



CALL FOR PAPERS

Categories in Flux

Continuity and/or Change?

International Conference

University of Tübingen

9 – 11 October, 2019

Deadline for abstracts: March 31, 2019

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“The sheer ability and staying power of the idea that male and female psychologies are inherently different can’t help but impress”, observes Cordelia Fine with regard to the current trend of a certain kind of neuroscientific research that legitimises a binary gender order. While the 1990s and early 2000s saw a wave of publications challenging the assumption that men and women are fundamentally different creatures, and despite efforts to include marginalised sexualities and forms of partnership and parenting arrangements into the fold of a pluralistic society, we now seem to be witnessing the reemergence of ‘traditional’ gender roles. But are we? Other voices would say that things have changed for the better in recent years. Margarete Stokowski speaks of the “final days of patriarchy”, while Jonas Schaible is of the opinion that the ostensible political shift to the right in recent years represents nothing more than a vocal minority, with the majority of the population actually having become “more pluralistic, liberal and more diverse”.

Opinions are evidently divided as to whether we are living in times of “Continuity or Change”. This takes us back to the question of the making and unmaking of categories. Most social orders are grounded in categorical frameworks that make clear, though contingent, distinctions between people focused around such concepts as gender, class and ethnicity. In the conference “Categories in Flux”, we will focus on how societal change is connected to change in categories. Can fairly recent changes in society topple old categories, or can an old social order be subverted by new categories? Do new terms have the power to bring about equality, or do they merely disguise continuing inequalities? While others have previously attempted to explain these phenomena in terms of either continuity or change, we do not see such explanations as mutually exclusive. We take our lead from Raymond Williams, whose concept of the simultaneity of emergent, residual and hegemonic categories paints a picture of a far more complex

state of affairs than the simple question “Continuity or Change?”. Are we witness to the emergence of something genuinely new? Or how do we know that these final days of patriarchy are not simply a stage in the history of an immensely durable social order?

In this conference, we wish to bring together a variety of disciplinary perspectives to discuss current events and the phenomena of “Categories in Flux” in order to explore questions of continuity and/or change. We encourage contributions focused around particular categories in specific fields, areas, practices or pieces of cultural representation, as well as broader reflections on the subject.

Contributions may address, but are not restricted to, the following topics:

- Political rhetorics of continuity and change
- Interdependence of social movements and category change
- Adaptability as a survival strategy of categories
- Persistence of implausible categories
- ‘Tradition’ legitimising old categories in modern societies
- Backlash and social justice movements
- Deconstruction of categories in film and fiction
- ...

“Categories in Flux” is an international conference hosted by the interdisciplinary Research Training Group “The Persistence of Gender Binaries” at the Centre for Gender and Diversity Research, University of Tübingen. We invite junior scholars of all social sciences, philosophy, political, cultural and literary studies, as well as any other scholar who engages with ideas on categories and continuity and/or change. The conference will be held in English and German.

The conference will bring together distinguished keynote speakers and researchers presenting research papers. At the same time, there will be room to present ‘work in progress’ for PhD students wishing to discuss their thesis projects in the form of poster presentations.

Please send your abstract of up to **500 words for talks** or about **300 words for posters**, together with a **short CV** to:

categoriesinflux@mail.de

The deadline for abstracts is 31 March 2019.

There is no registration fee for the conference.