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Pre-Conference Workshops

The Neoliberal University is Ill: What Possibilities for Change?

Pre-Conference Workshop by Luca P. Vecchio[1], Matteo Antonini[2], Chiara Corvino[2], Laura Galuppo[2], Mara Gorli[2]

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The title of this pre-workshop is intentionally provocative and may appear overly simplistic. Nevertheless, it reflects a widespread and growing sense of malaise increasingly articulated by academic workers – particularly early-career researchers – when recounting their experiences within contemporary universities. Pervasive uncertainty about the future, employment precariousness, intensified competition, escalating pressures to produce ever more outputs at an ever-faster pace under the logic of publish or perish, and the erosion of professional autonomy are key features of the neoliberal academy. These conditions are closely linked to the deterioration of workers' well-being and mental health, manifested in rising levels of anxiety, depression, and negative emotional states. How have such values and working conditions come to be normalized and institutionalized within academic organizations? More importantly, how might it be possible to intervene in order to transform these pathological workplaces and to foster health, rather than distress, within the university? This full day pre-conference workshop proposes a non-conventional approach to these questions, starting from the lived experiences of participants themselves. Rather than imposing predefined themes, the workshop invites participants to collectively bring into focus the main issues, tensions, and contradictions they experience in their everyday academic lives within what is often perceived as a "sick" university. Building on this shared exploration, the workshop will then move toward a critical reflection on possible avenues for action and change through the method of process consultation (Schein, 2000). Process consultation is typically applied in organizations by external consultants to support improvement and change. During the workshop, it will be used to analyze the internal problems of the Neoliberal University. The focus is on understanding internal dynamics and processes rather than providing predefined solutions. Particular attention will be paid to collective—rather than exclusively individual—forms of response, resistance, and transformation. Overall, the workshop seeks to create a shared space to introduce process consultation as a possible method for critically addressing the conditions of work in the neoliberal academy and for promoting organizational change.

De-Neoliberalizing the Subject: Workshopping a Practice- and Arts-based Approach to Critical Self-making

Pre-Conference Workshop by Nilima Chowdhury[1]

[1] University of Lausanne, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Numerous empirical studies have traced the contours and everyday practices of neoliberal selfhood. The neoliberal self is an entrepreneurial subject and purposefully cultivates a range of psychological qualities such as positivity, flexibility, busy-ness, resilience, personal initiative, and self-confidence. However, this constant work on the self also produces an anxious, insecure subject whose biggest fear is to be left behind because they are never "good enough". The promise of the 'good life' and the fear of failing together act as affective fuel for the production and persistence of neoliberal self-making practices. Thus, collectively developing new self-practices necessitates a methodology that (at least temporarily) disconnects us from these affective pulls and pushes, a methodology that engages the whole, embodied person: their identities, self-narratives, values, and fundamental connectedness. In this workshop entitled "The Game of Sayn", I invite participants to playfully experiment with ways of de-neoliberalizing ourselves. We will use arts-based tools and methods – narrative, performance, voice/ sound – underpinned by a critical psychological perspective to explore various dimensions of being-in-the-world affected and shaped by the dominant neoliberal logic, e.g., time/ temporality, embodiment/ corporeality, and relationality. Sayn is a term I coined to denote ways of being that are devalued or undermined by neoliberal capitalism: community, connection, resonance, ambiguity, playing 'the long game', practices of care. There are no pre-defined outcomes in The Game of Sayn; it is an attempt to re-capture 'sayn spaces' in the everyday.

Keynotes

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished - Conceptions, Contestations, and Contradictions of Critical Applied Psychology

Keynote by Severin Hornung[1]

[1] Universität Innsbruck, Austria

Emergence of the critical paradigm in applied psychology is dialectically analyzed, making the case for a reinvigorated approach more focused on the radical structuralist critique of the political economy, yet also more integrative with regard to allied critical social sciences. The socio-critical stream in work and organizational psychology established within the last decade is argued to be constrained by its disciplinary and topical boundaries as well as internal rifts and breaking points. Extending its foundations towards critical applied psychology more broadly includes political, environmental, community, educational, health, and clinical subfields. Further, this repositioning aims to intensify interdisciplinary cooperation with critical streams in sociology, political science, management and organization studies, human geography, anthropology, and allied social sciences. Drawing on metatheory of social science paradigms, conceptions of critical work and organizational psychology are reviewed and generalized to applied psychology. Suggested general definitional features are socio-critical, dialectical, deconstructionist, self-reflexive, emancipatory, and radical humanist. Major disciplinary influences of critical social theory, critical psychologies, and critical management studies are noted. Based on this conceptualization, contestations of the mainstream are reviewed. Contradictions of the critical paradigm are analyzed as pragmatic paradoxes of inclusion-exclusion (diversity vs. alignment), reform-transformation (micro- vs. macro-emancipation), continuity-disruption (reproduction vs. counterhegemony), and recognition-prefiguration (results vs. process). Associated struggles are analyzed as external (centripetal) and internal (centrifugal) force fields of stabilizing and disintegrating tendencies, comprising both paradigmatic (substantive) and political (interest-guided) components. For instance, tensions are seen in pseudo-antagonistic power-dependence relationships with the mainstream (e.g., funding, careers, publication opportunities) and unacknowledged internal reproduction of external pressures (e.g., micro-politics, power struggles). These tendencies can be interpreted in the sense of the “iron law of oligarchy”, haunting alternative organizations in ideologically hostile environments. Possible trajectories comprise assimilation, fragmentation, consolidation, and dissemination of the critical paradigm. Discussed are action strategies to extend the impact and survival of critical applied psychology in the context of increasing political pressure and austerity in an era of socio-ecological and political-economic polycrisis.

BIO

Severin Hornung is professor of applied psychology at the University of Innsbruck focusing on social-ecological responsibility and sustainability in work, economy, and society. He is a co-founder of the and the local Innsbruck Group on Critical Research in Work and Organizational Psychology (I-CROP) and the international network for the Future of Work and Organizational Psychology (FoWOP). His research interests include the neoliberal degradation and envisioned socio-ecological transformation of work, organizations, and society in the era of polycrisis, emphasizing issues of power, ideology, inequality, justice, and ethics.

The Critic and the Unconscious: Exploring the Work of Critique, the Critique of Work, and the Working-Through of the Critic in (and of) Applied Psychology

Keynote by Nathan Gerard[1]

[1] California State University Long Beach, USA

What does it mean to welcome the unconscious into what we do as critics of psychology? If one of the calls for this conference is for us critical comrades to "freely associate," a term taking directly from psychoanalysis, what does it mean to not just associate freely, or to say whatever comes to mind in the presence of another, but also live and relate, and even organize and disorganize freely? Might we use the exchanges on offer here to prove to ourselves that the identities and structures we stubbornly rely on—our disciplinary training and institutional affiliations—are not always required to create something new? Or might we need something more radical, something entirely grassroots and free from the institution, free even from our professional selves, to invite transformation and surprise? The unconscious, of course, surprises. This talk will explore the surprises of the unconscious in the work of critique, the critique of work, and ultimately the prospects of working together amid relations of domination and subordination and the urgent need for a wider coalition of collaboration and solidarity on the Left.

BIO

Nathan Gerard is an organizational psychologist and full professor at California State University, Long Beach, where he teaches and conducts research at the intersection of psychoanalysis, work, and organizations. He is also a research associate at the Center for Psychosocial Organization Studies. He is the author, most recently, of Winnicott and Labor's Eclipse of Life: Work is Where We Start From (Routledge, 2023) and co-editor of the Handbook of Critical Work and Organizational Psychology (Edward Elgar, 2026). In addition to maintaining an engagement with the conceptual and historical foundations of organizational psychology, Nathan also applies psychoanalytic theory to politics, education, and health and social care.

Feminist, Engaged, and Response-Able Ways of Writing and Interacting with the Field in Critical Organization Studies

Keynote by Anna Carreri[1]

[1] University of Verona, Italy

Drawing on a post-qualitative perspective that embraces concepts as method and proceeding through a rhizomatic approach, this contribution offers an initial theoretical elaboration of two emergent and still-becoming concepts for thinking about research and academic life: engagement and response-ability. These concepts are approached through a feminist sensibility and are understood as active forces and practices that create orientations for thinking differently beyond Cartesian epistemology, opening alternative possibilities for how we conduct research within critical organization and work studies. Rethinking engagement and response-ability across the multiple space-times of academic life, particularly in a historical moment profoundly marked by violence, releases their transformative potential while creating space for epistemic plurality. In doing so, these concepts raise a series of interconnected questions that span field encounters with vulnerable people; relationships with students and colleagues; engagements with productive sectors and communities; as well as our conversations with the writings of other scholars and the very practices through which scientific and public-oriented knowledge is written and circulated.

BIO

Anna Carreri is Associate Professor in Sociology of Work and Organization at the University of Verona, Italy. At the same University she is coordinator and co-founder of the Research Centre RE-WOrk: Researching for Remaking Work and Organizing, leading collaborative research projects with stakeholders and the community on work and organizational cultures, (alternative) forms of organizing social reproduction, and gender and diversity issues. She is also affiliated with the School of Social Sciences, at Hasselt University in Belgium, and associate member of CWOS-Centre for Work, Organization and Society, Essex Business School, UK. Her work is informed by a continuing concern with the ethics and practices of research. In this area, she recently co-edited, with Michela Cozza and Barbara Poggio, the volume Ethics of Engagement in Research Practices: Response-ability in Organisation and Management (Routledge, 2025).

On Shaky, Unequal Grounds: A Psychology of Crisis

Keynote by Franziska Kößler[1]

[1] Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany

The term polycrisis has entered public discourse and scientific literature to describe interacting, linked, and cascading crises. Over the last two decades, such crises have affected societies, organizations, and individuals with increasing visibility. Common individual responses have been to increase financial security, invest in insurance, and strengthen protective measures. While understandable, these responses rarely address the structural causes of crisis. Worse, they may intensify competition over already scarce resources. Neither polycrises nor struggles over resources are new. What is equally old is the pattern that crises hit those with the least power and resources hardest. This keynote develops a critical psychology perspective on crisis by examining how work and organizations create, distribute, and stabilize unequal vulnerabilities. It starts from a materialist perspective on the theft of economic power, introduced through the narrative structure of a true crime story. From there, it turns to the employment–health dilemma: a situation in which workers with restricted job choices must choose between accepting health-threatening work and risking economic insecurity. This dilemma also offers opportunities for critical reflection on the field of Work and Organizational Psychology which has often centered those privileged enough to choose between attractive jobs, while paying less attention to those whose choices are constrained by qualification, migration status, care responsibilities, or economic necessity. The keynote then extends this perspective to two application fields – algorithmic management and migration. As highlighted by boundary violations, workers are increasingly monitored, controlled, and disciplined by algorithms. When these invisible managers act in the context of precarious employment, workers frequently seem to push themselves voluntarily beyond physical, psychological, and value-based limits. Additionally, the keynote examines how crisis dynamics intersect with migration, diversity, and marginalization. Evidence from temporary agency work shows how job insecurity changes emotional responses to workplace incivility, weakening anger and strengthening sadness. Findings from retail workers further illustrate how social stressors and resources can interact in complex and sometimes counterintuitive ways with minority status. Together, these examples show that crises are not merely external shocks to organizations. They are also produced, normalized, and reproduced through everyday work arrangements. The keynote concludes by asking what role Work and Organizational Psychology can play in resolving or ameliorating polycrisis. Going back to the starting point (i.e., the theft of economic power), the keynote questions the apolitical norm of psychology, calling for a reflective stance that allows us to confront power and inequalities in workplaces.

BIO

Franziska J. Kößler is an assistant professor for ‘Psychology, in particular the Transformation of the World of Work’ at Leuphana University Lunenburg. In line with her PhD on migration and work-related health, her research interests include social inequalities, work-related health, and economic stressors. She has been a member of several international collaborations (e.g., the Future of Work and Organizational Psychology), won grants (e.g., by the German Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Federal Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) that allowed her to follow her research interests, and advocates for equality (e.g., as liaison professor at Hans-Böckler Foundation).

Capitalist Exploitation From the Standpoint of the Subject: The Labour-Nature-Society Nexus Reflected With Critical Psychology

Keynote by Stefanie Hürtgen[1]

[1] University of Salzburg, Austria; Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, Germany

Critical Psychology emphasis that, in order to analyze capitalist societies, we must adopt the analytical "standpoint of the subject". This is to understand why and how the exploited and suppressed contribute, through their everyday practices and orientations, to the creation and reproduction of the very structures that humiliate and endanger them – and how on the other side collective and transformative agency can be conceived. In the keynote, I want to bring this claim together with geographical concepts and those coming from sociology and critical political economy to discuss the socio-ecological catastrophe that we risk running into. I will give some theoretical and empirical reflections on current exhaustive forms of labor's and nature's capitalist exploitation, and how they are related. One overall thesis is that we face not only ecological but also social tipping points. To encounter them, the "standpoint of the subjects" must be strengthened, both analytically and politically, not least to change our understanding of what "the ecological" means and how it is related to living labor.

BIO

Stefanie Hürtgen is from East Berlin and, following the so-called "Wende," was longtime active in political and trade union education. Today, she works as an associate professor of geography and sociology at the University of Salzburg and is a permanent fellow at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. There, she is currently leading a project on global battery production networks. Her research focuses on labor geography and labor agency, the transnationalization of labor and (re)production, and the crisis of society's relationship with nature.

Dialectical Methodological Critique of Applied Psychology

Keynote by Ian Parker[1]

[1] Discourse Unit; University of Leicester, UK

Critical applied psychology opens up the potential for collective self-transformation, for constructing a different kind of subjectivity in another world beyond heteropatriarchal capitalism. However, this paper will focus on psychology as a problem from the standpoint of Marxism. The critiques and the false paths raise two questions, about the historical nature of psychology and about the historical nature of Marxism. I will approach this task dialectically. I will begin by outlining underlying problems with psychology, the case against it, before turning to what is positive about it, to acknowledge why some people are for psychology, why they get involved studying and practising it.

BIO

Ian Parker is a psychoanalyst and Marxist, doing clinical work through the Red Clinic (https://www.redclinic.org/), and political work through Anti-Capitalist Resistance (https://anticapitalistresistance.org/) and academic work through the Discourse Unit (https://discourseunit.com/). His latest book is Stalinist Realism and Open Communism: Malignant Mirror or Free Association (https://resistancebooks.org/product/stalinist-realism-and-open-communism/)

Eco-Social Convergence in Europe: From Working-Class Environmentalism to Climate Justice

Keynote by Emanuele Leonardi[1]

[1] University of Bologna, Italy

The talk engages with the link between the social question and environmental issues in such a way that the two poles are not mutually exclusive but, rather, the latter entails an expansion of the former. In this context, Just Transition initially indicates a defensive posture in industrial relations. Subsequently, however, the encounter with Climate Justice provides it with 'new clothes', which enable a class-based perspective on the environmental crisis. The case-study of the GKN Factory Collective in Campi Bisenzio (Florence) will show how workers' knowledge and sustainability can eventually merge into a horizon of ecological transition from below.

BIO

Emanuele Leonardi is Assistant Professor in Sociology at the University of Bologna (Italy). His research interests include: climate justice movements and their critique of carbon trading; logics of exploitation in contemporary capitalism; working-class environmentalism. He is the editor (along with Luigi Pellizzoni and Viviana Asara) of the Handbook of Critical Environmental Politics (Elgar, 2022). His latest publication is Labour Nature Value. André Gorz between Marxism and Degrowth (Verso, 2026).

The New Authoritarian Personality: A Comparative Study of Germany and Brazil

Oral Presentation by David Jäger[1], Arthur Bueno[2]

[1] University of Passau, Germany
[2] University of Passau; Centre Marc Bloch Berlin, Germany

The rise of far-right populisms around the world has sparked debates about the emergence of a “new authoritarian personality” (Gandesha 2018, King 2021, Amlinger/Nachtwey 2022). While these movements share common traits, they exhibit notable variations, especially between the Global North and Global South (Pinheiro-Machado/Vargas-Maia 2023). These variations challenge the assumption that a uniform set of socio-psychological structures underpins their emergence across different contexts. Building on our quantitative and qualitative studies of Germany and Brazil (Bueno 2021, Jäger 2022), this paper compares authoritarian tendencies in both contexts, exploring their similarities and differences. In both countries, we observe the intertwining of neoliberal concepts of freedom with new authoritarian attitudes. Across both cases, authoritarian attitudes are closely linked to neoliberal modes of subjectivation shaped by work, performance, and self-responsibilization. However, the form this phenomenon takes and its position within the political spectrum differ significantly. In Germany, two distinct groups emerge: one characterized by explicitly reactionary forms of authority, and another by a novel libertarian authoritarianism that opposes reactionary elements. In contrast, Bolsonaro’s election in Brazil saw the combination of reactionary and libertarian conceptions into a single movement. Although Bolsonarism is a heterogeneous coalition of political groups (Rocha 2019, Nunes 2020), these factions found enough common ground to unite. To account for the similarities and differences between Germany and Brazil, we propose a modular and dynamic concept of the new authoritarian personality. In dialogue with Critical Theory’s classical arguments (Jäger 2020, Bueno 2024), we define it through core socio-psychological structures—distinct from the ‘old’ authoritarian personality—that manifest differently across contexts.

Neoliberalism as a Myth? The Neoliberal Concept of »the Market« and the Right-Wing Extremist Concept of »the People«

Oral Presentation by Walter Ötsch[1]

[1] Johannes Kepler University of Linz, Hochschule für Gesellschaftsgestaltung Koblenz, Austria and Germany

Neoliberalism is a complex concept with many meanings. It cannot be defined as an economic paradigm because representatives of different paradigms have called themselves neoliberal, conducted research networks across paradigmatic boundaries, and collaborated in think tanks (Ötsch et al. 2018). The commonality of these people (mostly economists) lies on a categorical level: They use a common concept of »the market«, which is endowed with special properties. These can be derived from the writings of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich August von Hayek (Ötsch 2025). That leads to a number of peculiarities that point to an outside of scientific ways of thinking. Examples are: (1) The concept of »the market« violates conventional understandings of the relationship between part and whole in the concept of a system – the consequence is that »the market« can neither be verified nor falsified nor operationalized; (2) it is conceived as homogeneous and its apparent homogeneous opposite (a »non-market«, such as »the socialism« or »the state«) and assigned a binary code. (3) The term is used in different meanings that are not compatible with each other, e.g., to describe a real phenomenon, as a normative reference point, as a fictitious possibility (e.g. „counterfactual" historical narratives), as an institution-independent given social potentiality (e.g. for shock therapies in non-market economic orders) or as utopia. (3) »The market« is conceived as a field or as a process that is not limited by any other fields (e.g. by other subsystems in society) or processes (such as those of nature). It denotes a totality which, together with (2), has an immanent radicalization potential, which has historically manifested itself in the succession of people with reference to Mises, Hayek, or Milton Friedman (Slobodian 2025). These peculiarities lead to the thesis whether, for example, Hayek, in his critique of the Enlightenment, took a (historically) pre-scientific point of view, i.e. that of a mythical reasoning. Using the theories of myth developed by Ernst Cassirer (1997) and Kurt Hübner (1985) some parallels are shown using a table. The thesis is that both forms of myth, promoted by socially influential networks, relate to each other and together change society. In their overall effect, they have the potential both to destroy democracy and to thwart effective solutions to the impending climate catastrophe.

“Kiss up, Kick Down”: How Precarious Work and Implicit Power Motive Shape Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Voting Decision in Favor of Right-Wing Parties

Oral Presentation by Stefan Diestel[1], Filiz Meidrodt[1], Severin Hornung[2], Darlin Engstle[3], Wladislaw Rivkin[4]

[1] Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Germany
[2] University of Innsbruck, Austria
[3] Pinktum, Germany
[4] Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

In “The Loyal Subject”, the German writer Heinrich Mann characterizes a bourgeois philistine in Germany in the era before WW I. This aggressively conformist, submissive and opportunistic antiheroic character can be considered as a structural scheme for the authoritarian personality studied by Theodor W. Adorno (1950), who delineated a psychoanalytical explanation for the anticipatory obedience (“vorauseilender Gehorsam”) during National socialism. One core implication of Adorno’s studies is that the “authoritarian personality” would still exist even in liberal or democratic societies. After seventy-five years, right-wing populism, neo-fascist movements and chauvinistic ideologies do not only threaten democracies, but also transform whole constitutional institutions (e.g., USA). In the present study, we also draw on a metatheoretical psychological framework, Personality-System-Interaction Theory (Kuhl, 2001), to elaborate on how current societal discourses and working environments can “awaken” the “authoritarian personality” by influencing intrapsychic interactions that facilitate ideological infiltration and promote right-wing authoritarianism. In detail, we propose that neoliberal labor market policy, which facilitate precarious work in the working population, can reproduce authoritarian tendencies and foster right-wing parties. In a study during the German federal election in 2025 (N=271), we analyzed positive indirect effects of subjective precarious work (low income, job insecurity) (Time 1) on voting decision in favor of right-wing parties (i.e., AfD, 3. Way) (Time 4) via right-wing authoritarianism (Time 3). Since ideological self-infiltration via “stress” is modulated by fear of losing control, our analysis also includes implicit power motive that was measured by the Operant Motive Test and processed via large language modeling of the individual responses. Our results demonstrate that the positive indirect effects of precarious work on right-wing voting decision via right-wing authoritarianism was amplified as a function of implicit power motive. In other words, precarious work implies “power stress” (Fodor, 2010) that causes employees with higher power motive to internalize authoritarian worldviews and determines the interaction effect of precarious work and implicit power motive on right-wing authoritarianism. Our findings point to a significant societal risk potential of capitalist exploitation of labor force for democratic institutionalism.

