchy, Patrimonial-prebendalism (Pp) and Patrimonial-feudalism (Pf). Those terms build on but significantly modify Marx’s use of Montesquieu’s “Oriental Despotism” (OD) and Marx’s own “Asiatic Mode of Production” (AMP). When we refer to the “Orient” the geographical focus is not clear. When we refer to “Asia” the ideas tend often to be Eurocentric. The binary Oriental versus Occidental (used by both Marx and Weber) is highly misleading since it is not at all clear where the Orient ends and where the Occident beings geographically or temporally. (One version is at the Bosphorus!) This led Andre Gunder Frank to some false conclusions about Eurocentrism. An earlier essay by Bakker on this was published in the ISTC series (Bakker in Dahms). But in that earlier paper the topic was not entirely clear because it was somewhat blurred by reference to too many ideas for one relatively brief paper. Also, since that time I have deepened my knowledge of Hermeneutics and Semiotics, particularly Peirce’s triadic Semiotics (rather than de Saussure’s Cartesian dualistic semiologie).

On the role of the State in the age of Homo Vulnerabilis: critical reflections from two comparative studies

This paper deals with the issue of the role of the State in relation to the urgency of protecting people from the “new social risks”, namely long-term unemployment, job insecurity, and in-work poverty, but in the context of diminished capacity of public spending. For this purpose, it recovers some key conceptual categories – i.e. State, neoliberalism, vulnerability, exploitation – which, conveniently defined, form a plausibly coherent theoretical framework. Drawing on the neo-Marxist theory, the author intends to develop a pathway of social critique focused on the Neoliberal State and its inherent paradoxes. The central thesis of the paper is that the State, against the background of a neoliberal drift in economic policy and, specifically, in labour regulation in capitalist countries, plays an ambivalent role in relation to the social vulnerabilities that are generated within new exploitation relations. If economic theory requires a “weak” State, in fact, the political practice needs a “strong” State, able to impose neoliberal policies. But neoliberal policies – e.g. labour market flexibilisation – contributed significantly to the expansion of the area of social vulnerability, which in turn posed serious problems of financial sustainability to the Neoliberal State itself. The paper addresses these issues by presenting a “meta-analysis” of the results of two empirical research projects, focusing on the “active inclusion” of persons excluded from the labour market and the promotion and protection of creative labour, respectively. So doing, it aims to assume a wider perspective, which looks at both the “low” and the “high” strata of the labour forces. A “multi-level” and “multi-actor” approach allows analysing the different modes of interaction between the State and other key actors, such as the actors of industrial relations. The comparative perspective – the first research was carried out on six countries, i.e. France, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, UK, the second one on three, i.e. Denmark, Italy, Netherlands – represents an added value since it permits to conduct the analysis in the perspective of “multiple equilibria”, based on old and new “institutional complementarities”.

Antonia Cava, Marco Centorrino, S. Nucera, Mariaeugenia Parito

The False Myth regarding Internet as New Agora

This paper aims to discuss the statement regarding Internet as a new agora, in particular suggesting it is a false myth, rooted in the early optimistic vision of Internet diffused in the 1990s. In that period, Internet was considered an opportunity to reshape the public sphere.

The statement “direct democracy” is usually used in the political discourses addressed to the public highlighting the opportunity for all the people to participate in equal measure to political and deliberative processes. We argue that two features are implicated. First of all, Internet as tool to improve involvement in democratic processes has theoretical-practical limits; the idea of cyber-democracy is problematic. Second, and even more important, Internet is not democratic, in the meaning it does not guarantee equal access for all the people but it is extremely technomeritocratic and, therefore, with a top-down structure. Since its

debut, Internet has been governed by a techno-elite and the so-called virtual communities are just common users. We argue, this technical-cultural characteristic is incompatible with the idea of “Internet as new agora” and, at the same time, it is linked with the characteristic of the Internet centered movements: they have a top-down structure even stronger than traditional parties. In conclusion, the paper argues Internet is a “glue” for cyber-movements used to connect with their target people.

Eriada Cela

[On the Women’s Magazine Cover but Not Facing the Camera: Confronting the Socialist Past of Albanian Women through Visual Methodology](#)

For almost fifty years, Albania witnessed one of the most ferocious totalitarian systems in Europe, with a socialist regime that threatened most human rights and an ideological propaganda that aimed at strengthening the positions of the Party. The propaganda targeted Albanian women through a Women’s Magazine that included ideological rhetoric throughout all its articles and images. Also, state-fabricated discourse manufactured the semantic transformation in the national public discourse of the International Women’s Day into Mother’s Day. This semantic shift limited women’s agency within certain domains, despite the “emancipation” rhetoric as claimed by propaganda. This paper uses semiology (Rose, 2012) to trace the visual and the written discourse in women’s images that were used on the cover of a monthly women’s magazine, where the ideological propaganda on women’s “emancipation” agenda claimed to emancipate women without empowering or supporting them.

Roderick Condon

[Exploring the Neoliberal Turn Through Social Theory: From Parsons to Habermas and Luhmann](#)

The transition from the postwar to neoliberal social order is a key theme in the contemporary literature, the former of which actualized a social model of democracy and the latter a capitalistic one. From this perspective, the 1970s crises represented a crossroads. On one side, the conditions of the postwar order facilitated orientations towards deeper democratization that burst the bounds of the model itself. New social movements pointed towards a world beyond. On the other side, the postwar order also fostered orientations against the overextension and overburdening of the state and associated declines in efficiency and economic growth. Neoliberal and technocratic-conservative movements advocated re-commodification as the solution to systemic crises. The neoliberal order was forged from the political victory and subsequent hegemony of the latter, operating in opposition to the diffuse but ever present threat of the former.

This paper traces the neoliberal turn through social theory by linking the movements of society with salient movements in theory itself. Presenting Parsons’s theory of society as representative of the postwar order, and capturing the logic of social democracy, it maps two routes out of Parsons as reflecting political orientations emerging from within. Habermas and

Luhmann are social-theoretical representatives of the new social movements and neoliberal technocratic-conservatism. The neoliberal order can then be captured in social theory through the tension between these conflicting perspectives on societal organization. With the present crisis raising a developmental crossroads yet again, this study has implications beyond the sociology of knowledge to potential futures of democracy itself.

Joel Crombez, Caroline Loftus

[Rethinking the Chronopolitical Foundations of Modern Society and Social Thought: Toward the Practice of a Critical Afrofuturist Sociology](#)

The term Afrofuturism (Dery 1994) only dates to the mid-1990s but as a concept it has come to represent a long history, dating to the early writings of W. E. B. Du Bois, as well as contributions in literature, music, art, philosophy, and science that explicitly engage with the question of race, technology, and the future of modern society. Specifically, Afrofuturism lies at the intersection of black, African, and African Diaspora knowledge that links to thought on the utopic/dystopic possibilities for the future. As with the models of critical theory proposed by Horkheimer (1937) and Marcuse (1937), it is a framework that is ‘backward-looking and forward-thinking.’ Resting upon African notions of time, such as the Swahili concept of Sasa, which encompasses the immediate past, present and future, it provides a framework for rethinking the presentist chronopolitics of modern society. By turning to the history of the construction of Blackness-and as a by-product, the oft ignored construction of Whiteness-the darkest roots of the modern narrative emerge in the alien abduction and forced estrangement of African peoples subjected to the Atlantic passage and the horrors of slavery. With this as the starting point, the narrative of modern capitalist society ruptures along racial lines, with the White narrative holding apocalypse as something yet to come, and the Black narrative locating apocalypse in the past and the post-apocalypse in the present. In this paper we propose Afrofuturist thought as a framework for reloading sociology with a critical perspective and the tools needed to engage with the past, present, and future, so that we can recognize the effect that racialized perspectives on time impact the diagnosis of impending planetary problems.

