

Autodynamic processes – acceleration, alienation, metaphysical bangs

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In this seminar, I will discuss an idea brought forward and conceptualised by classical sociology: autodynamic processes. Examples are disenchanting processes of rationalisation (Weber), the Mammonist monetarisation of culture (Simmel), the intensification of division of labor (Durkheim), the permanent transformation of everything solid into air through the development and spread of capitalism (Marx). Autodynamic processes emerge from the modern experience of fundamental contingency and endless transition: things and the order of things could also have been otherwise, they will be otherwise, accordingly humans shape their own world, their own realities. They do so by inventing and creating means and institutions which will occasionally start to have a life on their own – they set free from man, their emancipation from human agency may mean alienation. I will present a number of conceptualisations of autodynamic processes, emphasising Simmel. I will then suggest a number of contemporary cases which may be conceived of as autodynamic processes – digitalisation, AI, flexibilisation, evolution of science, the economisation of the social. I will conclude with a supplementary discussion brought up already by classical modern thought (Siegfried Kracauer, Musil, Simmel): the recurrent search and longing for different conditions of life once human experience is deprived of autonomy and agency by that overwhelming, autodynamic, alienating colonisation of ends by means.

5th March 2026 -3pm

Venue: Sociology Seminar Room
AS1 #02-12



Register via the QR code
or via
<https://tinyurl.com/4hc8p3v9>

Bo Isenberg is associate professor of sociology and director of the doctoral programme at the Department of Sociology, Lund University. I have previously had positions at University of Copenhagen and Linnaeus University. My main areas of interest include contemporary and classical social theory, cultural sociology, social psychology, sociology of knowledge. Presently I am working on a book with the preliminary title *Thinking with Simmel. The Sociology of Movement, Differentiation, Interaction*.