

Call for Abstracts

Workshop: Social Ontology of Power – Contemporary Perspectives

September 5 – 6, 2024

Caldas University, Colombia / Stockholm University, Sweden

We are inviting submissions for our upcoming workshop on contemporary perspectives in social ontology of power, held as a joint hybrid event of Caldas University, Manizales, Colombia and University of Stockholm, Sweden.

Description

In the last years, classical accounts of social ontology have been criticized for painting a too harmonious picture of the social world. By focusing on cooperation, joint walks and democratic elections, social phenomena that do not fit this idealized imagination of society, such as conflict, oppression, or discrimination, have remained largely in the background. Advocates of a non-ideal or critical social ontology have therefore attempted to compensate for these deficiencies by highlighting categories like race or gender. A central concept to these recent discussions, which has remained underdeveloped nonetheless, is the concept of social power.

Our workshop aims at gaining new insights into the social ontology of power by building upon these recent developments in non-ideal social ontology and by intensifying the reliance on real-world examples that have been central to this line of research. We will ask how contemporary social changes can be reflected by social ontology and what they can teach us about the ways in which power relations exist.

How can social ontology, for example, address the mediation by digital infrastructure that our social relations increasingly depend on? Is artificial intelligence a social actor who exerts power over us? And how can we think about the algorithms that structure our behavior online? How can we conceptualize a company's power over its employees, if it uses contemporary forms of "agile management" or "soft leadership" as opposed to direct order chains? Can material conditions for our social life be addressed by social ontology as well? Could, for example, climate change's asymmetric consequences for different areas of the world be described with reference to the concept of power?

Focusing on these contemporary issues leads also to conceptual questions. The reliance on deontic categories of rights and obligations that many social ontological accounts show when thinking about power, seems too narrow to address many of the aforementioned phenomena. Can social ontology make sense of broader notions of power as well? How would a social ontology of structural power look like? What about infrastructures, environments, dispositifs of power?

Keynote speaker

Charlotte Witt, University of New Hampshire

We invite researchers from philosophy as well as from political science, science and technology studies, political economics and neighboring disciplines that engage in social ontological research to submit proposals for workshop presentations. **Abstracts should not exceed 300 words and should be sent to asa.burman@philosophy.su.se by May 31, 2024.** Attendance in person either in Stockholm or in Manizales is encouraged, but presentations can be given online as well. Notifications will be sent by June 17, 2024.

The workshop is supported by the International Social Ontology Society (ISOS): <https://isosonline.org/>

Organizers

Åsa Burman, Stockholm University

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