Manisha Desai

[Navigating Neoliberal Capitalism and Hindu Nationalism via Phule Ambedkarism: The Right to Pee Campaign](#)

The Indian state expresses its commitments to end gender and caste inequalities via various policies and programs. Yet, these are refracted via the prisms of neoliberal capitalism and Hindu nationalism, which undermine their potential for social transformation and emancipation. Indian feminists navigate these challenges through a bricolage of practices that continue to make the state accountable even as they articulate alternatives borrowing from the theory and practice of Phule Ambedkarism, increasingly understood as Indian critical

theory. I illustrate this through the changing dynamics of the eight-year old Right to Pee campaign in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Özgür Olgun Erden

A New Challenge in Democracy Debates Today: Democratization Discourse and Its Gramscian Criticism based on the Cases of Turkey and Egypt

Democratization expresses a different -historical- challenge reflecting a dominant approach with its discourses in democracy debates, albeit for a while. This challenge has brought a new dimension to the debates in question with its assertion to democratize some authoritarian regimes and structures, including Latin America and some Middle East countries, such as Turkey or Egypt. Having centered on democracy debates, the main argument behind such a democratization is structural change to lay the bases of development in one country or society. The prominent idea in the change is modernization theories. Modernization theories have established a close relationship between development and democratization. By the term development what is meant here has been mostly increased wealth, industrialization, urbanization, and education. These theories has fundamentally posited that economic modernization would lead to West-European style democracy regardless of time/place. For them, the ties between development and economic structure and relationships has been more important at all times. However, they have ignored political and intellectual/ideological structures in Gramscian sense. They have not considered if these structures have a strong influence in not being able to democratize one country or society. There has been no significance how political structures, ranging from state, political movements and a variety of ideological-political organizations to political culture, emerged and evolved. The intellectual and ideological structures and backgrounds and how an intellectual-moral leadership they undertake about democratization have never been matter. Having been grounded on disregarding political and ideological elements, the democratization discourse has been highly unsuccessful in explaining why some countries, Turkey and Egypt which is two major cases of this paper, tended towards authoritarianism, not democratization. In this paper, taking into account all of these we will basically make a Gramscian critic of democratization on the basis of those structures, whether political or intellectual/ideological, without falling into an economic reductionism as in economic modernization standpoint. We will address why the authoritarian rulings re-emerged in those countries from a comparative perspective based upon the cases of Turkey and Egypt.

Jaanika Erne

Discussion of Democracy from a Functionalist Viewpoint

Globalization and the developing models of transnational and supranational governance challenge the concepts related to Post-Westphalian understanding of states. States confer increasingly powers on other international actors.

The principle of conferral of powers has roots in the institute of delegation and, therefore, the direct elements of the principle of conferral of powers are sources, delegation, and power. For an interpretivist approach, the principle of conferral depends on the concepts of state(hood), sovereignty, legitimacy, democracy, government and governance. Although some of these concepts are related more and others less to the principle of conferral, they are all hybrid concepts that are continuously changing - none of these concepts is universal, valid and applicable in every time and place.

I am asking for the meaning of conferral of powers by states in the framework of the international law theory of global constitutionalism and global governance. The theory has important common points with government and governance approach. Combining these two approaches of different disciplines allows the hypothesis that the more an international actor (for example, an international organization) contains elements of governance/functionalism, the less it contains elements of government/traditional democracy theory and vice versa.

The theories of constitutionalism and government could explain the problem as follows: while the intergovernmental EU is a form of governance, the supranational EU can mean the EU as a government. But these two forms need not be connected with democracy theory because they both can mean merely functionalism, not connected with the traditional democracy theory. If the EU is not a state but only functions as a state, it can mean merely deeper integration rather than the EU based on the traditional democracy theory. That way, functionalist approach would mean democracy without democracy theory.

Laura Gherardi, Monica Martinelli

The new sustainable-contributory capitalism

Our contribution offers an analysis of the exchange of material and symbolic resources

between society, economy and politics in western democracies in two historical periods: 1989–2008 and from 2008 to 2018. The neoliberal exchange (1989–2008), termed ‘financial–consumerist exchange’ with its heavy social and economic consequences leading to the 2008 crisis and the ‘sustainable–contributory exchange’- that is the possible new exchange arising after the 2008 crisis, towards new sustainable business models and citizens’ contribution enabled by institutional innovations. We consider economic interests as those interests related to the accumulation of capital, in the form of profit and/or income, having concrete expression in the structural transformations of capitalism. For political interests we primarily mean the achievement of consent by policy-makers. The engines of exchange are the social interests as the demands that come from social groups; criticism of the system is a key expression of these demands (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999).

Revising Systems Theory with Critical Theory to Analyze Politically Relevant Correspondences between Engineering of the Human Genome and Engineering of the Planet

Systems theory cannot address equally the ecological and social domains of social-ecological systems (Walker et al. 2006). Analyzing society and its components as a system facilitates a holistic approach sensitive to complexity. Yet doing so misses major social phenomena, for example human intentionality as reflected by worldviews and traditions, cultural norms and relations, power dynamics within civil and political spheres, role formation, and personality (all the reasons why humans pursue life in community).

I propose revising systems theory (1) conceptually and (2) in application.

(1) Drawing on the work of Luhmann (1995) and Parsons (1971) as well as on soft systems methodology (Checkland and Scholes 1999), I develop Habermas's (1981) distinction between those components of society amenable to systems analysis (economy, polity, certain dynamics of human interaction, or collective action) and those components that systems theory misses. It fails to recognize that an effective cause from the point of view of culture is also a rationally compelling cause from the point of view of an agent's action. This perspective introduces an institutional bias in analyses of causality over and above considerations of culture and personality formation (because a systems approach renders the latter less susceptible to empirical investigation). Habermas's well-known alternative is a two-component model of society: the lifeworld and the system.

In that spirit, I propose a systems theory that can theorize and operationalize the social without depoliticizing the context or phenomenon being analyzed (Welsh 2014) (for example by postulating neutral feedback mechanisms) (Evans 2011). To that end I introduce aspects of Critical Theory into systems theory (a systems approach alone is insensitive to social pathologies because it, say, merely assimilates the lifeworld to disequilibria in exchange relations) (Habermas 1987). In fact, pathologies of society are caused by interactions of social, cultural, and economic realms such as the breakdown of bonds between the individual and community. Thus a revised system theory would not veil agency (Coulthard 2012) by focusing only on rules, material causes, and influence in collective situations; it would also reconstruct intention from a subjective point of view. After all, power and competing value systems are not external to but rather integral to the development and functioning of systems (Cote and Nightingale 2012). If phenomena such as inequity or economic marginalization only become apparent at certain scales of investigation (Glaser and Glaeser 2011), then systems theory revised with critical theory needs to operate at both large and small scales.

(2) It also needs to grasp system interdependencies between natural and social processes occurring at different temporal and spatial scales (Becker 2012). To that end I apply the revised theory to interconnections between two different systems: the human genome and the planet

in the age of the Anthropocene. The former marks caesurae in human history; the latter, caesurae in planetary history. Because no particular species can be preserved as such, and because the planetary environment as a whole cannot be preserved as such, the political question is: what are sustainable forms of change for each? I link issues of human genetic engineering to issues of humankind's impact on the planetary environment in the Anthropocene in a systems theory revised along Habermasian lines. I link them with regard to issues of intergenerational justice. In pursuit of intergenerational justice, communities confront the unintended consequences of technologies that can undermine justice. This holds for human genetic engineering no less than for Anthropocenic effects. A revised systems theory needs to be able to deal, at both macro and micro levels, with disparities in agency. Thus demands to sacrifice for future generations are not well addressed to the economically weak members of the current generation (or to underdeveloped regions of the Earth). Correspondingly, enhancements through human genetic engineering are more likely to be available to wealthy elites, in this way only exacerbating existing disparities in agency.

Jeffrey A. Halley, Ilaria Riccioni

[The Legacy of Historical Avant-Gardes: the Case of Pussy Riot](#)

This article interrogates the case of the Russian feminist art movement Pussy Riot as claim for feminism as a social justice movement. Pussy Riot may be considered a new art avant-garde because of its capacity to relate activism, politics and art. Avant-gardes are usually seen as art movements that can connect or express a unity of art and life, and as movements that are able to transform in a mediated cultural sense some crucial issues of social engagement. The case of Pussy Riot can also be seen as a struggle for democracy and as a way to recapture democratic and participatory forms of citizenship, especially in our time when accepted forms of democracy, such as the fetish of elections, have been eroded or reified.