How Did LGBTQIA+ Persons Experience the 2025 German Governmental Election? An Exploratory Qualitative Study on Political Anxiety

Oral Presentation by Vanessa Kulcar[1]

[1] University of Innsbruck, Austria

Individuals' lives are directly embedded in socio-political contexts, but not everyone is equally affected. Socio-political developments are particularly relevant for those marginalized, such as LGBTQIA+ persons, whose rights and security are often not guaranteed. As such, they are especially vulnerable to the emotional consequences of political events like elections. With right-wing parties that often question minority rights on the rise in Europe, insights into how minorities in Europe psychologically react to these developments are needed. This exploratory qualitative study investigated the subjective experiences of LGBTQIA+ persons in the context of the 2025 governmental election in Germany. Written narratives were collected from 61 participants before (n = 17) and after (n = 6; before & after n = 38) election day. Prompts for data collection were phrased openly to allow participants to freely reflect on their experiences during this time. Reflexive Thematic Analysis was used to elaborate on the participants' experiences. Political developments were described as a threat to the key values of modern, progressive societies. Human rights, including minority and women's rights, diversity and inclusion, social cohesion and support, and justice were perceived as strained due to the strengthening of right-wing populist politics. The future of recently acquired rights, such as the right to marry as a queer couple or the right to choose one's gender, became uncertain, and the threat of discrimination and violence against minorities increased. At the same time, democratic structures were described as being in danger of being undermined by populist and extremist tendencies. Participants perceived the 2025 election in Germany as guiding future developments and were, therefore, emotionally and behaviourally more engaged than usual. Becoming an active member of a democratic society by raising awareness and participating in activism frequently provided an outlet for their emotions and helped them against feelings of resignation and powerlessness, especially prior to the election. Still, future anxiety and moral disappointment often prevailed. Taken together, the election was a significant stressor for the participants. It kept them emotionally and cognitively preoccupied and affected their behaviour. With similar developments taking place internationally, the results highlight the need to support marginalised communities in coping with political stressors.

On Violence and Collective Action: A Pressing Tension in Environmental Activism

Oral Presentation by Nicolas Grevesse[1], Edina Dóci[2]

[1] UCLouvain (site of Saint-Louis, Brussels), Belgium
[2] UCLouvain, Belgium

Considered “one of the greatest ecological and social challenges of the twenty-first century” (Dietz et al., 2020, p. 135), the environmental crisis is deeply entrenched in capitalism and its exploitative dynamics. Since the late 1960s, environmental activism has increasingly sought to address this issue by raising public awareness and exerting political pressure (Rootes, 2022), grounding its legitimacy in a firm rejection of violence within its action repertoire (Malm, 2020). However, as the crisis continues to escalate, and after nearly sixty years of relentless mobilisation yet limited hard-won victories and no systemic change (Thiri et al., 2022), some scholars and activists have begun to question the pacifist stance prevailing within the movement, instead advocating for the adoption of more radical forms of protest (Simpson et al., 2022). At this pivotal point is situated “Les Soulèvements de la Terre”, a French environmental collective that mobilises against (agro-)industrial development projects and embraces a plurality of tactics in its action repertoire, including confrontational ones. In this regard, the collective embodies the contradictions of a movement that has long privileged non-violent praxis (Butler, 2020), yet whose claims may not be fully acknowledged without the pressure exerted by a more radical flank (Malm, 2020; Simpson et al., 2022). Through the case of Les Soulèvements de la Terre, we aim to discuss the normative understandings of violence, as well as the related violence-nonviolence dichotomy that prevails within environmental activism and social movement studies (Uysal et al., 2024). Based on a literature review in psychology of liberation, conflict psychology and social movement studies, a documentary analysis, as well as preliminary interviews, we also seek to provide a better understanding of violent and nonviolent praxis as a means of resistance in increasingly repressive settings. To that end, we will focus primarily on how activists experience and interpret the violence they encounter, as well as the counter-violence they may – or may not – respond with, and how such meaning-making processes may contribute to shaping the movement’s identity and enhancing individuals’ well-being and sense of agency.

Notions of Sufficient Consumption: “What do You Perceive as Enough Goods and Services?”

Oral Presentation by Anne Kraudi[1], Ernest Aigner[1]

[1] Social-Ecological Systems Institute, Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany

Sufficiency is increasingly acknowledged as a key strategy for promoting well-being for all within planetary boundaries – critically questioning capitalism and the economic growth paradigm. Nevertheless, insights on public perceptions of what is enough, i.e. levels of sufficient consumption and its determinants, remain largely underexplored. Building on a socio-psychological framework based on an interdisciplinary ecological economics and environmental psychology foundation, we combined 32 semi-structured interviews with survey instruments, examining enoughness notions and eliciting monetary enoughness levels for 27 consumer goods and service categories. To analyse underlying socio-psychological determinants and justifications of the respective enoughness levels, we developed a framework that integrates the Theory of Planned Behaviour with Social-Ecological Mentalities. For the mixed methods approach we selected participants with diverse living conditions, including high and low wealth individuals, living in Lüneburg (Northern Germany). To analyse the interview data, we transcribed the audio recordings and coded them abductively. First, we analysed the data regarding the ethical-material dimensions of the enoughness notions that people hold, as well as the socio-psychological dimensions of their justifications of monetary enoughness levels. Secondly, we integrated these qualitative findings with the quantitative post-interview survey results on socio-ecological mentalities and the monetary enoughness levels. The results revealed a diverse enoughness notion set and an association between monetary enoughness levels and their justifications, as well as with the interviewee’s living conditions and social-ecological mentalities. Overall, most interviewees had not yet thought about their consumption in terms of enoughness. What they perceive as enough is generally closely oriented to their current living conditions. We found a wide range of monetary enoughness levels. While the median total budget across households is 3,500 EUR, the highest monthly total budget indicated was almost 10,000 EUR, the lowest was around 1,323 EUR. We observed that most people’s actual consumption decisions are mostly based on their monthly income. Therefore, the question for most interviewees is not “what is enough?”, but “what can I spend this month?”. We conclude that these findings introduce further complexities to just transformations.

"Impacta más la industria que la naturaleza" - Risk Perception of Natural Hazards from More-than-Human Perspectives Using the Example of Aysén Fjord in Patagonia (Chile)

Oral Presentation by Danny Tröger[1]

[1] University of Kassel, Germany

Understanding the risk perceptions of natural hazards is vital for disaster mitigation. Despite extensive research on the topic, local and indigenous perspectives often remain marginalized and underrepresented. One reason is the inherent Eurocentrism in knowledge production. Using narrative interviews with fishermen in the Patagonian fjord lands, we developed a grounded theory on risk perception against the background of actor–network theory to adress this criticism. The emergent order of risk perception can be described by constructions of natural event systems, attributions of cause and blame, psychological processing and emotional strategies, territorial and professional identity, and perceptions of the national state. The distinction in risk science between natural hazards and environmental degradation, which represents the manifestation of the nature-culture divide, is not necessarily made by the local fishermen. By allowing ambiguity in the ontology of nature and including networks of human and non-human actors, a hybrid understanding can be developed, with the following concepts: environmental transformation, human-environment relations, appropriation of nature and ownership structure, displacement of sustainable traditions, and regional common-pool resources. Classifying these perspectives as pre-modern corresponds to the separation of different cultures described by Latour and forms the basis for asymmetrical relationships, reproducing the hegemony of Eurocentric and anthropocentric knowledge production. The separation into hazard and vulnerability can be seen as a manifestation of the second separation and leads to the networks of human and non-human actors that promote resilience being overlooked.

Florestania: Decolonizing Neoliberal Climate Citizenship and Examining the Transformational Alternative from the Global South

Oral Presentation by Minh Thu Nguyen[1]

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The author(s) did not consent to the publication of this abstract.

Thought and Action in Politics. On the Relevance of Hannah Arendt's Political Philosophy for Critical Social Psychology

Oral Presentation by Ralph Sichler[1]

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Hannah Arendt's reflections on politics, thought resp. judgment, and action offer promising impulses for psychology, especially for critical social psychology, by shifting the focus away from a purely intrapsychic perspective (e. g. processes of social cognition) to the public sphere, like plurality as well as the social conditions and interconnections of human behavior. Critical psychology, that deals with the relationship between the individual and society as well as the social origins of individual problems, can benefit from Arendt's ideas in several respects: Focus on the political: Arendt clearly distinguishes the political from the purely social or private. For her, politics is the public sphere where people act, speak, and encounter each other. Critical psychology can use this distinction to analyze how social conditions and power structures impair this political sphere and shape individual agency. Critique of conformism: Arendt's study of the Eichmann trial and her concept of the "banality of evil" demonstrate how the lack of independent thought and judgment can lead people to abdicate moral and political responsibility. For critical social psychology, this is an important starting point for illuminating the psychological mechanisms of conformity and obedience to authoritarian systems. Especially, Arendt's thoughts on thinking, judging, and acting enables illuminating approaches for critical concepts in psychology: Thinking: Following Socrates and Plato, Arendt conceptualizes thinking as an inner dialogue with oneself. This dialogue is crucial for the development of conscience and enables moral decision making. For psychology, this understanding can lead to the exploration of internal processes underlying moral and political behavior. Judging: Arendt saw judgment, especially "reflective judgment" (following Kant), as the key to freedom. It involves viewing a situation not only from one's own perspective, but also from the point of view of others, thus developing a sense of community. This is relevant for psychology because it highlights the importance of empathy as perspective-taking for political action and the shaping of public life. Action: Arendt defined action as unpredictable and pluralistic occurrences in public space that create new beginnings in public life. Critical psychology can address how psychological barriers prevent or enable political action and how action leads to empowerment of individuals.

Understanding the Discourse of Resilience within Neoliberal Subjectivity: Precarity and Collective Solidarity

Oral Presentation by Öykü Kuran[1], Reşit Kışlıoğlu[1]

[1] Başkent University, Türkiye

Resilience is understood in terms of adaptability, inner strength, flourishing, and the ability to bounce back in mainstream psychology (Ryff & Singer, 2003; Baumgardner & Crothers, 2009). It is predominantly presented as a desirable personal quality, a fundamental resource that enables individuals to cope with challenges during a crisis. Even though this approach emphasizes agency and well-being, as preferred within the neoliberal context in which we live, it rarely interrogates the socio-political conditions that require, demand, and valorize resilience. Instead, this study will examine how resilience discourse is shaped within neoliberal ideology and how it operates in contexts of increasing precarity (Schwarz, 2018; Gill & Orgad, 2018; Espinosa Zepeda, 2021; Oliva et al, 2022). Within neoliberal rationalities, imperatives of personal empowerment and self-management transform structural precarity into a growth imperative (Adams et al., 2019). Drawing on theories of critical psychology (Teo, 2018; Bettache et al., 2020), this study will examine resilience beyond an individual psychological concept. Precisely, the term will be elaborated as a historically situated construct, reorganizing responsibility for coping. Using Norman Fairclough's (2015) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, the research will analyze focus group discussions conducted with soon-to-graduate university students, fresh graduates, and early-career professionals in Türkiye: groups who are centrally positioned within contemporary conditions of economic insecurity, competition, and uncertainty. The analysis will examine how participants reflect on coping, success, and endurance in academic and professional contexts; how resilience is linguistically constructed in everyday conversation; and how themes of vulnerability, mutual support, and collective solidarity are articulated, marginalized, or silenced. The study is guided by one central question: Does the emphasis on personal empowerment within resilience discourse naturalize and sustain structural injustice by shifting responsibility from systemic conditions to individual self-management? By situating young people's experiences within broader relations of power, work, and ideology, this study will contribute to critical psychology's effort to re-politicize well-being and to reclaim vulnerability and interdependence as potential grounds for collective resistance rather than objects of individual adaptation.

Critical Theories of the Working Subject: Exploring the Missing Link between Work Experience and Social Consciousness Amid Ecological Devastation

Oral Presentation by Daniel Roose[1], Leon Höfer[1], Thomas Höge[1], Severin Hornung[1]

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The ecological devastation that has become a defining feature of the multiple crises of contemporary capitalism, driven by the imperative of capital accumulation, as well as workers' resistance to environmental policies, have both contributed to the recent revival of research on worker consciousness. Labour remains the principal mediator of society's metabolism with nature and therefore constitutes a strategic source of power for democratizing control over societal reproduction. Workers may possess this structural capacity—but are they willing to exercise it? This conceptual contribution examines psychoanalytic approaches that may help to answer this question. It argues that a gap exists between, on the one hand, studies of subject development within the labour process and, on the other, studies of workers' political and societal consciousness. The latter tend to rely on rather speculative and system-functionalist assumptions while remaining empirically underdeveloped and largely indifferent to the concrete processes of socialization both within and beyond the workplace. Conversely, psychoanalytic studies of workplace socialization rarely extended their analysis to the cognitive and affective structures that shape workers' orientations toward broader political and societal issues beyond the firm. The paper concludes by outlining propositions for a theoretical framework capable of bridging this divide. Such a framework would guide empirical research on the formation of psychic structures in the labour process and their implications for workers' extra-workplace political orientations, thereby trying to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of worker consciousness amid ecological devastation.

Labour Process Theory and German Critical Psychology: Towards a Relational Re-Examination

Oral Presentation by Leon Höfer[1], Daniel Roose[1], Thomas Höge[1], Severin Hornung[1]

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This paper proposes a re-examination of Labour Process Theory (LPT) and German Critical Psychology (GCP) sensu Holzkamp through a relational perspective. Classical LPT, especially in the tradition of Braverman, conceptualizes the capitalist labour process as a structurally antagonistic relation between capital and labour, mediated by ownership, control, and the managerial imperative to transform labour power into labour. While this perspective remains indispensable for understanding workplace control, it has been criticized for insufficiently theorizing the standpoint of the acting subject. To address this limitation, the paper suggests 1) supplementing LPT with GCP, particularly its concept of Handlungsfähigkeit – understood here as the socially mediated capacity-to-act – and 2) employing a relational perspective: both LPT and GCP share a Marxist foundation and can be connected through their common focus on social relations between humans, objects, and institutions. Drawing on the concept of modes of relating (Adamczak), the paper argues that capitalist management practices do not merely regulate individual workers, but organize specific forms of relations between workers, management, co-workers, customers, technologies, tasks, time, or the self. This argument is developed through the example of key performance indicators (KPIs). KPIs are interpreted not as neutral instruments of measurement, but as mediating devices that reorganize the labour process. They transform direct supervision into datafied accountability, cooperation into comparison, practical judgement into measurable output, and skill into self-monitoring. From an LPT perspective, KPIs can be understood as technologies of control responding to the transformation problem. From the perspective of GCP, they become part of workers' concrete conditions of action, shaping meanings, constraints, and possibilities for restrictive or generalized capacity-to-act. The paper therefore argues that a relational perspective offers a productive way of bringing LPT and GCP into dialogue in the analysis of capitalist management practices. The example of KPIs demonstrates how this perspective can be used to examine how such practices mediate concrete modes of relating within the labour process, while simultaneously structuring workers' subjective possibilities for action.

Reclaiming Yoga in Counselling Psychology: Neoliberal Capitalism, Epistemic Injustice, and Decolonisation through a Hindu Lens

Oral Presentation by Chhavi Kohli[1]

[1] University of Manchester, United Kingdom

Aims: This paper critically examines the integration of Yoga within applied psychology, particularly counselling, focusing on how neoliberal capitalism and Eurocentric therapeutic frameworks shape its contemporary use. Rooted in the 5000 years old Hindu philosophy, as a spiritually and ethically grounded practice, Yoga is increasingly marketed, sold, and deployed as a commodified wellbeing intervention within counselling contexts. The paper aims to explore how this process decontextualises Yoga to fit capitalist imperatives of efficiency, self-regulation, and productivity, while obscuring its spiritual foundations. It further seeks to interrogate the epistemic injustices produced through this commodification and to consider how decolonial approaches may support culturally responsive and ethically informed counselling practice. Methods: The study undertakes a critical, theoretically informed analysis of existing literature related to Hindu philosophy, spirituality, and applied counselling psychology. A reflexive practitioner–researcher stance is adopted to examine how dominant counselling models and techniques used for mental and psychological wellbeing, appropriate and repackage Yoga within therapeutic settings. Literature from counselling psychology, cultural competence, and Yoga scholarship is analysed to identify underlying capitalist logics, power relations, and epistemological tensions shaping contemporary practice. Results: The analysis indicates that Yoga is frequently reframed in counselling settings as a culturally neutral, marketable wellbeing tool, prioritising stress reduction, emotional regulation, and performance enhancement. This reframing aligns Yoga with neoliberal values of individual responsibility and optimisation, enabling its sale as an intervention while marginalising its ethical, spiritual, and relational dimensions. Such practices contribute to epistemic injustice by erasing Yoga's Hindu philosophical foundations and risk reinforcing colonial power dynamics within applied psychology. Discussion: The findings highlight the need for a decolonial reorientation of counselling psychology that moves beyond the superficial inclusion and commercialisation of culturally derived practices. The paper argues for epistemic humility, reflexivity, and structural accountability in therapist training and practice, advocating for approaches that honour Yoga as a spiritually situated tradition rather than a commodified technique

Counselling Psychology and Social Justice within a Neoliberal Context: Beyond an Uncomfortable Fit?

Oral Presentation by Fern Sleeman[1]

[1] University of Manchester, United Kingdom

Counselling psychology, particularly across North America and the UK, has long acknowledged the significant impact of socioeconomic factors on individual wellbeing and the role of counselling psychologists in adopting and promoting a social justice agenda, committed to the development of an equal society. Counselling psychologists are both scientist-practitioners and reflective practitioners, straddling empiricist and positivist scientific assumptions and the role of individual and structural influence and bias. This balance is challenged greatly with regards to social justice within the current neoliberal context. Neoliberalism has expanded from an economic philosophy to exert great influence on all aspects of individual life, promoting entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and personal accountability. This has resulted in the pathologisation and individualisation of the conditions and transitions of life, and the individual responsibility for and treatment of such stressors. However, if social justice is concerned with equal distribution and interdependence across society and neoliberalism enforces hyper-individualisation and interpersonal competition, can counselling psychology meet its social justice commitment whilst existing within neoliberal systems? This paper will explore the complicity and challenge of counselling psychology in relation to its structural position and contributes how a both-and approach can advance the counselling psychology social justice agenda in a neoliberal era.

Listening Otherwise: Learning to Unlearn

Oral Presentation by Elisabeth Fessler[1], Manuela Ditzen[1]

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Crisis and counselling encounters in Germany's 'Migrationsgesellschaft', as described by Paul Mecheril, are embedded in structural power relations shaped by racialized discourses, neoliberal norms, and dominant ideas of family, vulnerability, and responsibility. These forces shape the interaction between professionals and clients and restrict which stories can be told, heard, or acknowledged. The crisis service RUF24 of Stiftung Ambulantes Kinderhospiz München accompanies (expectant) families facing acute psychosocial emergencies when a child and/or parent becomes critically ill, is severely injured, or dies suddenly, with the aim of preventing long term trauma. This contribution brings together the method of (self-)critical, power aware listening with the principles of narrative therapy, as developed by Michael White. While (self-)critical listening seeks to recognize and interrupt forms of epistemic violence—a concept articulated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak—within the counselling situation, the narrative therapy approach offers ways to question dominant discourses and collaboratively develop alternative, client authored accounts of meaning. In doing so, it opens spaces in which marginalized perspectives can become audible and in which people in crisis appear not merely as affected individuals but as active interpreters and agents of their own experience. The joint crafting of new stories counters individualizing, pathologizing, and neoliberal framings and re-grounds crisis experiences within social, relational, and collective contexts. The analysis demonstrates that trauma prevention is not only a clinical task but also a socio-critical one. Integrating (self-)critical listening with narrative re-authoring provides concrete practices that can strengthen resistance, solidarity, and transformative potential. In line with this, the approach contributes to developing psychosocial work that challenges hegemonic meaning structures and—drawing on Norman K. Denzin's notion of Performative Social Science—intervenes in dominant dramaturgies of crisis while offering a stage for alternative, emancipatory modes of meaning making to emerge.

An Ideology of Indifference – How Neoliberalism Creates a Lack of Sympathy for “Losers”

Oral Presentation by Mattis Hein[1], Guido Hertel[1]

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Over the last century, neoliberalism, has become the dominant philosophy in Western societies. Heralding an ideal of individual success through inherent personal merit and savviness in discovering and taking opportunities, the neoliberal worldview holds those that “lose in life” and achieve negative outcomes personally responsible, even when there is evidence towards the contrary. It is often argued that this attribution serves the purpose to justify inequalities and negative outcomes of the target persons to reduce negative emotions and cognitions. In contrast, we conceptualize neoliberal beliefs as a universal, generalized mode-of-thinking which influences the way individuals perceive the world. In this framework, neoliberal beliefs are not a mental instrument for emotional self-regulation, but directly determine how we perceive others’ outcomes. Specifically, we propose that higher neoliberal beliefs are associated with increased perception of competitiveness and fairness when observing performance situations, thereby suggesting that individuals in these situations have high control over their outcome. This perceived control over the outcome necessarily leads to less sympathy for target persons who achieve negative outcomes. An online field experiment (N=777) provided first empirical evidence for the viability of the model. Furthermore, our newly proposed model showed better fit compared to the alternative model of neoliberal beliefs only suppressing the emotional reaction and a model accounting for both a mode-of-thinking and emotional-regulative function. Implications for our understanding of the impact neoliberal beliefs in individuals have on their everyday thinking and social judgement in general will be discussed, along with limitations of our design and the implications for future research.

Power and the Production of Subjects in the Genesis of Capitalism

Oral Presentation by Jonas Jonas Oßwald[1]

[1] University of Vienna, Austria

Coming from a background in social philosophy and poststructuralism, I would like to propose the concept of "accumulation by subjectivation" in my contribution, which allows us to understand the different but historically interconnected forms of subjectivation as a power-theoretical precondition of capitalist accumulation. The starting point here is the observation that Foucault recognizes the central importance of Marx for a historical and materialist conception of power that pays particular attention to effects of subjectivation, as is particularly apparent in the early analytics of power. Marx's reflections on so-called primitive accumulation are crucial here, especially the "protosubjectivational" aspects (such as the "blood legislation" in the last chapter of Capital I). This Marxian influence is especially evident in lectures at the Collège de France, where Foucault outlines disciplinary power as a kind of "pre-production system" that accomplishes the synthesis of life into labor-power through disciplinary normalization and subjectivation in the first place. From this perspective, primitive accumulation is not only understood as the historical process of the separation of direct producers from the means of production, but also as a cut regarding the history of subjectivity that is related to the establishment of new technologies of power. Adopting this approach to the genesis of capitalism allows us to perceive primitive accumulation as both a historical act of violent expropriation and a subjectivation-theoretical turning point. This allows us to consider the ways in which power in modernity produces different types of subjectivity, not only in relation to class (disciplinary normalization as proletarianization), but also in relation to gender and "race" (e.g. gendered and racialized divisions of labor and their corresponding types of subjectivation), which continue to be the basis for capitalist production. The notion of "accumulation by subjectivation" thus complements the analyses of Foucault and Marx by providing a conceptual framework for thinking different forms of domination and exploitation together against the backdrop of their common genesis and contemporary persistence in capitalist modernity.

