Call for Abstracts

Conference hosted by the Open Society Research Platform

Forget Open Society?
Critical Conversations on a Contested Concept

Deadline for Abstract Submission: 20 August 2021

Conference Location and Date*: Online, 28-29 October 2021

The Provocation

While Open Society is, undoubtedly, a contested concept, we find at its very heart a commitment to open discussion and critical thinking. This critical ethos also applies to the idea of Open Society itself: What are its characteristics? How, if at all, can the concept be translated into practice? What is its potential and what are its limitations in today's world? Is Open Society a 'Western' concept? In probing these and related questions, this is a conference *on* Open Society (as a philosophical/political concept) *in the spirit of* Open Society (as a critical ethos). As such, it seems apt to frame its overarching theme as a (deliberate) provocation: Forget Open Society?

The Purpose of the Conference

Following a series of workshops and public events in its first year of existence, the Open Society Research Platform (OSRP)* will host an academic conference to which we would like to invite everyone with a genuine interest in the concept of Open Society. The main purpose of this conference is to explore and open up further avenues for research on the idea(l) of Open Society in regional, national, international and global contexts. As such, this conference seeks to bring together and spark conversations between scholars, thinkers, and activists from various disciplines who will critically reflect on this contested concept, probe its potential and limitations in light of the global challenges that humanity faces, and carve out new ideas and insights of how to live with the tensions and frictions that an open society inevitably creates and constantly re-creates.

Topics and Areas of Interest

We welcome submissions from diverse disciplines and theoretical backgrounds and we are interested in empirical, theoretical, and normative approaches. Since this is a conference on, and in the spirit of, Open Society, we expect presenters to engage seriously with Open Society as a philosophical/political concept. Contributions can come from disciplines in which there has been substantive engagement with the concept of Open Society (e.g. Education, Public Health), but we also encourage explorations in fields that have been hesitant to draw on this concept (e.g. International Relations, Feminism). Topics of interest include, but are certainly not limited to:

- Comparative studies on the concept of Open Society in the works of different thinkers (e.g. Popper, Berlin, Shklar, Arendt, Oakeshott, Voegelin, etc.)
- The concept of Open Society and its relation to liberalism and democracy
- Freedom and justice in Open Societies (e.g. are Open Societies 'just' societies?)
- Towards a 'Global Open Society' (e.g. 'English School' approaches in International Relations)
- Feminist engagements with Open Society
- Open Society and non-Western philosophy
- The concept of Open Society in the context of post-socialist transformation
- Open Society, populism, and the rise of authoritarianism
- The potential of Open Society to address contemporary challenges (e.g. health, poverty, racism)

Planned publication:

The organisers will select papers for publication in an edited volume or a special issue in an academic journal.

Conference Organisers:

Volha Biziukova (Junior Visiting Researcher): biziukovav@ceu.edu

Christof Royer (Postdoctoral Fellow): royerc@ceu.edu

Please do get in touch with us if you are interested in the conference and/or have any other queries.

Timeline:

20 August 2021: Deadline for submission of abstracts. Abstracts, including a working title, should be 250-300 words and be emailed to royerc@ceu.edu. Please also include a short biography of 70-100 words. Successful contributions will be notified by the end of August 2021.

28-29 October 2021: Date of conference. Conference papers should have a word count of approximately 2000 words (excluding bibliography). The event will be held online; depending on the number of selected speakers and panels, this will either be a one-day or a two-day event.

End-February 2022: Papers for inclusion in academic publication (edited volume, special issue) due.

*On the Open Society Research Platform

The OSRP, which is affiliated with Central European University and the Open Society University Network, was created in January 2021. The platform seeks to revisit the debate on Open Society – a concept coined by Henri Bergson and popularised by Karl Popper. Our aim is to identify the multiple and often diverging uses of the concept in theory and practice, to offer a rigorous analysis of the scholarly discussions around this complex idea, and to probe the analytical, institutional, and political implications of different Open Society discourses. As such, the OSRP supports and contributes to inter- and transdisciplinary scholarly research and public debate on Open Society as an intellectual and policy tool.