Pussy Riot represents a new form of feminist mediatic resistance and activism within the political context of contemporary Russia. Their struggle is against the resurgence of misogyny, patriarchy, and as Weber would put it, caeseropapism, or secular power over the church, as a form of domination in contemporary Russia.

Pussy Riot is a female punk rock group which uses music performance in order to intervene in physical spaces to generate public debate and critique. They share with earlier avant-garde movements, such as Dada, techniques such as shock to provoke reactions and a controversial reception. As well, they share with Futurism the heavy use of means of communication in order to create a narrative of their own activism and a continuous contact with their possible audience. We describe Pussy Riot's use of western notions of feminism and how they challenge the actual political and patriarchal regimes.

In our article, we will analyze their contribution to a critique of politics and cultural values, and to a renewed importance of human rights. In particular, we will analyze the well-known performance they did in February 21, 2012, in the rebuilt Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the

seat of the Moscow Patriarchate and a site of historical struggle. We will discuss their concrete critique in terms of their performance as well as in the content of the messages. Aside from this, we will analyze the synthetic issues that one member, Nadya Tolokonnikova, raises in an exchange with the philosopher Slavoj Žižek.

As a new form of feminist resistance and activism, Pussy Riot points to a critique of both neo-liberalism and new illiberal form of governance. At the same time, they seem to question not only politics but authoritarian forms in religion as well. In the process, they have generated new ways to live and produce, a particular vision of how art and life go together, and new forms of social life and feminist expressions. How can this kind of movement add knowledge and practices to the social debate concerning liberty of expression and an attack on inequality?

Kasturi Hazarika

Public Art for Reshaping Contemporary Urban Life

There is uncontested acceptance of the fact that art is a powerful tool, which is capable of bringing about social change. There are many dimensions to the role of art in bringing about social change. Art can be a voice of dissent, a tool for advancing social justice and democracy. Art can also be a source of memory and provide the platform for future ways of knowing (David and McCaughan, 2006). In recent times, public art has been seen as a form of art, which can be a very powerful medium for bringing about revolutionary social change. A very simplistic and crude definition of public art includes art installed by public agencies in public spaces and at public expenses.

My paper will look at how public art can help in redevelopment and reshaping of contemporary urban life. It is important to note that for influencing any kind of change, there is first of all a need for having a conversation and engagement with a work of with any art form, including public art. Therefore, this paper shall look at exploring the methods employed for engaging audience for having conversation with public art, created in the modern capitalist society and how far they have been successful, in contributing towards desired required positive 'healthy' change in contemporary society. For the very purpose we shall draw in from ideas of Gregory Bateson, works of Ellen Dissanayake, Donald Kuspit, Peter Plagens and other theorists like Peter Burger.

Dmitry Ivanov

Herbert Marcuse's Critical Theory and Dialectics of Modernity

The dialectical negation and utopianism had enabled H. Marcuse's critical theory to reveal the direction of modern society transformation in the 20th century. Hegelian paradigm 'Thesis – Antithesis – Synthesis' takes form of dialectical negation in Marcuse's development of notion of freedom: Reason – Eros – Post-technological rationality.

By the end of the 20th century the concept of post-technological rationality became affirmative discourse for the system of postindustrial capitalism. An unintended result of three decades of critical theorizing is a general pattern of Modernity dialectics. The system normalizing unfreedom and anti-system movements refusing normativity are interrelated in dialectical way: anti-system utopias of the marginalized outsiders and protest movements oppressed by dominant structures of the present turn into sources for the dominant structures and patterns of agency in the future. Dialectical pattern 'system – anti-system outsiders – new form of sociality' can be seen in virtualization of society during last decades of the 20th century.

Virtualization is replacement of things and real actions by images and communications. Virtualization was the anti-system movement in the 1980-90s when digital technologies enthusiasts created virtual networks escaping control of reified institutions. But now that 'Great Escape' of cyberpunks, hackers, pirates, and copyleft activists has been absorbed by the system. Contemporary postindustrial capitalism is based on virtualization of production and consumption. Social life is alienated into virtual realities of branding, image making, and digital networking. The current cycle of Modernity dialectics is negation of virtualization by turn to 'new materiality' and then its negation in post-virtualization as a rise of augmented social reality.

Dialectical negation now is driven by movements representing the new utopia: authenticity revolt against virtuality. On the line of confrontation between glamour of postindustrial capitalism and alternative reality of craft, sharing, co-workings, co-livings etc., the newest forms of commodification and protest in urban spaces are converging on the move towards the system of alter-capitalism. Post-virtualization creates social life as an existence full of cyber-physical experience. Different social realities are mutually penetrated and take form of augmented reality integrating physical and digital, material and symbolic, modern and 'postmodern' components of human life.

The next phase of dialectic of Modernity is rooted in the contradiction between augmented social reality emerging in the global cities and exhausted sociality in small cities and rural communities which are losing material, symbolic, and human resources 'washed away' by flows directed towards super-urban hubs of globalization and virtualization. 'Augmented Modernity' contrasted with 'Exhausted Modernity' can be a starting point for the future critical theory of society.

Ivan Kislenko

[Sociological Analysis of Institutional Aspect of Global Sociology of M. Burawoy](#)

This article offers for consideration the institutional side of the global sociology project presented by M. Burawoy. The main critics of this approach currently ignore the role of institutions and more often concentrate on the ideological side of the issue. In this paper, it is

proposed to trace the usage of the institutional mechanisms of the ISA to promote the idea of the internationalization of sociology on a global scale.

On the basis of the historical and sociological reconstruction, the connection between the ISA World Sociological Congresses, the institute of presidency in the ISA and the project of global sociology in the approach of the British scientist will be demonstrated.

Through the analysis of M. Burawoy's articles, the main program statements of the development of global sociology will be defined. Special attention will be paid to the institute of ISA presidential speech and its usage in the context of global sociology M. Burawoy.

This paper claims the problem of excessive centralization of the project on the institutional link with the various resources provided by the ISA. The lack of such resources inevitably makes the idea less viable and it will be demonstrated in this work.

The main theoretical arguments presented in the paper are supported by empirical data: from the dynamics of changes in membership in an organization to changes in the impact factors of sociological journals associated with the ISA.

Morten Knudsen

Self-destruction in critical and systems theory

The diagnosis of self-destructive processes is a leitmotif in critical theory. In a letter to Lassalle in 1858 Marx characterized 'The capital' as "zugleich Darstellung des Systems und durch die Darstellung Kritik desselben." (MEW29: 550)". The presentation of the system is simultaneously critique of the system because the system is full of opposites, which threaten to destroy the system, that is basically a self-negating system. Marx thus claims that "Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology(..) only by simultaneously sapping the original sources of all wealth - the soil and the labourer" (The Capital p. 330). We find a parallel figure of critique in Horkheimer and Adornos 'Critique of Enlightenment' that analyses how enlightenment at its core has an inbuilt self-destructive dynamic.

Luhmann's theoretical style and ambition was far from critical theory a la Adorno – and primarily dealt with Adorno in polemical ways. But as Stefan Breuer has pointed out Luhmann's system theory may not start with an interest in self-destruction (it rather starts with improbability) – but it ends up describing a functionally differentiated society with strong self-destructive dynamics. Luhmann ends up describing a society with systems that are simultaneously highly interdependent and radically inconsiderate towards each other and their environment. Even though Luhmann does not flag it his theory can be read as just at 'critical' when it comes to diagnoses of crises and self-destruction as critical theory.

In this paper I shall extract the main figures concerning systemic self-destruction by Marx/Lukács/Adorno/Horkheimer on the one side and Luhmann on the other. In both critical and systems theory differentiation as well as de-differentiation are core ingredients when it comes to self-destructive dynamics. I shall demonstrate how we by Marx find a dialectical

understanding of crises (focusing on tensions and opposites) but also an understanding focusing on the outside fundamentals of capitalism. Similarly, I shall demonstrate two different figures of self-destruction by Luhmann related to internal break-downs as well as breakdowns mediated by the environment. Based on this I shall discuss what kind of self-destruction-analytics the two different theoretical traditions offer. That is: what can we learn from them in relation to analyses of current self-destructive phenomena – ranging from climate changes to organizational self-destructions? I shall also briefly touch upon the figures of ‘saving’ in the two theories – by Marx ‘revolution’ by Luhmann increased systemic ‘reflexive capacity’.

