

CALL FOR PAPERS: **Revisiting Hegemony**

The recent global rise of authoritarianism blending in with (neo)liberal narratives across the globe asks us to re-evaluate vocabularies about power. Concepts such as “sovereignty”, “oppression”, “hegemony” have, in the last decade, grounded the narratives of the “right”, “populist”, “nativist” and, increasingly, the “far-right”.¹ Yet, critics of these new iterations have found themselves turning to a somewhat limited toolkit of concepts, narratives and ideological artefacts to unpack meanings and advance critical interpretations and are often accused of an ideological bias. Although the depoliticization of vocabularies about power reaches mainstream academic, activist and societal concerns cyclically, arguably, this is another example of the impoverished notions of power that are operational in the current (neo)liberal democratic consensus. They cannot respond to the diffuse ideas of power at play at present and consequently engender an agonistic debate, driven by either adherents or critics, and carried by detractors and supporters. Some concepts are often emptied of their histories, while others have gathered dust, together with the memory of diverse social movements they animated. The present volume aims to retrieve and reinvestigate one of these, *hegemony*, in today’s configuration.

Proposed by Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci at the beginning of the 20th century, hegemony sits today on the lips of those arguing for a conservative refashioning of society, where the identitarian streak speaks to racism, intolerance or segregation. Precisely because of the diffused forms of oppression and domination and, in general, a more dynamic form of control, the editors and contributors of the present volume invite the audience to think about this old concept that is being revived. We invite papers that rethink hegemony, in the sense of a system of power relations, by reflecting on the dependencies between politics of consensus and the politics of coercion that the concept has enshrined in our understanding of power. By looking at this nexus, we can perhaps better explain how power imbalances are born and operate. For instance, understanding this dependency is a valuable concept for areas where the primacy of (neo)liberal ideas of development and politics aligns with older rhetoric of social Darwinism - imprinting exclusionary narratives, or more classical authoritarian models of governance, on society and politics. Similarly, entanglements of coercion, consensus and control are proper to uniformity-driven political systems, such as social-democracy, and consequently an important critical toolkit in understanding their excesses, especially those of racism and inequality.

¹ Davies W. “The Revenge of Sovereignty on Government? The Release of Neoliberal Politics from Economics Post-2008”. *Theory, Culture & Society*. April 2021. doi:[10.1177/0263276421999455](https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276421999455)

Starting from the idea that we need to find a “cold” definition of hegemony, in line with the political vocabularies of the present age, we invite interpretations that do not look at the concept as a “contamination” (presumably by the political left), but open new areas of investigation, fit for an intellectual debate where the boundaries of the political discourses are increasingly more fluid. Hegemony can be manifested in a myriad of ways, where discourses blend in with spatiality and materiality, digital and virtual lives and representations of histories.

In this sense, we start from the idea that meanings, concepts and interpretations “travel”², both spatially and temporally. Gramsci’s notion of hegemony “travelled” much further than the Sardinian Marxists circles, to the anticolonial debates in the Middle East and South-Eastern Asia, and closer to the new socialist thought in Eastern Europe. It mutated and changed in the global turn that postcolonial theory lent to decolonization. Implicitly, therefore, it shaped the debates that happened later in the 1970s about the way in which political identity is shaped by power as much as it shapes individual power itself. Consequently, we invite authors to think how hegemony operates spatially, discursively, and institutionally. At the same time, they are invited to think through case studies, situations and contexts. Therefore, we particularly call for contributions that:

- look at how hegemony manifests through the material space and the politics of architecture, spatial planning and development,
- attend to how we talk about hegemony in relation to the temporal realm and collective memory and,
- reflect on how hegemony speaks to our current political paradigms of liberal democracy.

We invite both short (3000 words) reflections on case studies or visual essays, as well as fully developed critical inquiries into the topic (7000-8000 words). We hope to produce a critically astute volume of analysis, contributions and reflections that address both a scholarly audience and a politically engaged public at large.

Please send in the complete drafts by **October 15th, 2021**. After a short consultation with the editors, we kindly ask for the final version of the text by **December 1st**.

² Edward Said, “Travelling Theory” (1982). From *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 267-247