

Call for Presentations

London Conference in Critical Thought

Friday 28th and Saturday 29th June 2024, University of Greenwich

Deadline for proposals: **Thursday 29th February 2024**

The Call for Presentations is now open for the 11th annual London Conference in Critical Thought (LCCT), hosted and supported by the University of Greenwich.

The LCCT is an annual interdisciplinary conference that provides a forum for emergent critical scholarship, broadly construed. The event is always free for all to attend and follows a nonhierarchical model that seeks to foster opportunities for intellectual critical exchanges where all are treated equally regardless of affiliation or seniority. There are no keynotes and the conference is envisaged as a space for those who share intellectual approaches and interests but may find themselves on the margins of their academic department or discipline.

There is no pre-determined theme for each iteration of the conference, with the intellectual content and thematic foci of the conference determined by the streams that are accepted for inclusion in response to the Call for Stream Proposals (now closed).

The streams for LCCT 2024 are:

- Abolition, Carcerality, and Care
- Body Folds and Booty Shots
- Collaboration and Collectivising: Potentials and Intersections
- Convivial Spaces: Forms and Figures of Encounter in Writing and Architecture
- Detail as a Creative-Critical Gateway in Literature, Art, and Architecture
- Exploring and Mapping, Littoral Zones and Liminal Realms: Manifesting Insights and Perspectives on Creative Practice
- Low Theory/Radical Praxis
- Mediating Cultural Heritage: Narrative Strategies and Tactics
- Radical Aesthetics: Imagining, Organising, Enacting Democratic Futures
- The Challenge of Scarcity: Politics, Ecology, and Beyond
- Transforming Vocology Through Interdisciplinary Perspectives
- Trans Theologies
- Use and Abuse of Passion in the Precarious Labour Market
- Violent Delights: Joy, Pleasure, Ecstasies, the Political, and the Promise of Violent Ends
- Watery Speculations
- What's the Matter with the Culture Wars?

Please read the stream descriptions below. If you would like to participate in one of them, please send an abstract for a proposed presentation to londoncritical@gmail.com with the relevant stream title indicated in the subject line. Abstracts should be submitted **as Word documents of no more than 250 words** and must be received by **Thursday 29th February 2024**. Please note that **LCCT is an in-person conference**.

Website: <https://www.londoncritical.co.uk/>

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Abolition, Carcerality, and Care

Stream organisers: Martin Young and Murray Robertson

Abolitionists widely propose care as an alternative to the state's punitive and carceral systems. On this account, policing and prisons are inadequately caring responses to social ills, prioritising punitive justice over caring for the needs of those who have experienced harm, and failing to recognise that those who cause harm are frequently those most in need of care. Carceral systems, therefore, are flawed both because they are uncaring and because they inhibit the formation of authentic caring relationships. Following this, abolitionists routinely suggest care as a substitute for punishment: because police and prisons cannot offer care they must be abolished and replaced with institutions, projects, or communal relations which can.

We are closely aligned to the analysis, principles, and strategies of abolitionist thought and action; however, we find the invocation of care as an antidote to carcerality to be frequently uncritical. While some key abolitionist texts offer radical re-theorisations of care, many more treat it as an unqualified good, or deploy the concept as a placeholder for unspecified alternatives to carcerality. We are mindful that while care is broadly regarded as a positive thing, and as an essential prerequisite for both survival and well-being, its real life enactment is ethically complex and frequently fraught with violence, abuse, and coercion. The labour involved in providing care, whether waged or unwaged, is arranged in ways that are heavily gendered, racialised, exploitative, and potentially damaging. The ideologies which underpin how care is performed in this society are premised on essentialist, ableist, and infantilising assumptions. The execution of care, even where it is much needed and appreciated, often serves to reproduce and reinforce existing social relations and hierarchies of power. As such, we are keen to engage critically with care in all its normative complexity, rejecting a picture of care as an unqualified good.

Viewing carceral systems not as uncaring but rather as places where care is problematically ever-present, we invite submissions exploring care's relationship to carcerality and abolitionist thought. We are particularly interested in interrogating the operation of care within carceral institutions, investigating how duties of care guide the functions of such organisations, and unpacking the notion of criminal justice as a normatively undesirable caring institution in and of itself.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- The ways in which care can be carceral
- The institutionalisation of care relationships
- Approaches to policing and prisons within the discipline of care ethics
- The 'duty of care' that the state imposes on its agents
- Provision for 'vulnerable adults' in the carceral system
- Secure psychiatric detention
- Liberal humanitarian care and the asylum system
- School exclusions, Pupil Referral Units, and the care of young people
- Care in the face of state violence
- Radical, transformative, or revolutionary approaches to care, mutual aid, and solidarity
- Abolitionist strategies of care
- Alternatives to 'care' as an abolitionist framework

Body Folds and Booty Shots

Stream organisers: Eva Aldea and Oliver Belas

In a 1910 essay entitled “Our Wild Body,” Wyndham Lewis complains that an image of the body as vibrant and untamed has been lost, displaced by an overly aestheticized body-image. “The body is sung about, ranted about, abused, cut about by doctors, but never talked about,” Lewis begins. Later, he lays into the “calisthenic quacks,” the “mercenary ‘strong men’” who lure everyday folks with their promises of identikit “muscle manufactories.” For all the ways in which Lewis is dead wrong – and he is: there’s a whole lot of body-talk going on, in 1910 as now – he is onto something: the body as reproducible, blueprintable, generic, commodified, curated, curable; as raw material, process, and product... For as long as there have been bodies of writing, we have attempted to write the body.

Now, then, seems as good a time as any to return to the body as material territory and to resituate it as liminal space. Have we, as Haraway suggested nearly 40 years ago in her “Cyborg Manifesto,” learned “from our fusions with animals and machines how not to be Man, the embodiment of Western logos?”