Daniel Krier

[Economic Theology and the Future of Capitalism](#)

Social mediation of neoliberal capitalism's contradictions has become impossible and the system, such as it was, is coming apart. When societies implode, the symbolic order disintegrates, releasing unregulated social energies. As crises proceed, projections of the social imaginary fill emergent fissures, contradictions, and impossibilities in the symbolic order that are experienced in the theological register as *Götterdämmerung*. This paper outlines a critical social theory of economic theology to comprehend this crisis.

Rhiannon A. Leebrick

[Pristine, Green, and Gated: Ecological Gentrification and Neoliberal Globalization](#)

Ecological gentrification can be understood as a physical manifestation of the ways in which neoliberal economic policies and ideology are continually and consistently shaping space and place, including ideas about what “green” spaces mean and who gets to occupy them. This paper examines the ways in which neoliberal or “market” ideologies are adopted at the local and regional level to justify development agendas that often exacerbate class and racial inequalities under the banner of a very narrowly imagined view of environmental stewardship. Using a case study of the southern Appalachian region in the United States and drawing comparisons to this process globally, I explore the claims making that those involved in ecological gentrification use to justify development projects that increasingly gate off pristine areas or carve out new places to be called pristine, while making these places accessible only to those who have the means to be there or who fit a specific image of who “should” be there. Moreover, the systemic and dialectical processes that are exacerbating ecological crises like climate change are downplayed, ignored, or only given lip service.

Robert Leonard

[Why don't we read Baudrillard? Why Should we?](#)

This paper constitutes parts of a larger MA thesis titled *Sociology Misrecognizes Jean Baudrillard*. This presentation addresses (1) the neglect of Baudrillard, specifically in the United States and (2) what Baudrillard “brings to the table” that sociology needs to take seriously in order to better understand contemporary modern society. For the former, I

explain the neglect and dismissal of Baudrillard by discussing the implications of when and the order in which his books were translated into English. I add to this existing conversation by incorporating an understanding of Baudrillard's intellectual development and the development of French social theory overtime as a consequence of the "gravity" exerted by concrete socio-historical circumstances (Dahms 2008). I give particular emphasis on the transition in the early 1970s in France to the movement away from French social theory per se and toward media theory. I also briefly look at the role of American Studies, Cultural Studies, and Media Studies in the United States.

To articulate how Baudrillard is useful and necessary for sociology today, I argue that we must understand Baudrillard work as an entire project. I suggest we conceptualize Baudrillard as working out of a radical Durkheimian tradition that is largely rooted in the anthropological works of Durkheim and Mauss. This perspective is taken up before Baudrillard by Bataille through the impure sacred and gift-exchange. I demonstrate how this genealogy forms Baudrillard's theory of social change in which is the transition from symbolic exchange to semiotic exchange. I explain this transition through key theoretical concepts of Baudrillard, including simulation, hyper-reality, sign-value (and sign systems), and the symbolic. I conclude by discussing the implications of Baudrillard that sociologist should be paying attention, in particular, simulation as a foundational theoretical concept to explain modernity and the problematic nature of the social in symbolic exchange.

Eric Lybeck

Civic Sociology as (Post) Critique

Civic sociology is an emerging approach to sociological and interdisciplinary research that seeks to integrate the four fields of research noted by Buroway (2004): professional, critical, policy and public. Drawing on pragmatism, processual sociology, sociology of knowledge and historical forms of sociological work, civic sociology pushes against prevailing assumptions that academic autonomy as such is a good thing, noting this can lead to insularity, unaccountability and ignorance of new social developments. Rather, through development of new forms of professional and public sociological practice, particularly engagement with local and regional communities, a more intentional heteronomy can be envisaged through which social research can be improved both for the wider public and for itself. Still, critical theory and critical research remain fundamental and necessary to maintain reflexivity in such forms of engagement and this paper points toward some ways in which critique can be both extended and limited within the civic sociological framework. Drawing on recent developments within critical literary theory pointing towards 'post-critique' and the call to move beyond the scholarly habits of the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', we can position civic sociology as a similar 'post-critical' move that appears increasingly urgent within our polarising contemporary societies.

Ideology as a means of critical transformation of social structure

Considering two foundations of social life - a stable and even rigid social structure and a lively, flowing stream of social meanings, we can sense their contrast. At the same time, this opposite, according to Hegel, has a dialectical unity. As E. Durkheim pointed out, every social institution is based on a specific idea regarding social relations. However, the rigid normative-role structure of social institutions dogmatizes, enclosing within established framework, its own ideal foundations. Improvement of the structure is therefore possible only after creation of the idea of such improvement. However, a new idea, in turn, arises as a response to awareness of the old structure's shortcomings. The process of dogmatization of social life, due to the properties of the social structure, should be constantly overcome by the work of critical thought, aware that there is not and cannot be an absolute, perfect structure. A prerequisite for the development of new ideas and its necessary part is deep criticism over the existing order. Therefore, the direction of social criticism, outlined and developed by the Frankfurt School, should be a full-fledged part of social science. In essence, this creates prerequisites for developing a new approach to understanding ideology as a social phenomenon. Ideology, according to it, is a system of ideas guiding social development. Scientific ideology isn't utopia, because it doesn't rely on an unattainable ideal. Modern society needs a new concept of ideology, the core of which should be critical idea establishing shortcomings, their causes and ways to overcome.

'Critical Theory on the relationship between fascism and capitalism: Was National Socialism a new social system, and could it re-emerge?'

Was National Socialism a new socio-economic system? Could it re-emerge in the 21st century? The standpoint from which critical theory sought to comprehend the experience of fascism is summarised in Marcuse's point that 'the fascist state was fascist society' and Horkheimer's statement that 'whoever is not willing to talk about capitalism should also keep quiet about fascism.' This paper draws upon critical theory's analyses of the fascist phenomenon and argues that 20th century fascism was both continuous and discontinuous with earlier stages of capitalism. The paper seeks to trace the key connections—and disparities—between capitalism and fascism, and considers the authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies within capitalism that could arguably give rise to a contemporary re-emergence of fascism, in the form of a new social system. First, the paper critically discusses Marcuse's text 'The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State' and his views regarding the definite relationship between the market form of capitalist society and fascism. Second, it looks at Pollock's argument for the 'primacy of the political' in fascism and his claim that this constituted a new system of post-capitalist social order. Finally, in drawing upon the work of Adorno, Horkheimer, Neumann, Sohn-Rethel and Postone, the paper explores the crucial issue of how a 'social system' is to be defined. It also seeks to specify the authoritarian and

totalitarian trends existing within late capitalism that could constitute the necessary conditions for a resurgence of fascism as a new social system in the 21st century.

Laurindo Dias Minhoto

Adorno and Luhmann: some internal connections

I have been recently arguing that aspects of the Luhmannian strand of systems theory could be mobilized in a crypto-normative way for a critique of certain trends in contemporary social development, especially the growing economic determination of different spheres of life and the formation of sectoral industries - such as health, education, crime control, etc. - with the consequent erosion of the autonomy of these spheres and the progressive exhaustion of social conditions for the exercise of freedom and the experience of difference.

A decisive step in this approach to systems theory would lie in the indication of certain "elective affinities" between Luhmann and Adorno, reinforcing the plausibility of an internal connection between these different theoretical conceptions and not their mere instrumental appropriation and external juxtaposition. From this point of view, I argue that aspects of Luhmann's conceptual construction - notably the way the system-environment relationship is thought - holds a strong family resemblance with the Adornian mode of conceiving the subject-object relationship in the speculative key of negative dialectics.

Conceived as a critical model that modulates society's real abstractions towards difference and systemic autonomy, and especially as a critical model that underlines possibilities of reciprocal mediation between system and environment, the point is that systems theory seems to emphatically put itself in tension with what, at least in part, could be seen as its other: neoliberal governmentality, the generalization of the commodity form and the instrumentalization of the individual by unilateral systemic imperatives in global capitalism.

