



23rd Utopian Studies Society/Europe Annual Conference

Utopian Imaginaries

Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

July 4-7, 2023

Hosted by the Center for Imagination Studies (Centre de recherches sur l'imaginaire - <http://phantasma.lett.ubbcluj.ro/>) of the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár in Hungarian, Klausenburg in German), Romania (<https://www.ubbcluj.ro/ro/despre/>), the conference will focus on “utopian imaginaries”. The French term *imaginaire* [English: imaginary], as opposed to the traditional concepts of “imagination” and “fantasy”, is a seminal concept in the investigation of the cultural, literary, and artistic representations. It was proposed in the mid-20th century, by Gaston Bachelard, Henry Corbin, Gilbert Durand, and others. While “imagination” defines the human faculty of creating random mental images, with no correspondent in the outside reality, that is, false, chimerical representations, the French term, *imaginaire* designates the imaging or the imagining function of the psyche, its capacity to produce new, creative representations. For Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, it designates the “inner creative force of the imagination” (*L'imaginaire*, 2003).

Humans relate to the outside world not only through senses and ideas, but also through images and representations. Their understanding of the world and their ensuing reactions depend on these subjective images. As neuroscientists have recently shown, the simple fact of telling stories (i.e., organising our experience in narrative terms by means of brain maps) is one of the most elementary and archaic “obsessions of the brain” (António Damásio). Rather than a dimension at the margins of the material and physical order of the world (both visible and invisible), “the imaginary” is intrinsically intertwined with it, over-determining the way we feel, read and represent (through artistic, literary, scientific, historical, religious or mythical discourses) both the reality surrounding us, the way we interact with it, and transform it. In order to understand human behaviour, anthropologists have to tackle the complex system of representations that underlies mental activity.

The imaginary pervades all human practices. It applies to a vast range of domains, from sociology and religion to literature and the arts. Social imaginaries comprise narratives, mythical events, historical characters, collective symbols which serve to make sense of history, to organise cultural memory and to configure the future. Charles Taylor defines “the social imaginaries” as

follows: “By social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations” (*Modern Social Imaginaries*, 2004, p. 23).

Topics may include:

- Utopian social or literary imaginaries
- Utopian modelling of natural and social systems
- Utopia vs. Dystopia: assessing secondary worlds
- Fictional worlds: utopias as “possibles latéraux” (Raymond Ruyer)
- Minoritarian (sexual, racial, natural) utopian / dystopian imaginaries
- Climate changes and ecocatastrophes
- Gaia hypothesis and Earth homeostasis
- Monstrosity and utopia/dystopia
- Utopias / dystopias in contemporary popular culture

We invite panels and papers that, while dealing with an open-ended list of particular topics, engage (some of) the above-mentioned ideas, and focus on utopian fictions, projects, and experiences. Non-theme-related interdisciplinary papers focusing on utopianism are also welcome.

The official language of the conference is English, but panels in languages other than English are also welcome, subject to minimum enrolment.

23rd USS/E CONFERENCE FEE:

- **Full In-Person** Conference Participation Fee – **80 EUR**
- **Reduced In-Person** Conference Participation Fee – **50 EUR** (doctoral students and academics with no university positions).
- **Online** Participation Fee – **20 EUR**

A limited number of **USS/E travel grants** for in-person participation will be available for doctoral students and academics with no university positions. Please use the attached form and apply to justynagalantusse@utopos.net by **10th February 2023**.

USS/E SOCIETY FEE:

Please note that the USS/E membership fee of **20 EUR, which** entitles you to the annual membership in the Society, is separate from the Conference fee and is the Society’s only source of funding travel grants for utopian scholars and covering the costs of current expenses (such as bank account, USS/E website). It is not possible to participate in a USS/E Conference without paying the Society Fee. **The membership fee should be paid until 30th April 2023.**

The fee is payable to the accounts administered by the Society’s Treasurer – Zsolt Czigányik – via bank transfer, PayPal or Revolut. The latter options may help you reduce bank fees.

- **Bank account (EUR):** Zsolt Czigányik MagNet Bank, Budapest (H-1062 Budapest, Andrássy út 98.) IBAN: HU89162002231012061100000000
- **SWIFT:** HBWEHUHB
- **PayPal:** cziganyik.zsolt@gmail.com
- **Revolut:**Beneficiary: ZSOLT CZIGANYIK
- **IBAN:** LT97 3250 0218 2592 5352
- **BIC:** REVOLT21

Please submit your abstract of **max. 250 words** in a **Word document** format, **in Times New Roman, 12, single space** to: USS2023@yahoo.com

The file and email should be titled: **USS/E 2023 Name Surname.**

Deadline for abstracts: 10th February 2023