The Architecture of Submission: Unconscious Mechanisms of Conformism and Resistance

Oral Presentation by Margarita Coosemans[1]

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This research aims to understand the mechanism of acceptance of the capitalist system as society's natural state. Despite vast inequalities, widespread consent persists with minimal coercion. The project addresses these research questions: What mechanism explains conformism/submission to hegemonic common sense and why some resist? Can we identify the (collective) unconscious mechanisms that prevail in conforming vs resisting? The theoretical framework synthesises discourse theory with analytical psychology (Jung's collective unconscious and archetypes). "Consent without consent" refers to covert control where acceptance is manufactured through forces limiting alternatives, drawing from Gramsci, Chomsky, and Foucault. These forces may activate certain archetypes. Firstly, they may prevent shadow integration. Internalizing the neoclassical narrative represses guilt over inequality and normalizes it by denoting the poor as "lazy" and investors as "virtuous". This prevents shadow integration, ensuring no cognitive dissonance. Secondly, the currently dominant narrative may activate specific archetypes for the majority. Through history and space such narratives could have been completely different (e.g. the USSR vs the advanced capitalist societies in the West). Comparing the UK and Russia, we may see how different narratives activate different archetypes and how outliers/non-conformists develop in each system. The research employs mixed methods combining quantitative text analysis and qualitative case studies. The first part is a web-scraping mechanism on historical newspaper archives, biographies, memorandums. Sources include British Newspaper Archives from the 1700s and East View Russian Periodical Database for newspapers before/after 1917, during the Soviet era, and afterwards. Quantitative text analysis using TF-IDF and/or neural embedding will identify important words in business versus labour press and in accounts of capitalism versus socialism defenders. I will analyse whether these words identify with certain collective unconscious patterns. Qualitative case studies will complement quantitative findings, identifying archetypal mechanisms linking to conformism versus resistance. We will examine status quo acceptance in pre-, Soviet and post-Soviet Russia versus the UK. For historical outliers' analysis, we will examine accounts of supporters and resisters, assessing similarity of their activated archetypes and shadow integration extent.

Characterizing the Neoliberal Subject: A Systematic Review of the Literature on Internalized Neoliberalism

Oral Presentation by Konrad Bernshausen[1], Thomas Höge[1], Christine Unterrainer[1], Severin Hornung[1]

[1] Universität Innsbruck, Austria

The growing influence of neoliberalism has restructured not only economic and political institutions but also the forms of subjectivity through which individuals understand and govern themselves. In recent years, increasing psychological research has addressed the internalization of neoliberalism by developing several quantitative assessment tools. Drawing on a systematic review of 23 included studies, this paper compares different self-report questionnaires to quantify the neoliberal subject and the respective empirical evidence: the Neoliberal Beliefs Inventory (NBI), the Neoliberal Orientation Questionnaire (NOQ), and the Neoliberal Ideological Beliefs Questionnaire (NLBQ). Comparing the questionnaires demonstrates that each instrument operationalizes a distinct theory of neoliberal ideology. In the NBI, neoliberal ideology is conceptualized as a diffuse cultural discourse, emphasizing the concept of homo oeconomicus and post-prejudice narratives. In the NOQ, neoliberal ideology is characterized as a system-justifying mechanism and the application of cost-benefit analyses to everyday life. In the NLBQ, a perspective from critical theory is discernable, conceptualizing neoliberal ideology as a system of meanings in service of power, focusing specifically on its manifestations in the workplace. Findings across these instruments suggest that neoliberal subjectivity is shaped, at the social level, by meritocratic beliefs, justifying an unequal and hierarchical society. Beliefs in economic liberties, such as endorsement of free markets and opposition to redistributive policies, are complemented by socially conservative values, like traditional gender norms and ethnocentrism. At the intersubjective level, internalized neoliberalism is related to less empathic consideration of others but also a tendency to trust those close to oneself. The neoliberal intrasubjectivity is characterized by a prioritization of the self. Highly neoliberal individuals perceive themselves to be in control, reporting higher levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem. Alongside a constant drive for self-optimization, neoliberal subjects report greater life satisfaction and better health, which may facilitate neoliberal internalization. However, alternative methodological explanations and undetected dysfunctional consequences need to be considered. After summarizing correlates of neoliberal subjectivity, the paper concludes with recommendations regarding the questionnaires' respective use cases and future research possibilities.

Workplace Bullying as Inequality: The Lived Experiences of Transgender Employees

Oral Presentation by Ernesto Noronha[1], Premilla D'Cruz[1]

[1] Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, India

Rising societal inequalities are noted as a grand challenge of our times. Inequalities, linked to established and emerging social categories, are embedded into social life via social structures and institutions. Indeed, against the hegemony of the dominant elite, neoliberal claims about personal freedom, individualism and self-realization are ineffective in dismantling these inequalities. The disadvantage that accompanies inequalities is evidenced through various types of mistreatment and microaggressions including incivility, discrimination and bullying. Importantly, societal inequalities permeate workplaces, accentuating the inherent inequality of the employment relationship. This study, undertaken in India, reports a hermeneutic phenomenological study of 36 transgender employees. Participants' lived experiences emphasized the severe overt and direct bullying they experienced at work including offensive stares, malicious gossip, taunts, insults, threats, exclusion and even expulsion. Denial of participants' trans identity, restrictions on the permissible range of job tasks and roles, reneging on promised accommodations and perquisites were reported. Participants' experiences of bullying began from the time of joining the job and persisted even after their transitioning, reflecting deep-seated biases which othered them and violated their dignity. Some participants opted for self-employment while others remained unemployed after losing their jobs. Whereas the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, was ineffective in protecting participants, there were a few instances of responsible and inclusive workplaces, managers, HR professionals and co-workers who upheld their dignity. Addressing societal inequalities has been documented as challenging, but not impossible. Notwithstanding the hegemony of the dominant groups, the role of human will and agency in seeking social change cannot be underestimated. Power is never absolute and the collective resistance of strategic social actors, who enlist the collaboration of like-minded fellow humans, can break the patterns of the past and steer the path of social life towards equality. These endeavours hold hope for disadvantaged groups, such as transgender employees, who emphasize the universal claim that all humans are born equal and deserve dignity.

Collective Reflexivity as Deliberative Practice. We Shape Our Buildings; Afterwards Buildings Shape Us

Oral Presentation by Bjørn Z. Ekelund [1], Fred Steier[2], Joanne Barnes[3]

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This contribution explores how the Diversity Icebreaker (DI) seminar can be reframed to strengthen radical innovation and systemic change. The DI tool, used globally for almost three decades, creates a shared language through the socially co-created categories Red, Blue and Green. While this approach has been successful in building psychological safety, trust and positive interaction, its impact has been mainly limited to immediate communication benefits inside the seminar room. In a time where DEI work is highly contested, and where solving complex “wicked problems” requires new forms of collective meaning making, we propose shifting the learning goal of the seminar towards deliberate reflexivity. By expanding Stage 4 of the DI process, the reflective phase, participants can explore how categories, identities and inside/outside dynamics are socially constructed in organizations and society – and how alternative framings may enable different outcomes. This shift moves attention from individual preference differences toward the design of structures, practices and narratives that enable more inclusive, human centric development. Reflexivity at individual, team, organizational and societal levels can generate dialectical tension between the current state and future possibilities, mobilizing coordinated action beyond incremental improvement. Re-framing DI in this way transforms it from a communication tool to a platform for deliberative change processes. This increases its relevance for actors working with diversity not only as inclusion and dialogue, but as a strategic resource for radical innovation, responsibility and societal resilience.

“You Can’t Save The World”: Value-Abjection And Subjectivation In Outpatient Care And The Growing Power Of Capitalist Logics In Care Work

Oral Presentation by Lux Yoani Lenz[1]

[1] University of Innsbruck, Austria

Condensed presentation of a study on the devaluation of care work, drawing on Beatrice Müller’s theory of value-abjection to analyze how structural conditions shape the everyday experiences and subjectivation processes of nurses in outpatient care. Based on Clarke’s Situational Analysis, the research adopts a power-sensitive approach that interweaves the discursive, historical, social, and material dimensions of the care field. Drawing on six semi-structured interviews, it reconstructs how nurses navigate tensions between institutionalized efficiency logics, economic constraints, ambivalent experiences of recognition, and their professional and ethical self-understandings. The findings clearly indicate that the widely diagnosed care crisis can only be understood as the result of the logics of prevailing systems of power and domination. By tracing the complex dynamics shaping outpatient care, the study develops a nuanced understanding of the structural-discursive obstacles to people-centered care which is informed by theories of capitalism. Accordingly, the results open up perspectives on resistance, agency, and utopian alternatives to the contemporary organization of care work.

Caregiving Without Sovereignty: Nannying and the Burden of Substitute Parenting

Oral Presentation by Parisa Dashtipour[1]

[1] The Open University, United Kingdom

This paper explores the narratives of domestic workers, a group of workers often ignored by work and organizational psychology. A domestic worker is “any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship.” (International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 189 on Domestic Work.). Globally, this form of work is structured around definitions of women’s work, family roles, and the hierarchies of race, class, and nationality in ways that are dynamic and constantly evolving. Many domestic workers in central and Western Europe are migrants from the Global South, but there has been an increase in domestic workers from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet States in recent years. Historically, wealthy families in the UK have relied on domestic workers, or ‘servants’, to perform household tasks, such as cleaning, cooking, and childcare. In recent decades, especially among dual earner families, a neoliberal logic to childcare positions care as either a market commodity or the responsibility of the family. Combined with a cultural preference for intimate, ‘motherlike’ care (rather than collective care in institutions or nurseries), this dynamic has driven growing demand (from those who can afford it) for flexible childcare arrangements, such as nannies and au-pairs. Nannying and childcare are a particularly personal and intimate form of domestic work, a job which includes high levels of emotional labour, isolation, exploitation, and the requirement to navigate intimate and often awkward environments marked by power asymmetries. This paper presents data from in-depth interviews with 8 nannies working in some of the most affluent areas in the UK. Preliminary findings draw attention to concealed voices within the nannies’ narratives. These voices speak to the burden of acting as substitute parents: being employed to ensure the care and welfare of children while lacking the autonomy to fulfil that responsibility. The harms nannies experience may arise from this contradiction: they are entrusted with caring for children yet denied the conditions necessary to do so.

Emancipatory Psychotherapy in the Context of War, Crises and Capitalism

Oral Presentation by Julian Dicks[1]

[1] University of Cologne, Netzwerk Kritische Psychotherapie, Germany

In a time of multiple crises – from ecological disasters to wars – psychotherapy is faced with the question of its role in society. This lecture analyses psychological suffering as a socially mediated phenomenon that is deeply rooted in capitalist modes of production and acute states of crisis. The central thesis is that much suffering is based on structural overload under neoliberal living conditions, which is exacerbated by a permanent state of emergency. One focus is on the analysis of the subject in capitalism: it is explained how the universal commodity form and the associated alienation structurally constitute the psyche. The necessity to sell one's own labour as a commodity can manifest itself in feelings of alienation. This is supplemented by a perspective on the historical process of change in the world of work and life, which is accompanied by processes of singularisation that shape certain subject ideals. The analysis highlights how increasing internal discipline leads the subject to internalise authoritarian demands. These socio-structural conditions can serve as an explanation for the specific form of exhaustion experienced today. Despite the broad perspective of the generally accepted biopsychosocial model, clinical practice often remains stuck in an individualising logic that reduces suffering to intrapersonal deficits. Approaches that focus on resilience and acceptance run the risk of systematically ignoring the social conditions described above. An emancipatory alternative must focus on the individual's ability to act as the disposition of their living conditions (Holzkamp). To this end, the lecture integrates Ernst Bloch's concept of hope as an emotion that points to the mutability of social conditions. It also draws on Rahel Jaeggi's concept of progress, which understands progress as a learning process aimed at overcoming systemic "learning blocks" and regressive structures. Finally, the lecture discusses approaches that aim to transform isolated suffering into collective capacity for action. The goal is a form of psychotherapy that promotes patients' connection to the world, recognises the social roots of suffering, and actively participates in social movements to help transform them.

CBT, Power, and the Therapeutic Relationship: Towards a Humanistically Oriented Response to Crisis

Oral Presentation by Ishba Rehman[1], Andre Etchebarne

[1] University of Manchester, United Kingdom

Aim: This paper critically examines how the therapeutic relationship is understood and practised within Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). While CBT dominates contemporary mental health services, it is often experienced as overly technique-led, time-pressured, and aligned with individualised models of distress that sit comfortably within neoliberal and crisis-driven systems. We propose Humanistically Oriented CBT as a unifying approach that strengthens CBT through an explicit commitment to relational depth, shared power, and contextual understanding, without discarding its core principles. Methods: We developed this model through an integrative conceptual synthesis of CBT, humanistic psychology, and critical applied psychology. Points of tension and overlap were explored, particularly around how relationships, power, and meaning are constructed in therapy. A practical framework was shaped around key clinical tasks, including collaborative assessment, values- and strengths-based goal setting, flexible formulation, cognitive and behavioural work, embodied and grounding practices, and a social justice-informed stance. An intersectional lens is used throughout to attend to how social position, identity, and structural inequality shape therapeutic engagement. Findings: The model centres the therapeutic relationship as active rather than instrumental. It includes: (1) a relational foundation based on empathy, transparency, reflexivity, and shared power; (2) collaboration-first assessment and formulation that maintain CBT structure without becoming procedural; (3) meaning-focused cognitive work grounded in compassion and dialogue; (4) client-led behavioural experiments and exposure that prioritise autonomy over compliance; and (5) grounding and mindfulness practices used as relational and transdiagnostic supports. Discussion: Humanistically Oriented CBT offers a practical way of holding CBT's evidence base alongside a more critical, relational, and socially aware practice. In the context of capitalism, crisis, and constrained mental health systems, this approach challenges reductive and individualising models of distress while remaining workable for clinicians. It is presented as a conceptual contribution, with future work planned around manual development, training, and evaluation.

Toward Psychotherapy Beyond Individualism: Models of Health and Practice

Oral Presentation by Juliane Sim[1]

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Psychotherapy has been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms and disease burden while increasing life satisfaction. Although the officially endorsed framework is a biopsychosocial model of mental illness, concepts of disease development and treatment in clinical practice remain largely centered on individual responsibility. Psychotherapy often assumes implicitly that after treatment, a person will naturally live an emancipated life and act with social responsibility. However, current social developments call this assumption into question. In the context of multiple, intersecting crises (social polarization, group-based hatred, and erosion of democratic values), many individuals report feeling increasingly powerless to engage in societal change. Despite comparatively broad access to psychotherapy in Germany, this treatment availability does not appear to translate into greater social agency or participation. Based on an enactive approach this presentation proposes a framework that seeks to move beyond a neoliberal understanding of mental health. Psychological distress is conceptualized as emerging from the interaction of societal norms and social relations, alongside parental influences and individual core beliefs. Building on schema therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), an adapted schema mode model is introduced that integrates recent research on embodiment, sociological determinants of distress, and the internalization of social narratives. Concrete therapeutic methods and practices will be presented, which support a deeper understanding of individual behavior by making visible the influence of societal norms on thinking, feeling, and acting, even when these norms are consciously rejected. Particular attention is given to patterns of the inner critic as largely implicit carriers of social expectations. Finally, the presentation argues that compassion-based and values-oriented work can support forms of critical reflection that link emotional processing with ethical and social responsibility. Such an approach enables patients not only to experience personal improvement, but also to relate their mental health to the social conditions in which they live and to reflect on their role in responding to the challenges of a world shaped by polycrisis.

Violence of Capitalism: Systemic Sacred Undeads Homines at Work

Individual Contribution to a Themed Symposium by Chiara Corvino[1], Matthijs P. Bal[2], Francesco Tommasi[3]

[1] Faculty of Economics, Department of Psychology, Catholic University of Milano, Italy
[2] Lincoln University, UK
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This paper analyses violence in the workplace by considering both a macro, meso and micro-level perspective. In social sciences and in political philosophy, there is a longstanding debate on how to account for violence. Drawing on insights from Žižek's perspective on systemic violence and Agamben's philosophy of the Homo Sacer, we theorize violence in the workplace by combining both the macro, meso and the micro-level. In doing so, we assert that violence obscures our ethical understanding of the human, and while a systemic approach offers us an understanding of violence in capitalism (Žižek, 2008), the camp of the lived experience of humans in organization can also be accounted (Agamben, 1995, 1998) by considering the psychological self-inflicted violence and violence at the relational, group and organizational level. To conclude, we elaborate on the potential of our intellectual work for business ethics. We advocate for an ethics of violence, that is, an ethics to resist violence in work and organizations based on two specific ethical components: the ethics of the testimonio and the ethics of grievability.

From Minority Protection to Structural Violence: Language, Education, and inequality in South Tyrol

Individual Contribution to a Themed Symposium by Giorgia Andreolli[1], Nadja Thoma[2]

[1] Institute for Applied Linguistics, Eurac Research, Italy
[2] Fakultät für Bildungswissenschaften, Universität Innsbruck, Austria

This paper draws from critical sociolinguistic and educational research to highlight the connection between language and structural violence, focusing on the case of the South Tyrolean school system. Established by the Province's Statute of Autonomy (1972) and based on a mother tongue principle, the system consists of three tracks, corresponding to the three officially recognized linguistic groups – Italian, German, and Ladin. While historically designed to protect minority language rights, this structure no longer reflects the reality of todays' superdiverse society and reproduces forms of inequality. These surface most prominently in the experiences of individuals who fall outside the linguistic categorization, as in the case of migration trajectories. The language-based separation not only restricts socialization across groups but also reinforces classed and racialized boundaries, undermining possibilities for equal participation. In this context, German functions as a prestige language, tightly linked to social status and possibilities for upward mobility. Access to German-medium schooling becomes a key mechanism through which opportunities are distributed, reproduced, or denied. Drawing on ethnographic data collected in South Tyrol, we will exemplify how language educational policy generates processes of minoritization and marginalization, focusing on the experiences of children and families navigating the school system.

Understanding, Researching and Resisting Violence: Ethico-Onto-Epistemological Perspectives

Themed Symposium by Chiara Corvino[1], Franceso Tommasi[2]

[1] Faculty of Economics, Department of Psychology, Catholic University of Milano, Italy
[2] University of Milan, Italy

In psychology, violence has long been recognized as a significant social problem leading to ample reflections on micro-individual dimensions related to violence, potential regulatory action based on societal and organizational intervention, and scholarly enquiry with dedicated journals on the topic (Psychology of Violence journal). This is because, the “issue” of violence has increasingly been framed as a core concern for community and society wellbeing as the impact of violence may be severe in some incidents and can result in long-term implications for mental health. However, existing perspectives tend to focus on individual level characteristics reducing on the logic of individual (violent) actions, with one perpetuator and one victim. This is in contrast with the view of violence as a manifestation of multiple tensions and conflicts: tensions among individuals, social groups (class, race, religion and their intersections),and, increasingly, geopolitical tensions and ideological clashes between nation states in part as a result of heightened politico-economic rivalry. Violence may occur at the intra-/inter- individual levels, as well as in the workplace, in the public domain, and society at large. Following the Zizekian perspective on violence, violence can be better understood by distinguishing subjective (individual acts) and symbolic (language and discourse) levels of violence, but also by expanding the view to a systemic level (ideology, e.g., capitalism) of violence. This symposium combines different perspectives with precisely the aim to enlarge the understanding of violence, as a systemic ideological and phenomenological condition rooted in the logic of “letting the other die” or “lives that do not matter”. Presentations offer indications on how violence is institutionalized, structured and maintained from a systemic level, that is from such ideological logics. Ideas for resistance and ethical binds are also presented. Conceptual and empirical works are included in the symposium.

Concepts in Motion: Epistemic Violence as an Assessment of the Significance and Consequences of Theoretical Knowledge

Individual Contribution to a Themed Symposium by Armando Toscano[1], Severin Hornung[2]

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This contribution applies the concept of epistemic violence in the context of the process and content of research in applied/ organizational and work psychology, drawing on additional theory and current examples from the field. The non-neutrality of scientific knowledge is recognized in nearly every field of the social sciences. If we accept that scientific knowledge develops propositionally and that language is a form of action, we can logically establish the idea that knowledge is itself a form of action. For knowledge to be considered a violent action, according to Thomas Teo (2010), three conditions must exist: it must be objective, it must have as its object a marginalized or dominated group, and it must cause harm to the object to which it is addressed. With respect to the first point, the creation of an objective world requires an operation of oblivion and fetishization. The subject must forget the operations of representation; the constructed world must be perceived as an opus alienum (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Thus, a new world is created, a dimension of dehumanized technology, forcibly cleansed of human elements. That same world becomes an object of veneration as a supreme truth (Paci, 1961). Regarding the second point, unless the scientific community is investigating its own functioning or the dynamics of neoliberalization of academic production, the object of knowledge is likely to be a dominated group: adolescents, women, ethnic groups, people experiencing poverty. In studies conducted in the fields of organizational and work psychology, it is possible that the investigated otherness is consodered obvious, and traces of social domination get lost. However, studies on effective leadership, or on improving working conditions, etc., focus on workers. Workers are those who daily embody the harmful effects of the naturalization of capitalist relations of production. The idea that the surplus value of one's labor benefits third parties and not the workers themselves has become so firmly entrenched in common sense that it is considered the only natural and possible path. Regarding the third point, we propose a vision according to which any scientific knowledge that does not reveal the reproduction of the relations of domination implicit in scientific innovation itself can be considered a source of harm to society and the social groups involved.

