

The International Workshop *Transparency. Thinking Through an Opaque Concept* aims at inquiring into the historical circumstances which allowed the concept of transparency to emerge in Early Modernity and how it progressively came to occupy such a central place in contemporary discourse. But what 'transparency' exactly refer to? The metaphoric level of the notion seems to strangely mirror its literal meaning: the perfectly transparent window is one which completely diverts the attention from itself.

After the first event, which took place at the University of St. Gallen in May 2015 (*Transparency. A Critical Approach*), the workshop aims at combining various approaches to the problem (philosophy, intellectual history, political sciences, cultural theory) in order to map and interconnect the various sites at which it became virulent and to ask how its imperative decisively shapes behaviors today.



Universität St. Gallen

Grundlagenforschungsfonds (GFF)

"Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants", Louis Brandeis once famously stated. One hundred years later, there is a growing consensus that transparency is one of democracy's best tools and that every citizen has a right to transparency. Demands for more transparency are more widespread than ever, in fields as diverse as corporate and public administration, finance, scientific research, sports, technology, media, and healthcare. Transparency is not restricted to the social or corporate spheres, however, but is also seen as an effective way to increase accountability and responsibility on an individual level: acting under the gaze of the public eye leads to more ethical behavior, or so we're told.

As opposed to concepts like regulation or surveillance, transparency doesn't seem to have a negative flipside. Perhaps the ultimate consensual value of our time, transparency is being invoked by President Obama and whistleblower Edward Snowden alike, by Wikileaks' founder Julian Assange but also by Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg. Yet nothing is less clear than what is meant exactly when the word 'transparency' is used. At times the power of 'transparency' appears to lie in its mere utterance, as if it were a magic formula whose meaning doesn't need to be understood for its effects to be felt.

# Trans parency. Thinking Through an Opaque Concept



International Workshop  
May 19 & 20, 2016, St. Gallen



"Transparency should always be substituted for what is secret. I can quite well imagine the day when two men will no longer have secrets from anyone, because subjective life, as well as objective life, will be completely offered up, given"

-Jean Paul Sartre

**Organization:**

Emmanuel Alloa & Dieter Thomä  
(School for Humanities and Social  
Sciences, Universität St. Gallen)

Open to all interested participants  
upon previous registration:  
[Emmanuel.Alloa@unisg.ch](mailto:Emmanuel.Alloa@unisg.ch)

**Thursday May 19<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**Location: St. Gallen University Campus,  
Room 01-114**

14.-14.15 Welcome

14.15-14.45 Emmanuel **ALLOA** (St. Gallen)  
"What is to Come will be Dominated by  
Transparency'. An Introduction to the Topic"

14.45-15.45 Claire **BIRCHALL** (King's College  
London) "Transparency and Secrecy"

15.45-16.45 Bernhard **TAURECK** (Braunschweig)  
"Monitorcracy. On Different Kinds of Surveillance"

16.45-17.15 Break

17.15-18.15 Thomas **BERNS** (ULB Bruxelles)  
"Algorithmic Governmentality and the Promise of  
Transparency"

**20.15 Art Panel Transparency, Surveillance, Resistance**

Where: Palace St. Gallen, Zwinglistrasse 3, 9000 St. Gallen  
With: **Julian OLIVER** (Berlin/NZ), **Mediengruppe BITNIK**  
(Zürich/London). Moderation: Emmanuel Alloa

**Friday May 20<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**Location: St. Gallen University Campus,  
Room 01-112 (Main Building)**

9.00 Welcome Coffee

9.30-10.30 Caspar **HIRSCHI** (St. Gallen)  
"Transparency and Trust in Historical  
Perspective"

10.30-11.30 Stefanos **GEROULANOS** (New York  
University) "The Matter with Transparency. A  
French Story"

11.30-11.45 Break

11.45-12.45 Miran **Božovič** (Ljubljana) "Seeing  
it All. Bentham's *Panopticon* and the Dark Spots  
of Enlightenment"

12.45-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.00

Noreen **KHAWAJA** (Yale) "The Ironist's  
Confession. Beginning Again with Rousseau"

15.00-16.00 **Jörg METELMANN** (St. Gallen) "The  
Inner Selfie. Media Desire, Moral Sentiments,  
and the New Markets of Transparency"

16.00-16.30 Concluding Discussion