

Call for Papers

The political philosophy of Rosa Luxemburg
A critical assessment

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 10th-11th of January 2019

Conference organizers: Christian Neuhäuser (TU Dortmund University), Gabriel Wollner (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Lea Ypi (London School of Economics), Nicholas Vrousalis (Universiteit Leiden), Robin Celikates (Universiteit van Amsterdam).

Rosa Luxemburg is well known for her political activism in the revolutionary movements in Poland, Russia and Germany, and as a leading Marxist member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. She is also well known for her economic work on capital accumulation. But although she formulated important arguments in political economy, the theory of revolution, and council democracy her contributions to political philosophy are less than fully appreciated in the contemporary academic community. Marking the hundredth anniversary of Luxemburg's murder in January 1919, this conference turns towards her political philosophy and discusses her philosophical arguments at the intersection with more strategic, historical, and sociological considerations. We invite paper proposals for papers on, but not limited to, the following topics:

1. Socialist liberty: More strongly than other contemporary socialists, Luxemburg emphasizes the importance of freedom of thought and speech. Arguably she defends a position one could call liberal socialism. How would such a Luxemburgian liberal socialism look like and how defensible is it?
2. The poverty of reformism: Luxemburg opposes the idea that socialism can be achieved by gradual reforms. What are her reasons for opposing reformism? What currency do those reasons have in contemporary capitalist societies?
3. The future of revolution: According to Luxemburg revolution is not an automatism. It will also not be brought forward by socialist parties acting as a vanguard. Instead the workers have to emancipate themselves, learning from their mistakes and acting in a way that combines spontaneity and organization. How does Luxemburg justify these claims? Are her considerations applicable to contemporary circumstances?
4. Council democracy: According to Luxemburg, councils provide the proper organizational form of post-revolutionary society and its politics. How does she conceptualize participation, representation and delegation within this system and how could it operate in a large and complex society? In which ways is this model still desirable and applicable today?

5. Capital accumulation and imperialism: Luxemburg thought that capital accumulation leads to growth that cannot be accommodated by domestic consumption. Instead new markets need to be opened up by imperialistic force and colonial rule. Is this a convincing description of what happened and maybe is happening at the moment?

6. The relation between economic and political struggles: Luxemburg engages with the topic of strikes, trade union organisations and their relation to political organisation. She criticises the short-termism of trade union bureaucrats and suggests that strikes are only effective when combined with a long-term project of political emancipation. How do her arguments adapt to contemporary circumstances? Are they still plausible?

7. The relation between national and international emancipation: Luxemburg was notoriously critical of projects of 'socialism in one country'. Her critique of social democratic parties rooted in national projects of emancipation sounds as relevant today as it did when she first elaborated it. What are the virtues and limitations of her account? What is its potential for thinking about a new International Left in the 21st century?

We invite papers discussing philosophical questions within or close to the described topics or any other area of the political theory and philosophy of Rosa Luxemburg.

Please submit an anonymized 300 - 500 word abstract suitable for blind review by July 1st to:

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