Pier Paolo Motta

Administered world: domination and conformism in Max Horkheimer's representation of capitalism

In the late writings of Max Horkheimer, the analysis of capitalism unravels the way in which capitalism can't be conceived merely as a system of social production but as a way of knowing reality that conditions human being's representations of social reality.

In the essay "Jews and Europe", Horkheimer comes to the radical conclusion that "whoever is not willing to talk about capitalism he should also keep quite about fascism". Horkheimer rejects any understanding of capitalism and fascism from a systematic perspective. Capitalism is not an economic system, nor is fascism a political system. They are abstract concepts that imply an intuitive representation of social reality in terms of domination and conformism. Domination is a way of knowing the world by reducing things to object. Conformism is a way of living with the other that is instrumental to domination.

My contention is that Horkheimer exemplifies with the abstract concept of “administered world” a new way to investigate the representations of social reality. This is a critical method of investigation in which thinking rejects any hypostatization.

I will examine how Horkheimer’s concept of administered world could not be considered as a hypostatized concept that represents a conclusive system in itself. I will draw on three aspects of Horkheimer’s social thought: the philosophical inquiry into bourgeois anthropology, the sociological analysis of rackets and the studies on prejudice.

Finally, my paper aims to show how Horkheimer’s critical theory retrieves the intuitive representations of his contemporary social reality within abstract concepts without hypostatizing them.

Patrick O’Mahony

[Critical Theory, Systems Theory, and Prospects for a Reasonable Society](#)

The stimulating and challenging outline of the conference call invites participants variously to consider the relation between critical and systems theory, to address the ‘facticity’ deficit in critical thinking, and to consider whether long-established key terms such as capitalism, socialism, and democracy have lost traction, perhaps even become obsolete, in an emergent post-human world. Oriented by these ideas, the proposed paper will contend that a more adequate societal ontology than that of systems theory – Luhmann has a very strong but latent set of ontological predispositions – emerges from left-Hegelianism, with a certain comparative consistency to be derived from viewing Luhmann as following a right-Hegelian archetype, with the primacy of spirit over subjects and facts being replaced by that of communicative systems. The left-Hegelian inheritance, shared by the still original thinkers Marx and Peirce, as well as others, does not leave out, as does Luhmann, as part of a differentiated theory of reason, the creative world-making power of subjects, the recalcitrance of the world of facts, or the ultimate necessity of normative ordering. A world description, even allowing for its contemporary state, proceeding in this left-Hegelian manner will provide a very different normative prognostics than systems theory, though a prognostics to which as a component part and an advanced social theory it may make a contribution, a prognostics that can be factually supported while counterfactually reaching beyond contemporary actualities.

Shane O'Mahony

[“The disease model of addiction, structural violence, and epistemic injustice: Lessons from the Irish experience”](#)

The disease model of addiction provides the dominant socio-cultural narrative through which drug users can conceptualise their drug using experiences, as well as their related experiences of suffering. However, this narrative obscures social arrangements which cause significant harm to vulnerable populations; and which can be reasonably implicated in patterns of harmful drug use. Following the work of Miranda Fricker, this paper will argue that drug users suffer from a specific type of epistemic injustice which is linked to their capacity as “knowers”.

Specifically, the disease model of addiction ritualistically eschews discussions of social context and thereby denies drug users the possibility of developing the conceptual tools through which to understand their experiences of suffering, in ways which do not involve the acceptance of personal responsibility for one's drug use. In particular, drug users suffer from 'testimonial injustice', in that their descriptions of their experiences of suffering in the context of drug use, are only accepted as legitimate within the framework offered by the disease model and 12-step recovery groups. For example, if drug users attempt to argue that their harmful use was a temporally limited, situational response to a traumatic event, and that they could potentially return to more moderate use, they will be accused of being in denial; while any attempt to blame social exigencies for their harmful drug use will be met with encouragement to take personal responsibility. Finally, it is suggested that the concepts of structural violence and webs of significance, informed by an epistemic and social justice perspective, may provide a superior alternative framework within which to understand drug using experiences and related harms. This argument will be presented by reference to over a dozen qualitative interviews conducted with drug users in Ireland, as well as by drawing on broader philosophical literature's.

Jan Overwijk

[Spiralling Into Control: Rationalisation as Operational Closure](#)

The rationalisation thesis has traditionally been a central part of Critical Theory. It signifies the process through which instrumental reason proliferates throughout capitalist modernity at the expense of some form of political reason, like value or communicative rationality. Rationalisation, in a word, eclipses the horizon of political action in a technocratic and bureaucratic totality dictated by a logic of identity. After Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action, this picture of modernity has fallen out of vogue in critical sociology. There are at least two good reasons for this. Firstly, contemporary accounts of neoliberal capitalism rightly point to present-day capitalism's stress on various forms of openness, like flexibility, fluidity and entrepreneurship, rather than on eclipse and closure. Secondly, the rationalisation thesis hinges on a separation of technology and politics that has been shown to be both empirically and philosophically untenable. In this paper, I want to revitalise the rationalisation thesis by formulating an alternative account on the basis of Niklas Luhmann's systems theory that takes these two problems into account.

The main thesis of this paper is that the crux of rationalisation is not instrumental rationality, but the operational closure of sociotechnical systems driven by forces of commensuration. Whereas for Critical Theory instrumental reason and commensuration represent the same process, I argue that these notions are distinct and that the latter produces the former. I do so by analysing social technologies of commensuration that are central to rationalisation, like quantification, standardisation and categorisation, on the basis of literature from science and technology studies (STS). These are all measurement technologies, or 'metrologies', of which efficiency and instrumental reasoning are only one example. I trace historically how these

metrologies achieve operational closure in Luhmann's sense, namely the system's production of its own operations on the basis of its previous operations.

Specifically, I attempt to show that metrological systems are self-productive, self-performative and self-reinforcing. They are self-productive in that they produce their measured object through their very measuring; they are self-performative, because they set up an environment in which their measurements can circulate; they are self-reinforcing since they tend to become increasingly interlocked through a series of positive feedback loops. In addition, metrological systems that are tightly coupled to 'ecologically dominant' function systems, notably the capitalist economy, can exert considerable pressure onto their environment, forcing it to become commensurable with their metrological communications. Rationalisation is this process of social closure through metrological commensuration. Due to the self-performative and self-reinforcing nature of central metrological systems, these tend to appear as natural and depoliticised. This does not mean that technology or metrology is strictly opposed to politics. Research in STS shows that these technological systems are always permeated with values and ends that have sedimented from past political struggle. Moreover, these metrological systems themselves open up the space in which further politics can take place and have sense. This is a formulation of the founding paradox of Luhmann's second-order systems theory, the paradox of closure and openness. For Luhmann, it is precisely the system's operational closure that produces its openness to the environment. And vice versa, the system's closure emerges from radical difference or openness itself. This is also why I maintain that we need an account of rationalisation as closure precisely in order to understand the forms of openness in neoliberal capitalism. Phenomena of closure and openness do not point to two separate phases of capitalist modernity, but to two moments in a paradox that neoliberal capitalism itself embraces and exploits.

Jack D Palmer

Genocide and the Multiplicity of Modernity

This paper explores the hitherto untapped contributions to genocide studies in the oeuvre of Schmuël Noah Eisenstadt, a major figure in comparative historical sociology during the 20th and early 21st centuries. Specifically, it highlights the potential of the paradigm of 'multiple modernities', developed in the latter stages of his career, and focuses in particular on an unduly neglected aspect of the paradigm: the possibility for specifically modern forms of 'barbarism', including genocide. His work is placed in relation to the renowned thesis of Zygmunt Bauman, presented in *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989). For illustrative purposes, the argument draws on the case of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which Eisenstadt understood as a 'trauma of modernity'. Most significantly, 'multiple modernities' is presented as a paradigm that allows for the relationship between modernity and genocide to be analysed in non-Eurocentric ways.