We are not advocating a return to binary bodily thinking. Rather, we are interested in what, as Richard Shusterman has pointed out, is often missing from accounts of the body influenced by Merleau-Ponty: the flesh-and-blood body. We are interested, with Sara Ahmed, in the ways diverse bodies reconfigure cultural spaces; and, with Silvia Federici, in the ways those spaces re/inscribe bodies. This, at a time when, as intersectionality studies have taught us, modes of fluid and non-binary identities are becoming mainstream(ed).

Bodies always rebel – against de-, pre-, and pro-scription. However much we pinch and airbrush, hide, shame and disinfect, our bodies remain what they are – messy, unruly, not enough, too much, scarred, stretched, diseased, de/formed (not least by their own visceral processes), supplemented by invited or inevitable incursions of other things and beings (from piercings/art to microbes). Bodies are always rubbing against: against the standard, against the gaze, against the idea, against the non-bodily, and not least, against each other. How might we, in the spirit of Kristeva and her notion of the abject, use the inherent unruliness of bodies to re/think the body as unbounded?

We invite proposals from anyone interested in the biocultural, technoscientific, sociopolitical implications of the body. We are interested in cyberculture, we are interested in sweatpants, we are interested in the stains left in and by both. Submissions may wish to interpret broadly and consider, but are not limited to, aspects of the following:

- bodies situated at, and breaking their own, boundaries;
- bodies that are connecting, re/producing, extending, joining and melding, enfolding and entangling with other selves, bodies, materials;
- nonhuman and posthuman bodies in the Anthropocene (what might these look like: beastly, robotic; uploaded into the cloud, cloned to infinity; extinct, interplanetary; ancient and outdated, evolved and unageing?);
- bodies in/as space or territory and de/territorializing bodies;
- bodily inscription/reconfiguration;
- body modification, bodybuilding, prostheses and body enhancement;
- body politics: the body under capitalism and neoliberalism, body and class, body anarchy, body solidarity;
- bodily identities: de/gendered, de/sexualised, de/racialised, de/colonised, dis/abled bodies
- bodily autonomy;
- bodily becoming.

Collaboration and Collectivising: Potentials and Intersections

Stream Organisers: Anouk Hoogendoorn, Sophie Mak-Schram, Roshana Rubin-Mayhew and Paul Alexander Stewart (Gentle Gestures founding coorganisers)

This stream considers the specifics of what a collective site of action, through art practice could be. How can one take a fluid or gentle position that can (re)articulate where or how a convivial sociality can/ could/does happen? The stream is situated at the intersection of critical theory and art practices that work inside, against, and beneath existing structures. What are the central and speculated nodes of collaboration and collectivising?

We are keen to explore the specifics of both the practice and theory underpinning collaboration as a site of practice through spatial, peer-led, and nomadic sites of collective action in relation to creative work and precarity, and the influence of para or alternative practices. The stream hopes to address research and practice towards nomadic art schools and alternative structures of resource and learning distribution, but also artist-led initiatives and gallery-focused pedagogical or peer-to-peer networks held within (or despite) institutional frames. Other focuses could examine the neoliberalisation of collaboration, methods through which the undercommons (Moten and Harney, 2013) is practised or expanded, how learning is used in, through and amidst artistic and design practices. For example, this could include work manifesting from interdisciplinary and participatory practices, expanding approaches to process, arts production and pedagogy within accelerated developments of neoliberalism. Also proposals could address the existing problems within collective action from individual ambitions, to questions of sacrifice and moments where common interest is not realised. The social pressure whereby groups solve the problem of collective action and how the action requires a model of group process and cannot be deduced from simple models of individual behaviour, or the wider motivations of individuals who form the 'critical mass' that sets collective action in motion.

We welcome submissions from early career researchers, artists, and educators with limited experience of academic research alongside established peers to expand the landscape of critical thought towards perspectives on collective and collectivising and encourage a diverse range of submissions and will look to produce at least one workshop alongside presentation panels.

"They should work—in a non-condescending way—to open their thought to others who aren't functioning as intellectuals in society, but who are potential intellectuals, all the same, and who are capable of understanding much more than they're given credit for" (Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*). Critical pedagogy has ventured to depart from orthodox Marxist lines to explore the questions of gender, race, agency, subjectivity and so on, and the Gramscian schema is positioned at that specific juncture.

Some starting points for papers:

- The role of class in contemporary conditions of sociality and collaboration.
- The advancing of narrow economic and social interests, and ways to question dominant hegemonic positions through collegiate practice and collective forming.
- How do sites of collective learning negotiate problems?
- Which artistic endeavours can be practised in radical pedagogical encounters?
- How can, or do, radical pedagogies give way to systematically oppressed voices without falling back into dominant logics or reproducing narratives of oppression?
- How are collectives defined, with what tools and frameworks?
- What ingredients are needed for forming communities of action?

Convivial Spaces: Forms and Figures of Encounter in Writing and Architecture

Stream organisers: Marko Jobst, Caroline Rabourdin, and Katarina Stenke

This stream aims to explore and re-imagine the possibilities and conditions of convivial spaces, architectural, literary, discursive, or other, that might foster reconnection and collaborative co-existence while supporting plurality, mixture and difference.

First theorised by Austrian philosopher Ivan Illich (*Tools for Conviviality*), 'conviviality' has become a productive concept in postcolonial, transcultural, ethnicity and race studies, particularly following sociologist Paul Gilroy's articulation of 'convivial culture' in 2004. As the flourishing of more recent scholarship on conviviality makes clear, it remains a timely term, with traction across a wide variety of disciplines, contexts and forms – thus, a park bench might be 'convivial', and so might a codex (Rishbeth & Rogaly, 'Sitting outside'; Robertson, *Nilling: Prose*). While Illich, Gilroy and many later commentators envisage conviviality in positive terms, for others conviviality's 'normative' impetus not only fosters community but can also entrench marginalisation (Chambers, 'Performed Conviviality').