Applied Psychology as a Critical Praxis: A Deleuzian Reading of Royal and Nomad Sciences

Oral Presentation by Zed Zhipeng Gao[1]

[1] The American University of Paris, France

Critical applied psychology occupies a paradoxical position: embedded in institutions where psychology is often mobilized toward goals of efficiency and control, yet continually animated by practitioners and scholars seeking more reflexive and socially engaged forms of work. This article draws on Deleuze and Guattari's account of royal and nomad sciences to conceptualize the dynamic relationship between mainstream and critical psychology. Rather than treating royal and nomad sciences as opposing modes, I emphasize their dynamic entanglement. Critical psychology remains institutionally embedded in the structures it seeks to transform, while such entanglement is also theoretically necessary, since critical inquiry itself depends on existing structures of meaning and social organization. In practice, this calls for targeted interventions that work with established frameworks while disrupting them where they fail to account for emerging realities. At the level of the field, this relationship unfolds through processes of flight and capture, as critical innovations move beyond established frameworks only to be incorporated and transformed through institutionalization. Critical applied psychology is therefore conceptualized not as an autonomous territory outside the mainstream, but as a praxis of working simultaneously with and against dominant structures. It can thus be understood not as a fixed identity, but as a movement of continual critique and renewal.

From Critique to Praxis: Toward Psycho-Political Programs in Critical Psychology

Oral Presentation by Laya Hooshyari[1]

[1] University of Manchester, United Kingdom

Since its emergence, critical psychology has insisted on the inseparability of theory and practice. Drawing on traditions such as historical materialism, dialectical analysis, feminism, and critical theory, it has persistently challenged mainstream psychology for individualising suffering, naturalising capitalist social relations, and erasing the material conditions of life (Holzkamp, 1983; Fox et al., 2009; Parker, 2015). Yet this paper argues that, despite its analytical richness and political commitment, critical psychology currently faces a profound crisis at the level of program and praxis: critique has expanded, while the development of concrete, sustainable, and transferable forms of collective intervention has remained limited. In many cases, critical engagement is confined to exposing dominant clinical, therapeutic, or psychoanalytic frameworks—an intervention that is often necessary and justified. However, critique frequently becomes an end in itself rather than a point of departure for constructing alternatives. The result is a form of "critique without program": theoretically radical but practically insufficient for addressing the urgent psycho-social needs of communities living under conditions of exploitation, displacement, racism, precarity, and structural violence. This situation risks reproducing precisely the separation between theory and practice that critical psychology originally sought to overcome. Collective Memory Work (CMW) represents one of the more systematic attempts to bridge this divide, linking lived experience, social analysis, and collective reflection, particularly within feminist contexts (Haug, 1987; Haug et al., 2007). Nevertheless, this paper argues that CMW also encounters structural limitations, including uneven accessibility, reliance on high levels of cultural capital, and a tendency to circulate primarily within white, middle-class, and academic spaces. These limitations are not incidental but symptomatic of a broader problem within critical psychology: the absence of diverse, context-specific, and struggle-oriented psycho-political programs capable of translating critical analysis into sustained collective action. The paper contends that the future of critical psychology depends on an explicit shift from critique as an endpoint to critique as a moment within a constructive political project. Moving beyond critique requires the deliberate development of psycho-political programs that integrate critical consciousne

Concerning the Ontological Basis of the Current Paradigmatic Crisis

Oral Presentation by Irina Mironenko[1]

[1] St.Petersburg University, Russia

The mainstream international socio-psychological science is currently experiencing a paradigm shift. The "decolonization" of social sciences has undermined the creed of the 20th c psychological "grand theories" and the crisis of replicability has called into question the very heart of the crumbling dominant paradigm - the trust in statistical validation of empirical research. The need for a radical renewal is obvious. In seeking a possible solution, I follow the ontological principle. That is, first of all, to focuse on the actual reality which we study, without replacing it with old theoretical models enshrined in concepts and measurement methods. This presupposes a critical approach to the scientific legacy, since, in my opinion, radical changes have occurred in recent decades and are currently going on in the core subject of psychology—the human personality and the human world. This requires a rethinking of the entire methodological apparatus, ensuring its relevance to current reality. The crumbling paradigm, dominant from the post-war period until the mid 1980s, was based on a homeostatic view of social life, like that is presented by the World Society Theory. The liberal democratic model of social organization was seen as the pinnacle of social development already achieved by humanity, and personality characteristics of individuals in Western democratic societies were considered universaly human. The most obvious, to me, is now the need to abandon this implicit creed of an "universal" human with its "universal" human qualities. The human has changed in the past decades and is changing now, and the increasing speed and the unpredictable character of these changes require a transition from homeostatic theoretical models of self-regulating systems, dominant in the third quarter of the 20th c theory and methodology, to those of self-developing systems, from the nonclassical to the post-nonclassical science of the 21st c (Stepin, 2009). In search for turn-around points to support the quest, I appeal to the legacy of Russian psychology, primarily the Activity Theory (Mironenko, 2013). I would like to bring to my colleagues' attention some methodological developments aimed to explore bifurcation points in human development that largely stay obscure outside of the Russian-language psychological discourse, particularly the individual-typical approach (Mironenko, 2025).

‘The retrogression of society runs parallel to the retrogression of thought about it’ (Adorno): The Crisis of Critique, the Eclipse of the Subversive Reason and the Question of Social Constitution

Oral Presentation by Christos Memos[1]

[1] Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Sociological and Psychological Sciences, Abertay University, Dundee, UK

The author(s) did not consent to the publication of this abstract.

Me, My Nervous System and I. On the Reproduction of Neoliberal Psychopolitics within Contemporary Popular Neuroscience and Neurodiversity Discourses.

Oral Presentation by Tove Gersitz[1]

[1] Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Internationale Psychoanalytische Universität Berlin, Germany

The concept of neurodiversity has gained momentum in popular culture and is increasingly referenced in psychological scientific literature. While it is often depicted as a subversive, critical and potentially even deconstructive paradigm, in my presentation I'm asking why the concept could achieve its current popularity and whether it can hold up to the expectations of subversion and inclusion. Initially, I'll outline the changing understanding of the materiality of the psyche in popular neurodiversity and mental health discourses: Based on the assumption that the brain and its processes are increasingly reified (Ortega, 2009), I argue that the brain is constructed as an external, almost mechanical counterpart to the subject. However, in line with Gruber (2017) I assume that essentializing interpretations of neuroscientific research in popular science and culture are not simply a consequence of faulty science communication but instead fulfill specific societal functions. Contemporary concepts of the brain serve as a basis for new forms of subjectivity and corresponding subaltern identities (Rose & Abi-Rached, 2014). I will introduce the concept of neurodiversity and the neurodivergent subject position to explain how shifting understandings of the brain are used to justify dysfunctionality while still claiming a neurobiological aptitude for meeting capitalist demands. Additionally, this neurobiological selfhood lays a foundation for psychopolitical governmentality (Rau, 2010) by encouraging specific technologies of the self (Foucault, 2005) in the shape of individualized and neuroessentialist strategies to overcome the experience of alienation by finding and realizing one's authentic self. Neurodivergent identities and the processes of their (trans)formation thus are entangled with self-monitoring and self-management within emotional capitalism (Illouz, 2023). The contribution concludes with a summary of how neurobiological subjectivities in neoliberal societies oscillate between internalizing and externalizing: While experiences of failure and dysfunction in the domains of work or relationships are largely internalized as a result of individual difference, this difference is in turn externalized by attributing it to an abstract yet tangible neurobiological third, which should be illuminated and controlled by implementing neurotype-specific technologies of the self.

Redundant? Academic Identities, Wellbeing, and the UK Higher Education Crisis

Oral Presentation by Maria Kordowicz[1]

[1] Regent's University London, United Kingdom

This work examines the escalating use of redundancies within English higher education and analyses their implications for academic identity and wellbeing. Situating contemporary job losses within a broader context of financial precarity, demographic change, and policy instability, it is argued that redundancies have become a hypernormalized routine managerial response rather than an exceptional measure. Drawing on social identity theory, symbolic interactionism, and organisational identity scholarship, academic identity is conceptualised as relational, socially situated, and morally charged, while being shaped by institutional power and labour market conditions. It is demonstrated how managerial narratives of financial inevitability and strategic necessity depoliticise redundancy decisions, marginalising the human costs while normalising harm. Redundancies are shown to disrupt core identity scaffolds of academic work, namely autonomy, disciplinary belonging, collegiality, and vocation, producing profound identity shock, moral distress, and deteriorating wellbeing among both displaced staff and those who remain. The analysis further highlights how these processes intersect with existing inequalities, while hollowing out disciplinary capacity, particularly in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The article concludes that redundancies in the UK higher education sector represent not only a labour and wellbeing crisis but a fundamental threat to the integrity and sustainability of the academic professions. Protecting academic identity and wellbeing is therefore positioned as central, rather than ancillary, to the future of higher education.

Beyond Self-Care: Collective Sources of Psychological Resilience in an Age of Crisis

Oral Presentation by Edina Dóci[1]

[1] Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium

Contemporary crises – climate breakdown, right wing authoritarianism, increasing (global) political instability & social tensions, the erosion of civil liberties, and widening inequalities –demand immense psychological resources to confront. Yet dominant responses remain strikingly individualistic, emphasizing self-care, therapy or mindfulness. Such approaches neglect the relational, collective, and political conditions that shape psychological resilience, particularly at a time when many traditional community structures that once enabled collective meaning-making and shared purpose have eroded. This conceptual paper examines collectives and social movements as key sites for generating collective psychological resources. Drawing on and extending research on psychological capital –hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism– the paper challenges its predominantly individualistic and organizational framing. While PsyCap has been extensively studied in corporate contexts, little research has explored how psychological resources emerge, circulate, and are sustained within collective settings. Building on literature from community psychology, social movement studies, critical psychology and liberation psychology, the paper develops a framework for understanding psychological resources as fundamentally relational and political. The analysis identifies five collective sources of psychological capital within collectives and movements: (1)collective identity and belonging, which externalize hardship and provide emotional grounding; (2)collective meaning-making and ideological commitment, transforming adversity into shared purpose; (3)critical consciousness, enabling systemic interpretations of suffering and fostering solidarity; (4)collective action and agency, countering helplessness through visible demonstrations of power; and (5)cultural practices and community rituals that reinforce resilience over time. At the same time, the paper examines the shadow side of movements as “greedy institutions” that can paradoxically deplete psychological resources through pressures toward ideological purity, guilt, overcommitment, and cycles of political erasure or repression. The paper concludes that psychological resilience cannot be separated from collective relationships and political conditions, highlighting the ambiguous yet crucial role of social movements in sustaining–and sometimes undermining–the psychological capacities required for transformative social change.

Depression and Resilience in Emerging Adults in Mozambique: A Quantitative Analysis of Risk and Protective Factors

Oral Presentation by Luke Griles[1], Carla Moleiro[1]

[1] ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal

Depression is a globally relevant topic with a high burden on the well-being of people worldwide. While much research has been done on the topic in the West, the impact is equally and often more significant outside of this context due to factors such as under-resourced mental health infrastructure, colonial legacies, and cultural taboos around mental illness. Building on the frameworks of decolonial theory, social determinants of mental health, and mental health literacy, this study looks at culturally situated risk and protective factors related to depressive symptoms of emerging adults in Mozambique, while acknowledging and challenging the application of Western frameworks outside of the context in which they were developed. This research is motivated by the question: “How are depressive symptoms among emerging adults in Mozambique related to locally situated risk and protective factors?” Using nationally representative data from Mozambique collected by the Demographic and Health Surveys Program in collaboration with the Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE) and ICF, this study looks at demographic data and uses quantitative analysis to correlate social determinants of mental health with reported depressive symptoms. The analysis found support for the relationship between education and mental health literacy, as mediated by internet usage. Additionally, employment was related to the outcome of depressive symptoms reported, as mediated by socioeconomic status; this was also conditionally moderated by gender. These results contribute considerations for future political and institutional directions, and delineate areas of focus in which economic growth and policy can be leveraged for the best outcomes.

Moral Perception and Justification of Platform Workers Amidst Moral Ambiguity of Account Subleasing

Oral Presentation by Hanh Doan[1]

[1] Aalto University School of Business, Finland

In traditional organizations, organizational values and ethical infrastructure play an essential role in guiding employees' behavior. However, within platform work—work facilitated through digital labor platforms - moral values are open to interpretations among workers for two reasons. First, these workers often have loose ties with organizations, typically being classified as independent contractors. Thus, organizational behavioral guidelines may not be fully adopted by workers, leading to differing perceptions of right and wrong compared to traditional work contexts. Second, the remote nature of platform work complicates the monitoring of unethical behavior, and the lack of strong ethical infrastructure may promote such conduct. While research on behavioral ethics is robust within traditional organizational settings, limited knowledge exists in platform work context. For the aforementioned reasons, this paper aims to shed light on moral perception and justification among platform workers by examining how they perceive and justify morally questionable behavior in their work environment. Through a qualitative study of 26 app-based food delivery workers in Finland, I find that these workers hold various perspectives on the morality of account subleasing—a prominent morally questionable practice in Finland. This involves workers with their own accounts (account holders) renting out their accounts to others (substitutes) for a fee. Substitutes pay for access to accounts due to limited work opportunities and a lack of new accounts. Account holders, therefore, gain financial benefits through subleasing, without the initial cost of obtaining an account. Account subleasing is not regulated by law while accepted by platform organizations, possibly to ensure a consistent workforce of delivery workers. Moral perception varies depending on the workers' status as account holders or substitutes, impacting their justification of the practice. Some embrace the capitalist logic of subleasing accounts, while others condemn it as unethical and exploitative, especially toward less empowered substitutes. These findings advance our understanding of moral decision-making by exploring moral perception and justification beyond traditional organizations. This study identifies different justification modes, explaining how these workers justify their engagement in morally questionable practice. Additionally, this study highlights situational factors that exacerbate such behavior.

Adaptation Through Defense, Defense Through Adaptation – On the Damaged Subjectivity of Migrant Workers and the Reproduction of Racism

Oral Presentation by Yannic Wexenberger[1]

[1] Universität Wien, Austria

For migrants, the reduction to their economic function is omnipresent: Negative, when the populist and the far right as well as conservatives describe migration as ‚illegal' and migrants as ‚superfluous' people who would be a social as well as economic threat to the country's competitiveness as a business location. Positive when self-proclaimed progressive (left-)liberals defend migration by pointing to the usefulness and, ultimately, necessity of migrant workers for the business location in light of skilled-labour shortages and the demographically induced crisis of the pension system. Although this abstraction from concrete human beings and their individual needs and qualities is universal under the rule of exchange value, migrant workers are affected in a particularly brutal way because of their position within the social order. Of course, this does not leave their subjectivity untouched. Thus, my analysis of the lived experiences and interpretations of migrants working in care, the construction industry or logistics in Austria, made accessible through narrative, problem-centered interviews, points to a relation to themselves and others in which they repeat that same abstraction. Without complaint, they cling to their economic function, despite the immense deprivations that necessarily accompany it. To simply declare this irrational, however, would misrecognize the life situation of these migrants. They simply experience the proof of their own usefulness and employability as the only chance to at least partially escape racist discrimination, to receive recognition from the society of arrival and thus ultimately to secure their self-preservation. In an irrational, racist class society, even the affirmation of one's own painful working and living realities becomes rational - reason as a means of self-preservation. However, as my empirical analysis also shows, some migrants "take revenge (...) for the pain whose expressions they were not allowed to show, which they had to repress" (Adorno 2003: 682; Translation by me): Victims are particularly other migrants, from whom they not only demand the same hardship that they inflict on themselves. They also sometimes reproduce the racist hatred of supposedly lazy, useless migrants that they themselves are subjected to. *** (please note the Abstract addendum in the comment section)

Why Consumer Boycotts Don't Work in Poland? Discourse Analysis

Oral Presentation by Alicja Dudek[1]

[1] Krakow University of Economics, Poland

Consumer boycotts are often described as a form of collective resistance within capitalist markets, based on solidarity and coordinated action aimed at influencing corporations and political actors. While boycotts have proven effective in some countries, previous research shows that they remain relatively ineffective and underutilized in Poland (Szwed, 2020; Zasuwa et al., 2020). Cross-country comparisons indicate that Polish consumers are less willing to participate in boycotts than consumers in countries such as France (Szwed, 2020). This tendency is often explained by lower levels of social capital and interpersonal trust (Zasuwa, 2017). At the same time, the permissibility and legitimacy of consumer boycotts are still being discussed and reconceptualised (Donaldson, 2026), especially in the context of global crises such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Misiewicz et al., 2024) or the genocide in Gaza (Asyaidir et al., 2024). This study aims to explain why consumer boycotts in Poland rarely lead to collective impact, with a particular focus on the role of solidarity. The study uses critical discourse analysis to examine discussions on Polish online forums. The corpus is supplemented with selected online media articles addressing consumer boycotts in Poland. In contrast to studies focused on official statements or political discourse, this research concentrates on everyday narratives produced by individuals who comment on boycott initiatives. The study contributes to critical perspectives on consumer resistance and shows how discourses of individual responsibility, skepticism, and low trust weaken solidarity and collective action in the Polish context. Although the analysis focuses on consumer boycotts, the conclusions may also be relevant for other areas of collective resistance, including labor relations and employee rights, where solidarity is often emphasized but remains difficult to achieve in practice (Rintamäki & Alvesson, 2023).

The Impact of Changing Meanings of Work on Trade Union Representation in Italy

Oral Presentation by Matteo Antonini[1], Laura Galuppo[1], Silvio Ripamonti[1]

[1] Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy

This ongoing research project investigates the relationship between the crisis of trade union representation in Italy and the transformation of the meanings attached to work, with regard to the experience of meaninglessness. While unions face difficulties engaging with external workers these latter increasingly experience their jobs as fragmented, individualized and stripped of collective as well as individual significance with an increasing experience of meaningless work. This transformations also reflects within Unions where professional identities and sense of purpose of officials are challenged by the difficulty of interpreting workers' demands, especially those from the categories affected by job insecurity. Grounded in a critical and psychosociological frameworks, we conceptualize work as a socially constructed emotional experience. Drawing on theories of collusion and affective symbolization (Matte Blanco, 1975; Fornari, 1976; Carli & Paniccia, 1999, 2003), we explore the interplay between the experience of work and the crisis of unions' representation. Data collection is currently in progress through individual interviews and focus groups with union representatives and strategically relevant categories of workers, such as "atypical," "agency," and self-employed workers. Using Emotional Text Analysis (AET), we are identifying affective symbolizations that define how participants experience work and union representation. Interviews are expected to shed light on the impact of the loss of work's role in shaping collective identities, replaced by individualized logics of self-interest, mirrored in tensions within unions themselves. The research aims not only to produce analytical categories to interpret these transformations but also to collaboratively develop strategies with unions to renew their representative function in ways that support workers' emerging demands for meaningful work.

Diversity Icebreaker - An Experiential Learning Process Focusing on Individual Differences Relevant for Collaboration and Innovation

Workshop by Bjørn Z. Ekelund [1]

[1] Human Factors AS, Norway

In the Diversity Icebreaker seminar the participants co-create the meaning of three communication style dimensions, named Red, Blue and Green in mono-coloured groups due to their dominant scores where they describe themselves and others from inside and outside perspectives. Blue is more task and detail-oriented. Green is more holistic and future-oriented Red is more social and communicative. The language as a metaphorical structure used in the seminar builds a culture of inclusivity. The simplicity and ease of mastery of the categories make it easy for everyone to apply them. The colours are defined reciprocally, thus strengthening the needs of the others. It is named "icebreaker" because it is often used in the beginning of processes and conferences, involving participants in a co-creation of a shared language relevant for dialogical learning processes. The "Diversity" concept refers to "communication style / cognitive style". It is a seminar concept that has involved more than 1/2 million people in 80 countries. My intention here is to do a classical engaging process with all involving participants early in the conference, and then in my oral presentation share how I reframe this into a process where we reflect upon the power of language as a categorical system forming perceptions and interaction.

Signs and Reproduction. Ethos and Capitalist Modernity in a Critical Theory from the Americas

Oral Presentation by Stefan Gandler[1]

[1] Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, Mexico

In order to overcome the intrinsic "philosophical Eurocentrism", I have carefully analyzed the works of Bolívar Echeverría (UNAM) and his concepts of cultural mestizaje and baroque ethos. Cultural mestizaje refers to the melding of European with pre-Hispanic traditions – particularly important to Mexican culture. Examining the foundations of the cultural mestizaje, Echeverría develops the concept of historical ethos. This concept is based on the subsumption of the production of use-values through the production of value – and it is analyzed in its relationship to the production of signs. He distinguishes between four "historical ethe", different ways of living within the "unlivable" capitalist reality: the "realistic," "romantic," "classical" and "baroque" ethos. They result from the potential combinations of recognition and denial of the contradiction between the logic of value and the logic of use-values, on the one hand, and the importance given to the value and/or the use-value, on the other. The realistic ethos denies this contradiction while attributing greater importance to value. The romantic ethos also denies this contradiction, but leans more toward use-value. The classical ethos acknowledges the existence of this contradiction and submits to the logic of value, while the baroque also recognizes this contradiction, but attempts to preserve the dynamics of the use-value. The baroque and realistic ethe coexist in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, it is a paradoxical combination of soberness and rebelling. The today dominating realistic ethos, based on the principle of non-ambiguity, is unable to attain the highest ideal of Enlightenment – the recognition of the other as conditio sine qua non for the constitution of subjectivity of the self. The baroque ethos, on the other hand, borrows its name from the baroque art movement, with its capacity to combine and mix diverse elements and styles which, seen form a "serious" point of view can not be combined or mixed. It was the only art form in Nueva España capable of integrating elements of indigenous art. A mutual lack of "comprehension" exists on both sides of this ethos; the elements do not "understand" one another but have agreed to peacefully coexist by turning a blind eye and a deaf ear when necessary. They do not comprehend or recognize one another; yet, neither seeks to destroy or aggressively exclude the other. It is this incongruous attitude, garmented in ambiguous speech, that enables the baroque ethos to tolerate differences among people – what makes it in certain sense more "modern" (open towards other cultures) than the other ethe. These theoretical contributions of Bolívar Echeverría are confronted conceptually in my research project For a Critical Theory from the Americas with the critique of ideology from the "classical" Critical theory (M. Horkheimer, Th. W. Adorno, H. Marcuse, F. Neumann, O. Kirchheimer, W. Benjamin), inspired in G. Lukács' History and class consciousness, who–using the terms of B. Echeverría–only analyzed the ideology of the realistic ethos. Our project is now (I am part of a working group in Mexico in Latin America), to reorganize the debate on Critical theory beyond Habermas and Honneth et al.–in the original radical (radix) way, but overcoming the mentioned limitation, unfolding in that way a Critical theory from the Americas. Note: Stefan Gandler, Critical Marxism in Mexico. Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez and Bolívar Echeverría. Trans. George Ciccariello-Maher and the author. Leiden/Boston, Brill Academic Press, Spring 2015, 467 pp. (Historical Materialism Book Series, vol. 87).