Adorno and Luhmann: theorizing the arts

The two different approaches of the critical theory of society by Adorno and that of the system theory by Luhmann in relation to the world of arts unveil not only two different ways of inquiring and theorizing societal phenomena, but reveal many aspects that potentially contribute to theorizing the arts as a pivotal social phenomenon in understanding society. As well as for inquiring social functions. On the one hand art as expression of social critique implies a peculiar kind of knowledge about society, on the other hand arts as communication implies how it can become a unique medium for “bridging” meanings beyond verbal or written language. The aesthetic dimension stands for its political and cultural potentiality, the praxis impact society in a mediated or indirect way. This paper will inquire the differences between these two approaches, trying to build a dialogue between the complexity of these positions.

Steffen Roth

Digital transformation of social theory. A research update

This article outlines the basic design of digitally transformed social theory. We show that any digital world is created by the drawing and cross-tabling of binary distinctions. As any theory is supposed to be concerned with truth, we introduce to and insist on the distinction between true and false distinctions to demonstrate how flexible matrix-shaped theory architectures based on true distinctions allow for the reduction and unfolding of the entire complexity of analog or other possible social theories. The result of our demonstrations is the idea of a theoretical Supervacuum. The social equivalent of a universal Turing machine, this supervacuous social theory is virtually empty as it is based on only one proper theoretical premise (the idea of distinction [between true and false distinctions]), and therefore able to simulate all other social theory programmes. We conclude that our digitally transformed social theory design is particularly useful for observations of the digitally transformed societies.

Kosuke Sakai

Functional differentiation as middle-range theory in empirical research

The theory of modernization as the functional differentiation of society, which was proposed by Talcott Parsons and reformulated by Niklas Luhmann, is more or less accepted in social scientific discourse. However, because this theory is premised on a teleological–evolutionary schema, despite the fact that the concrete diverse characteristics of functionally differentiated societies should be scrutinized empirically, such a schema tends to be used as an explanatory variable supporting study of particular sociological objects. Therefore, the hypothesis of functional differentiation is not suitable as a theoretical reference point for empirical sociological research.

This paper reformulates Luhmann’s theory of functional differentiation, which combined with his theory of self-referential systems and an equivalent-functional analysis indicates their use in empirical research as a middle-range theory. In this way, I will clarify how functional

differentiation theory can be also a working hypothesis for a description and an explanation of a certain social phenomenon, not a teleological premise.

To determine the significance and effectiveness of my theoretical proposal regarding the functional differentiation of society, a concrete case is examined: the development of modern insurance in Germany during the 19th century. Analyzing this case, I show that various (sometime opposite and conflicting) ideal presentations making use of several epistemological distinctions regarding insurance (privat/öffentlich and Gegenseitigkeit/Spekulation, among others) can be observed in this era. These social practices contributed to semantic constructions of the political, economic, and civic fields of communication. Thus, this case appears as a historical development of the differentiation of functional systems in relation to semantic analysis, as well as empirical material for further comparative study of modern insurance.

Christopher Schlembach

Democracy and the Fact of the "Thou": From Simmel to Schütz and Beyond

In his seminal monography "Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt," Alfred Schütz praised Georg Simmel for making the individual human mind the starting point of social theory in terms of tracing back social phenomena "to the modes of individual behavior" to understand "the particular social form of such modes" (Schütz, 1967, p. 4). But he also criticized Simmel for his confused and unsystematic methodology and the fact that few of his concepts would survive critical scrutiny. However, Simmel's later approach of using historically relative, apriori concept to understand the constitution of sociology and society was groundbreaking and eye-opening. Describing and explaining social interaction by concepts based in methodology with reference to (historically) apriori experiences of social reality does not only open the way to understanding modern sociology, but also to conceptualizing modern democracy. In elaborating Simmel's ideas via the sociology of Max Weber, Schütz did not just develop an abstract phenomenological description of human sociability as is often assumed by contemporary critics. The basic ideas of his book were developed in a proliferating and politically embattled phase of Austrian inter-war democracy which is the every-day life experience of society and social order which Schütz translates into theoretical (second order) concepts. "Der sinnhafte Aufbau" can, therefore, be read as a fully-fledged theory of modern democratic society which puts personal human existence and – to take a phrase of Schütz's friend Eric Voegelin – its "existential representation" in every-day life center-stage. The democratic experience which is already present in Simmel's late sociology – symbolized by the fact of the thou – and its sociological articulation by Schütz is still a highly relevant insight and starting point for sociologies which claim to conceptualize democratic society and to distinguish it from other types of societies. Simmel's basic insight to take the reality and only partial accessibility of the other as a starting point of social theory, is not only a linchpin for Schütz, but also for Eric Voegelin and his conception of order (and disorder) in history and, last not least, for Parsons's idea of the social system. As a consequence, Schütz is presented as a

political thinker who defends democracy in the turmoil of Austrian interwar society; in addition, Voegelin and Parsons should not be classified as conservative intellectuals, but as researchers who had a clear vision of modern (democratic) society.

Michael Thompson, David Ciepley, Jim Block

[PANEL: The Challenge of Transformation in an Age of Reaction](#)

Radicals and progressives today should be under no illusions that the political initiative resides in the forces of reaction. Despite the temptations to quietism, this panel will insist on the value of a probing analysis of this drift as the foundation for shaping the role that the forces of transformation can and must now play. In our analysis, buttressed by the recent writings of Piketty and Lilla among others, there is a deep cleavage in the reactionary project between the powers of universalizing neoliberal globalism and those demanding the reinstatement of localist privilege and license. Both forces are profoundly elitist and inegalitarian, bent on control and domination through the takeover of power and the repression of popular movements for change and empowerment. At the same time, their projects of global centralization and localist control are profoundly incommensurable, and each moreover gains renewed determination through opposition to the other.

Given that the result of this global contestation is a commandeering of the discourses of both universalism and local empowerment, and moreover a joint assault from opposite ends on state and national structures as repositories of reform and social amelioration, those committed to a politics of justice and transformation must rethink their strategies and agendas for change. Where are the agents of change likely to emerge? What political and social structures can and should they call upon in the projects of resistance and change? How will these strategies and agendas need to adjust as these diametrically opposed forces of reaction engage in a take-no-prisoners struggle for control? What should the balance be between long term strategizing and holding actions and amelioration as the people of the world come to see the depredations that will accelerate at every level of social and moral life? The papers in this panel are not meant to offer a single perspective or project but rather to encourage a discussion and working meeting on the issues before us.

Michael J. Thompson

[From Nihilism to Ethical Life: Toward a Radical Double Movement](#)

Abstract: Modern societies have been racked in recent decades by the expansion of market mechanisms and the atomization of public life. The deterioration of social bonds has led to a kind of ethical nihilism that traps individuals in their own particularity and erodes the imagination requisite for social transformation. What we have witnessed as a response to these shifts has been a rightward movement toward identity, toward the group and to a will to power to secure an increasingly insecure sense of meaning and belonging. Neoliberalism's project of marketizing society has led to reaction and resentment. But what we see as the

"market model" is really more the emergence of a society of instrumentality and administration, one that can be disrupted only by turning to a richer, more compelling theory of democracy as social interdependence and a sociality of mutual reciprocity that is already existent in many ways in modern capitalism. Only by turning to a post-liberal conception of democratic life will a new energy be unleashed. I propose to sketch what the sociological and anthropological features of such a democratic form of life would look like, but only after also sketching the forces arrayed against it: of technological control, reification, alienation and nihilism. A new sense of meaning and value will only come about when we turn from this status quo and inquire into the potentialities inherent in alternative social arrangements.

