

THE KANDERSTEG SEMINAR

Wednesday, November 5th – Sunday, November 9th, 2008
Kandersteg, Switzerland

Remarque Institute, New York University

Programme

Wednesday, November 5th: Arrival of participants by train in Kandersteg

Check in: Waldhotel Doldenhorn
CH- 3718 Kandersteg
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19:00 Welcome reception and dinner at Hotel.

Thursday, November 6th:

Session I

10:00– 13:00

The Welfare State Writ Large

Pierre Rosanvallon, Chair

Why do we have a welfare state today? As a precaution against market failure – a prophylactic security barrier against the extreme political consequences of economic disruption? As a socio-cultural integrator for societies exposed to the centrifugal consequences of capitalism? Or is it just an accretion of inherited practices whose political or ideological contexts we have outgrown? Do we sustain the institutions and costs of a welfare state on 'normative' grounds: i.e. because of a conception of the good society, or of social rights and collective duties? Is the welfare state—whether understood as a body of minimal social institutions or in its maximal (Scandinavian?) form as a complex network of resources and services—integral to the modern market economy? Or is it, as some have argued in recent decades, a redundant impediment to the optimal workings of a minimally-constrained economy? To put it differently: what matters more, the economic costs of the providential state or the political costs of its absence?

Thursday, November 6th (continued):

13:15 Lunch at Hotel.

 Free afternoon.

19:30 Dinner at the Hotel.

Friday, November 7th

Session II

10:00 – 13:00

Labor and Work

Richard Sennett, Chair

In the past, in the West as elsewhere, work conferred identity. It was work - typically but not exclusively paid work - that determined cultural and political allegiance, shaped social routine and spatial relationships, assigned and differentiated class, status and income. The skills required for work were typically inherited, in that children usually performed the same tasks in the same station of life as their parents. Most people were only ever employed or occupied in one line of work, and usually stayed in a single job & with one employer for most of their active life (which until the middle of the twentieth century meant most of their life). Today, very little of this still applies. In the course of the past generation (now almost two generations in the United States and north-west Europe) 'work' has lost its associations with social and cultural identity. A growing number of jobs have interchangeable skills or require none at all. What are the implications of these changes – the most rapid since the coming of the Industrial Revolution – for societies and political systems founded upon work-defined categories and affinities, and which still pay residual homage to them in the way we think about jobs, employment and lifecycles? Is there a way back? Should there be?

13:15 Lunch at Hotel
 Free afternoon

20:00 Dinner at restaurant Landgasthof Ruedihus.

Saturday, November 8th

Session III

10:00 – 13:00

Globalization and the State

Katherine Fleming, Chair

For the past two decades, conventional opinion and mainstream economic theory have consigned the state and the national political or economic unit to secondary significance, perhaps even to history. We live, we have been told, in a post-national 'global' world: one in which economies, communications and people operate in a transnational space whose scope and pace puts it beyond the reach of traditional political and institutional regulation. Was this ever true? Is it true today? And what of governments, which remain – must remain – resolutely national? Even if economic life does indeed transcend national boundaries, need this entail the end of national politics, national perspectives and their accompanying national states with their powers and capacities and political legitimacy? Is the solution to be found in multinational institutions, or in a return to the national? As we enter a new age of insecurity - personal, political, institutional and financial - shall we not see a return of the state and a re-legitimization of its interventionist capacities and role? Is the world really as flat as we once thought?

13:15

Lunch at Hotel

Free afternoon until

16:30 – 18:00

Informal closing session

20:00

Farewell Dinner at Hotel.

Sunday, November 9th

Morning departure of participants.

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