On the Concept of Instituting Psychology

Oral Presentation by Jean Nikola Cudina[1]

[1] Hannover University, Germany

This talk addresses a philosophical discussion on the foundations of critic in psychology by questioning its dominant conceptual and disciplinary structures. It is guided by a central question: How can critique be assumed as a constitutive and transversal principle of psychology, both in its scientific and professional dimensions? Rather than accepting the historically normative, technocratic, and adaptive orientation of mainstream psychology, this work argues for a conception of critique as a central and structuring axis of psychological practice. It proposes moving beyond a peripheral or reactive form of critique to one that actively reimagines the discipline from within. To this end, the concept of instituting psychology is introduced as an analytical tool to problematizing the normative structure of the discipline. The hypothesis is that critique should become a transversal force that permeates training, professional activity, research practices, and epistemological assumptions. This critique is a practice of continuous conceptual vigilance, capable of interrogating the categories that organize psychological knowledge, their ideological roles, and their social implications. I argue that instituting psychology offers a conceptual framework that embraces this ongoing critical task. It does not simply respond to disciplinary limits but interrogates the very conditions under which psychological knowledge is produced and legitimized. By doing so, it opens the possibility of transforming psychology at its core rethinking the discipline as a dynamic and ethical space of creation, reflection, and political engagement. This conceptual proposal situates critique as an ethical and political responsibility of psychological work, highlighting the capacity of professionals to participate in the transformation of their own field. The talk aims to contribute to a dialogical discussion guide to the construction of a reflective, situated, and socially committed psychology, one that understands critique as a horizon for its ethical and political reinvention.

Changes in the Organization of Work and Psychological Practices: Psychologists Amid Labor Transformations, 1996–2020

Oral Presentation by Hernan Camilo Pulido-Martinez[1], Daniel Camilo Palacios-Medina[1], Kelly Natali Coca-Peña

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This paper presents advances from a study that adopts a critical, socio-historical, and political–economic perspective to examine the entanglements between transformations in labor regimes and the configuration of psychological practices in Colombia. Drawing on an archive of narratives produced by psychologists who graduated from the Faculty of Psychology at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana across four generational cohorts (1986–1990, 1996–2000, 2006–2010, and 2016–2020), the study critically reconstructs how professional interventions have been shaped by, and have contributed to, broader processes of labor restructuring, neoliberal reform, and the intensification of precariousness. These cohorts entered professional practice under markedly unequal and historically specific labor conditions, reflecting shifting configurations of power, governance, and subjectivity in the world of work. The first generation developed their practices within relatively stable employment arrangements, largely informed by managerial and human relations paradigms aligned with Fordist labor relations. The second generation entered the labor market amid processes of economic liberalization, privatization, and early flexibilization. The third generation built their professional trajectories in a context of intensified flexibilization, characterized by contractual fragmentation, the normalization of self-entrepreneurship, and the expansion of “light” psychological technologies such as coaching and self-management discourses. The fourth generation has entered an increasingly precarious and algorithmically mediated labor landscape, shaped by deindustrialization, automation, and digitalization. The archive is being constructed through oral history interviews that document situated narratives of professional practice, using a snowball sampling strategy to capture relational and institutional trajectories. The resulting historical account is developed in dialogue with critical methodologies in the history and sociology of psychology. Rather than treating psychological practice as a neutral technical activity, the study analyzes it as a historically contingent form of labor governance and subjectivation. Overall, the project contributes a critical history of contemporary psychology in Colombia by situating professional practices within processes of psychologization, neoliberal regulation, and social inequality.

Social Alienation in the Context of Economy – Thought Forms of Capitalistic Dehumanization

Oral Presentation by Wolfgang G. Weber[1], Christine Unterrainer[1], Thomas Höge[1], Severin Hornung[1]

[1] Universität Innsbruck, Austria

Applied psychology is increasingly called upon to contribute, through its own research, to the analysis of the psychological and social consequences of economic, political, and ecological crises. For this reason, it will find it difficult to avoid incorporating social science conceptualizations of the relationship between economic structural conditions, associated social ideologemes, and their effects on the behavioral orientations of actors in the context of work and consumption into its theoretical development and empirical research. The prevailing fields of work, organizational, and economic (W-O-E) psychology have, however, scarcely drawn upon conceptual alternatives from the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory. In our view, this abstinence is responsible for the fact that the question of the extent to which capitalist principles can intrude into employees' behavioural orientations and contribute to widespread dehumanization processes which induce repercussions on democratic societies remains both a theoretical and empirical desideratum within W-O-E psychology. This shortcoming continues even though conceptualizing a societal mediation of psychological and social processes and resulting socialization effects has been one of the main foci of the Frankfurt School. Thus, we will present a conceptualization of social alienation in the economic context. Despite certain conceptual differences, representative works by authors of the Frankfurt School (T. W. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, H. Marcuse, E. Fromm) and their theoretical environment (J. Israel, A. Sohn-Rethel) that we have examined reveal a—more or less—shared conceptualization of social alienation. It's core describes dehumanizing thought forms and perspectives of interaction that reduce one's own person or other people to an imagined economic utility and reject universally applicable human dignity. Five interrelated dimensions can be classified at least: 1) Marketing Orientation ,2) Commodity Fetishism, 3) Economistic Reification of Humans, 4) Reification of Societal Conditions, 5) Impairment of Universal Perspective Taking. According to Critical Theory, these thought forms can result from organizational or consumption-related socialization processes in the workplace and the consumer sphere—and the more severe they are—the more strongly radical capitalist principles of economic activity and management are implemented in those contexts. On this critical-theoretical basis, we have constructed the Social Alienation in the Economy Questionnaire encompassing those five dimensions of alienation. Using the conceptualization and the questionnaire as examples, we would like to discuss the extent to which concepts from Critical Theory can also be applied to emancipatory research within the framework of quantitative data analysis methods, thereby helping to address fundamental research gaps in traditional W-O-E psychology.

Machiavellianism as a Link Between Perceived Neoliberalism, Unethical Behavior and Emotional Exhaustion

Oral Presentation by Filiz Meidrodt[1], Stefan Diestel[1], Wladislaw Rivkin[2]

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Neoliberal beliefs emphasizing competition and self-reliance increasingly shape modern work environments, yet little is known about how these beliefs shape employees' behaviour and well-being. Based on recent research showing that organizational cues (e.g., competition, norms of self-interest) foster Machiavellian tendencies and on the self-interest perspective of unethical pro-organizational behaviour (UPB) we propose that perceived neoliberalism promotes Machiavellianism among employees which in turn fosters UPB. Besides these potentially negative ethical effects harming others (e.g., clients), we additionally argue, based on Conservation of Resources Theory and research linking Machiavellianism with heightened job strain, that Machiavellianism will also foster emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, we suggest that explicit power motive tendencies amplify the positive relationship between perceived neoliberalism and Machiavellianism, as power-oriented employees might be particularly sensitive to social cues embedded in neoliberal work environments that focus on competition and individual success. To test our proposed research model, data was acquired via a longitudinal study with four measurement points in the UK (N = 392). Based on Latent Moderated Structural Equation Modelling we found empirical support for our hypotheses: perceived neoliberalism predicted Machiavellianism and this effect was amplified as a function of power motive. Additionally, Machiavellianism mediated the effect of perceived neoliberalism on emotional exhaustion and unethical pro-organizational behaviour. Notably, the indirect effect of perceived neoliberalism on the outcomes was nonsignificant at low levels of the power motive, but significant at medium and high levels. Thus, our study provides initial insights that perceived neoliberal beliefs foster Machiavellian tendencies within employees, particularly among individuals with a stronger power motive. These tendencies than increase both UPB and emotional exhaustion, making neoliberalism not only an ethical concern in organizations but also posing a risk to employees' psychological well-being.

Abstract Corporations and Concrete Persons: A Marriage not Necessarily Made in Heaven

Oral Presentation by Martin Morf[1]

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There are organisations and there are people. Organisations are large, hierarchical, objective structures somehow “out there” and beyond individual experience and consciousness. People, individuals, or persons, on the other hand, are subjective entities propelled by perceptions and ideas which somehow seem to be “in there.” The type of organisation considered here is the commercial corporation offering goods, services, and employment to flesh-and-blood individual persons. Such corporate entities are what makes modern life possible, but the fit between them and their dependents is less than perfect. Corporations are typically large, distant, and abstract while a person is small, up close, and concrete. The objective of this paper is to look at this mismatch within a comprehensive contingency table of empirical and rational epistemic claims, made about ontological entities which are either subjective or deemed objective in the sense of “independent of human minds.” The table constructed allows situating corporations and persons as the hypothesized abstract and concrete entities. It also suggests how they broadly relate to mainstream psychology (e.g., Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and its earlier materialist European critics (e.g., Holzkamp, 1983) and its current, largely American, and mainly humanist critics (e.g., Held, 2004).

The Life-World and the Psychologist as an Authoritative Figure: A Scientist-Humanist Alternative

Oral Presentation by Konstantinos Kontis[1]

[1] University of Ioannina, Greece

This presentation attempts to demystify the imaginary and real figure of the psychologist as an objective subject-supposed-to-know and a bearer of a secure method of psychological 'truth'. To attempt this demystification I engage with the Husserlian concept of the life-world. The life-world is the prescientific world of everyday experience, of the "naive" life already there, pregiven, before any theory or objectification is attempted. It is the world of dynamic intersubjectivity and experience, of the subjective-relative out of which the objective emerges. The psychologist -and every scientist according to Husserl- is situated within the life-world. I suggest that it is an onto-epistemological necessity for psychology, in order to exist as an independent, "objective" discipline, to deny and/or surpass the life-word and claim that there is a deeper or proper way of studying experience, other than the way is it manifested in a first-person perspective of a subject operating in the life world. This ideological/epistemological move also includes the suppression of folk psychology and its replacement by an objectivist method. It is my suggestion that through this process, whether concealed or open, the psychologist can inhabit the position of a subject-supposed-to-know and exercise a professional-scientific gaze upon the Other's experience. This mystification of the psychologist is also aided by an objectivist rhetoric and the use of specific methods (statistical, neuroscientific, therapeutic, etc.) that require highly skilled expertise and technical training (e.g. the fact that questionnaires can only be administered and scored by a psychologist). My suggestion is that this image of the psychologist should be dismantled and a way out of it is through theorizing on the relation between the life-world and objective psychological knowledge. Another practical way is through the psychological humanities. This means substituting the imaginary figure of the psychologist (and psychology in general) as an expert-above-the-life-world with the image of the scientist-humanist operating within the life-world and within communities and by using folk psychological insights, not 'surpassing' them. This would require of the psychologist to engage in the arts (e.g. literature), philosophy, social theory, history, in an attempt of a hermeneutic understanding of subjectivity rather than seeking final causal explanations and providing a mirror of nature regarding mental life.

“Performance is what counts here” – An Exploration of the Neoliberal Organizational Climate

Oral Presentation by Christine Unterrainer[1], Thomas Höge[1]; Severin Hornung[1]

[1] Universität Innsbruck, Austria

In work- and organizational psychology, the organizational climate is defined as employees’ shared perception of organizational practices, policies, and procedures. The prevailing literature describes both general and specific forms of the organizational climate (e.g., the socio-moral climate). This presentation focuses on the conceptualization and operationalization of the neoliberal organizational climate as a specific type of climate. The neoliberal organizational climate is characterized by the dimensions 1) instrumentality, 2) individualism, and 3) competitiveness, which served as the basis for the development of the questionnaire presented here (NLBQ-C). While previous studies have examined related aspects (such as objectifying or competitive climates), they have not addressed the integrated construct of the neoliberal organizational climate. The present paper provides results of the factorial structure and first construct validity from two quantitative survey studies (study 1: N = 176; study 2: N = 437). Those initial studies found evidence for a three- and four-dimensional structure of the questionnaire. Study 1 reveals positive associations between the neoliberal organizational climate and both work intensification and work extensification, as well as negative correlations with employees’ psychological well-being. Furthermore, in both studies employees perceive a stronger neoliberal organizational climate in profit than in non-profit organizations and working in industries like finance, trade and insurance compared to education, instruction, health and social services.

Human-Robot Collaboration in Front-of-House Restaurants: Implications for Human Staff

Oral Presentation by Premilla D'Cruz[1], Ernesto Noronha[1]

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The rapid development of artificial intelligence has resulted in higher human-robot collaboration (HRC) at work. This paper reports a multi-site, multi-city study using photodocumentation, observation, and in-depth and photoelicitation interviews to examine human staff's experiences of human-robot teams in front-of-house (FOH) operations in Indian restaurants. The findings showed that the introduction of robot colleagues and the division of FOH tasks between humans and robots triggered job insecurity among the already precarious human staff, reflecting the threat of the substitution/replacement hypothesis (Ali et al., 2022; Bankins et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2020). Yet, since the robots were reflexive/reactive IS agents with limited functionality (Baird and Maruping, 2021), lapses marked their task completion. Human staff, who were ever vigilant in order to ensure flawless customer service, displayed a coordination response, constantly monitoring and appraising the situation and covering up for their robot team-mates' shortcomings. Human staff's ensuing strain was offset by their realization that the robots' limited functionality made them indispensable and safeguarded their employment. Nonetheless, the augmentation/enhancement hypothesis (Ali et al., 2022; Bankins et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2020) was evidenced through human staff's learning about new technology and its functioning and troubleshooting, with them also reporting that being part of a human-robot team boosted their self-esteem. The study adds nuance to extant insights on how technology re-shapes human work, highlighting the challenges of integrating humans and robots into a coherent and seamless workgroup (You and Robert, 2023) marked by interdependence, which works jointly and cohesively towards shared purpose and responsibility (Richards, 2016; Semeraro et al., 2023). AI's and robots' effects on employees depends on how AI is deployed, with Industry 5.0 emphasizing the 'human element' to make work more sustainable. Obviously, social issues in HRC in terms of the impact on workforces and employment, warrant attention. Equally, ethical issues in HRC need to be attended to, as these are essential to ensuring that human dignity is upheld (Baltrusch et al., 2022; Dhanda et al., 2025).

Leisure Crafting: A Critical Review

Oral Presentation by Lotta Harju[1], Kang Leng Ho[2]

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Research on crafting in the leisure domain, an extension of job crafting literature, has increased rapidly amidst and after the COVID-19 pandemic driven by the expansion of remote and hybrid work practices that leave more time and freedom for workers to structure their work and engage in leisure activities. Similar to job crafting, which refers to adjusting the work activities to meet individual needs and desires, leisure crafting (Berg et al., 2010; Petrou & Bakker, 2016), or off-job crafting (van Bloom et al., 2020), refers to shaping such activities at leisure. These conceptualizations define crafting in the leisure domain either as fulfilling central human psychological needs (de Bloom et al., 2020; Petrou & Bakker, 2016), or shaping leisure resources and demands (Tsaur et al., 2023). For purposes of this review, we will refer to these activities uniformly as leisure design. Because the boundaries between work and non-work domains as well as how people allocate time across these domains are socially constructed (Ashforth et al., 2000; Feldman et al., 2020), this emerging research on leisure design reflects the social meanings on how workers should spend their time outside of their work. We conducted an integrative critical review of 43 studies on crafting in the leisure domain published since 2010 to provide a synthesis of this emerging literature and reflect on how it reflects our understanding of and approach to workers' time use outside of work. Based on this review, we identify four themes, which represent the social meanings of leisure design that are reproduced in research. These themes portray leisure design as: 1) finding meaning when there is none at work, 2) recovering from work, 3) improving well-being, and 4) optimizing work performance. Our findings reveal two main tendencies in leisure design research. First, leisure design research largely understands the function of leisure as compensating for work and/or benefitting work. Second, this research reflects the social norms concerning leisure time use, and specifically the worker's responsibility to engage in leisure activities that benefit productivity and performance at work. Although these approaches are presented as a ‘win-win’ situation that enable workers to enjoy leisure while amassing benefits for work, they also beg the question of whether research is normalizing the encroachment of work onto the private live of the workers. Propositions for future research will be discussed.

Careers: A Critical Dialectical Review

Oral Presentation by Katharina Chudzikowski[1], Alexandra Bristow[2], Katharina Chudzikowski[3], Nadia DeGama[4], Oliver Ratle[5], Sarah Robinson[6]

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In this paper, we critically and dialectically review career research. There is an urgent need of re-examination due to rapidly changing working and employment practices in the context of complex global societal challenges and recent crises (Bristow et al., 2026). Broad socio-political unrest and the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that workers all around the world have been pushed to operate under deteriorating conditions and increasing workloads. Further, neoliberal career scripts, defined as schemas and norms, or required 'performances' (Barley, 1989) such as a focus on individualism, competitiveness, and the pursuit excellence and perfectionism, have come to define what it means to have a successful career. These notions and their underlying organizational and professional norms (e.g., Grey, 1994; Butler & Spoelstra, 2012; Chudzikowski et al., 2020) are connected to the image of the successful careerist, which while valorised, is also replete with hyper productivity, a focus on performance metrics (e.g. Beer et al., 2022), and self-interest, and also linked to working lives that are becoming increasingly unhealthy, marked by stress and burnout (Bristow et al., 2019). Following the Covid-19 pandemic, many are starting to question prescribed career scripts and working patterns as witnessed by 'the great resignation' (Sheather & Slattery, 2021). Yet critically questioning and developing one's own or other people's careers means engaging in asymmetrical power relations (Schneidhofer et al., 2015), and diverting from the established norms and scripts involves engaging in practices of resistance, subversion, and bricolage (Bristow et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2023). To more critically envision agendas for future career research, it is necessary to work with the complexities of contemporary career contexts (Kozhevnikov et al. 2026) and engage with the choices, dilemmas, tensions and contradictions embedded in how contemporary careers are experienced. We contribute by: Firstly, we provide an overview of the key concepts of careers. Secondly, we review existing career literature to identify what we can learn from it. Thirdly, we present our critical dialectical review method and demonstrate its application to career literature in management and organisation studies. Fourthly, we conduct a dialectical analysis of the tensions and contradictions within the literature, and finally, we present our key insights and develop a dialectical research agenda.

Paradox of Calling: Why Freelance Journalists Continue to Devote Themselves to the Cause ?

Oral Presentation by Anabel Cossette Civitella[1], Samuel Lamoureux[2]

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In recent decades, the media sector has entered a polycrisis marked by three intertwined trends: the collapse of traditional media revenues due to the rise of digital platforms, the decline of distribution income as audiences become increasingly fragmented, and the erosion of journalistic authority amid growing public distrust, which has even led to hostility and violence toward journalists. This crisis has led to a deterioration in working conditions for journalists, but more specifically for freelance journalists (FJ). For them, it translates into very low rates, a virtual inability to negotiate, a lack of protection against financial risks, and a lack of support at work, risk factors that affect journalists' mental health. As a result, many freelancers choose to make sacrifices in their practice to survive, such as taking on public relations assignments. In Quebec (Canada), 59% of freelance journalists also have another job. Given that freelance journalists are known to be the most precarious of all information workers, we ask the following question: what motivates freelance journalists to persevere in this profession, which poses such a high risk to their mental health? Inspired by literature in management and organizational psychology, we demonstrate that this polycrisis produces a series of paradoxes for journalists. We define paradox as the persistent contradiction of interdependent elements. To expose the paradoxical tensions at play, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 Quebec FJ professional association members. These interviews were transcribed and inductively coded. The study highlights three key insights: 1) FJ persist in a psychologically risky profession because they feel a strong vocational calling; 2) this calling is paradoxical, as pursuing “ideal” journalism (e.g., investigative journalism) reduces their income while producing more “pragmatic” work (e.g., public relation) undermines their capacity to uphold journalistic ideals; and 3) this tension generates forms of suffering at both individual and collective levels. Despite the high psychological risks, independent journalists persist in their profession because of a paradoxical vocation that traps them in a system that exploits their dedication. Based on these findings, we argue that the tensions faced by FJ go beyond idiosyncrasies: through the paradoxes of the FJ vocation, a reality shared by more workers, whether self-employed or salaried, becomes clear.

Right-Wing Radicalism and Emancipation in Therapy: A Subject-Scientific Perspective on Learning from Therapeutic Challenges

Workshop by Peter Brook[1]

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When therapists perceive their patients as politically markedly right-wing or even far-right, obstacles and difficulties may arise in therapeutic practice that can be hard or even impossible to resolve satisfactorily and may therefore constitute a lasting professional challenge. Such cases do not only challenge therapists individually; they also expose the limits of mainstream psychological approaches and highlight contradictions within dominant conceptions of emancipation. In this sense, they represent instructive problem constellations for demonstrating the relevance of a subject-scientific approach as developed within Critical Psychology (Holzkamp/Osterkamp etc). In response to these challenges, therapists may initially resort to defensive coping strategies that promise ad hoc relief. Alternatively, they may develop a self-determined interest in learning when they judge that they lack the knowledge or skills required to meet the standards they set for their own therapeutic practice. From the experienced discrepancy between one's own demands and one's actual possibilities for action, a need may arise for a deeper engagement with the encountered problems. This engagement aims at expanding one's knowledge, skills, and modes of experience beyond the therapeutic situation – more generally, one's possibilities for action and control over one's life conditions (Handlungs-/Verfügungsmöglichkeiten). Through reason-guided learning actions (begründete Lernhandlungen), therapists can separate a learning object (Lerngegenstand) from their initial practical problems and pursue it outside the therapeutic context within a learning loop. Such learning actions may include further training, reflection on one's own affectedness by current political developments, political activism, or reading political theory and professional literature. With Holzkamp's theory of learning, these activities can be analysed as forms of learning as an opening up of the world (lernender Weltaufschluss), aimed at overcoming experienced restrictions of one's possibilities for action and life. The workshop introduces key concepts from Holzkamp's theory of learning to analyse a case of reason-guided learning and draw conclusions for therapeutic practice. Through reflection on reasons for learning and deeper engagement with the learning object, it demonstrates how defensive ways of dealing with political orientations can be transformed into new emancipatory perspectives for therapeutic practice.