David Ciepley

[The Corporate Economy under Neoliberalism and "Populism": "System," or the return of discretionary rule?](#)

The antithesis of capitalism and socialism is outdated wherever economies are corporatized. In corporations, as in states, all property is owned by an abstract legal entity. That is to say, a corporate economy socializes capital, but at the level of the firm (thus combining socialistic and capitalistic traits). Furthermore, the corporate firm is a public-private hybrid, with a legal entity and board authority granted by the state (a "socialistic" trait), but privately financed, staffed, and operated (a capitalistic trait). States charter corporations. But the relationship between states and corporations (or rather, between their human agents) is inherently unstable. Each wishes to bend the other to its own ends. The postwar strategy of maintaining a productive counterpoise between them as "countervailing powers" becomes untenable under neoliberal policies. These policies generate a corporately-based plutocratic class, whether through "shock therapy" or simply through rentier accumulation under "shareholder primacy" and slashed tax rates. This class does not accept the status quo, but moves to consolidate its position. Either these agents of the corporation will dominate the state (as in the United States), or the state's agents will, in reaction, dominate the corporation (Russia; Hungary). Both outcomes sideline democracy, even if the façade is retained. But this does not bring "system." However much "servo-mechanisms" and "algorithmic governance" may characterize the new governance of the masses, in the commanding heights of political-economic governance, the breaching of the "rule of law" wall between state and corporation entails the return of discretionary rule, the antithesis of "system" and the bane of republican theory

Jim Block

[Pockets of Possibility: Beyond the fragmented Nation](#)

American social science has in its heyday shown two faces of the U.S. to the world: the photo shopped image of national consensus and the pseudo-scientific mechanism of an aggregated collective of atomized – however pacified – constituents. The premise of consensus was that, with sufficient rewards and enforceable limits to concentrations of power, the atoms would all

rush performatively on tracks like amuse park go-carts and, whatever they were thinking (if they were), social science could christen the mass conformity as unity.

With the accession of rightward power in the form of global neoliberalism and retrenching local authoritarian populism, vast concentrations of power, rapidly declining rewards, amusement park courses dismantled, vast ignored cleavages in the aggregate now open as mortal wounds spilling life from the body politic. Elite control of institutions with their minions of supplicants and enforcers on one hand, massive pockets of resisters to the accelerating domination on the other, means that the increasing nullification of laws and norms and established practices will migrate from the elites into everyday social activity: abortion controls vs. abortion rights, voter suppression vs. inclusion, corporate supplication vs. resistance, gun control vs. gun proliferation, treatment of immigrant, women, minorities, gender empowerment, and on to every other issue of health, power and well-being.

The result is tending toward growing networks and patchworks of enclaves – each in a defensive shell of self-governing communities practicing its divergent system of meaning and faith. Latter Day Saints, Harlem, the Big Easy, communes, Southern racist parishes, New England towns, are the seedlings of what is to come: a time of apparent regress, a dissolution within a national collective that could not hold together, but also a time of endless possibility to preach and practice vision, new forms of theory and practice, integrating survival and promise. Are we ready?

Shann C. S. Turnbull

[What defines capitalism? What is wrong with it and how to fix it](#)

Economists have neglected the nature of property rights as a policy variable for mitigating the inefficiencies, inequities and un-sustainability of capitalism. Ecological property rights are described that provide a way for introducing prosperity without growth to sustain both society and the environment.

Stephen Turner

[Liberalism and the Administrative State](#)

We can distinguish two ways in which people have come to talk about “threats to democracy.” When the Left discusses threats to democracy today, what is meant is the threat to the democratic power to act through the state posed by neo-liberalism and populist rejections of state initiatives. The fear of neo-liberalism is rooted in an understanding of it as the politically sanctioned abandonment of the power of the state to protect people from the undesirable outcomes of the market and to bring about social justice. This power is further considered to be threatened by unenlightened voters, so there is a related threat to the institutions, such as the press, whose role is taken to be the enlightened defense of government and the pursuit of social justice against skeptics and critics, who are taken to be dupes of forces of bigotry, racism, sexism, and hatred, whose role in liberal discussion needs to be suppressed.

The paradox here is that the exercise of democratic power through the administrative state works to undermine democratic power itself. This presents a major challenge for liberalism, because liberalism in the sense of government by discussion assumes that there are more or less direct effects of democratic decisions, informed feedback, and so forth. The administrative state, however, as a means, mystifies and obscures the processes of decision, and substitutes its own expertise and its own processes for democratic discussion.

In this chapter I will discuss the mechanisms of the administrative state, not primarily with reference to the legal issues with administrative law, a theme well developed by Phillip Hamburger and others in the recent literature, but with the practical aspects of the administrative state as a parallel political order to liberalism within the structure of nominally liberal forms of representative government, with an emphasis on the undermining of political neutrality and the acquiescence of particular groups, especially elites, in a system which has output legitimacy for them, and the relation of democratically controlled levels of government, such as cities, to administrative power. These issues are far from being merely organizational. Concern over the rise in discretionary bureaucratic power has long been a theme of liberal thought, and the issues here run deep: the relation between law and justice, input and output legitimacy, the possibility of a democratic liberal state in the face of complexity and the need for expertise, and many related issues.

Many of these issues relate to problems of knowledge. The traditional solution of oversight by ordinary courts runs into the problem that the knowledge that is employed in decision-making is not ordinary knowledge. Courts have traditionally deferred in such cases to experts or expertized bureaucracies, but even if they did not, they could not make sound decisions or generate precedents which conformed to traditional rule of law standards. In practice they have limited themselves to procedural matters, with bizarre results. This suggests that there are fundamental limits to the rule of law in “knowledge societies” with expansive state powers.

Esther de Weger, Natascha van Vooren, Katrien Luijkx, Hanneke Drewes,
Caroline Baan

[Searching for new community engagement approaches in the Netherlands](#)

Background: 'Meaningful' community engagement (CE) is thought to improve healthcare systems and to increase communities' involvement in the shaping of their own communities. The aim of this paper presentation is to describe how 'community engagement' (CE) is understood and being operationalized in the decentralized Dutch healthcare system by investigating the different types of CE approaches being implemented in six different regions and by examining citizens' and professionals' experiences of those approaches.

Methods: A realist qualitative study was conducted. Interviews and focus groups were held with citizens (16) and professionals (42) involved in CE approaches in the six regions. Observations of CE-related activities were held to supplement interview data.

Results: This study shows that citizens and professionals defined and experienced CE differently and that they differed in who they felt had ownership of CE. The CE approaches implemented in community-led initiatives and organisationally-led initiatives varied accordingly. Furthermore, both citizens and professionals were searching for meaningful ways for citizens to have more control over healthcare in their own communities.

Conclusions: Communities and organisations were exploring how to adapt to the changes brought on by a newly decentralised system and the related 'participation society'. CE can be improved by, first of all, developing a shared and overarching vision of what CE should look like, establishing clear roles and remits for organisations and communities, and taking active measures to ensure CE is more inclusive and representative of harder-to-reach groups.

Frank Welz

Two Forms of "Systems": Social Theory as Social Practice

My paper contrasts the totality thinking of Adorno and Luhmann's systems theory. In epistemological regard, Adorno claims there is no ultimate "first" while Luhmann introduces the idea that theories are based on distinctions, originally drawn by their authors. In ontological regard, the comparison proves the exact opposite. Adorno conceptualizes the preponderance of the object, society, while Luhmann states that science refers to objects that do not exist (Luhmann 1990: 327). Consequently, the former one invites to criticize the existing (historical) society whereas the latter motivates to accept a scientifically outlined multiplicity of possible worlds. Finally, I will claim that the shift from the earlier one to the later form of "systems" thinking corresponds to the historical change from the Keynesian welfare state to the neoliberal capitalism of the 1980s onward.

Krešimir Žažar

From the dominance of critical paradigm towards 'yet-unaware positivism' – overview of general tendencies in developments of social theory in Croatia

