

THE LECTURERS

ROWLAND ATKINSON is Research Chair in Inclusive Societies at the University of Sheffield. He is an urban sociologist whose work crosses the boundaries of urban and housing studies, sociology, geography, and criminology. The central focus of his research is on how social divisions find spatial expression in urban contexts. His most recent book, *Alpha City* (2020), looks at how the super-rich have co-opted the political and property machine of London.

GURMINDER K BHAMBRA is Professor of Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies at the University of Sussex and a Fellow of the British Academy. She is author of *Connected Sociologies* (2014) and the award-winning *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (2007). She is also co-editor of *Decolonising the University* (2018) and co-author of *Colonialism and Modern Social Theory* (2021).

CATHERINE E. DE VRIES is Professor of Politics in the Department of Social and Political Science and the Dondena Research Centre at Bocconi University in Milan. She is co-author of *Political Entrepreneurs: The Rise of Challenger Parties in Europe* (2020) and co-editor of *Foundations of European Politics: A Comparative Approach* (2021).

JENNIFER PAN is an associate professor of Communication, and an associate professor, by courtesy, of Political Science and Sociology at Stanford University. Her research resides at the intersection of political communication and authoritarian politics, showing how authoritarian governments try to control society, how the public responds, and when and why each is successful.

CAROLYN SISSOKO is Senior Lecturer in the Bristol Business School at the University of the West of England (UWE). Her research focuses on macro-finance and the history of the nexus between the monetary system, the financial system, and economic performance. Current projects include a history of the monetary foundations of Britain's nineteenth-century growth, a history of the transformation of the US financial system in the twentieth century, and the study of modern collateralized money markets and their implications.

DUNCAN WIGAN is a professor in the Department of Organization at Copenhagen Business School. His research interests include international taxation, global wealth chains, international finance, and activism for global economic justice. Among his current publication projects are *Global Wealth Chains: Asset Strategies in the World Economy* and *Global Tax Battles: The Fight to Govern Corporate and Elite Wealth* (both 2019).

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Öffentliche Vorträge MPIfG Lectures



Winter 2021/2022
Oct 6 | Oct 27 | Nov 24
Dec 8 | Jan 12 | Jan 26



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2021 | 17:00 CEST

The Fictions of Modern Social Theory

GURMINDER K BHAMBRA

The consolidation of modern social theory, in the writings of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, coincided with the height of European empires and global war between them. Yet, empire lay outside the purview of mainstream social theory except as a phenomenon associated with earlier historical periods and civilisations. Even in the work of Du Bois – a theorist excluded from the canon until recently – the issue of colonialism was not immediately evident, but something worked towards from an initial address of the seeming particularities of race relations in the US. As social theory developed into sociology in the mid-twentieth century, most European countries were confronted by anti-colonial movements and challenges to their global dominance. However, these challenges to the political structures of European modernity, similarly, seemed not to impinge on what sociology came to see as its “jurisdiction” – namely, issues of class, gender, and sexuality. The issue is not simply to add colonialism to sociology’s repertoire of topics, but to show how that repertoire must change and the concepts and methodologies with which it is associated be transformed. Central to this is to recognize and address five fictions that currently organize the conceptual framework of modern social theory and sociology: the fiction of stages of social development; the fiction of modern subjectivity; the fiction of the nation-state; the fiction of class and formally free labor; and, finally, the fiction of sociological reason.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2021 | 17:00 CEST

From Propaganda to Channeling: The Changing Digital Strategies of the Chinese Government

JENNIFER PAN

With the advent of radio, television, and other broadcast media, authoritarian governments acquired the ability to reach large, captive audiences. The rise of digital media has fragmented audiences and disrupted the ability of governments to reach large audiences through broadcast channels. This talk shows how the Chinese government is moving beyond propaganda and other forms of persuasive communications to a new, digital strategy of “information channeling.”

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2021 | 17:00 CET

Political Entrepreneurs and Populism

CATHERINE E. DE VRIES

The rise and fall of populist parties across Europe has attracted much attention. But is this a new phenomenon? In this talk, Catherine E. De Vries suggests not. Populist parties can be seen as a type of challenger parties, that is, political entrepreneurs without government experience seeking to disrupt the dominance of mainstream parties. She discusses how ongoing changes in European party systems compares with previous waves of challenger parties, including social democratic and green parties. She then presents the core strategies used by successful challengers, namely issue entrepreneurship and anti-establishment rhetoric, as they mobilize issues that gives them an electoral advantage and attack the competence of the established political parties. Finally, she considers what the rise of challenger parties may mean for democracy in Europe.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2021 | 17:00 CET

New Gilded Age in a Broken World? The Super-Rich, Urban Life, and City Politics

ROWLAND ATKINSON

The extent of social inequalities was well known before the pandemic arrived. Poverty and staggering wealth had already reappeared at levels not seen since the gilded age of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This wealth, and those who wielded it, brought power to craft city settings according to the needs of the rich. Political actors, seeking capital investment and sometimes personal enrichment, declared the rich a mark of the city’s success.

Today, as the pandemic eases, we might ask what a social politics of inequality will look like in an apparently “new” urban context that, in reality, contains the same public “bads” that existed before. While a “capture” of the city by the rich will continue, it may be that systemic constraints and public anger propel the taming of wealth. Will an egalitarian enlightenment grow, as some have suggested, or will pro-market orientations prevent a commitment to tackle excessive wealth and increase social investment?

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2022 | 17:00 CET

Identity Switching in Disruptive Organizations: The Microfoundations of Transnational Activism for Economic Justice

DUNCAN WIGAN

How do entrepreneurs create organizations intended to disrupt an environment? And how do they stabilize them as organizations once they have made their mark? This talk provides a framework for understanding how issue entrepreneurs propel disruptive organizations by switching identities between different network domains. The talk draws on the emergence of global tax justice campaigns and data from fifteen years of para-ethnography. It identifies conditions for identity switching that highlight the importance and limitations of this strategy for organizational transformation in the world economy.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2022 | 17:00 CET

The Financial Foundations of Capitalism and Widely-Shared Wealth

CAROLYN SISSOKO

Is capitalism a remarkable mechanism for growing a society with widely shared wealth, or is it a tool for transferring wealth to a select few? In her talk, Carolyn Sissoko will suggest that it is both, and that our current economic structure is post-capitalist. More importantly, she will argue that a careful history of capitalism can tell us what financial and legal infrastructure is necessary in order for a society to promote widely shared wealth. The challenges then are political and environmental: Is there the political will to put this infrastructure into place on a global scale? And is it possible to design this infrastructure so that it does not worsen the climate crisis?