

Conference aim

“If the ruling class has lost consensus, that is, if it no longer ‘leads’ but only ‘rules’ — it possesses sheer coercive power — this actually means that the great masses have become detached from traditional ideologies, they no longer believe what they previously used to believe, etc. The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum, morbid phenomena of the most varied kind come to pass.”¹

Europe is facing a crisis of democracy. Anti-pluralist stances, racism and social inequality are increasing and it seems right to speak of a great regression². The crisis is further enhanced by the fact that the establishment seems to struggle in finding answers to these phenomena let alone strategies to tackle them. Furthermore, decision makers seem not able to sufficiently cope with a globalized world, neoliberal rigour and the ‘fear’ of ‘the citizens’ — or at least not able to convey the electorate that they do so. Instead, in order to retain power Europe’s leaders increasingly turn to nationalist coalition partners and switch to anti-migrant rhetoric themselves.

The conference uses Antonio Gramsci’s concept of interregnum as a metaphor for the current state of Europe and the EU and as a start to think about the future of Europe. Hence the aim of the conference is: to take the current state of Europe as a start to elaborate on what can be ‘the new’ for Europe. The conference aims at thinking beyond the interregnum, towards a future political, social, legal and economic architecture for Europe.

Scholars have recently proposed different economic, political and legal reforms regarding the European Union. We invite participants to address recent discussions, but also to think beyond the EU, discussing inner European and global power relations, from a post-colonial and post-socialist perspective. Furthermore, we invite participants to engage with the research topics listed below from a theoretical and/or empirical standpoint.

¹ Gramsci, Antonio (1996): Prison Notebooks. Volume II. New York: Columbia University Press. Ed. and transl. by Joseph A. Buttigieg.

² Geiselberger, Heinrich (2017): Die große Regression. Eine internationale Debatte über die geistige Situation der Zeit. Berlin: Suhrkamp

Potential research topics

European democracy

- > Transnationalisation, regionalisation, localisation and the European democratic processes
- > New forms of political participation (digitalisation, culture & protest)
- > The crisis of the European left
- > ‘Shifts’ in democratic organisation (actors, movements, crisis of mobilization)
- > Legal and financial aspects of a future European polity and democracy

Socio-economic opportunities and challenges

- > The concept of European welfare
- > Analysing precarisation in Europe
- > Gendered and racialized aspects of labour and welfare in the European context
- > Current ‘weakness’ of labour

Within and without Europe

- > Current economic inequalities and dependencies within and without Europe
- > Fidesz, AfD and PiS – Post-socialist aspects of current nationalist shifts
- > Current and future aspects of European enlargement

Words do matter

- > Reconfiguring ‘Europe’ — shifts in mainstream discourses on the EU
- > Dominant discourses (anti-migrants, anti-LGBTIQ and anti-gender), intersections counter discourses in European politics
- > Beyond national discourses — is a European public sphere possible?

We especially invite PhD candidates and junior scholars to send abstracts (300-500 words) **by 31. October 2018**. We are able to provide financial support (for travel and accommodation) for participants — favouring those with currently no institutional affiliation. If you are in need of financial support, please e-mail in addition to your abstract a budget plan and a short recommendation from your supervisor. Selected participants will be informed during September 2018. The possibility of publishing presented papers will be discussed at the conference.

Venue

Danube University Krems
Dr.-Karl-Dorrek-Straße 30
3500 Krems, Austria

Organiser

Department for European Policy and the Study
of Democracy; Univ.-Prof. Dr. Ulrike Guérot

E-Mail abstracts to:

conference.ded@donau-uni.ac.at, subject “Interregnum”