Remaining hopeful about the political potential of convivial spaces, the stream proposes to harness the potential of collaborative interdisciplinary practice for generating new forms of conviviality. We aim to explore the spatial configurations of *forms* and *figures* of conviviality at the intersection of architecture and literature, with a focus on specific historical and geographical contexts. We welcome interventions which might lead to new forms of convivial *practice*, extending to sculptural, performative, vocal or habitual practices.

We therefore warmly encourage applications from researchers and practitioners from all disciplines, and welcome contributions from creative writers, architects, artists, designers, historians, philosophers and sociologists that may address or respond to the following questions/topics:

- How might one describe or imagine a 'convivial space'? Or, what are (some possible) characteristics or qualities of convivial spaces, in architecture, spatial literature and/or discourse?
- How might convivial spaces, whether in architecture, discourse or in other socio-cultural formations, be contrived, fostered and/or encouraged?
- Consideration of particular historical or contemporary spaces, in spatial literature, situated writing, architecture or in other modalities, under the rubric of conviviality.
- How are historical practices and narratives of conviviality generated and perpetuated via architectural or discursive figures and/or forms?
- What spatial counter-concepts, addendums or alternatives have been or might be proposed to 'conviviality'?
- Research on practitioners or theorists whose work articulates and/or instantiates particular forms and/or ideals of convivial space and encounter.
- What political possibilities or difficulties might attend the conceptualisation and production of convivial space?
- Is convivial space politically radical?
- How do cultural, socioeconomic, geographic, experiential and other differences shape the possibilities and experiences of convivial space?
- What dangers might attend the production or experience of convivial space?
- When/how/under what conditions might a space cease to be convivial?

Detail as a creative-critical gateway in literature, art, and architecture

Stream organisers: Kris Pint and Maria Gil Ulldemolins

Independently of whoever said it first (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Aby Warburg, or Gustave Flaubert), the persistence of the axiom “God is in the detail” demonstrates its usefulness. Attention to that which may at first seem too small to be significant affects the nuance, meaning, and overall impact of the work. The minute being as sublime as tricky is only further demonstrated by the later variant featuring the devil instead.

And yet, as essential and treacherous as it may be, detail has been understudied. We have Roland Barthes’ omnipresent *punctum* - the tiny piercing of a detail that stands out from an image, subjective and poignant: “However lightning-like it may be, [it] has [...] a power of expansion. This power is often metonymic.” (*Camera Lucida*) We also have a quote by Nietzsche (*Ecce Homo*) that Barthes himself was fond of: “The question will be asked of me why I actually have brought up these small and, according to traditional judgment, quite insignificant things [...] Answer: these small things [...] are inconceivably more important than everything that has hitherto been considered important. Precisely here one must begin to learn anew.”

The expansion and renewing power appears again, many years later, when poet Susan Stewart (in *On Longing*) remarked upon details’ capacity to change one’s course, writing that “detail lends hierarchy and direction to our everyday lives.”

This stream seeks then contributions capable of offering a relearning, a redirection, precipitated by the fixation on a specific detail. We would like to hear from creative-critical practitioners and scholars using a small detail in a text, an image, an object, a building, etc. as a gateway to disproportionate, greater learning. Following the prompt by Lisa Robertson (in ‘Soft Architecture’) - “The truly utopian act is to manifest current conditions and dialects. Practice description. Description is mystical. It is afterlife because it is life’s reflection in reverse” - we invite contributions that convey the richness of a detail as a tactic to reveal knowledge that is both intimate and scalable. We want contributions that zoom into an unsuspecting piece of minutia to reveal a vast universe.

A few suggestions of what these may be, while open to many others (creative-critical and/or interdisciplinary proposals not only welcome but encouraged). Detail and/as:

- metonymy/synecdoche: how do we use a part in order to learn something of the whole?
- ekphrastic practices: how does a detail in a work of art get transported and extended into written language? (we are thinking of artwriting like T. J. Clark’s *The Sight of Death*, for example).
- close-reading (and possibly inviting interdisciplinary understandings of what close-reading can be).
- the punctum, of course: what are the affective, subjective, emotional potentials of using details in scholarship?
- representation of whole historical and ideological movements, or the opposite: forms of resistance against a specific norm or status quo.
- obsession in scholarship.
- a design tactic in historical and contemporary art and (interior) architecture.

Exploring and Mapping, Littoral Zones and Liminal Realms: Manifesting Insights and Perspectives on Creative Practice

Stream organiser: Peter Jones

Littoral zone: the foreshore, a region between high and low tide – or – a place that belongs to or changes between two different states; an amorphous region where two phenomena meet; a liminal realm.

This stream is prompted by the location of this year's conference, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, that is Maritime and Riparian Greenwich. The *littoral zone* in Greenwich is a dynamic *liminal realm*, that continually changes states between land & water, a place of departure and a place of arrival. Historically it was also a place of import & export, industry and indolence, navigation & exploitation. All of these initiating the consolidation in 1851 of the Greenwich Prime Meridian, a liminal line that divides east and west – zero degrees longitude.

This stream aims to explore *littoral zones and liminal realms* found within creative practice.

Whilst the latter regions may often be interpreted as nexuses, interstitial or intersectional, the messiness of art or design creative practice means they are inherently fuzzy and ambiguous (Richard Buchanan, 'Wicked Problems in Design Thinking'). This stream aims to embrace this ambiguity and asks, how and why, the location and exploration of *an amorphous region where two contrasting or complimentary phenomena meet*, can initiate new critical thought, insight, and knowledge?

