

# Workshop

Institute for Political Science, Vienna University  
Organised by: Alexander Kurunczi & Madlyn Sauer  
as part of the ERC Research Project  
Prefiguring Democratic Futures (PREDEF)

# CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Activist Perspectives on the

# Radical Imagination

- A Workshop with Max Haiven

If there was ever a moment for the radical imagination to emerge and for social movements to bring it to life, it is now. This was stated by Max Haiven and Alex Khasnabish in 2014 – an insight that reflected the events of the 2010s, a decade shaped by transnational social movements. From the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt to the waves of resistance in Greece and Spain and the Occupy Wall Street movement: The 21st century has been defined by movements challenging systemic oppression and seeking alternatives to our multiple global crises of finance capitalism, ecological destruction, (post-)colonialism, antisemitism, genocide, and the rise of anti-feminist, right-wing and fascist movements taking over governments around the world.

Creating cracks in the oppressive systems we seek to dismantle is not a smooth process and it often does encounter fierce resistance. As we strive to create openings in the walls of power – challenging governments, multinational corporations and fascist, racist and fundamentalist movements – those in power respond with attacks, imprisonment, and destruction. In fact, as Leah Hunt-Hendrix and Astra Taylor resume, “we are all living amid the wreckage of a long, ongoing, and intentional war against progressive collective action” (2024, 151). How do we, then, honor the grief of lost comrades, broken solidarities and repressed movements without losing sight of the need to continue organizing? How do we move forward and continue organizing, while holding space for mourning, and how can radical imagination help us bridge loss with radical hope?

Radical imagination needs to be collectively nurtured, nourished, and developed; it can be a tool for analysing and transforming our movements. The workshop aims at bringing together activists, artists, researchers, and politically-minded scholars to rethink the role of radical imagination in political and social struggles and its relation to practices of resistance.

## 20–21 March 2025

*Max Haiven is an organiser and social theorist; he specializes in the power of the imagination in an age of crisis. Max is an associate professor at Lakehead University in Canada, co-author of *The Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity* and the author of *Revenge Capitalism. The Ghosts of Empire, the Demons of Capital, and the Settling of Unpayable Debts*. Together with Sarah Stein Lubrano he runs *Sense & Solidarity*, a platform where organisers convene to learn about what really works to change hearts and minds.*

The workshop will be structured around three key themes, to which any interested persons can apply with their contributions:

- 1) CONCEPT**
- 2) LANDSCAPES OF FEELINGS**
- 3) STRATEGIC HORIZONS**



Funded by  
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Council (erc). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

PREFIGURING  
DEMOCRATIC  
FUTURES



universität  
wien

20–21 March

# CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

## 1 CONCEPT (THEORY)

The first strand explores the role of the radical imagination in political struggles, questioning its necessity and transformative potential. Amongst other things, it asks:

*What do we expect the radical imagination to do for us and why do we need it?*

*Were there recent experiences that have highlighted, for you, how the radical imagination can be co-opted and colonised by systems of domination, oppression?*

## 2 LANDSCAPES OF FEELINGS (EXPERIENCE)

The second explores the emotional landscapes of activism, asking how we can honour the grief of lost battles, fractured and failed solidarities and broken alliances, while continuing to organise and move forward without dreamlessly withdrawing from political engagement. It throws into relief questions such as:

*Which practices have been developed to deal with frustrations, loss, and failures? And what helps you as actors on the front lines to keep going?*

## 3 STRATEGIC HORIZONS (PRACTICE)

Finally, the third strand focuses on strategy, examining how radical imagination interacts with pragmatic approaches to achieving collective political demands and realistic solutions within existing power structures. It might tackle strategic questions such as:

*How does the radical imagination translate into practices on the ground?*

*How do your movement practices nourish the radical imagination? When, where, and how does it work and fail in social movement practices?*

### programme

The event will begin with a confirmed keynote by Max Haiven on Thursday, 20 March 2025 at the University of Vienna, followed by an in-person workshop on Friday, 21 March.

### contributions

We invite contributions from all those working on the radical imagination in their own contexts. Whether through activism, research, art or storytelling, your perspectives will enrich this collective exploration. This might include short essays, input presentations, and – especially if you come from a more artistic background – conversations on your methods and practices.

### open call process

If you are interested, please submit an abstract (400 words) for your contributions with the title “Radical Imagination” [predef.erc@univie.ac.at](mailto:predef.erc@univie.ac.at) by **15 February 2025**. We will get back to you by 20 February.