

distinktion

Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory

CALL FOR PAPERS: SPECIAL ISSUE ON POSTMODERN CROWDS

Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory invites papers for a special issue on 'Postmodern Crowds' to be published in 2013.

Since the late nineteenth century, crowds and masses have occupied a central place in social and political theory. Typically, crowds have been conceived as formless entities ready to be civilized, disciplined and formed by states and social structures in different historical epochs; as dangerous phenomena representing pure life, vitality and death drives; or as a force which might serve liberating functions.

Although crowds and masses tended to be associated with a phase of modernity that ended in the 1960s, it appears that the notions are far from obsolete today. Crowds and masses might still be identified and mobilized, even if novel theoretical resources are required to conceptualize their contemporary manifestations. Several recent developments buttress the impression that crowds and mass theory is currently gaining renewed significance:

- Poststructuralist understandings of social formations as we encounter them in the rhizomatic thinking of Deleuze and Guattari, STS (Latour, Law, Callon), network theory (Castells, Benkler) and non-representational theory (Thrift) all suggest a fluid and ever-changing image of the social that parallels an interest in moments and spaces of high density (online or offline) crowd behavior. This covers phenomena such as flash mobs, generated by digital media, ceremonial spontaneous crowd gatherings around tragic events, terrorism and its dependency on electronic media, and more explicit political protests in both democratic and non-democratic societies.
- The re-actualization of sociologists from the late nineteenth century such as Gabriel Tarde and Gustave Le Bon as well as a renewed interest in sociological main figures such as Jean Baudrillard and Michel Maffesoli (echoed by cultural theorists René Girard and Georges Bataille) have resulted in new understandings of the prefix 'mass'. Social logics of imitation, mimetic desire, contagion and excessive and momentary transgressive tribalism seem to acquire new meanings due to global social media.
- The turn towards transindividual transmitters in order to understand the social beyond its cognitive and rational elements revolves around affects, emotions, drives, atmospheres, etc., which seem to be important so as to grasp what mobilizes, governs and energizes crowds and masses (Thrift, Brennan, Massumi, Clough, Seigworth). The focus on the transindividual resources of sociality entails a focus on the in-between-ness of bodies, on the relationship between bodies and (media)technologies, and on the materiality and spatiality around bodies.

With this special issue we invite scholars to discuss the notion and phenomenon of postmodern crowds. Possible topics include:



distinktion

Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory

- How to conceptualize contemporary crowd manifestations, in the economic, political, religious, etc. realms?
- How do postmodern crowds and masses differ from modern ones?
- How does/should crowd theory relate to other forms of social and political theorizing?
- Which normative underpinnings can be identified in the recent revitalization of crowd thinking?
- What notions of spatiality and temporality are pertinent to understand current crowd formations?
- Are distinctions between crowds, masses, mobs, groups, gatherings, etc. still relevant?

We welcome papers that address the topic of postmodern crowds from a theoretical perspective or from a more empirical angle. Yet, we expect more empirical papers also to include reflections on their theoretical implications.

Submission guidelines

Deadline for submissions is January 1st 2012. Papers must be in English. See www.distinktion.dk for details about style and form. Please send papers to distinktion@ps.au.dk. Publication is based on a double-blind peer-review process. The editors are happy to receive inquiries by email.

Editors of this special issue

Christian Borch, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark,
email: cbo.lpf@cbs.dk

Britta Timm Knudsen, Aarhus University, Denmark,
email: norbtik@hum.au.dk (guest co-editor)

Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory is a peer reviewed journal that publishes papers which make a substantial contribution to contemporary social theory. The journal particularly investigates the interface between social and political theory, often explored in thematic issues. *Distinktion* invites articles from sociology, political science, cultural and legal studies, anthropology, and philosophy that provide original perspectives on the social. Launched in 2000 and based in a Scandinavian context, *Distinktion* creates a space for theoretical contestation that includes both continental and Anglo-American traditions.

The journal features theory articles as well as more empirical contributions, but empirical papers should outline implications for social theory. *Distinktion* publishes standard articles as well as review essays. *Distinktion* has published original papers by prominent international scholars, including Karin Knorr Cetina, Mitchell Dean, Jürgen Habermas, Engin F. Isin, Nikolas Rose, Richard Swedberg, Peter Wagner, Harrison C. White, and Slavoj Žižek. Previous special issues have focused on Niklas Luhmann, economic sociology, Gabriel Tarde, political theology, bioeconomy, and successive modernities.

From 2011, *Distinktion* will be published with Taylor & Francis, Routledge Journals.