The stream embraces the LCCT ethos of creating a *safe space*. In addition to this, the stream also aims to be a forum where contributors can take a sideways look at their field of interest by locating and exploring a *littoral zone or liminal realm* within it (Vanessa Rutherford & Ian Pickup, 'Negotiating Liminality in Higher Education'). The *zone* being mapped may be generic to creative practice, such as the *realm* between Thought & Manifestation or Technology & Creativity. Alternatively, the proposal may survey an *amorphous or fluid region* that is the focus of the creative practice itself, such as Colonisation & Decolonisation (Hew Locke, 'The Procession') or Graphic Design & Politics (Lucienne Roberts & Rebecca Wright, *The Other Side*).

Set out below, are some examples of regions within creative practice where *littoral zones and liminal realms* may be found:

- *Between Art & Utility or Aesthetics & Function* – for example, "If you want a golden rule that will fit everything, this is it: Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful" (William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art*).
- *Between Inclusivity & Exclusivity* – how might such a littoral zone be addressed within a Community of Practice, the acquisition of tacit knowledge and legitimate *peripheral* participation? (Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger, 'Situated Learning'; Etienne Wenger, 'Communities of practice').
- *Between Land & Water* – how might creative practice impact positively on an environment, plus create common ground or an overlap between one discipline and another? (Agnes Denes, *The Crystal Fort*, 2001 – present).

The *Between*s listed above are by no means exclusive, they might also be complementary. It is up to you to locate, explore, map, and offer critical thoughts on a *littoral zone or liminal realm* situated within a bailiwick of creative practice.

Low Theory/Radical Praxis

Stream organisers: Frankie Hines and Matthias Kispert

The late David Graeber, reflecting on the possibility of anarchist theory and its position in the academy, once suggested that “what anarchism needs is what might be called Low Theory: a way of grappling with those real, immediate questions that emerge from a transformative project” (*Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*). In the spirit of Graeber’s proposition, this stream asks how various forms of politicised praxis—including but not limited to organising, activist or creative practices—could be understood as forms of thought and knowledge production on their own terms.

Graeber’s notion of low theory was subsequently taken up and repurposed as not simply a challenge to the pretensions of high theory but a holistic, if fragmentary, approach to transdisciplinary knowledge and its production. For Jack Halberstam, low theory is “theoretical knowledge that works at many levels at once ... that revels in the detours, twists, and turns through knowing and confusion, and that seeks not to explain but to involve” (*The Queer Art of Failure*). For McKenzie Wark, low theory entails “a kind of comradely practice, where each kind of labor or science produces its own specific worldview ... and where none claims to be the master discourse with authority over them all” (*Molecular Red*).

In relation to praxis, militant research has been described as “the place where academia and activism meet in the search for new-ways [sic] of acting that lead to new ways of thinking” (*Militant Research Handbook*), while Linda Tuwihai Smith (*Decolonizing Methodologies*), in her proposal for decolonised methodologies, identifies “research as a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other”. These interventions, as well as proposals for art practice as research (Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties*), spell out the necessity of accounting for a thinking-with-practice that intersects research and theory on the one hand, and political, social and embodied action on the other—fostering, perhaps, a theory-from-below.

This stream invites explorations that consider the multiple correspondences, crossings and currents between low theory and radical praxis, for example through:

- theory that is grounded, concrete, operating “from below,” “movement-relevant” (Bevington & Dixon, ‘Movement-relevant Theory’); theory that strives to be tactically or strategically *useful*;
- social, activist, artistic and embodied practices as forms of thought and knowledge production, and as challenges to established epistemologies;
- theory that is covert, furtive, underground; theory that operates from, or carves out, an undercommons (Harney & Moten, *The Undercommons*);
- research, theory and politics approached through their extra-linguistic aspects—thinking through the body, the senses, the collective, etc.;
- theory that is minoritarian, molecular, or simply *small*;
- militant research and emergent forms of grassroots knowledge;
- theory that seeks to *bring low* the hitherto elevated—theories of “fallism” (Frank & Ristic, ‘Urban Fallism’), irreverence, plagiarism and idea-thievery (Guattari, ‘I Am an Idea-Thief’).

The stream welcomes submissions of all kinds and from all disciplines and none. We particularly encourage an open-ended approach to format, which could include interventions, performances, workshops, artworks, or explorations in autoethnography or autotheory.

Mediating Cultural Heritage: Narrative Strategies and Tactics

Stream organiser: Rosamund Davies

This stream is concerned with the role of both media and narrative in the way that cultural heritage is defined, represented, contested and promoted. Taking de Certeau's notion of *strategies* and *tactics* as a starting point, the aim is to consider the different ways that individuals, collectives and institutions employ and engage with particular media, in order to produce, inhabit, rework and challenge narratives of and about places, objects and practices of cultural significance.

In contemporary cultures and in common with other sectors, cultural heritage institutions typically consider the production of narratives to be a core activity. This relates both to their interpretation strategies and to how they construct their own institutional narrative. They may employ many types of media and work with a variety of creative practitioners to construct and share these narratives with audiences.

Meanwhile, many forms of cultural heritage are maintained outside hegemonic cultural institutions, by a range of individuals, groups and organisations, who also employ different creative methods and media to produce narratives that may, explicitly or implicitly, question, refute or defy official narratives and make visible what such narratives ignore.