Drivers of Students' Employment Relationship Frames: How is Social Background Linked to Pluralism in HRM Education?

Oral Presentation by Sabine Bösl[1]

[1] University of Innsbruck, Austria

Using survey data from 386 university students in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, this study examines how students' sociodemographic characteristics are associated with pluralism in the employment system. Pluralism is defined as the belief that employment relationships involve conflicts of interest that should be balanced through institutions such as labor law and trade unions. The findings show that students' economic, social, and cultural capital are only weak predictors of pluralism. However, students' social background plays a role in shaping pluralism when mediated by psychological capital. In addition, the data reveal differences in pluralism between management and psychology students and between genders, with female psychology students being most likely to support pluralism. These effects are mediated by students' equality orientation, but not by psychological capital. Overall, the findings suggest that normative orientations and trait-like qualities are more important in shaping students' views on employment relations than social background. This opens pathways for university interventions aimed at fostering pluralism.

Career Development Amid Precarious Employment Conditions: A Qualitative Study on Early Career Academics at Austrian Universities

Oral Presentation by Lisa Seubert[1], Lisa Reinstadler[2], Severin Hornung[2], Bernadette Kofler[3], Iris Kahn[3], Christian Seubert[2]

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[3] University College of Teacher Education Tyrol, Austria

Precarious employment conditions among early-career academics (fixed-term contracts, legislation prohibiting of so-called "chain employment relationships", part-time work) are a recurring theme within academia and beyond. These conditions provoke uncertainty about future life and impair career development. Performance pressure and intense competition lead to unpaid overtime, high stress levels and work-life-imbalance. Nevertheless, a scientific career offers a stimulating and challenging job, flexibility and freedom to engage in meaningful and intrinsically motivating research topics. This study examines how early-career academics in Austria perceive their job and employment situation and how this affects their private lives, career prospects and health. We embedded the study in a broad framework including macro-, meso- and micro-level as well as contextual aspects of precarious employment. Drawing on 14 interviews with pre- and postdocs across disciplines, we investigated subjective experiences along five-dimensions: reproductive–material, social–communicative, legal–institutional (participation), status and recognition, and meaningful–subject-related. Findings indicate pervasive job and career insecurities, uncertainties in career and life planning, mobility requirements, unpaid overtime, heightened performance and competitive pressures as well as blurred boundaries between work and non-work and impaired health. Despite these negative aspects, participants strongly identified with their job, reported appreciation, respect and support from their scientific community and colleagues, and experienced meaning in work. However, some interviewees reported about feelings of envy and resentment in this highly competitive working environment and about a decline in meaning in work. We discuss these dynamics within the framework of the neoliberal university and propose recommendations for the development of academic careers at individual and policy levels.

The Curriculum as the Key: Are Fachhochschulen a Threat to or a Solution for a More Humanistic Working Environment?

Oral Presentation by Julia Schöllbauer[1]

[1] Ferdinand Porsche FERNFH, Austria

The world of work is profoundly shaped by neoliberal paradigms. The associated social consequences include growing social inequality, gender-specific income disparities, a decline in civil society solidarity, and an increasing undermining of democracy and the social system. This lecture highlights the role of Fachhochschulen (FH, universities of applied sciences) as central educational institutions for future decision-makers in the economy. There is often a tendency towards unitarianism, particularly in economic teaching at Fachhochschulen. This one-sided perspective inevitably leads to students uncritically reproducing the neoliberal status quo in their working lives and then, as compliant 'professional experts', bringing it back into FH teaching. This creates a cycle that further strengthens neoliberal paradigms. However, since FH graduates are key figures in the working world, their behavior can theoretically not only reproduce the status quo but also bring humanistic changes to the working world. But how can FH teaching break the cycle outlined above without being politically didactic and thus generating reactance? The proposed solution focuses on increasing multi-perspectivity in the teaching of a FH master's degree programme in business administration and business psychology. By integrating sociological, philosophical and political perspectives, students should be enabled to understand social processes in politics and economics and the underlying views of humanity in a more holistic way, thereby also enabling them to critically question their role. The socially critical view from the perspective of other sciences is intended to establish the necessary emotional distance from the course content so that it does not have a politically didactic effect (which fundamental critical perspectives within the main disciplines could have) but rather broadens horizons and thus actually enables 'innovative approaches' as stipulated by the NQF at Level 7. Through this educational approach, academic training at Fachhochschulen could broaden the horizons and strengthen the cognitive flexibility of key players in the economy. If, at the same time, their intrinsic motivation to strengthen social democratic values in working life is sparked, they can bring self-determined humanistic changes to the Austrian world of work.

Neoliberalisation and Academic Careers: A Qualitative Study from Austria

Oral Presentation by Anja Hofmair[1]

[1] Universität Innsbruck, Austria

This research investigates how the neoliberalisation of the university – and the internalised neoliberal ideologies that accompany it – shape academic working conditions and career paths. Building on research that links market-oriented governance, intensified competition, and performance metrics to growing precarity in academia, the study examines the following research question: How do the neoliberalisation of universities and internalised neoliberal ideologies affect the career paths of academic staff in Austria? Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with academic staff, both women and men, in different positions and employment arrangements in the area of social science at an Austrian university. Topics included their professional experiences, perceptions, and assessments of working conditions and career prospects. The material was analysed using Thematic Analysis. Three overarching themes were identified: (1) Neoliberal management approaches and the governance of the university, including hierarchical structures, precarious employment, informal networks, prestige cultures, along with forms of instrumentality, individualism, and competitiveness; (2) The impact of precarious working conditions on academic work and careers, with consequences for flexibility and performance demands, health and well-being, career uncertainty, limited exit-options, and structural disadvantages; and (3) Coping and action strategies in the system of the neoliberal university, ranging from academic ideals and motivations alongside strategic career planning to adaptation and resignation, as well as forms of resistance. Overall, findings show how neoliberalisation structures academic labour and career trajectories while shaping subjectivities. Beyond institutional measures to reduce precarity and widen equitable pathways, results indicate a need for sector-wide policy and legal reforms aligned with democratic rather than neoliberal principles. Participants' coping and action strategies emerge as leverage points for change that require alliances within and beyond universities. Accordingly, the study contributes qualitative evidence from Austria and indicates the need for institutional measures that reduce precarity, widen equitable career pathways, and align governance with the conditions required for sustainable, high-quality academic work.

Resilience and Conspiracy Mindset as Techniques of Psychological Governance in Times of Crisis

Oral Presentation by Anna Eva Andersen[1]

[1] RWTH Aachen, Germany

Contemporary governance research often prioritizes behavioural regulation such as compliance mechanisms, nudge architectures, and enforcement systems. This overlooks something more fundamental: the governance of interpretation itself. Under late capitalism, multi-crisis—economic instability, ecological breakdown, shifting power relations—no longer arrives as rupture but persists as condition. Governance operates less by directing conduct than by shaping sense-making in advance—determining what interpretations register as credible and which invite suspicion. This mode of governance relies increasingly on psychological categories that distinguish resilient from vulnerable cognition—particularly as informational authority becomes contested across multiple sites. This presentation examines cognitive resilience and conspiracy mindset as policy instruments in European Union crisis management, focusing on civic education and information security initiatives. Resilience now functions as normative ideal: the emotionally regulated subject who exercises epistemic caution and trusts institutional knowledge sources. EU policy documents rarely define the term explicitly. Instead it works through accumulation, marking a disposition rather than measurable capacity. Conspiracy mindset serves as diagnostic counterpart—framing particular modes of scepticism not as political disagreement but as cognitive vulnerability. Together, these concepts enable governance through psychological classification rather than direct prohibition. The analysis centres on two cases: German educational programmes teaching students to identify Verschwörungsideologien through psychological markers, and the EU's EUvsDisinfo initiative addressing state-backed disinformation amid contested informational authority. Despite different scales and audiences, both cases illustrate how psychological expertise becomes enlisted in defining cognitive normality. These concepts are not neutral psychological descriptors but normative frameworks regulating interpretive boundaries. When institutional scepticism is understood through the lens of conspiracy thinking while adaptation to precarity becomes resilience, psychology's traditional role shifts. The discipline finds itself defining not merely individual difference but the boundaries of acceptable political cognition.This raises questions about applied psychology's relationship to political power in societies structured by permanent multi-crisis.

The Mouraria Archive: A Critical Psychosocial Approach to Emplaced Social Justice under Urban Transformation

Oral Presentation by Maria Alba[1], Susana Batel[1], Andrés Di Masso[2]

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Driven by neoliberal urban planning policies and increasing global mobilities, gentrification and touristification currently pose major challenges for cities in Southern Europe. In Lisbon, specifically, the unsustainable rise in housing prices and the transformation of neighbourhoods into sites for tourism-led consumption are reshaping how communities experience their everyday places. These processes lead not only to the physical displacement of residents, but also to symbolic forms of dispossession, including experiences of dislocation, defamiliarization, as well as the disruption of people-place relations and community bonds among those who are able to stay in the affected neighbourhoods. In this ongoing research, we adopt a critical psychosocial approach to examine a touristified neighbourhood in Lisbon's historical centre – Mouraria – that has been associated with diverse representations over time, from popular and traditional to multicultural and cosmopolitan. Our aim is to analyse how representations of Mouraria spatially unfold and are (re)produced by different actors over time, and how they intertwine with past and present mobilities. Drawing on a critical realist framework, we perform a Thematic Analysis of media materials and institutional documents, such as urban regeneration plans, to assemble a Mouraria Archive, spanning from the end of the Portuguese dictatorship to the present day. We argue that this historical and spatial approach enables tracing how representations of place are appropriated by actors holding uneven social power over time, and how these materialise in the territory. Moreover, we explore how specific symbolic aspects of Mouraria are mobilised under competing representations of the neighbourhood, and with what consequences for the (re)production of situated social exclusions. Overall, this study contributes to critical psychosocial research by highlighting how power dynamics shape the social construction of places in contexts of urban change, and by informing more socially just urban policies.

Discernment as a Shared Skill: Critique-in-Action in Times of Capitalist Crises

Oral Presentation by Anna Saave[1]

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Across overlapping crises—ecological breakdown, democratic erosion, war, and social fragmentation—critical research and activism are marked by increasing analytical precision and urgency, while realpolitik remains largely stalled. Those engaged in these fields confront a twofold challenge: external obstacles such as stalled climate politics and the dismantling of social welfare systems, alongside internal dynamics of exhaustion, fragmentation, and loss of momentum. This contribution reflects on the collective, personal, and interpersonal tensions encountered in practicing a critique of capitalism under these conditions. Starting from experiences within research and activist contexts, the poster examines the intimate toll of sustained engagement with systems of power—capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy—that systematically undermine ecological and social flourishing, even as those engaged work toward precisely that flourishing. Rather than suggesting that critique turns against itself, these dynamics are interpreted as the relational and affective costs of sustained critical practice under conditions of permanent crisis and limited political uptake. While critical work continues to generate important insights and distinctions, it often lacks shared capacities for orientation, accountability, and collective decision-making—capacities conceptualized here as discernment as a shared skill. Drawing on ecofeminist ethics, political economy, systems thinking, reflections from degrowth movements, and relational practices informed by systemic counseling, the poster introduces discernment as a shared skill as a response to this gap. Discernment is conceptualized not as an individual cognitive ability, moral value, or normative ideal, but as a collectively cultivated, relational, and embodied capacity to navigate contradiction, affect, and power in critical research and movement contexts. Emphasizing practice over prescription, discernment operates as critique-in-action: enabling connection, decisiveness, and accountability despite difference and uncertainty. The poster outlines the necessity of shared discernment under capitalist crises, develops the concept, and situates it within the broader mosaic of transformative critical sustainability studies.

Resisting the Passive Voice: Citizens' Agency in the Face of Ideological Pacification

Oral Presentation by Sona Manusyan[1]

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Drawing on an ongoing study of civic (dis)engagement and perceived agency in the layered, insecure Armenian context of post-revolution disillusionment and post-war recovery, I examine how the political language around "peace," circulated through government-affiliated media and articulated in the idiom of prevailing Western policy discourse, positions citizens as objects rather than agentic subjects. I explore how this language is experienced and resisted, and what it does to the subject's perceived agency – individual and collective. Bringing together ongoing critical analysis, reflexive media study, researcher self-positioning, and qualitative interviews, I argue that the prospect of peace—anchored in genuine public need—is simplified and imposed top-down, without authorship or voice. Framed in externally accommodating, Western-facing terms, this discourse risks functioning as a subtle form of subjugation: disciplining a defeated society through a vocabulary that is ostensibly unquestionable. Peace talk becomes part of the political taming toolbox, carrying implicit messages of conditional acceptance into the western space contingent upon "good behavior," while de-historicizing a collectively endured conflict and sidelining the immediacy of war memory, grief, and grievances of an emerging democracy. I identify two intertwined mechanisms through which this mind- taming operates: psychologizing and de-historicizing. Structural, historical, and geopolitical complexities are reduced to cognitive and emotional deficiencies of the defeated nation. Public suffering is reframed as maladaptive affect; historical trauma is downplayed; predominately external critical discourse is assimilated as self-criticism. In this way, collective memory and identity are implicitly attacked, agency is displaced. Juxtaposing dominant political discourse with reflexive first-person accounts, I demonstrate how subjects critically interpret, negotiate, and at times resist these imposed "truths." The analysis reveals both the possibilities and limits of reasserting lifeworld perspectives under multiple ideological pressures and the silent, hard-to-articulate anxieties of the subjects. I conclude by arguing for more critically engaged psychological scholarship in safeguarding collective self-worth and sustaining perceived agency in recovering societies.

Cycles of Organizational Democracy: A Systems Theory Rereading of Degeneration

Oral Presentation by Mengyao (Angel) Yang[1], Alessia Contu[1]

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This paper revisits a central debate in organizational democracy: how democratic enterprises can remain economically viable while preserving democratic member control. A review of the organizational degeneration literature reveals limited theorization that captures the processual and intertwined nature of practices shaping the viability of organizational democracy. Drawing on Koss Hartmann's (2014) notion of subversive functionalism, we propose a systems analysis that mobilizes the functionalist and processual assumptions of Katz and Kahn's (1966) open systems theory to examine the viability and degeneration of democratic member control. We illustrate this systems analysis with retention and degeneration examples from the existing literature, which reveal reinforcing mechanisms linking democratic participation and economic viability. Applying this analytical approach, we performatively reframe organizational democracy as a viable alternative that is continuously sustained through the ongoing enactment of democratic member control in day-to-day practices. Our paper contributes to current alternative organizations literature by bridging system concepts with critical management studies, challenging the myth that democratic member control is inherently inefficient and calling for knowledge production that is meaningful to practitioners.

Labour and Democratic Values at Work and Beyond

Oral Presentation by Annette Kluge[1], Manfred Wannöffel[1]

[1] Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany

The aim of this paper is to discuss the relationship between democracy at the workplace and the overall societal and political development. We will outline the so far isolated research streams in industrial sociology, organizational, and social psychology as well as leadership research which should be integrated for a comprehensive understanding of the interplay of contributing factors at work that affect individual and collective democratic values at work an beyond. The initial thesis is that the relationship between market and democracy in social and political life cannot be sustainable in the long term without the establishment of social institutions and democratic practices at the workplace. The experiences of employees with relative powerlessness in economic decisions in companies, with a lack of participation in the organisation of work and employment, and with declining participation in social and cultural life have finally an impact on the political sphere of societies. Following arguments from German labour and industrial sociologists, a stable democratic order in a society is only possible if working people not only determine their representatives as voters in parliaments, governments and administrations, but also have a say in their specific working and employment conditions in companies and organizations in their everyday work as economic citizens. However, since the implementation of neoliberal economic policies in the working world from the mid-1980s onwards, a creeping erosion of social institutions in the workplace and democratic practices has been observed in Western European countries (Aglietta, 1986). For now 40 years these practices of deregulation pose long-term risks to the political order of western societies, as they in turn have an accelerating impact on social institutions at the workplace and in companies. From a work- and organisational psychology and socio-technical perspective, the quote „„The product of work is people“ (Herbst, 1975) expresses that also workplace design and managerial behavior experiences crucially impact human democratic values development inside and also outside the workplace. Organisation produce more than goods and services. Organisation produce more than goods and services. Organizations, through leadership processes and factors influencing justive perceptions at work, also influence the proactivity of employees outside the organization, their active desire for societal contribution and participation.

Reworking a Typology of Democratic Organizations: A Review and Integration of the Literature

Oral Presentation by Benjamin Lum[1], Christine Unterrainer[1], Wolfgang G. Weber[1], Thomas Höge[1], Severin Hornung[1]

[1] Universität Innsbruck, Austria

Current research on organizational democracy and participative workplace structures is heterogeneous and fragmented across several disciplines. Studies include qualitative and quantitative research, as well as a variety of conceptual works focusing on different dimensions of organizational democracy, including structures and processes, as well as outcomes, thereby establishing numerous frameworks. This contribution presents a literature review based on the results of a literature search in the EBSCO database, leading to the screening of 145 publications addressing typological approaches of organizational democracy, published between 2016 and 2026. In addition, relevant studies were identified through a berry-picking strategy, allowing the inclusion of influential conceptual contributions beyond the initial search criteria. The study pursues two objectives: Firstly, it aims to provide an overview of qualitative and conceptual studies on organizational democracy, analyzing and comparing different forms of democratic organizations presented in the literature. Furthermore, it analyzes and compares different dimensions, levels, and frameworks to understand how democratic structures and processes are characterized and defined in organizational research and how they are affected by economic constraints and power structures. Its second aim is to rework and extend an existing typology of democratic structures and organizations developed by the ODEM research group. The typology is compared to different democratic criteria found throughout the literature and conceptualizes which criteria can be integrated. In addition, a new dimension, "democratic resilience", is suggested, which describes practices to prevent degeneration and to support regeneration, resulting in an extensive and inclusive taxonomy. It thereby combines current heterogeneous research findings and includes various forms of organizational democracy described in the literature. The developed taxonomy is suggested as a theory-based model to assess, evaluate and design democratic organizations in the current world of work.

Caring for a Multispecies Community in Consumer Society? Questions of Commodification and Alienation in an Eco-Social Context

Oral Presentation by Reingard Spannring[1]

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The unfolding of the ecological disaster has led authors to reconsider the position of the human subject and his/her relationship with the earth. One entry point is the concept of ecological citizenship, which emphasizes responsibility, community, and care. However, the discourse of ecological citizenship often reduces the human subject to a critical consumer-citizen and citizenship education to the production of such a subject. Buidling on Zymunt Bauman's work on consumer society, the position outlined in this conceptual paper provides a more fundamental critique of consumption as a way of being in and relating to the world. In particular, it foregrounds objectification, commodification, and its impacts on human and nonhuman subjectivity and the possibility of care within a multi-species community. The paper brings animal-sensitive work in environmental education research and political theory into dialogue with a more general critique of culture and pedagogy in consumer society. From this perspective, ecological citizenship education seeks to liberate human and nonhuman beings from predetermined behavioral results and functions, and opens the time and space for the subjectification of human and nonhuman citizens within the complex dynamics of a multi-species community. With this proposition, the paper contributes to an ecocentric understanding of ecological citizenship education that builds on the continuity of life and subjective experience. It hopes to spark a wider discussion of processes of commodification and alienation from an eco-social perspective at the conference.

Politics of Feeling: How Emotions and Structures Co-Shape Civic Engagement in Social Innovations for Sustainable Consumption

Oral Presentation by Mia Gesa Lehn[1], Julia Fülling[1]

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Social innovations for sustainable consumption contribute to reduce negative social and environmental impacts of current consumption patterns and challenge neoliberal and profit-orientated production logics. In community-organized initiatives such as repair cafés or energy cooperatives, , consumers become active co-creators. Studies indicate that emotional processes play a major role in whether people collectively engage in environmental protection and remain committed in the long term. However, emotional experiences do not arise in a vacuum, but in relation to external circumstances and thus in relation to socio-political conditions. As part of the REsI project emotional dynamics that arise in the context of civic engagement in social innovations for sustainable consumption are analyzed. This presentation provides an overview of the current status of the project. It outlines the results of a literature review, a survey of around 200–300 active members in social innovations for sustainable consumption, and first findings from two case studies – repair cafés and seedbanks - held in spring 2026. The case studies were picked on the basis of expected emancipatory potential and diversity of reached audiences of the activities of the initiative. The emotional dynamics are placed in relation to the socio-political conditions in which the initiatives operate. First analyses show that arising unpleasant emotions, like frustration, sadness, and disappointment, are closely related to the central challenges of social innovations for sustainable consumption, such as a lack of financing or suitable spaces. These challenges are especially important in times of shrinking civic spaces and increased pressure on initiatives (defunding, debanking). Another emotional challenge that was frequently reported was the exhaustion of volunteers, who often feel a high level of responsibility. This seems to be related to the prior-mentioned structural challenges as well as problems with recruiting new members. Last but not least, initial conclusions are presented on how emotions can be incorporated into the communication strategies and activities of initiatives in order to attract and retain members, and what political structures are required to strengthen motivating emotions.

Historical Knowledge as Reality Attunement: Colonial Memory Predicts Climate Justice Understanding

Oral Presentation by Sascha Kuhn[1], Syed Mohammad Omar[2], Glenn Adam[2]

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Public understanding of climate justice remains limited, despite growing recognition that the climate crisis is deeply entangled with historical and ongoing forms of global inequality. One central pathway linking these domains is colonialism, whose extractive and racialized structures have shaped both the drivers of climate change and the unequal distribution of its impacts. Building on the Marley hypothesis, which conceptualizes perceptions of injustice as partly grounded in differential historical knowledge and identity-relevant motivations, this study examines whether knowledge of colonial history predicts understanding of climate justice. We developed and validated a novel scale measuring historical knowledge of German colonialism using a signal detection paradigm that distinguishes accuracy from response bias. Participants evaluated true and false statements about German colonial history, with items systematically varying in whether they framed colonialism as oppression or development. From these responses, we derived indices of reality attunement, general response bias, and differential bias toward rejecting oppression versus development claims. In addition to the primary study (N = 419), an expert survey (N = 35) assessed the historical accuracy and clarity of all items and established reference benchmarks. Results indicate that higher reality attunement in colonial historical knowledge is associated with greater understanding of climate justice. Stronger national identification is linked to systematic response biases, particularly a tendency to reject colonial oppression statements. In ongoing work, we aim to replicate these findings in a quota-balanced sample of participants identifying as White versus BIPOC, following prior work on the Marley hypothesis by testing for racial group differences in climate justice understanding. Together, the findings highlight historical knowledge as a psychologically relevant foundation for climate justice understanding and underline the role of identity-related motivations in shaping how colonial pasts are acknowledged or denied.