The paper provides a reconstruction of general tendencies in the transformation of social theory in Croatia in the last several decades (since the 1960's). The overview of shifts in the domain of ideas is examined in relation to the profound structural societal upheaval that this society has undergone. The starting point of the analysis are the 1960s, when a specific type of Marxian thought represented the most influential theoretical position. As former Yugoslavia (and Croatia as part of it) was a socialist country, it is not surprising that the Marxian thought was the leading intellectual frame, since it corresponded to the nominally proclaimed value system. However, far from being a dogmatic teaching, the mentioned type of Marxism represented a vibrant theoretical position developed by a group of intellectuals gathered around the journal 'Praxis'. The axial premises of the so-called 'praxis philosophy' were anchored in the early works of K. Marx and share multiple common attributes with the critical theory. The exchange of ideas between the proponents of 'praxis philosophy' and the representatives of 'Frankfurt School' of critical theory was intensive and fruitful, as authors

like Marcuse and Habermas took part in the internationally renowned 'Korčula Summer School', a meeting annually organized by the 'Praxis' circle. Moreover, the works of the entire 'Frankfurt School' were intensely echoed, discussed and applied in Croatian intellectual and academic circles. Despite a certain dominance of critical theory, it should be emphasized that the social thought in Croatia was never mono-paradigmatic since other theoretical perspectives, for instance functionalism, structuralism etc., were present to a considerable degree as well. With the collapse of socialism and the instalment of the liberal-democratic societal system, critical theory lost its centrality and has been barely preserved as an intellectual tradition, and is only advocated by very few proponents today. During the 1990's and to a certain degree in the 2000's the dominance of the 'democratic transition model' can be obviously detected. This approach was imported from political science as an explanation tool for social processes and social phenomena during the so called 'democratic transition' period, but it was generally applied almost entirely uncritically, i.e. without the necessary reflective rigor, so its usage is of doubtful analytical merits. When considering current tendencies, specifically in the field of sociology, a wide multi-perspectiveness of theoretical paradigms and methodological approaches is apparent. However - and this is one of the crucial thesis claimed in the paper - there is a lack of serious theoretical discussions and advancement of theories in the general sense. Namely, a theory in current sociological researches conducted in numerous subspecialized (empirical) fields is often given only secondary relevance, while pivotal emphasis is on empirical data. Such tendency can be conceived as a type of 'yet-unaware positivism', i.e. taking positivistic position without being aware of that. When analysing developments in social theory, it is extraordinarily interesting to notice that the (social) systems theory has been of marginal importance, both in the past and today. This continuous weaker reception is something that requires proper explanation. The final segment of the paper is reserved for the discussion about which theoretical approach is the most appropriate and heuristically fruitful one for interpreting phenomena and processes unfolding in present day Croatia. Critical theory and systems theory are especially scrutinized with respect to the latter issue. Finally, an urgent need for the development of an adequate specific theoretical position capable of explaining particular features of contemporary Croatian society situated in the European semi-periphery is underlined.

Angelo Zotti

Models of social systems. How can they be recognized?

Starting from the thesis that a social system is determined by a set of social actions whose content, goals, effects are very similar, we assume a social system as a result of multiplication of similar social conducts and, at the same time, of interactions between social actors. We assume that in the social life we can find different types of social systems characterized by a specific interplay between their real structure, deep nature and latent or claimed functions. This is an approach to the study of systems which emphasizes the general properties of goal-seeking systems. Using different categories of structure, nature, functions and focusing on the

fundamental theme of social change, we try to analyze different kinds of systems, their specificity, their possible evolution over the time, and their collective identity.

The purpose of this study is to provide an heuristic model aimed at assessing and verifying the existence of different systems in different areas of social life (especially with respect for different forms of legal systems and judicial culture) and, eventually, in cultural products (e.g. social life depicted in a novel or in a film!).

We are going to use in this analysis three ideal-types of systems, called in the following way, 'tridimensional systems', 'multidimensional systems', 'one-dimensional systems'.

Tridimensional systems:

In this kind of social organization social action tends to be affective and emotional. Every actor follows his own rule and is unwilling to observe social and low norms that could restrict its capacity of free action. Multiplying this sort of personal attitude leads to a chaotic and entropic social system. Nobody accepts State's authority and state's apparatus operates in the same way. Institutions responsible for monitoring don't provide a real social control. Also political, administrative and law sub-systems seem act in an expressive way. They have very often an highly ideological view. The primacy of emotions and of intellectual and ideological approach to social life generate general adaptation. Nevertheless this kind of social system maintains balance and doesn't run effectively toward self-destruct. This is because of tendency to start morphogenetic process. We mean something like a biological process that causes an organism to develop incessantly its shape. System's vital energies is implied in this continued transformations of inner structure. For example through polemical attitude toward social facts, or through attempts to reform legal sub-systems. The system is generally inert: it tends to reproduce itself over the time in the same way. There is not an evolutionary process. The structure is composed by large group (i.e. sub-systems) that are formed accidentally, on the basis of a spontaneous and adaptive inclusion process.

Multi-dimensional systems: the network:

In these systems social action is goal-oriented. System's rationality is instrumental one. System's structure is generally a network. The whole system is composed by parts. What do we mean here for structure is a set or group of interrelated elements where a change in one part would affect some or all of the others parts. We argue that these parts are the social roles (Professional bodies, different kind of association, for example)

Every part and every role performs a specific functions. The system's nature is prevalently economic one. The system is moving back and forth. It depends on the general and individual interest. There is an utilitarian approach to life. Systems are linked to their environment by interconnections between set of roles. The system's balance is guaranteed by contractual relationship.

One-dimensional systems: the microcosm:

This system resembles a little, close social word. It is like a microcosm (i.e. beehive). The system represents a perfect community. This derives by spread of a specific way to act: the traditional action. Every actor tends to observe scrupulously social norms, traditions and customs. Social life is ruled by norms. We argue that there is a sort of perfect socialization. We mean, there is an real identity between personal motives to act, the ratio legis and social chances offered to actors.

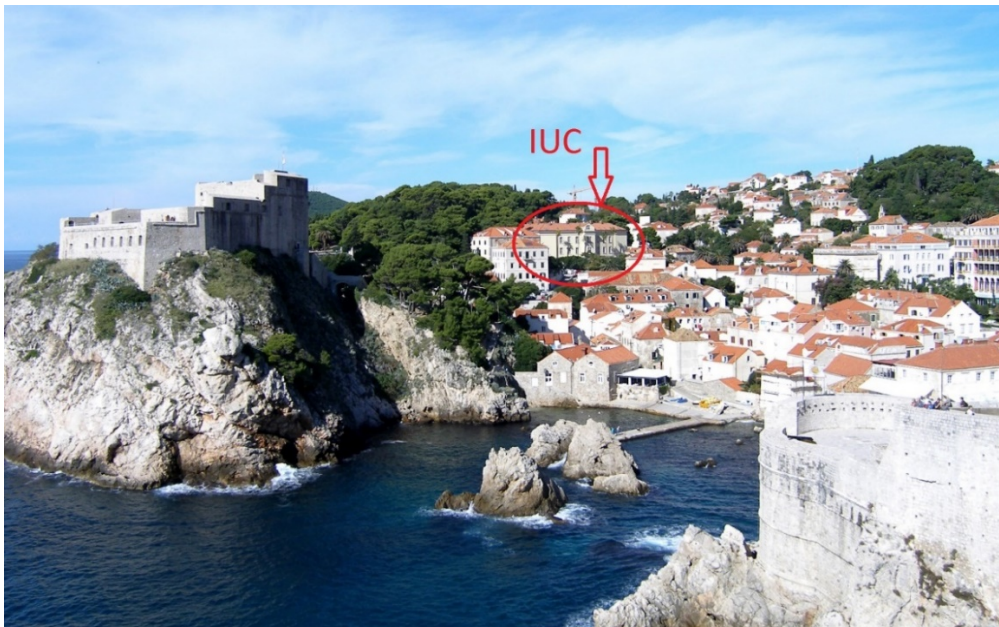
The system is naturally in balance. Its functions is to maintain this kind of order and to perpetuate it over the time.

Inside the system we can find groups (in-group) just as in external environmental we can imagine very different social realities (out-groups). System's identity is built upon this ongoing comparison between their own nature and other's system perceived nature. The true nature of one-dimensional social life is symbolic. Every way to act and every material objects could 'say' something about our social or economic status, our view of life.

Venue and Travel information

Workshop Venue

The workshop will take place at the Inter University Center Dubrovnik (IUC), which is located in the vicinity of the Dubrovnik historical center, at the address Don Frana Bulića 4.



<https://indico.cern.ch/event/795581/page 1>

The building, originally a school constructed in the first years of the 20th century, is renovated to provide a meeting place for international courses, meetings, workshops and conferences. In the attic of the building there is dormitory where a limited number of rooms are booked for the Workshop participants.



<https://indico.cern.ch/event/795581/page/2>

Travel information

Getting from Dubrovnik Airport to the Conference venue

Dubrovnik airport is located about 20km from the city centre. There is a regular airport shuttle bus service connecting Dubrovnik airport to the city. A bus will leave the airport shortly after each flight arrival. It goes to the Dubrovnik Bus Terminal, but it will stop first at the "Pile" gate in front of Dubrovnik's old town, very close to the IUC.

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