Largely in response to such counter-hegemonic practices, institutional discourses of cultural heritage have started to include a wider scope of tangible and intangible culture in designations of cultural heritage, from which preservation and promotion strategies proceed. Moreover, cultural heritage institutions have begun to produce different narratives about long established sites, artefacts and practices of cultural heritage, with the aim of acknowledging problematic histories and/or marginalised experiences. Such changes are not always easily accommodated within existing norms of cultural heritage conservation and interpretation, however, creating tension both within cultural heritage institutions and in their relations with other actors, including governmental bodies and different community sectors.

If, as in de Certeau's formulation, hegemonic institutions serve to circumscribe the 'proper place' of cultural heritage, then we might see such attempts to change and multiply the narratives they produce as strategies to redraw the boundaries of the institution. What opportunities and limits for tactical 'insinuations' might this process of redrawing offer? Does this destabilising of the boundaries constitute a temporary or a permanent process?

When considering cultural heritage narratives produced outside such institutions, how might we consider them to operate as tactics of creative resistance? Might we also see them as attempts to circumscribe a rival 'proper place'?

In what ways do contemporary cultural heritage narrative strategies actively seek to encourage/co-opt tactical transformations by cultural heritage 'consumers' and what are the implications of this?

This stream would invite presentations from both practitioners and theorists, which may take the form of artworks and practice-based research, as well as more traditional presentations. Areas/questions to explore might include:

- Creative media as strategy/tactic in cultural heritage narratives
- Artistic practices and practitioners in cultural heritage
- The role of the 'consumer' in cultural heritage narratives
- Contested and multiple narratives and cultural heritage
- Cultural heritage narratives as a way of imagining potential futures
- The limits of narrative as a way to engage with cultural heritage

Radical Aesthetics: Imagining, Organising, Enacting Democratic Futures

Stream organisers: Viktoria Huegel and Tanay Gandhi

The call for a radical reimagination and practises of organisation – to think, write, perform, and prefigure another world in (than) this one – has become increasingly urgent in the face of exacerbating crises: today's societies find themselves caught between ecological collapse driven by neoliberal logics of accumulation and exploitation, and the success of new authoritarian forces. Yet, it is these very tendencies that also limit our ability to imagine forms of emancipation that reach beyond existing economic and political structures; Margaret Thatcher's famous dictum that *There Is No Alternative* (TINA) persists. Accompanying this "crises of imagination" (Haiven, *Crises of Imagination*), neoliberalism's individualizing logics together with the devaluation of social language and political spaces limits emancipatory struggles to the success of solitary individuals that ascend within its frames whilst leaving untouched the very oppressive logics from which we attempt to escape (Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*).

Against this background, recent work in radical democratic thought has drawn out the potential of artistic practice – and the aesthetic more generally – to generate novel visions of collective subjectivity and to pre-enact democratic futures (Frank, *The democratic sublime*; Marchart, *Conflictual Aesthetics*; Rebentisch, *The Art of Freedom*; Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*). The registers of such radical performances are myriad drawing on and often melding together literature, dance, theatre, architecture, music, cinema, and the visual arts, together with the spaces in which they are enacted and the forms of subjectivity to which they give voice.

In this stream, we invite theoretical, literary, and empirical explorations along these very interstices – across and in the break(s) of performances of radical reimagination, the rhythms, visions, and gestures of novel forms of political subjectivity, and the heterotopias in which such practices are situated and out of which they emerge.

Contributions may engage with – but need not be limited to – the following questions:

- What radical forms of appearance and visibility – or indeed, of in/visibility and refusal – are instantiated in particular aesthetic practices?
- What are their sites of emergence and what forms of spatialisation do they make possible?
- And what is the political vector or potency of such corporeal/literary/material performance/s?

Suggested reading:

Brown, Wendy. 2019. *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism. The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Frank, Jason. 2021. *The democratic sublime: on aesthetics and popular assembly*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Haiven, Max. 2014. *Crises of Imagination, Crises of Power. Capitalism, Creativity and the Commons*. London: Zed Books.

Marchart, Oliver. 2019. *Conflictual Aesthetics: Artistic Activism and the Public Sphere*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Rebentisch, Juliane. 2016. *The Art of Freedom: On the Dialectics of Democratic Existence*. Cambridge: Polity.

Tully, James. 2008. *Public Philosophy in a New Key, Vol. (2 Vols.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Challenge of Scarcity: Politics, Ecology, and Beyond

Stream organiser: *Alvise Capria*

Climate change heightens concerns about resource scarcity, prompting discussions on fair distribution. Consequently, the concept of scarcity permeates modern life, impacting resource allocation, political power dynamics, and ecological sustainability. However, our prevailing notion of 'scarcity', rooted in neoclassical economics, often goes unexamined and traces back to modern political and economic philosophy. Consequently, the concept has garnered significant attention in recent years, becoming an essential topic that connects various disciplines closely. Recent research proposes various theories to address scarcity challenges, broadly falling into four categories:

- a) Reconstruction of the different views on scarcity through an intellectual history approach (Mackrakis 1997; Jonsson et al. (eds) 2019; Valenz 2023);
- b) Political and economic criticism of the pursuit of policies that do not consider scarcity as a real event due to climate change and intensive exploitation of resources (Homer-Dixon 1999; Denier 2007; De Castro 2013);
- c) Analytical consideration of scarcity by referring to the evolution of the scientific paradigms of the hard sciences in relation to political economy (Ingrao, Israel 1987; Mirowski 1989);
- d) Epistemological analysis of scarcity within various scientific fields of reference in an interdisciplinary manner (economics, politics, social sciences, etc.), also considering the historical context (Luhmann 1994; Foucault 2004).