Analysis of How Historical Factors Influence the Subjectivity of Primary School Teachers in Cambodia Regarding Their Present Jobs

Oral Presentation by Sohoan Heng[1]

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The Cambodian education system, shaped by Buddhism, Hinduism, and French colonialism, suffered under the Khmer Rouge. The Ministry of Education's efforts to enhance teacher training and curriculum face challenges like low skills, high student-to-teacher ratios, and technology's impact. These issues invite criticism from various stakeholders. This study examines primary teachers' challenges and psychological defence strategies. Qualitative research using a historical-clinical framework proposed by Valerie Ganem (2021, 2023) examines the educational system's development through a documental review and the study of primary school teachers from diverse geographical backgrounds, including a region known for resisting French colonialism. All participants engaged with Christophe Dejours' theory of psychodynamics in work settings through four sessions. The first two involved discussions, the third focused on creating a report on the observed psychological dynamics, and the last aimed to validate the report by the target population for eventual dissemination among the stakeholders in the educational system. Data analysis used content analysis methods based on Dejours' framework (1988, 1993). The ultimate phase of the historical-clinical framework consists in interviews with seniors and historian records. It investigates how interactions between adults and children influence workplace dynamics. The initial findings revealed that educators worldwide face four main challenges. First, teachers struggle with managing student behaviors that do not meet Khmer cultural expectations and varying knowledge levels. Second, there is a gap between the curriculum and the actual conditions of schools and teachers. Additionally, the professional development for new curricula is inadequate. Lastly, there is a lack of cooperation among teachers in their professional activities. These challenges deeply impact teachers' psychological and cognitive well-being, leading them to adopt psychological defense strategies influenced by Buddhist philosophies, transforming their inner identities to reflect archetypes like giants and deities, along with fostering negative biases regarding their students. The Ministry of Education should collaborate with educators to improve the curriculum. Educators and parents must work together to teach children and share Khmer values. Keyword: Psychodynamic theory of work, Primary School Teacher, Subjectivity, Defense mechanism

Temporal Organization of Hospital Work and Psychological Health: Rethinking Job Resources From a Critical JD-R Perspective

Oral Presentation by Ahmed Khaoudi[1], Soufian Azouaghe[2]

[1] Moulay Ismail University, Morocco
[2] Mohammed V University, Morroco

The healthcare sector represents a central pillar for social stability and collective well-being, with nurses playing a key frontline role in ensuring care quality and achieving public health objectives (International Council of Nurses [ICN], 2023a, 2023b). However, nursing work in public hospitals is characterized by strong organizational and psychosocial constraints, particularly shift work, atypical schedules, and high workload, whose negative effects on psychological health are well documented (Molero et al., 2022; Montgomery & Lainidi, 2024; Page & Graves, 2021; Vincent-Höper et al., 2017). Drawing on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014, 2017), this contribution adopts a critical work psychology perspective to examine how temporal organization of work operates as a structural job demand shaping nurses' work activity and psychological health. While JD-R research has demonstrated the protective role of resources, this paper argues that dominant applications of the model often insufficiently address the organizational production of demands, particularly those related to working time. Focusing on public hospital settings, the paper examines key resources that may buffer the impact of shift work on nurses' psychological well-being, namely job autonomy, coping strategies, and the perceived usefulness and social meaning of nursing work—a dimension that remains underexplored within JD-R research. From an activity-centered perspective, these resources are analyzed not as individual traits but as situated and organizationally conditioned processes embedded in work activity. The contribution further offers a critical discussion of Quality of Work Life (QWL) programs in hospitals. It shows how QWL initiatives, when disconnected from temporal organization, staffing levels, and decision latitude, tend to individualize responsibility for well-being and obscure structural determinants of psychological strain. This paper argues for a reorientation of occupational health interventions toward organizational transformation, emphasizing participatory work-time arrangements, collective regulation, and recognition of the social utility of nursing work as central resources for psychological health.

The State at Stake: When Mobility Takes on the Psycho-Economic Cost of Representation

Oral Presentation by Vincent-Frédéric Gascon[1]

[1] Universidad Javerina, Colombia

Proposed for discussion at the 2nd Innsbruck Conference on Critical Applied Psychology at the University of Innsbruck, this presentation centres on the psycho-economic cost of being taken by mobility—how continuous circulation in effervescent capitalism becomes a structuring life condition that shapes capacity, coordination, and constraint. The analysis is framed through the metaphor of a jet in perpetual lag and introduces Gest-Lag as a critical concept for understanding the temporal out of phase, or mismatch between gesture and institutional recognition. It develops a conceptual framework emerging from doctoral research and a forthcoming article on the paradigm and paradox of mobility. The talk unfolds in four movements: (1) Framing the problem – conceptualizing mobility as both paradigm and paradox and foregrounding Gest-Lag as a marker of psycho-economic strain; (2) Western genealogies – tracing the mobilities turn, critical social theory, phenomenology and the governance of desynchronization; (3) Dialogue with Oriental process thought – exploring concepts such as shi, wu-wei, ma and détour to emphasise rhythm, interval and non-coercive coordination as alternative temporalities; and (4) Toward sustainability – considering how diplomatic and institutional spaces might recalibrate mobility toward durable, ethical forms of representation rather than chronic acceleration. Upon confirmation of the conference format and time constraints, the presentation would close with guided questions about being “taken by mobility,” reflexivity, ethnocentrism, and ethical governance. The aim is to stage a constructive conversation that bridges Western and Oriental perspectives to rethink mobility as a sustainable condition within contemporary capitalism.

Between Passion and Precarity: How Young Austrian Teachers Navigate Structural Insecurity

Oral Presentation by Christian Seubert[1]

[1] Universität Innsbruck, Austria

This study examines how young Austrian teachers subjectively experience their employment situation at career entry, applying a five-dimensional model of precarious employment to the Austrian school context from a Critical Work and Organizational Psychology perspective. We analyze how institutional arrangements shape teacher subjectivity, health, and agency. Twelve semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with early-career teachers across three Austrian federal states and diverse school types, analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Common themes across interviews were job insecurity, income insecurity, lack of rights, lack of training and career prospects, and lack of collective representation. Findings was ambivalent subjectivity: teachers simultaneously experience deep professional commitment and chronic anxiety, with passion coexisting alongside structural insecurity. Negative health impacts were widespread, including chronic stress, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, anticipatory anxiety, and impaired planning horizons. Social relationships emerged as the primary coping resource, yet precarious contracts systematically undermine the collegial bonds teachers depend upon. Professional identity tensions were evident, with teachers experiencing uncertainty about their status and using over-performance and self-silencing as identity repair strategies. Hiring practices were described as opaque and relationship-dependent, concentrating power in school principals and transferring institutional risk onto individuals. While teachers articulated concrete demands for reform, collective action capacity remained limited. These findings demonstrate that precarity is structurally produced rather than an individual failure, underscoring the need for qualitative, subject-centered research in critical work and organizational psychology. The study has direct implications for Austrian education policy and teacher labor market reform, calling for transparent hiring procedures, secure contracts, and institutional spaces enabling collective voice rather than individualizing structural insecurity.

Organizing Work Solidarity in Search of “Alternative” Approaches: the Italian Experience

Oral Presentation by Irene Garigali[1], Laura Galuppo[1], Marta Piria[1], Andrea Bonanomi[1]

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Introduction: The contribution addresses the phenomenon of work solidarity within the Italian context, which is characterised by growing inequalities and diverse types of employment. Whilst trade unions find it challenging to offer solutions, "alternative" forms of organizations are emerging. These are driven by the desire to enhance workers’ solidarity along a continuum ranging from individual empowerment to political development and mobilisation. Purpose: The contribution is part of a wider research project that aims to map and understand the characteristics, actions and impacts of grass-roots organisations committed to address work inequalities in Italy. The presentation will discuss the profiles of these organisations, their approaches to solidarity and their distinctive challenges. Method: To achieve the first objective a desk analysis was carried out (via consultation of major web search engines), integrated with exploratory interviews with key informants. Afterwards, to achieve the second objective, a cluster analysis was carried out on the mapped contexts, identifying different groups of solidarity organizations. Results: via the mapping and cluster analysis of the 37 selected cases, four different organizational profiles are identified (ie: community-based, progressive, value-based and purpose-based organizations). The findings suggest that work solidarity is a nuanced and multifaceted experience, sustained by different organizational identities and strategies. Some solidarity organization are defined by traditional approaches to representation, a precise focus on individual empowerment and more exclusionary boundaries. Other, more “counter-hegemonic” ones, are characterized by a “solidarity in difference” approach, recognizing the value of their members’ differences and integrating social with political mobilization. Conclusions: The contribution provides a critical reflection on contemporary work solidarity and its organisation, analysing how variety and critical tensions emerge in a process of constant evolution and redefinition of the concept of 'work solidarity' itself, as evidenced by the Italian experience. Key-words: solidarity, work inequalities, alternative organizing, non-standard work

How Labor Movement Uses New Technologies In Organizing? Opportunities and Challenges.

Oral Presentation by Joanna Grzymala-Moszczynska[1]

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The dynamic development of artificial intelligence is fundamentally changing the world of work, presenting trade unions with new challenges. During this presentation, I will present the results of a preliminary study on the recognition of practices in the use of various technologies in trade union organizing – popular tools, circumstances, and their strategic use. I will present the results of an analysis of existing data and qualitative research conducted with people involved in the trade union movement. The interviews focused on identifying both the challenges and potential benefits of implementing new technologies – both in the workplace and in union activities, taking into account the specific needs of diverse employee groups. Based on the 3C method (context, class, community) proposed by Jen Schradie (2020) for studying union organizing in a technological context, I will refer to the intersectional dimension of the issues discussed, taking into account the context of the work environment, the class dimension, and various forms of organizing. In conclusion, I will present conclusions on how trade unions can use new technologies to create more inclusive organizing strategies, as well as how they can counteract digital forms of precarization and increasing control over work.

Pseudo-Participation: Conceptualization and Empirical Results on Manipulative Involvement Practices in Organizations

Oral Presentation by Thomas Höge[1], Christine Unterrainer[1], Severin Hornung[1]

[1] Universität Innsbruck, Austria

The phenomenon of “pseudo-participation” and its potentially detrimental consequences has been frequently mentioned in the history of the existing literature on organizational participation. However, systematic empirical research on this manipulative form of participation remains notably absent. Drawing on a critical review of the existing literature, this presentation discusses theoretical and definitional problems, advances a conceptual refinement of the phenomenon, and proposes a new working definition of pseudo-participation. It further presents preliminary results of a scale development as well as quantitative and qualitative empirical findings. These findings highlight specific challenges and contradictions involved in analyzing pseudo-participation in organizational contexts. Finally, the presentation discusses broader theoretical and methodological implications and outlines a research agenda on pseudo-participation.

The Dark Side of Inter-Organizational Relationships: A Micro Level Conceptualization

Oral Presentation by Nora Thorsteinsen Toft[1], Mari Svendsen[1]

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Inter-organizational relationships (IORs) are essential in addressing complex societal challenges, yet assessments of collaboration often privilege productive outcomes and obscure the "dark side" of joint work. Such narrow evaluations are reinforced by neoliberal standards emphasizing efficiency and cost effectiveness, which can produce "hollow victories" and mask systemic sources of failure and individual strain (Bal & Dóci, 2018; Clegg et al., 2002; Evans et al., 2005). While IOR research has examined macro-level issues such as conflict and opportunism, it has paid limited attention to the micro-level processes through which these dynamics are interpreted, enacted, and experienced by individuals. Building on Cloutier and Langley's (2020) process theorization principles and informed by illustrative examples from empirical work on non-profit collaboration, this article links macro-level structures with micro-level lived experience to investigate the following research question: What affects individuals' experience of agency when encountering dark sides of non-profit IORs? The article presents a process-based conceptual model explaining how the "dark side" of non-profit IORs unfolds at the micro level. Drawing on critical organizational psychology (Bal et al., 2019; Islam & Sanderson, 2022) and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986, 1989), the model shows how personal factors, behaviors, and environmental events interact recursively with system-level pressures. Through this interplay, individuals may become disempowered, emotionally burdened, cynical, or morally distressed, - experiences that emerge dynamically rather than as fixed outcomes. Adopting a critical meta-theoretical stance, the paper challenges assumptions embedded in dominant IOR research and highlights how neoliberal ideologies can obscure harmful individual consequences, especially when contributions are evaluated by "wrong tokens" (Vamstad, 2025). In line with critical organizational psychology's emancipatory aims (Abrams et al., 2023), the paper advances a more human-centered understanding of collaborative dynamics and lays groundwork for future empirical research and interventions to strengthen individual agency within non-profit IORs.

Promoting Sustainability in Organizations: Exploring the Deep Subjective Experiences of Top Managers

Oral Presentation by Luca P. Vecchio[1], Laura Galuppo[2]

[1] University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy
[2] Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy

The literature on organizational sustainability consistently underscores the pivotal role of managerial support in the implementation of sustainability-oriented initiatives (Kutzschbach et al., 2021). While managerial support alone is insufficient to ensure a transition toward sustainable organizational processes, it represents an enabling condition, given the strategic positioning of management in shaping organizational trajectories and decision-making processes. Within this framework, work and organizational psychology has primarily focused on managers' motivations, attitudes, and cognitions related to sustainability, highlighting factors such as personal values, concerns for organizational image, and beliefs about sustainability as a driver of competitiveness (Kumar et al., 2025). Research has also addressed resistance to sustainability initiatives, often linked to perceived economic costs and limited technical competencies. Finally, scholars have discussed how managers often develop defensive responses to avoid sustainability tensions, particularly those arising from the simultaneous needs of profit maximisation and environmental responsibility (Ferns et al., 2019). The present study shifts the analytical focus from explicit attitudes and decision-making processes to the subjective and affective dimensions of managerial work, with particular attention to how managers live, talk about and interpret sustainability in relation to their role and to the contradictions experienced in addressing people-planet-profit oriented demands. An in-depth interview study was conducted with top managers and owners operating in the logistics sector. The interviews explored how managers gave meaning to environmental sustainability and, crucially, the kind of tensions and contradictions experienced in addressing demands of profit maximization and environmental responsibility simultaneously. Interview analysis aims to investigate managers' awareness of these contradictions, foregrounding the deep lived experiences of tension, ambivalence, and conflict that shape their sense of professional agency. Particular attention is devoted to how such tensions are psychologically managed through discursive and meaning-making processes and to their implications for managers' orientations toward supporting or constraining organizational change toward sustainability. The study is ongoing, and preliminary findings will be presented at the conference.

Fromm’s Radical Humanism as a Bridge Between Social Inequality Research and Leadership Studies

Oral Presentation by Thomas Kühn[1]

[1] IPU Berlin, Germany

Recent decades have seen an expanding body of research documenting persistent and, in many contexts, intensifying social inequalities and power asymmetries. Within leadership research, Critical Leadership Studies and Critical Management Studies have offered sustained critiques of individualized, depoliticized, and managerialist conceptions of leadership, foregrounding questions of power, ideology, and domination. In parallel, critical social inequality research has developed sophisticated analyses of authoritarianism, elite power, and destructive forms of leadership. However, leadership has rarely been conceptualized within this field as a transformative social process. Drawing on Erich Fromm’s radical humanist social psychology, this paper proposes transformative leadership as normative identity work as a conceptual bridge between social inequality research and leadership studies. Building on Fromm’s critique of capitalism and his analysis of social character, leadership is conceptualized as a moral and social practice through which power relations are interpreted, stabilized, and potentially reoriented through ongoing processes of identity work. Rather than treating leadership as an individual attribute or managerial function, leadership is understood as a situated social process in which agency, belonging, and coherence are worked on under conditions structured by inequality, contested citizenship, and experiences of misrecognition. Building on critical social psychology, social identity research, insights from Critical Leadership Studies, and qualitative empirical studies on leadership and identity work, the paper advances the normative ABC model—agency, belonging, and coherence—as an analytical heuristic for examining how leadership processes mediate between structural inequalities and processes of orientation, positioning, and responsibility. The model specifies how power relations shape the possibilities and limits of identity work, thereby enabling a systematic dialogue between social inequality research and leadership theory. Following Fromm, the paper does not present leadership as a solution to social inequality. Instead, it conceptualizes leadership as a critical site in which the social, moral, and political implications of inequality become visible and subject to reflection through identity work.

Poster

Disentangling Talent: Uncovering Implicit Assumptions and Proposing Future Research Lines

Poster by Sanne Nijs[1]

[1] HRS, Belgium

In this study we shine light on hidden assumptions embedded in dominant conceptualizations of talent by elaborating on three ongoing debates: Talent for what? Talent of whom? and Talent to whom? Across these debates, we critically assess how seemingly neutral definitions of organizational talent have been shaped by a managerial discourse that privileges organizational interests and reinforces narrow views of talent. We show that scholars and practitioners alike frequently equate talent with leadership talent (Talent for what?), conceptualize talent as an entity residing within single individuals (Talent of whom?), and adopt top down approaches that position organizations as the primary arbiters of who or what counts as talent (Talent to whom?). These assumptions - rarely questioned in mainstream talent management literature - both reflect and reproduce power dynamics that marginalize alternative conceptualization and sources of talent. The future research directions we outline aim to counterbalance these dominant understandings by recognizing the multiple domains in which talent may manifest, acknowledging the dyadic and collective nature of talent, and valuing perspectives that have historically been overlooked or devalued. To enrich and broaden the study of talent, we point to several relevant literature streams - including feminist scholarship – that can help address underexplored issues and challenge prevailing assumptions. We argue that no single existing theory provides sufficient scope to capture the complexity of the talent phenomenon, and we call for a more pluralistic, critically informed research agenda when it comes to studying talent and talent management.

Moral Disengagement in Sustainability-Related Value-Action Conflicts Across the Plastics Industry: A Qualitative Study of Employees

Poster by Sabrina Schopf[1], Barbara Stiglbauer[1]

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Employees in sustainability-challenged industries often find themselves caught between personal environmental values and organizational practices. While prior research has highlighted tensions, less attention has been paid to the psychological processes through which employees make sense of these conflicts under constrained organizational conditions. Against a theoretical background of moral disengagement and cognitive dissonance, this study examines how employees in the plastics industry experience and interpret sustainability-related value–action conflicts in their work. The plastics industry provides a context in which sustainability tensions are particularly pronounced, as employees work in organizations closely connected to broader environmental challenges and often experience limited individual agency. The study draws on 12 semi-structured interviews with employees in plastics manufacturing and processing organizations and applies thematic analysis to explore how sustainability-related practices are explained, justified, and emotionally managed in everyday work. Preliminary findings indicate that employees draw on different strategies to distance themselves from the environmental implications of their work, including shifting responsibility, reframing environmental harm, or pointing to technological progress and external constraints. At the same time, the interviews reveal recurring experiences of cognitive dissonance, expressed through ambivalence and ongoing negotiation between personal environmental values and professional roles. Instead of being tied to isolated sustainability decisions, these strategies and tensions are embedded in everyday work routines, which are shaped by limited individual agency. In this context, moral disengagement does not resolve sustainability conflicts but makes them more manageable in everyday organizational life, while at the same time allowing environmentally harmful practices to persist. By offering a qualitative, subject-centered perspective on moral disengagement in sustainability-challenged industry contexts, this study contributes to work and organizational psychology by highlighting how psychological processes can both help individuals cope with sustainability conflicts and sustain problematic organizational practices.

Negotiating Power and Belonging: Role Conflict an Identity Struggles in Early-Career Middle Managers

Poster by Max Kraus[1], Nick Altenburger[1], Dilara Bulut[1], Jochen Lavall[1], Leo Pöschl[1], Lion Tegeder[1], Severin Hornung[1]

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Abstract: The exercise of power and control plays a central role in everyday organizational life. Exercising power and control is accompanied by ambivalence and conflicting demands and experiences. Managers who have only recently taken on such a role for the first time are particularly torn between formal authority, organizational expectations, and moral dilemmas regarding their subordinates. How they subjectively perceive, interpret, and exercise power and control in their everyday working lives, and how they experience and deal with contradictions and ambivalences, has not yet been researched. The aim of this study is to explore the significance, thought processes, and experiences of early career managers in the context of power and control. The study is based on a qualitative research design. A total of nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with early career managers from various industries. The interviews were evaluated using qualitative content analysis. The majority of those interviewed showed an awareness that they exercise power over their subordinates and reflected on how they exercise their power responsibly. All interviewees found themselves in a tense relationship between their subordinates and their own superiors. It became apparent that they act as both a buffer and a medium or amplifier in both directions. Power is not only exercised top-down along the hierarchy, but also in the opposite direction. Many interviewees also expressed the idea of continuing to be part of the team, even though their role vis-à-vis their employees is clearly that of a manager. Many interviewees experience the dilemma of occupying a position of power due to their role on the one hand, and on the other hand, the desire to be understood and accepted by their team members. Various mechanisms for dealing with this ambivalence are evident. The results suggest that early career managers, on the one hand, assume their role as leaders and often strive to handle it responsibly, but on the other hand seek to satisfy their need for belonging within the team. The resulting tensions in some cases lead to a distortion of their own role. Keywords: Young managers, Middle management, Leadership, Qualitative Research

Pino-Chat: Why the Dictator Still Has a Say in Spatial Planning in Chile and What Germany Has to Do With It - Explained by Trees.

Poster by Danny Tröger[1]

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Landscape resilience is highly endangered worldwide, even in so-called last wilderness areas in higher latitudes, and especially in the Global South. Sometimes, countermeasures are attempted in spatial planning, for example through spatial planning areas, an instrument that is particularly characteristic of Germany and is sometimes adopted by countries in the Global South. Using the example of the Aysén region in Chile, we evaluate the potential of regional plans to contribute to landscape resilience using a combination of performance and conformance approaches. Reserved areas for agroforestry appear promising at first glance. They are defined in the regional plan as areas for which subsidies are to be obtained under Decree 701, a measure dating back to the Pinochet era. These subsidies are responsible for the deforestation of native forests and their transformation into pine monocultures, with devastating ecological and social consequences. Traditional agroforestry practices, on the other hand, are ignored, even though they would have high environmental performance and high social acceptance. The instrument of land zoning and, above all, the reserved areas for agroforestry thus threaten to become a Trojan horse for even more pine plantations, thereby not only reducing but further weakening the contribution of spatial planning to landscape resilience.

