

# INVITATION

April 17–19, 2024, Berlin

## CALL FOR PAPERS

Experience of crisis – crisis of experience

Research conference of the PhD students  
of the Hans-Böckler-Foundation



# CALL FOR PAPERS

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Talk of crisis is omnipresent in the media and political discourse: financial crises, climate change, migration, the Covid-19 pandemic, Russia's war against Ukraine and conflict in the Middle East – all of these events are interpreted as crises or as parts of larger crises and inform the experience of the present as a "time of crisis."

Yet this idea of a crisis-riddled present is nothing new. Within the contexts of radically diverging political programs, modern societies have continually used the concept of crisis to diagnose their perceived discontents. Karl Marx's critique of bourgeois political economy is one prominent example, which resulted in a shift of emphasis from individual crises to a structural "crisis-nature" of capitalist socialization. What before appeared as individual crises were now considered as instances of a larger crisis-complex, an approach inherited by contemporary Critical Theory and expressed with such terms as "pincer crisis" (Klaus Dörre), "multiple crisis" (Ulrich Brand) or more recently as "poly-crisis" (Adam Tooze).

This is to say, the often quite varied and inconsistent use of the concept of crisis in today's media and political discourse should be scrutinized. Keeping the Marxist critique in mind, the experience of crises as isolated and contingent phenomena with vague criteria can dissimulate the deeper crisis-nature of the societal formation and therefore ultimately serve the interest of those in power. A crisis is not a phenomenon that is "given," but rather one that must be analytically divulged and situated within a larger social and historical context.

According to its original meaning, a crisis confronts us with a decision, a turning point, upon which a transformation of the status quo is possible or even necessary. But it appears that now more than ever this mutability of relations, the transformative or revolutionary potential of the crisis is called into question. "Crisis" seems to have stopped delivering on its promise of change.

One of early Critical Theory's more enduring contributions was its suggestion that a symptom of this crisis-nature was the crisis of experience itself. Over the last decades, the epistemological critiques of post-structural, feminist, queer-theoretical, race-critical and anti-colonial theory have brought even the legitimacy of (certain understandings of) "experience" into question, making a confrontation with this contribution of early Critical Theory ever more urgent. For when a crisis of experience feeds back into the experience of crisis, then not only knowledge but the very agency of subjects and collectives is problematized.

In honor of the 100-year anniversary of the founding of the Institute for Social Research, the doctoral conference of the Hans Böckler Foundation will explore this correlation of crisis and experience and its relevance for comprehending the dynamics of contemporary global crisis.

### **Questions of particular importance:**

- How should we understand the term Erfahrung and how is it differentiated from related terms such as *Erlebnis*? Is “experience” an individual or an intersubjective category?
- What is the relationship between experience and crisis? How are crises experienced? Are there crises beyond the experienceable?
- What is the relationship between “crisis” and “critique”? What is the epistemological significance of the concept of experience for a critical theory of society?
- What role do utopian, theological, or metaphysical dimensions of experience play in relation to contemporary crises?
- What is the significance of aesthetic experience for diagnosing the crisis?
- Does crisis “block” or “open” possibilities of practice? How do these moments relate to one another?
- What role does the concept of experience play in our understanding of “practice”? How do “experience” and “solidarity” relate to one another?
- How can the “loss of experience” as theorized by Critical Theory be applied to the age of internet and social media?

# INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPATION

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We cordially invite doctoral students of Germany's scholarship foundations as well as all other young researchers in Germany and internationally who are working on empirical case studies or theoretical considerations relating to the topic of the conference to submit abstracts for papers. Contributions from any academic discipline are welcome. Twenty minutes will be allowed for presentations plus a further ten minutes for discussion.

Proposals for contributions should be submitted by January 9, 2024 in the form of an abstract (max. 500 words) with a brief CV.

## **Submissions should cover the following aspects:**

- The title of the paper
- Research question, knowledge interest and corresponding academic discipline
- Relevance to the topic of the conference
- Short curriculum vitae

# ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

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The conference will take place at the Humboldt University of Berlin from April 17 to April 19, 2024 in cooperation with the Centre for Social Critique (HU Berlin). Students will be notified by January 24, 2024 if their submissions have been accepted. No fee will be charged for the conference. Accommodation and catering will be provided by the Hans Böckler Foundation. In addition, travel costs will be covered for those who are doctoral scholarship holders of the Hans Böckler Foundation. The aim will be to publish the papers in a conference volume.

Please send any questions or comments – in German or in English – to:

[WT2024@boeckler.de](mailto:WT2024@boeckler.de)