Precisely because of the urgency raised by the topic, this stream seeks to critically examine the multifaceted problem of scarcity, offering a cross-disciplinary platform for scholars to explore its manifestations in politics, economics, environmental studies, and beyond. Characteristics of the Stream:

1. *Cross-disciplinary Exploration*: We invite scholars from diverse backgrounds, specifically from politics, sociology, queer and feminist studies, history, critical theory, to shed light on the many dimensions of scarcity. By fostering cross-disciplinary dialogue, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of scarcity-related challenges.
2. *Past and Contemporary Significance*: The stream delves into the historical and contemporary significance of scarcity, exploring diverse cultural and socio-political perspectives. It analyses scarcity as a present-day challenge, examining its impact on global economic systems, international relations, ecological crises, and sustainability debates.
3. *Critical Inquiry*: As *per* the conference's *ethos*, we encourage critical examination of the concept of scarcity. Presenters can explore its past and contemporary implications, the ethics of resource allocation, and the potential for innovative solutions.

Papers engaging with these problems are welcome, including (but not limited to) the following questions:

- What is meant by "scarcity"? Is it a concept that can be limited to economic and natural resources or can it be extended to other fields?
- How has the concept of scarcity been theorised in modern and contemporary economic-political thought?
- Can law and/or positive law help in curbing scarcity-related phenomena in practice?
- How can contemporary ecological thinking curb the phenomenon of scarcity?
- What is the relationship between scarcity and capitalism?
- Are there, or have there been, communities or ways of being together among human beings that have a different approach to scarcity than in the West?
- How can feminist thought, queer theories and the LGBTQI+ community be of help re-thinking the scarcity-management?

Trans Theologies

Stream organiser: Nicolete Burbach

Transness occupies a critical social and political position today.

Fears around transness have become central to the rhetoric not only of the contemporary resurgence in far-right and nationalist politics, but also of certain strands of feminism. The result is the mainstreaming of a bridge between political milieus that have previously been mostly distinct. Moreover, these controversies serve as a context for the mainstreaming of specifically religious reactions against not simply transness, but queerness and even feminism. Many of the narratives adopted within mainstream transphobic politics draw from a decades-long Christian, and in no small part specifically Catholic, tradition of antifeminist culture-warfighting. The upshot is that Christian metaphysics of the body and the norms that flow from them are finding a place within nominally secular political movements.

This phenomenon also gestures towards the wider theological dimensions of contemporary British politics, with its attitudes towards the body and gender emerging from a Christian history, and which retains many elements of that history in a secularised form.

The 'Trans Theologies' stream aims to speak directly to this context from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including theology but also other humanities, the creative arts, and the social sciences.

This response involves two primary components: first, an exploration of the contemporary theopolitical situation of transness. This will interrogate the way that theological constructs undergird, motivate, and circulate within contemporary transphobic politics, but also the trans politics that respond to them.

The stream also seeks to include constructive theological work around transness. Contextual theology done from a trans perspective is welcome, but the stream also invites other methodological and disciplinary approaches. This latter component is particularly vital for several reasons. First, because much of the contemporary controversy around transness is theological in nature, it demands a theological response.

Second, because theology is a live factor in trans life more generally: many trans people are theologians, figuring our lives within theological terms not simply in an apologetic mode, but in a way that constructively navigates the interface of transness and faith. Doing trans theology not only offers the basis for a response to contemporary theopolitical transphobia, but enables and enriches the lives against which these political trends militate.

Responses from beyond the social sciences would be especially welcome for both components. Most explorations of trans theologies are social scientific, leading not only to issues of methodological homogeneity, but those arising from the tension between social scientific epistemologies and those of some theologies.

In this context, promoting other theological approaches in trans studies provides agency for trans people not only to articulate themselves in the face of these epistemologies, but to contest them and the hierarchies of knowledge and expertise they embody. In this way, the stream would serve as an occasion and platform for trans knowledge production that is otherwise frequently negated within both religious and wider public spheres.

Transforming Vocology Through Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Stream organiser: Jenna Brown

This proposed stream seeks to curate multi-disciplinary practitioners, exploring the benefits and challenges of adopting alternative methodologies and practical perspectives as an emergent foundation for critical and transformational scholarship and practice in Vocology.

Vocology is the science and practice of vocal habilitation. Vocologists work towards understanding the how and why of healthy vocal function. As a transdisciplinary practice, Vocologists include researchers and practitioners who may be voice rehabilitation specialists, singing teachers, vocal coaches, musicologists, performing artists, speech and language therapists, Laryngologists, voice scientists, osteopaths and numerous other complementary health and wellbeing practitioners. These practitioners are involved in the evaluation, diagnosis, treatment and training of voices.

Traditionally, Vocology research employs positivist, quantitative methods and the accompanying strand of vocal pedagogy is founded on a hierarchical master-apprentice structure that privileges rational androcentric values and maintains unbalanced power structures between knowledge gatekeepers and their patients/clients. Additionally, the majority of published vocology research is centred on Western Classical traditions, which fail to account for oral traditions and the impact of socio-cultural differences.

Recently, these traditional structures have been challenged by critical thought addressing the positionality of researchers and practitioners. Calls have been made for a more-person-centred approach, which allows for subjective interpretation of data and application of diverse perspectives. Specifically, there has been a growth in researchers and practitioners employing Feminist, Indigenous, Queer and Intersectional paradigms and integrating perspectives from outside of the discipline of vocology. Practitioners are recognising there is much to be gained from the experiences of academics outside of vocology, who may bring alternative perspectives to the field.

Within Vocology, these emerging transformational methodologies position the researchers and practitioners on the margins of the community, particularly those working in clinical voice care contexts. However, several contemporary voice researchers have proposed that the adoption of transformational methodologies in vocal research can help address issues of inequality and bias through development of rich, qualitative approaches, which contribute to an intersectional synthesis of vocal science and artistry. Advancement of transformative approaches advocates a move away from academic gatekeeping, towards an inclusive model of research within a community of practitioners.

