

Call for papers

The Institute of Philosophy, The Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague
presents
the international conference

Towards a Phenomenology of Social Change

1st-2nd November 2017, Prague, Czech Republic

Conference theme:

The phenomenology of sociality that currently attracts growing attention focuses on a systematic evaluation of the phenomenological approach to the area of social relations and interactions. Thanks to this initiative, we get the chance to rethink the significance and reach of phenomenological explorations of topics such as intersubjectivity, empathy, shared emotions, group intentions, collective agency, and social coherence. It is beyond doubt that the works of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Levinas, Patočka, Arendt, Schütz, Scheler, Stein, Henry and many others give enough material for a systematic exploration of social ontology. It seems, though, that the phenomenology of sociality leaves aside the important aspect of the way we share our world with others. What is implicitly presupposed in a collective sharing of our world, without being explicitly examined, is the phenomenon of social change.

Any interaction with others is somehow related to social change, for it either provokes it, or avoids it. Social interaction that takes place in the semantic context of a social world oscillates between stability and instability. While the state of stability is maintained by social rituals, habits, and other everyday practices, instability generates a change that more or less alters the semantic structure of the social world. In more radical forms, social change then disrupts established collective identities and makes way for new collective agents. However, social change doesn't always yield positive effects; it can also cause individual or collective traumas if it is too sudden or drastic.

Whether it concerns tiny shifts of social relations, or spectacular social transformations, it is necessary to reflect on the nature of social changes, to demonstrate what they have in common and what differentiates them. The decisive factor for us is less the extent to which social changes alter history than their ontological character. The way we understand it, the ontology of social change

examines the overall semantic alteration of the social world and the precarious integrity of social agents that are involved in social change. In social change we can also observe shifts from social invisibility to social visibility that take place when new collective agents appear or step out of the shadows of social reality. With respect to all these phenomena, it is possible to map various possibilities of understanding social change, its conditions and effects.

For a critical evaluation of the phenomenological approach to social change it is vital to confront the phenomenology of sociality with analytic philosophy, critical theory, postmarxism or poststructuralism. We certainly cannot ignore the whole field of sociology, where the concept of social change plays a fundamental role. In addition, we intend to bring phenomenology into dialogue with disciplines such as gender studies, postcolonial studies, minority studies, migration studies, or the ethics of care. We believe a dialogue between phenomenology and other approaches to sociality could create a platform where the phenomena of social change, social visibility and invisibility, as well as the formation of collective subjects will be understood in a complex way. Case studies and the results of field work can be also taken into consideration for the conference, but we generally tend to a more synthetic approach that has the potential to grasp the basic ontological features of social change.

Since our conference is meant to lay new ground for further research, we intend to follow the principles of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. Hence, there will be no keynote speakers, and all active participants will be treated with the same respect.

We encourage contributors to consider the following topics, but we are open to any other suggestions:

- **human interaction and social change**
- **temporality and historicity of social change**
- **ontology of social change - between project and event**
- **traumatic effects of social changes**
- **conditions that enable formation or dissipation of a collective agency**
- **macroscopic and microscopic social changes**
- **social visibility and social invisibility**
- **new media, new forms of sociality and social change**
- **social change between phenomenology and analytic philosophy**
- **interaction between phenomenology and critical theory**
- **social change between phenomenology and poststructuralism**
- **a phenomenology of social change from the feminist point of view**
- **contribution of minority studies and postcolonialism to a phenomenology of social change**
- **from phenomenology to sociology of social change**

Venue:

The conference will take place in Prague, whose historic center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The venue will be:

Vila Lanna, V Sadech 1, Prague 6, 160 00, Czech Republic

<http://www.vila-lanna.cz/index.html>

Accommodation for paper presenters will be provided directly in Vila Lanna.

Submissions:

We invite all scholars interested in social change to submit abstracts on any topic relevant to the theme of conference. Abstract should not exceed 500 words and must be received via email **by July 31, 2017**. Authors will be notified on the status of their submission by August 15, 2017. Finished papers should not exceed 30 minutes reading time. Thanks to the support of the Czech Grant Agency the conference offers no fee participation to all paper presenters.

Abstracts and inquiries should be sent to: kouba@flu.cas.cz

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