



Double Binds of '68

29th-30th September, 2018
Keynes College,
University of Kent, Canterbury

Keynote Speakers

Prof Benjamin Noys (Chichester)
Dr Iain MacKenzie (Kent)

The "double bind" – a situation in which no matter what a person does, he "can't win".

- Gregory Bateson et al., 'Toward a theory of schizophrenia'

We are commemorating May '68 because the real outcome and the real hero of '68 is unfettered neo-liberal capitalism.

- Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*

On the fiftieth anniversary of the global 1968 uprisings, and on the bicentenary of the birth of Karl Marx, this two-day multidisciplinary conference seeks to cast a retrospective light on the legacy of the former in order to illuminate the spectre of the latter. By thematising the figure of the double bind, this

conference intends to explore the extent to which, and by means of which mechanisms, it can be argued that the radical social, political, psychic, and conceptual potential of the events of 1968 has ultimately been co-opted by the unfolding of neoliberalism over the past fifty years (the latter to be understood here as a political and economic system for organising society, subjectivity, culture, and thought).

Those involved in the events of 1968 rightly sought to challenge State power and institutional forms of social and psychic domination employed by post-War social democracies. If during the so-called *Trente Glorieuses* the social and economic wellbeing of the worker had been enshrined, this was nonetheless to the detriment of other social inequalities (those of sex, race, gender, sexuality, age...) and psychic freedoms (individuality, sexual liberation, self-expression...). We have witnessed something close to a reversal of this state of affairs in the wake of the neoliberal counter-revolution – new social movements and individual ‘freedoms’ have blossomed in inverse proportion to labour’s capacity to negotiate a compromise with capital. In parallel with the laudable rise of identity politics we have witnessed, perhaps until recently, the increasing fragmentation or at least increased complexity of solidarities amongst workers. This appears to leave us with a political double bind which the left has thus far been unable to adequately articulate. Economically, it is clear who has benefitted from this political impasse, given the post-1968 restoration of wealth inequality in most developed economies on a scale not seen since the 1920s. The post-’68 conceptual arena echoes this political double bind as postmodern and more recently ‘post-truth’ epistemologies risk obscuring the global machinations of capital. However, the alternative offered by some contemporary realisms, materialisms, and post-humanisms, in absolutely disengaging thought from world or intelligence from consciousness, is arguably equally guilty of blunting political critique and of side-lining Marx’s epistemological revolution in philosophy.

Yet, it may also be that today the post-’68 era is giving way to a radically new configuration of double binds (or leading away from them altogether), given the seismic shifts predicted as a result of the further development of digital capitalism and fuller automation. Would this entail a return to the revolutionary potential of 1968 or rather signal a total break from this horizon?

Any queries, please contact: doublebinds68@gmail.com

This event is supported by the University of Kent’s Department of Politics and International Relations and by the Centre for Critical Thought

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Programme

Saturday, 29 th September	
8.30am	Registration (Keynes College foyer)
9.15-9.30am	Welcome and Opening remarks (Keynes Lecture Theatre 3)
9.30-11am	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel 1: Experiences of Revolution*</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cécile Decousu, "68 in the closet, remembering Gabrielle Russier'</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Blanche Plaquevent (University of Bristol), "68 and sexuality: Disentangling the double binds'</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Aylon Cohen (University of Chicago), 'Chaos and the Riot: Auto-theory on the 50th Anniversary'</p>
11-11.30am	Break
11.30am-12.30	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel 2: History – Continuity and Discontinuity I</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Nicolas Schneider (Kingston University London), 'Displacing the Double Bind'</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Daniel Fraser (Trinity College Dublin and CRMEP Kingston University London), 'Workers and capitalists: two different worlds? Immanence and antagonism in Marx's <i>Capital</i>'</p>
12.30-1.30pm	Lunch
1.30-2.30pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel 3: History – Continuity and Discontinuity II</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jose Rosales (Stony Brook University, University of Westminster), 'Aux Revoir Aux Enfants... <i>de Mai!</i>'</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Franco Manni (King's College London), 'The Italian Paradox'</p>
2.30-2.45pm	Break
2.45-3.45pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel 4: Writing and Resistance</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Brigitte Nicole Grice (University of Essex), 'Between Past and Future: Writings on the Wall and Twitter in the 'sphere'</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Zoe Angeli (Cambridge), 'The double bind of failure (success): The Politics of Literature'</p>
3.45-4pm	Break
4-5.30pm	Keynote: Benjamin Noys (University of Chichester)

7pm	Conference Dinner (The Dolphin, Canterbury)
Sunday, 30th September	
8.30am	Registration
9.30-11am	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel 5: Subjective Spaces of Resistance and Creativity</p> <p>Ben Dunn (University of Manchester), "'Drama as a weapon, drama as a voice": community theatre, collaborative ontology and the myth of '68'</p> <p>Gabriela Hernández De la Fuente (University of Kent), 'Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point is to create (new institutions)'</p> <p>Natasha Lushetich (LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore), 'On Ludic Servitude'</p>
11-11.30am	Break
11.30am-12.30	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel 6: Truth and Post-truth</p> <p>Jonathan Hann (King's College London), 'Transgression Without Risk? Rethinking Post-structuralism in 2018'</p> <p>Julian de Medeiros (University of Kent), 'The Truth Is Not Enough: Contesting the neo-liberal politics of truth and confronting the revenant features of a 1960s paranoid style'</p>
12.30-1.30pm	Lunch
1.30-2.30pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel 7: Deleuze and Political Philosophy</p> <p>Christos Marneros (University of Kent), 'Gilles Deleuze and Human Rights - A problematic relationship'</p> <p>Andrew Stones (University of Warwick), 'Postcolonial Genealogies of May '68: Deleuze, Badiou and the Question of Decolonisation' [presenter not attending in person]</p>
2.30-3pm	Break
3-4.30pm	Keynote: Iain MacKenzie (University of Kent)
4.30pm-	Drinks Reception ('K-bar', Keynes college)

* All sessions will take place in Keynes Lecture Theatre 3 (KLT3), Keynes College, UKC