It is hoped that this stream will bring together participants from a range of disciplines, particularly those least recognised and integrated in the field of Vocology. We are keen to explore new interdisciplinary connections and learning, and particularly welcome contributions from those working in disciplines which are traditionally seen as distant from the vocal arts. It is hoped that participants will critically discuss their methodologies and the potential integration of these values and processes in their work. The stream aims to further support the developing community of likeminded Vocologists and adjunct professionals, giving opportunity for cross-disciplinary responses to the challenges faced when approaching work within a discipline whose empirical foundations remain steadfast, despite changing socio-political tides and advancements in our understanding of the multifactorial, biopsychosocial nature of vocal production.

Use and Abuse of Passion in the Precarious Labour Market

Stream organisers: Anastasia Fjodorova and Ricky Gee

The continued post-industrialisation of OECD countries has seen a proliferation of service and knowledge economies which require 'high skilled' workers to engage in an elongated and credentialised education process at great emotional and financial cost. Such sectors offer the promise of 'meaningful' work, presumed sufficient on its own terms, conditional on the embracing of neoliberal policies that pervert 'flexibility' on the worker's terms into a climate of continuously insecure and precarious, short term and zero-hour contracts. The transition to post-industrialisation has seen movement from theory x forms of scientific management (based upon the work of Frederick Taylor) to theory y forms (informed by the human potential movement) promoting the importance of the 'play ethic' at work, where the individual is to bring their 'authentic self' to work, not only their mind and body but their *spirit* and *passion* also (see Fleming, 2009; Mignot, 2017). Conversely, there still remains an enduring link between work/remuneration and suffering (Fisher 2021).

In such an environment, individuals are encouraged to become increasingly agile and adaptive, to forge 'new careers' that challenge the predictable linear progression of the traditional career. Such new careers promote 'career portfolios', boundaryless and protean careers or forms of polywork - a kaleidoscope of activities and opportunities likely to provide tension between desired forms of self-expression and financial pragmatics. Such adaptability is likely to involve an investment of the self to work, which provides an intensification of working practices that extend and colonise leisure time – a privatisation of the commons – and forms of 'self-exploitation' and self-discipline (Hardt and Negri, 1994). The asymmetry of power relations between the employee and employer provokes a one-sided empathetic over investment on the part of the worker, which becomes particularly exacerbated for marginalised groups and/or popular sectors offering inadequate remuneration – for example in the arts and creative industries and caring sector.

These circumstances create not only precarious work but in turn precarious lives where the coerced overexertion of work may well have negative impacts on other strands in the life-career, e.g. relationships, leisure, and health. Further insecurities are provoked by the coming age of artificial intelligence and its potential misapplication.

This stream invites theoretical, empirical, and performative proposals exploring varied perspectives from academics, activists, artists, and practitioners to question the abuse of people's passions and desire for purpose in the 21st century labour market, to then consider opportunities and action to build solidarity to resist and subvert such circumstance:

- How do we provide precision on understanding of the exploitative practices of the precarious labour market?
- How can we resist such modalities of oppression and reclaim the commons and our passions?
- How does social position influence career trajectory and navigation?
- What are the arguments for and against the refusal and resistance of work and working practices?
- How might AI impact upon conceptions, experiences and enactment of work and career?

Violent Delights: Joy, Pleasure, Ecstasies, the Political, and the Promise of Violent Ends

Stream organisers: Jess Mezo and Jeremy Halsey

The role of pleasure and enjoyment in the life of the community, as well as the individual, has been a long-debated issue within the field of Critical Thought. Is pleasure, as Foucault posits, a 'rallying point of counterattack' (1978: 157), is it 'completely rotten' (Deleuze, 2001: 96) or is it, perhaps, a *pharmakon* (Schuster, 2016)? Should it be viewed as a potential line of flight or was Jim McGuigan right when he claimed that we are trapped in a 'political triangle of populism, pleasure and leisure' (1992: 111)?

We posit that regardless of whether one sees pleasure, joy, enjoyment, and ecstasy as mechanisms of liberation or capture, there is a real urgency for closer theoretical engagement with how they alter the field of potentiality and structure power relations within society today. Starting from the Lacanian distinction between *plaisir* and *jouissance* – the former a passive form of pleasure, gained via consuming substances and content sanctioned under the dominant ideology, the latter an active form of pleasure (or 'enjoyment') that brings about 'an ecstatic loss of previous being' (Rylance, 1994: 82) –, we suggest that it is imperative that we make every effort to map out and understand how our 'violent delights' are arresting and/or enabling meaningful political agency and empowered action today.

Particularly pressing areas of concern include:

1. Political disengagement and voter apathy, coupled with rise of (and retreat into) 'defensive emotions' that Jacobsen (2021) identifies primarily as fear and nostalgia. And, while nostalgia goes hand-in-hand with *plaisir*, affirming one's sense of belonging via the re-enjoying of pre-existing identities, ideologies, and content, and fear tacitly evokes the dark intensities of *jouissance* that are, then, embodied in *schadenfreude*, hatred, and/or violence, where the two converge is their ability to trap us in a libidinal enjoyment of the present, while simultaneously arresting our ability to engage with the future as an act of creative world-building.
2. A shifting landscape of power and resistance, reflected both in the emerging legislation targeting repertoires of contention, and the seeming inability of traditional methods of resistance to catalyse large-scale socio-political transformation. When considering the current track record of movements such as Occupy or Extinction Rebellion – both of which have been described as 'carnavalesque' and 'festival-like' (Hammond, 2020; Tancons, 2011) –, one cannot help but wonder whether McGuigan was right and protest movements are now ushering in a new era of 'licensed popular blow-offs' (1992: 18), where anti-*status quo* passions are grounded and/or exhausted in a carnival of *jouissance*.
3. In contrast, emerging counter-narratives in the field of political thought (Yalcintas, 2015; Jasper, 2011) propose that pleasure, joy, and enjoyment can serve to re-engage and re-empower alienated segments of the population in the political life of the community via a deliberate shift into more pleasant affective registers.

