

Call for Papers

Special Issue on “Scopes of the Social Imaginary in Sociology” in the *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*

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Throughout the history of sociology, different variations of the imaginary, imagination, and fantasy have on the one hand served time and again (albeit often in passing) as a topic of sociological curiosity, yet have on the other hand also been accepted into the theoretical foundations of the field, where they are usually included unquestioned in the epistemological inventory. Foundational texts of sociology, whether those of Durkheim, Simmel, or Schütz, cannot do without the imaginary and its potential for transcending social realities and helping to constitute them.

The social imaginary is hence both a relevant field of inquiry for sociological studies and an essential element of sociological methods and theories. However, there are as yet only few in-depth and comparative sociological studies on the social imaginary.

Moreover, while the social imaginary has played an important role in the French as well as in the German and English theoretical traditions, it has been construed in very different terms in these traditions, making it difficult to hold a common discussion on the topic within the European sociological discourse.

Against this backdrop, the special issue will deal explicitly with the *social* imaginary from a primarily *sociological* perspective, while also attempting to make interdisciplinary linkages to further branches of cultural and social sciences, and the humanities. The goal of the issue is therefore to examine, compare, and determine the epistemological scope of the various theoretical conceptualizations of the imaginary in sociological approaches. The issue will also endeavor to overcome the boundaries between the French, Anglo-American, and German research traditions and initiate a dialogue between these discourses. Furthermore, it will take a closer look at the social imaginary as a research topic with regard to suitable research questions, fields of inquiry, and methods for studies on the social imaginary.

In particular, we welcome contributions focusing on the social imaginary from the following perspectives:

- from a sociological or historical philosophical perspective; e.g., where do we find the social imaginary in the classics and in current theories in the field, and how does it influence theory formation?
- from a comparative perspective; e.g., how can we combine Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities” with Cornelius Castoriadis’s “society as an imaginary institution”?

- from an epistemological perspective; e.g., how can we adequately grasp the concept of the social imaginary and how do imaginary elements generate evidence in sociological cognitive processes?
- from an empirical perspective; e.g., what methodological consequences does sociological research focusing on the social imaginary entail?
- from an interdisciplinary perspective; e.g., where does a sociology conceived from the perspective of the social imaginary intersect with cultural sciences?

The special issue will aim to portray the current state of the discussion on the social imaginary. An editorial will outline the scope of the content, embed the current discussion in a historical and (inter-)disciplinary context, and place it in relation to neighboring theoretical perspectives (such as the metaphor, the symbol, etc.).

Please send your paper proposals in the form of an **abstract** (approx. **1 DIN A4 page**, in **German** or **English**) to: herbrik@leuphana.de.

The submission deadline is **16 December 2016**.