

Summaries

Antje Daniel & Björn Wendt: Utopia is Alive! Broadening of Contemporary Sociological Diagnosis and Social Theory. In debates on social theory and contemporary diagnosis, the present is often described as devoid of utopia. Imaginaries of fear, expectations of decline as well as apocalyptic and backward-looking narratives dominate the imaginings of the future. We take this time-diagnostic description as a starting point to show that, despite these tendencies, it is wrong to define the present as an age without utopias. This but also other widespread (mis-)assumptions about utopia are subjected to a critical examination. Against these theses on the end of utopia as well as the version of utopias as a specific genre of fictional literature, as progressive-emancipatory projects and as a European phenomenon, we argue for a multi-dimensional, elastic concept of utopia and the reevaluation of utopia as a subject area of sociological research. A sociology of utopia aims at a differentiated analysis of social relations imagined as desirable and of varying ideas of the good life, and at exploring their anchoring in social practice and their significance for processes of social change in contemporary societies.

Alissa Starodub: The Art of Survival on a Destroyed Planet. New Notions and Field Notes on Ecological Solidarity. This essay pursues the question of how lived utopias are inscribed in the present in future-oriented practices of social actors in the face of the climate crisis. With an actor-oriented approach it investigates into future-oriented practices of social non-movements, common people inhabiting rural areas, which are pursuing an alternative vision of the future in cultivating the arts of surviving on a damaged planet in a cross-border multispecies solidarity. Leaning on contemporary posthumanist theory and nourished from a collage of field notes, the notions of ecological solidarity and ecological class are harnessed for solidarity studies and studies of protests. The essay unfolds cross-border practices of social actors that see the future in and through commoning and making-kin with other humans and non-humans in a multispecies solidarity created right here and now. Hereby, the proposal for a future-oriented research is to theorise the new ontological approach born in and through such practices in giving it a meta-theoretical base in order to employ it for an extended study of future-oriented practices of ecological solidarity.

Olaf Kaltmeier: The Oxymoron of an Anarchist Constitution. The Death of the Social and Popular Constituent Power in Chile. This article analyzes the draft of the Constitution prepared by the Constituent Assembly in Chile between 2021 and 2022 to explore how the diverse and plural concerns of different social movements, which protested against Chile's neoliberal constitution with the mass protests in 2018, can be translated into a new libertarian form of political representation. Historically, the article examines the strongly authoritarian constitutional tradition in Chile, which culminated in the Constitution enacted by the military dictatorship in 1980. While this oppressed popular concerns and ultimately led to the death of the social, the

Constitutional Convention – according to a central thesis of this article – ensured that the social was reinstated by inscribing the various concerns of movements into the constitutional text. With recourse to political philosophy, the article explores both the tensions caused by the paradoxical project of a popular anarchist constitution and its perspectives for emancipatory processes.

Merlin Becskey: The Role of Orthopraxis in the Development of Post-utopian Kibbutz Models. This article explores Kibbutz Samar as a rare example of a post-utopian, egalitarian community that has retained core principles of democratic kibbutz socialism while integrating anarchist-inspired practices of self-organization. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, it introduces the concept of Orthopraxis – a practice-oriented alternative to ideological Orthodoxy – and illustrates how Samar’s community life resists the dominant logic of neoliberalism and bureaucratic realism. Samar maintains collective ownership, equal access to resources, and decentralized decision-making, demonstrating a lived alternative to capitalist norms. Despite ongoing internal and external pressures, Samar remains a space of tactical negotiation and collective experimentation for a more just and self-determined form of living.

Miryam Frickel: No Future? Imagining Sicily’s Future. This article explores how alternative visions of the future are emerging in Palermo, Sicily, challenging dominant narratives about the Mafia and development. Introducing the analytical concept of situated revisions, the empirical study investigates how local actors negotiate power relations, reinterpret official discourses, and articulate their own perspectives on processes of social transformation.

Alexander Neupert-Doppler: From the loss of utopia in neoliberalism to authoritarianism and back to the future. How are the loss of utopia in our time and the rise of right-wing authoritarianism connected? It is the success of neoliberalism in recent decades that has set the lack of alternatives to the market against the utopian core idea of the shape ability of society. This calls for people to take responsibility for themselves, which proves to be excessive, especially in times of crisis. Building on this isolation, right-wing populism is successful by promising national belonging as a source of relief. The narrative of all-powerful conspiracies can be explained psychoanalytically, also by experiences of one’s own repressed powerlessness. What remains are dystopias of a threatening future, which can be linked to in order to restore access to utopian perspectives for the political imagination.

Anne Tittor, Eduardo Reilly, Leoni Schlender & Maria Backhouse: The “Amputated” Re-embedding of Intellectual Property Rights in Genetic Resources. The Case of Brazil. In 2010, after prolonged negotiations, the Nagoya Protocol – and with it, a central mechanism for access and benefit sharing (ABS) – was adopted. The Nagoya Protocol aims to end biopiracy, which refers to the appropriation and patenting of knowledge about plants by pharmaceutical or agricultural companies. It seeks to limit biopiracy by regulating access to genetic resources and ensuring that

local knowledge holders receive a share of the profits derived from such appropriations. Drawing on a sociological understandings of property and an interpretation of Karl Polanyi, we argue that the ABS mechanism is the outcome of decades of negotiation between market forces, states from the Global South, and social movements over the social re-embedding or social regulation of intellectual property rights. Against this background, we examine how the social re-embedding or social regulation of intellectual property succeeds and observe an “amputated” re-embedding of private intellectual property. Although Nagoya as an international norm acknowledges the importance of Indigenous and Traditional knowledge for the first time, we find no evidence of a substantial social regulation of intellectual property: the exclusive character of private property and the associated commodification processes remain unchallenged and are instead reinforced by the mechanism. Not even the envisaged monetary redistribution through benefit-sharing has been successful at the local level. Despite this, most actors involved see no viable alternative to this form of regulation. We illustrate our argument with a qualitative study on the social negotiations surrounding the implementation of the ABS mechanism in Brazil. Specifically, we focus on the strategy – propagated by many state, private, and civil society actors – of cataloging traditional and Indigenous knowledge through so-called biocultural protocols. The protocols, while well-intentioned, aim to make such knowledge more visible and protect it from biopiracy.