This stream invites papers, workshops, and performances that explore the role of pleasure today, both as a method of resistance and as a mechanism of control.

Watery Speculations

Stream organiser: Lucy A. Sames

This stream explores feminist, queer and posthuman approaches to thinking about water – as materiality, metaphor and methodology – foregrounding the contingent nature and disruptive qualities of the liquid for creative practice.

As detailed by gender studies scholar Margrit Shildrick (1997), fluidity and leakiness are misogynist tropes that have historically been used to denigrate othered bodies through the portrayal of their biologies as watery, leaky and uncontainable. Such a characterisation thus excludes them from rational discourse that demands a stable and consistent conception of the self. Rather, in this stream, we will consider these qualities as vital, generative and liberatory: ‘water gives us material evidence of an alternative mode of being’ that seeks to problematize hierarchical binary logic (Chandler and Neimanis, 2013).

This stream welcomes a wide range of submissions, that consider water and liquidity as/through the body, hydro/ecological perspectives on visual culture, marine vision, and watery speculations of all kinds. Formats can include academic presentations, workshops and roundtables to more creative and experimental formats such as performance, film, and publishing.

Themes might include, but are not limited to:

- Thinking with sea life, marine mammals and seaweeds;
- Swimming and diving as methods;
- Overflowing, gushing, flooding, and watery excess as disruptive methods;
- Floating and drifting as methods;
- Liquidity as a state of being or doing;
- Liquidity and queerness;
- Bodies of water – geographic, hydrologic, meteorologic, embodied, transcorporeal.

Suggested reading:

Chen, Cecilia, Janine MacLeod, and Astrida Neimanis (eds.) (2013). *Thinking with Water*, McGill-Queen's Press.

Gumbs, Alexis Pauline (2020) *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals*, Chiko, CA: AK Press.

Jue, Melody (2020), *Wild Blue Media: Thinking Through Seawater*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Neimanis, Astrida (2012) ‘Hydrofeminism: Or , On Becoming a Body of Water’ in *Undutiful Daughters: Mobilizing Future Concepts, Bodies and Subjectivities in Feminist Thought and Practice*, 96–115.

Shildrick, Margrit (1997) *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)Ethics*. London, UK: Routledge.

What's the Matter with the Culture Wars?

Stream organiser: Andrew Woods

Is the 'culture war' a distraction from 'real' issues? Conventionally, 'culture-warring' has been conceptualised as a cynical political technique to divide people according to mere 'cultural' differences rather than material interests. Yet, as Judith Butler once remarked in a 1998 essay, this framing of certain issues as part of a 'culture war' presumes that "the distinction between material and cultural life is a stable one." Other writers, such as Amardeep Singh Dillion, have also challenged this common-sense distinction between 'culture wars' and 'class struggle.' In the field of cultural studies, scholars have repeatedly stressed that the realm of culture is central to the political and material life of post-industrial societies. According to the cultural theorist Janet Newman, we must always avoid the problem of divorcing a critique of the 'culture wars' from a wider social and economic analysis. We must, in other words, see the 'material' in the 'merely cultural.'

This stream invites proposals that investigate and interrogate the relationship between the material and the cultural in the discourses and practices of the 'culture war.' This stream welcomes critical approaches to the concepts of "culture," "cultural politics," and "cultural production." What does it mean to carry out a materialist analysis of culture? Is a materialist conception of the culture war even possible or desirable? Which other theoretical traditions might help us to successfully think through the antagonisms of the culture wars? How is Theory itself implicated within the 'culture war' (demonisations of "Cultural Marxism," "CRT," "postmodern neo-Marxism," "gender ideology," etc.)? How might we defuse and disengage these reactionary discursive logics and, as Sven Lütticken puts it, "desert positively" from the mediatised spectacle of the 'culture wars' to fabricate alternative models of cultural life?

This stream welcomes proposals that engage with, but are not limited to:

- Debates about the materialist/culturalist divide in Marxian theory
- Race, racialisation, and moral panics ('mugging,' Drill music, etc.)
- The Frankfurt School on the relationship between the culture industry and the social totality
- Gender, sexuality, and "gender ideology"
- Theorisations and critiques of the base/superstructure metaphor
- The "War on Woke"
- The relationship between production and reproduction
- Understandings of 'culture' in the culture wars
- The aestheticization of politics and the politization of aesthetics (Walter Benjamin)
- Colonialism and decolonisation (Rhodes Must Fall, etc.)
- Cultural materialism

Suggested reading:

- Judith Butler, 1998, "Merely Cultural," *New Left Review*, No. 227, January-February: 33-44.
- Stuart Hall, 1994, "Some 'Politically Incorrect' Pathways Through PC," in *The War of the Words: The Political Correctness Debate*, edited by Sarah Dunant (London: Virago): 164-183.
- Sean Phelan, 2023, "Seven theses about the so-called culture war(s) (or some fragmentary notes on 'cancel culture')," *Cultural Studies*, 1-26
- Janet Newman and John Clarke, 2022, "What's at Stake in the Culture Wars?," *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture*, No. 81, 13-22.
- Maria Hlavajova and Sven Lütticken (eds), 2020, *Deserting from the Culture Wars* (BAK: Utrecht).
- Amardeep Singh Dillion, 2023, "The Culture War Doesn't Exist," *Novara Media*, April 19, 2023.