

The Dynamics of Capitalism: Inquiries to Marx on the occasion of his 200th birthday

Conference jointly organized by the *Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies* in Cologne and the *Hamburg Institute for Social Research*

Location: Hamburg Institute for Social Research

Dates: May 3–5, 2018

What does Marx's political economy still have to say? This is the question the conference will address.

Marx's political economy is a particularly interesting and also current topic for sociology: In the process of its disciplinary consolidation, the core of sociology has either largely excluded economic issues from its empirical focus, handing them over to subdisciplines such as industrial and economic sociology, or it has played down the social impact of economic dynamics in order to sidestep the theoretical accusation of economic reductionism. One result is that Marx' contribution to political economy was largely eliminated from the so-called classics of sociology. As a consequence, sociology has been rather helpless in a theoretical and conceptual sense when confronted with the cycles of growth and destruction in capitalist economies.

Today, we certainly cannot directly and without further reflection build upon Marx' heritage. The theoretical and empirical criticism of Marx and Marxism, more or less systematically pursued over the last 150 years, has undoubtedly uncovered the weaknesses of many of Marx's arguments. This does not mean, however, that all the concepts and theorems introduced by Marx into the discussion have become obsolete or useless.

The conference will reexamine some of the central aspects of Marx's political economy and ask how concepts such as money, labor, profit, value, market, violence, and technology as well as property and class can still be useful today. The conference will not be an exercise in Marx philology. On the contrary: The central question is, in fact, both a current and theoretical one, insofar as sociologists should discuss whether and how Marxian concepts might be discarded, modified, or extended in order to deal in a theoretically meaningful way with the problems and features of contemporary capitalism, be it "financialized", "digital", or "aesthetic" capitalism.

The conference is expected to include presentations from around 15 participants, with perhaps 25 additional researchers from the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne and the Hamburg Institute for Social Research attending. The conference language will be English.

The Dynamics of Capitalism: Inquiries to Marx on the occasion of his 200th birthday

Program (May 3 – May 5, 2018)

Thursday
May 3, 2018

19.00-20.30: Evening Lecture

Thomas Piketty: *Rising inequality and the changing structure of political conflict*

Dinner

Friday,
May 4, 2018

9.00-10.15: Opening Lecture

Wolfgang Streeck: *Driving Forces: Social Theory as a Theory of History*

Coffee break

10.45-12.45: Value and exploitation

Jens Beckert: *Value with and without Marx*

Kean Birch: *Towards a theory of 'rentiership' in contemporary technoscientific capitalism*

Lunch

14.00-16.00: Money and Financialization

Greta Krippner: *The Power of Abstraction: Marx on Money and Credit*

Aaron Sahr: *From Pen Strokes to Keystrokes: the Production of Money in Early and Contemporary Capitalism*

Coffee Break

17.00-18.30: Evening Lecture

Axel Honneth: *"Capitalism" - economy, society or form of life?*
Greatness and Limits of Marx' theory of society

Dinner

**Saturday:
May 5, 2018:**

9.00-11:00: Technology and knowledge as forces of production

Dave Elder-Vass: *From modes of production to complexes of appropriative practices*

Marion Fourcade: *The Rise of the Artificially Intelligent Classes*

Coffee Break

11.30-12.45: Closing Lecture

Friedrich Lenger: *The end of capitalism - the history of a never ending story*

Lunch and end of conference