

Social Pathologies of Contemporary Civilization

Call for Papers:

The cycles of backsliding and rebound

The interplay of social pathology, metanoia and emancipation

- SPCC 11th Conference
- Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University
- Brno, Czechia
- 20–21 May 2027
- Deadline for the abstracts submission: 15 October 2026



Ladislava Gažiová, Prázdninový výlet (Holiday Trip), 2025.
Spray on canvas, 80 × 100 cm. With kind thanks to
Mgr. Andrea Průchová Hružová, Ph.D., for the suggestion.

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We are by now well into the death-spiral of Modern Western Civilization. Only a few centuries old, already in its apotheosis, accelerating rapidly into self-destruction, evident everywhere around us today in wars, failing states, decomposing institutions, rising tyrannies, pervasive nihilism, sociocide and planetary ecocide. Yet, this “we” is not a homogeneous subject: experiences of crisis, decline and violence are structured by gender, race, class and geopolitical position, raising the question of whose civilization is said to be collapsing, and for whom its promises were never fully realized.

The liminal collapse of civilisations into recurring dark ages, Giambattista Vico says, is always characterised by ‘two great maladies’: ‘the perfect tyranny of anarchy and the unbridled liberty of free peoples’ [in our time we see the anarchy of de-regulation and the unbridled liberty of hyper-individualized ‘freedom’]. These great maladies become manifest in three forms: (i) the return of monarchy, by authoritarian demagogues who would impose order by violence; (ii) the declining civilization becomes subject to conquest [we have already entered a post-Western world order, and the ‘democratic age of men’ is eclipsed by techno feudalist plutocracy] (iii) we become asocial again – solitary, competitive, uncooperative. Contemporary forms of backsliding are also profoundly gendered and sexualized, as seen in the global rise of anti-gender movements, the rollback of reproductive rights, and the increasing politicization of bodies, intimacy and care as key terrains of authoritarian reordering.

Today, everywhere, institutions of justice, rule of law, treaties and social contracts are under siege, usurped and transgressed, and our apotheosis is the subject envisaged by the Marquis de Sade: the model of Man embodied by Trump, Epstein, Musk, Theil and the billionaire techno-feudalists is the pathologically greedy ‘libertine isolist’ with narcissistic-psychotic tendencies, who lives in ‘the Beyond’, outside all limits, ‘where transgression itself is the only law.’ Today, we see Vico's historical ricorso to barbarism. But, as we also learn from Vico's reading of ancient histories, mythologies and poetics, we have been through this moment of liminal collapse and the return of civilizational breakdown already many times, and myth, poetry, literature and art can help us to remember how to imagine how we might endure and survive our dangerous times.

Occasionally we also see examples of resisting the darkness or the unexpected and improbable collapse of deeply embedded algorithmic populisms. The recent removal of one of the global populist role models, Viktor Orban in Hungary, demonstrated the limitations of post-truth regimes. Although it took sixteen years, at the end of the day, not even the most overwhelming propaganda could maintain a political reality constituted exclusively by the hatred and fear of virtual enemies.

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Taking these complexities into consideration, we invite you to join with us in reflecting together on the cycles of backsliding and rebound. The endless interplay of modern structural distortions resulting in social pathologies, the difficulties of despair and defeatism, the securing and nurturing of hope and the breakthrough towards emancipatory or revolutionary praxes are imagined as parts of the same interrelated historical logic. Our conference aims to explore these links. In this context, we particularly encourage contributions that examine how social pathologies—such as alienation, exploitation, acceleration or anomie—are differentially produced and lived across intersecting axes of inequality, including gender, race, class, sexuality and migration, and how these differences shape both vulnerability and resistance.

In emergency conditions that seem to demand entirely new 'disruptive' thinking we need the presence of mind to know that 'imagination is nothing but the working over of what is remembered, and ingenuity is simply the elaboration of things remembered' (Vico); 'imagination is memory' (James Joyce). From this perspective, feminist, queer and decolonial practices can be understood as sites of such metanoia, where embodied experience, collective memory and situated knowledge generate alternative forms of critique, care and emancipatory transformation. As Donna Haraway argues in her seminal essay on "situated knowledges," feminist objectivity requires "partial perspectives" that resist the "god-trick" of disembodied universality, instead drawing strength from "the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body" positioned against dominant power structures. Similarly, María Lugones' decolonial feminism reveals how coloniality enforces a "racist/colonial gender system," and metanoia emerges through the "unmaking" of this matrix via plural, coalitional practices that reclaim pre-colonial relationalities and bodily autonomies. Audre Lorde complements this by insisting that "poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought," making the unspeakable visible as a transformative act of survival and resistance. Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology of "orientation" further enriches Vico's and Joyce's memory-work: disoriented bodies "learn to become orientated" by rearranging the furniture of the familiar world, turning inherited habits into new directions of collective becoming.

If our present-day context is indeed deeply marked by the alienation of 'relation of relationlessness' (Rahel Jaeggi), how can we move in the reverse direction? What would a 'revolution for life' (Eva von Redecker) resisting the late capitalist death-spiral entail, and what lessons do we need to learn from former major and minor turnovers?

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Following the previous years, exploring the social pathologies (i.e., alienation, exploitation, acceleration or anomie), their individual consequences (i.e., social suffering, mental disorders or illness), and the potential countermeasures (including metanoia, socially reflective therapy and emancipatory collective action), this time we would like to emphasize the historical dimensions of these interrelated dynamics.

Hence, we invite presentations that approach the social pathologies of contemporary civilization, while reflecting not only on the causes and countermeasures, but also on the interrelatedness of these tendencies. We explicitly welcome contributions that foreground care relations, reproductive labour, and struggles around bodily autonomy as central dimensions of both social crisis and emancipatory response.

Submit Your Abstract

Please send your abstract to socialpath2022@gmail.com by 15 October 2026.

Make sure to include:

- your name
- affiliation
- proposal title
- keywords
- abstract (max 300 words)
- contact details for correspondence



Decisions on submissions will be communicated by 15 December 2026.

Keynote Speakers

Prof. Rahel Jaeggi * Prof. Anne Fuchs * Prof. Anna Pospěch Durnová

Organising team

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