“But whoever is not willing to talk about neoliberalism should also keep quiet about right-wing populism” – On Neoliberal Ideological Beliefs and Political Attitudes

Poster by by Thomas Höge[1], Christine Unterrainer[1], Severin Hornung[1]

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Convergence of neoliberalism and right-wing authoritarian political attitudes have repeatedly been the subject of public debate. This poster presents an exploratory study examining the relationship between neoliberal ideological beliefs and political preferences in Austria and Germany. The analyses are based on a convenience sample of N = 2.666 voters from Germany and Austria. Across the full sample, substantial positive associations were found between neoliberal ideological beliefs and self-placement on the left–right political spectrum. Moreover, distinct patterns of correlations emerged between neoliberal ideological beliefs and preferences for the political parties represented in the respective national parliaments of Austria and Germany. As expected, positive associations with conservative and right-wing populist/extreme-right parties were observed in both countries. In a subsample (N = 449), social dominance orientation showed largely congruent patterns of association with neoliberal ideological beliefs, political self-placement, and party preferences. These findings suggest that social dominance orientation can be understood as a fundamental psychological orientation that provides a common ground for both neoliberal and right-wing ideologies.

The Effect of Neoliberal Beliefs on the Perception of Forced Migrants

Poster by Mattis Hein[1], Guido Hertel[1]

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Integration of refugees depends on how the resident population of their destination country accepts their claim to shelter and is willing to integrate the newcomers into society. Support for refugee intake largely relies on how refugees themselves, the migration reasons, and the chances of successful integration are perceived and evaluated by residents. Based on schema theory, we predicted that this perception is not only based on objective facts but also on preexisting values. We assessed neoliberal values as a source of interindividual differences, since they represent a philosophy based on both individual responsibility and the idea of success through personal merit, which can be in conflict with the core concept of external force driving migration decisions. In two experimental online studies conducted on German samples (total N = 1917), we examined the effect neoliberal beliefs have on the perception of refugees' migration history and how these perceptions shape emotions and opinions. Both studies relied on different vignettes describing the migration stories of refugees coming to Germany. In the first experiment, we examined how neoliberal beliefs influence the perception of migration forcedness. In the second experiment, we expanded on the findings by taking individual behavior during migration into account, testing how it influences the perception of refugees as potential workers in Germany. Results showed a complex influence of neoliberal beliefs on refugee perception: While stronger neoliberal beliefs decrease the perception of external threat as a reason for migration and substantially lower sympathy towards refugees, they also increase the perception that refugees can successfully integrate in the labor market. Beyond that, the results consistently show that neoliberal beliefs do not influence the way factual information is interpreted, but rather appear as a generalized perception bias. These results provide evidence that general worldview and specifically neoliberalism are complex and underestimated factors in explaining the perception of refugees in large parts of the population.

Before We Transform the World: Hubris and the Unexamined Organisational Psychologist

Poster by Jeffrey Bagraim[1]

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Practitioners successful in changing organisations and critical scholars focused on radical socio-ecological transformation exhibit related yet distinct forms of hubris. The first is well-theorised yet rarely applied reflexively: the metamorphic effects of power, wherein successful influence transforms the influencer through inflated self-perception, devaluation of those subject to intervention, and psychological distancing from the less powerful. The second is the epistemic arrogance of critical consciousness, the conviction that one possesses privileged insight into how the world operates whilst others remain ideologically captured. Practitioners accumulate symbolic capital within field logics consecrating effective translation of psychological knowledge into organisational outcomes. The psy-complex, within which they operate, functions as apparatus of governmentality, producing self-regulating subjects through frameworks that individualise structural contradictions and pathologise resistance. Yet the posture of unmasking ideology carries its own seductions. Vanguardism haunts critical scholarship no less than hubris infects practitioner success. The universal intellectual whose theoretical sophistication becomes warrant to speak over those experiencing domination enacts a parallel corruption. In both cases, repeated success or insight activates narcissistic structures and self-serving attributions. Feminist and postcolonial challenges to presumptive knowing remind us that critical consciousness can calcify into its own regime of authority, reproducing the hierarchies it contests. We propose a framework for disciplinary self-examination drawing on three intersecting domains: the political economy of expertise, power and subjectification, and the psychological dynamics of power-holding. This framework offers coordinates for diagnosing hubristic tendencies and cultivating reflexive practices capable of interrupting them. Such inquiry assumes urgency within the current polycrisis, wherein psychological governance expands continually. The uncomfortable proposition is this: the metamorphic effects of power operate upon those who critique power no less than upon those who serve it. Before we transform the world, we must examine what our knowledge and our convictions have made of us.

The Acceptance of Vulnerability - An Exploratory Scale

Poster by Sonja Schottner[1], Heiko Mikolajczak[2]

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According to Brown (2012) and Baiasu (2020), vulnerability is commonly seen as a weakness. Society seems to be prone to the risky and harmful side of vulnerability. But Brown (2012) and Baiasu (2020) see moreover the underexplored advantages that could lie in vulnerability, such as the possibility of forging and forming deep, meaningful relationships, profound experiences, and joy (Brown, 2012). Additionally, Corine Pelluchon (2019) raises the idea that not only humans, but their biosphere is inherently vulnerable. This shared vulnerability fosters a sense of belonging to the world, in contrast to notions of dominion or hegemony over others and the common world. Analogous to Ray & Najman (1975), who regard acceptance of mortality as adaptive given the inevitability of death, we contend that the most adaptive response to vulnerability is to accept it, thereby increasing the likelihood of realizing its benefits rather than risking harm and only treating it as a weakness. Furthermore, we hypothesize that accepting vulnerability (based on Brown and Pelluchon) leads to a healthier life, as it involves accepting negative feelings, and this may be a cornerstone for functional coping towards other human and non-human beings. Thus, our hypothesis is whether we could create items that measure the conceptual core of acceptance of vulnerability. In this pilot study, n = 304 participants (72.43% female, 24.25% male, 2.66% non-binary, age mean = 28.69, sd = 10.06) were recruited to answer a total of 86 items. Exploratory Factor analysis and item analysis revealed a four-factor structure (common world, social vulnerability, exploration of feelings, acceptance of mortality) with acceptable model fit (TLI: 0.882, RMSEA: 0.057, BIC: -3686, mean complexity: 1.1) for a pilot study. We found hints for the construct named acceptance of vulnerability that may be a new coping strategy as well as a counterpart for dominion or hegemony. Further confirmation and validation are needed. Baiasu, R. (2020). The openness of vulnerability and resilience. Angelaki, 25(1-2), 254-264. Brown, B. (2012). “Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead.” Pelluchon, C. (2019). Ethik der Wertschätzung: Tugenden für eine ungewisse Welt. wbg Academic. Ray, J. J., & Najman, J. (1975). Death anxiety and death acceptance: A preliminary approach. Omega-Journal of Death and dying, 5(4), 311-315.

Gender Differences in Eco-Emotions: The Role of Emotional Competencies in Daily Perceptions of Environmental Crisis

Poster by Annalena Schröder[1], Gerhard Reese[2], Nicole Harth[3]

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Emotions are considered important predictors of individual and collective environmental behaviour. Environmental research often shows that women tend to report stronger eco-emotions than men. One possible explanation refers to differences in emotional competencies between genders, which may influence emotional intensity in different ways. Previous research indicates that women, on average, demonstrate higher abilities to perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions, commonly conceptualized as emotional competencies (EC). Such competencies may enhance individuals' sensitivity to emotional experiences not only in general but also in environmental contexts and may facilitate the use of these emotions in ways that translate into environmentally protective behavioural responses. Indeed, individuals with greater EC tend to act more environmentally friendly. In a preregistered 14-day daily diary study (N = 173; 1,1734 observations; convenience sample from Germany), we examined the effects of everyday experiences of environmental degradation on emotional reactions and environmental behaviour, while accounting for the role of gender and EC. Specifically, we expected individuals with higher emotional competencies to report higher emotional intensity, greater use of functional emotion regulation strategies, and stronger pro-environmental behaviour. Our findings provide novel insights into the role of EC in emotional engagement with the environmental crisis. We discuss this engagement within broader contexts that shape the distribution of responsibility, care, and emotional labour, drawing on feminist and critical perspectives, as well as their potential as a resource for collective engagement and sustained commitment to socio-ecological transformation.

Critical Perspectives on Psychology of Organizations in Society: Theorizing Power and Ideology

Poster by Severin Hornung[1], Thomas Höge[1], Christine Unterrainer[1]

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This poster introduces a recent book project by the authors, compiling conceptual contributions developed in the context of a research program in critical applied psychology. Specifically, the volume presents an attempt to integrate previously fragmented theorizing on power and ideology, emphasizing interdisciplinary, psychodynamic, and socio-historical perspectives on society, organizations, and individuals. Providing a critical epistemological basis, drawing on meta-theory, competing social science paradigms in organizational research and associated debates are outlined. Extending the critical tradition of labor process theory, a psychodynamic framework of power and control is proposed. Taxonomies of power in organizations are reviewed and developments in labor process analysis of algorithmic management presented. Subsequently, literature on ideologies in work organizations is reviewed and structured. Following chapters of the book dialectically analyze antagonistic tensions between organizational versus individual workplace flexibility, normative foundations of neoliberalism versus humanism, and economy versus ecology. In doing so, socially corrosive logics, discourses, and practices of economistic neoliberal ideology are exposed and contrasted with envisioned ethically responsible and socio-ecologically sustainable alternatives. The latter are grounded in a recommended rediscovery and reinvigoration of the philosophy of radical humanism in current times of polycrisis. The book is openly accessible under the following link: https://doi.org/10.15203/99106-190-8.

The Therapeutic Practice of Psychoanalysis in Neoliberalism

Student Poster by Sara Rabanser[1]

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There is a scientific consensus that cognitive behavioural therapy and positive psychotherapy draw on neoliberal ideas, whereas psychoanalytic therapy is often credited for its critical stance and social engagement. Yet, even in psychoanalytic therapy their scholars have pointed towards a forced neoliberal alignment. This contribution examines these observations of neoliberal ideology within psychoanalytic therapy. Ideological motifs include reinterpretations of happiness as willpower, illusions of freedom, a shift towards self-help practices, and the reduction of the analysand to their competencies. To further investigate these motifs, interviews were conducted with psychoanalysts from Tyrol (Austria) and subsequently analysed via qualitative content analysis. The resources identified – such as inner psychological strength, strengthening of defences, identity consolidation and emotional regulation – are linked to the constant imperative of growth and self-help. The ability to perceive oneself and others, mentalisation, self-love, self-acceptance and tolerance are also part of human capital, which must be maintained in the face of constant competition. These identified resources highlight the reduction of the individual to their abilities. The results also show that patients are attributed high expectations regarding their own problem-solving abilities, based on the assumption that they often already know what is wrong with them. They learn to protect themselves by learning to be in touch with their own feelings. Burnout, in particular, was often attributed to the person's lack of skills, as one's own will is the prerequisite for recovery. The unconscious, society, politics and culture also exert an influence, but the focus was more on the individual's specific relationships. The present study concludes that psychoanalysis might still hold a critical potential. As the findings indicate, however, psychoanalysis is currently unable to realise this potential in its therapeutic practice. It is argued that this critical implementation gap should be investigated further in order to bring society back into the therapy session and criticalize psychoanalytic practice (again).

Self-Actualization as a Form of Constraint in Contemporary Work Society

Student Poster by Sven Steinhauser[1], Niklas Scholl[1], Hanna Suchanek[1]

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Self-actualization is regarded as an essential prerequisite for a fulfilling life in both philosophical and psychological traditions. Aristotelian eudaimonism already understands the realization of one's potential as the foundation of human well-being. This idea is also reflected in humanistic approaches to psychology, particularly in the work of Abraham Maslow, who describes self-actualization as a fundamental human need. Contemporary motivation theories, such as Self-Determination Theory, build on this tradition and emphasize the importance of autonomy, competence, and social relatedness for personal growth and psychological well-being. At the same time, modern work societies have increasingly embraced the notion that work serves not only as a means of material subsistence but also as a central arena for individual meaning-making and self-development. This work examines the extent to which the ideal of self-actualization, under conditions of neoliberal work organization, can shift from an emancipatory goal to a mechanism of social control. Drawing on work and organizational psychology as well as theories of power, the analysis explores how forms of control in the workplace have changed over time. Whereas traditional organizational forms relied primarily on hierarchy, surveillance, and direct discipline, control has increasingly moved toward the level of values, identities, and subjective consent. In neo-normative work contexts, regulation is increasingly exercised through the promotion of individuality, authenticity, and self-development. Employees are encouraged to align their personal goals with organizational interests and to assume responsibility for their own continuous development. As a theoretical contribution, the work presents a developmental model of control that traces a progression from external discipline through normative and neo-normative control to a paradox of self-actualization. This paradox describes the internalization of societal and organizational demands for optimization by the individual. The more work is understood as a site of self-actualization, the more self-management, performance enhancement, and continuous self-improvement become personal obligations. The article argues that under neoliberal conditions, self-actualization cannot be understood solely as an expression of freedom but also generates new forms of self-regulation and self-control. Finally, the possibilities for authentic self-actualization within contemporary employment relations are critically discussed.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Going the Extra Mile – But at What Cost?

Student Poster by Greta Lochmann[1], Maya Schmidt[1]

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Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to discretionary employee behavior that exceeds formal job requirements and contributes to organizational functioning. Traditional research has predominantly conceptualized OCB as voluntary, prosocial, and beneficial for both organizations and employees. Accordingly, behaviors such as helping colleagues, showing initiative, or demonstrating exceptional commitment have been associated with increased organizational effectiveness, cooperation, and performance. More recent critical perspectives, however, question whether OCB is truly voluntary in organizational practice. Employees often experience implicit expectations and social pressure to engage in extra-role behaviors in order to be perceived as committed and cooperative. As a result, the distinction between voluntary engagement and organizational obligation becomes increasingly blurred. In addition, excessive OCB may contribute to role overload, stress, emotional exhaustion, and conflicts between work and private life. Critical approaches further emphasize that OCB can function as a subtle mechanism of organizational control by encouraging employees to internalize performance expectations and continuously regulate their own behavior. Feminist perspectives additionally highlight that forms of emotional support and harmony maintenance associated with OCB are often unevenly distributed and may reinforce existing social inequalities. Overall, the critical perspective conceptualizes OCB as an ambivalent phenomenon that may simultaneously support organizational functioning while also contributing to pressure, self-exploitation, and hidden forms of control.

Critical Perspective on Homeoffice and Dissolution of Work Boundaries

Student Poster by Paula Schultes[1], Marilena Reher[1], Angelina Rieder[1]

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This presentation offers a critical analysis of home office work and the increasing dissolution of boundaries between professional and private life. Approximately 25% of employees in Germany work at least partially from home in 2026, and while the literature clearly suggests systemic problems that disadvantage some, mainstream discourse continues to frame remote work primarily as a question of productivity and managerial optimization. This project challenges that framing by asking not how home office can be improved, but for whom it functions and at whose expense. The analysis is structured around four thematic areas. First, it distinguishes mainstream or functional critique which accepts existing systems and treats problems as correctable malfunctions from structural critique that interrogates underlying power relations. Second, it examines the dissolution of work boundaries across four dimensions: social, temporal, spatial, and psychological. The project argues that practices marketed as self-care are better understood as mechanisms of self-disciplining that sustain exploitative conditions, keeping workers mentally and physically available at all times. Third, the project addresses the double burden borne disproportionately by women. Drawing on feminist labor theory and empirical research, it demonstrates that home office does not redistribute care work but instead intensifies it, particularly for women, while rendering this inequality invisible by repackaging it as an individual work-life balance solution. Remote work reproduces rather than dismantles the structurally gendered division of labor. Finally, the project argues that the autonomy promised by remote work functions as a sophisticated form of control. When companies grant flexibility, they simultaneously shift responsibility for productivity, self-organization, and even burnout onto individual employees. Failure becomes personalized rather than recognized as a structural condition. Home office, in this reading, is not a retreat from corporate logic but its deepest penetration into private life turning the living space into a factory and the individual into the manager of their own exploitation.

The Resource-Stressor-Transformation Model: A Critical Extension of the JD-R Model

Student Poster by Berno Weidinger[1], Nerija Sickel[1], Luca Luisa Mesch[1], Julia Ernstberger[1]

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Contemporary work environments are increasingly characterized by flexible forms of work, blurred boundaries between work and private life, and organizationally staged forms of care. The Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R) traditionally distinguishes between demands that generate strain and resources that foster motivation, engagement, and well-being. However, this dichotomy is insufficient in contemporary work contexts when seemingly positive resources simultaneously contain subtle mechanisms of control and attachment. The case of the home-like workplace ITcomp illustrates that autonomy, community, coaching, mindfulness practices, recognition, and well-being-oriented workplace design do not necessarily reduce strain. Under conditions of high normative intensity, permeable boundaries between work and private life, and asymmetrical reciprocity, such resources can generate obligations, inhibit criticism, intensify self-control, and bind employees more strongly and more subtly to organizational goals. The Resource-Stressor-Transformation Model therefore extends the JD-R model by introducing a third category: ambivalent or pastoral resources. These resources appear phenomenologically as resources, yet they can be transformed into sources of strain through mechanisms of pastoral power. The transformation process is described by four operators: responsibility, voluntary binding, knowledge, and transformation. Particularly relevant is the reversal of personal resources: identification, self-efficacy, optimism, or perfectionism do not necessarily function protectively but may, within the pastoral pathway, intensify self-exploitation, extended working hours, reduced recovery, and self-alienation. This strain dynamic is mediated by several mechanisms: self-endangering work behavior describes the seemingly voluntary intensification of work. The autonomy paradox refers to the transformation of freedom into permanent availability. Boundaryless labor captures the internalization of entrepreneurial self-management. Self-alienation denotes the organizational appropriation of the authentic self, and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory's loss spirals describe the hidden depletion of personal resources. At the same time, strain is obscured because the pastoral transformation process is subjectively experienced as motivation, belonging, and voluntary engagement. Overstrain is therefore more likely to be interpreted as personal failure than as a structural problem, while criticism of the caring system appears illegitimate or ungrateful. The paradox coefficient refers to the positive association between engagement or identification and strain: the more successfully an ambivalent resource generates attachment, motivation, and belonging, the more strongly it can simultaneously produce hidden strain. Strain therefore increases not despite, but precisely because of the success of the resource when boundaries, reciprocity, and genuine autonomy are not protected. Well-being is thus not created by the mere provision of organizational benefits, but by genuine decision latitude, clear boundary structures, and non-instrumentalized support.

Digital Control Technologies at Computer Workplaces: Forms, Legal Limits, Critical Perspective, and Psychological Effects

Student Poster by Joy Mair[1], Helena Olek[1], Ines Fiegenschuh[1]

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Digital control technologies are increasingly used to monitor, analyze, and regulate work processes at computer-based workplaces. This theoretical paper examines their use from technical, legal, critical, and psychological perspectives. Following a general introduction to workplace control, the paper outlines central forms, characteristics, objectives, and mechanisms of digital monitoring systems, as well as current trends and prevalence data illustrating their growing relevance in contemporary organizations. Building on this foundation, the legal frameworks of the European Union and the United States are compared, with particular attention to regulatory gaps and unresolved challenges. The critical section of the paper traces historical shifts in organizational control practices, explains why digital control emerges and persists within organizational structures, and analyzes how digital technologies reinforce existing power asymmetries. Some empirical findings suggest that digital control may temporarily increase motivation and performance in simple, repetitive tasks. However, a substantial body of research shows that in complex knowledge work, digital monitoring is associated with elevated stress, perceived violations of privacy, reduced autonomy, and negative effects on psychological well-being. The analysis highlights that the use of digital control technologies requires a careful balance between organizational interests (understood as the interests of the organization as a whole rather than solely those of its power holders) and the protection of employee autonomy, privacy, and health. From a critical standpoint, the paper argues that digital control primarily serves the interests of higher organizational levels, offering little to no benefit for employees. Consequently, the use of such technologies is discouraged. If implemented nonetheless, their application should be limited to necessary work-related data, communicated transparently, and evaluated preferably in aggregated form. The focus should shift away from individual performance surveillance toward promoting safety, collaboration, and sustainable individual and organizational development.

The “Complete Activity” as a Form of Complete Exploitation?

Student Poster by Lea Grudzinski[1], Nele von Twistern[1], Jonathan Falcke[1]

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This poster critically examines the work-psychological concept of the “complete activity” and questions whether its implementation under capitalist conditions genuinely promotes psychological health and autonomy or instead represents a more subtle and expanded form of exploitation. The analysis starts from the Action Regulation Theory developed by Hacker and Volpert, which conceptualizes complete activity as a humanistic alternative to Taylorist work organization. An activity is considered complete when it includes both the cyclical dimensions of action (planning, execution, and control) and hierarchical levels of regulation (sensorimotor, perceptual-conceptual, and intellectual demands). While the original theory argues that such activities foster personality development and prevent deskilling, this paper develops three critical perspectives. First, the shift from external control to self-control: Under the influence of neoliberal ideals such as self-responsibility and flexibility, employees may internalize organizational goals. External supervision is replaced by self-regulation, potentially enabling a more efficient and unobtrusive form of value production. Second, subtle forms of alienation and exploitation: Alienation and exploitation in the Marxian sense do not necessarily disappear but may become less visible through increased autonomy and participation. Psychological strain is increasingly individualized and interpreted as a failure of personal self-management rather than as a consequence of structural working conditions. Third, expanded forms of utilization: The humanization of work can also function as a means of increasing productivity. Through the “autonomy paradox,” apparent freedom may contribute to the intensification and extension of work, making not only employees’ labor but also their creativity, identity, and personality economically exploitable. Overall, this paper argues that without changes to the broader social and economic conditions, complete activity risks functioning primarily as a strategy of work intensification rather than genuine emancipation. It therefore calls for a research agenda that systematically considers the structural foundations of capitalist work instead of addressing only individual or organizational symptoms.