

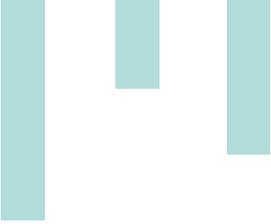
Symposium in memoriam
Claus Offe (1940 - 2025)

Social science for a better world



Claus Offe
1940 - 2025

Friday, 27 – Saturday, 28 March 2026
Henrik Enderlein Forum, Hertie School



Claus Offe dedicated his intellectual life to uncovering the conditions for social progress in the modern world, probing notions of social justice and how to defend individual freedoms. While keenly aware of the tensions liberal and open-market societies harbour, the profound challenges democracies face, and the complex contradictions of political transitions, neither optimism nor hope left him in any doubt that the social sciences can improve the world.

In his unpublished “A Short Account of my Professional Life, Including Facets of Its Context”, which he shared only with close friends, he wrote:

“I have also been convinced that social science research is virtually worthless unless its findings provoke, throw light on, or can serve as arguments in normative discourses on the nature of a ‘well-ordered society’ and its defining features of the reasonable use of freedom and distributive justice. A key goal must be to propose, in the mode of thoughtful wishing rather than that of wishful thinking, ways to achieve that end.”

This symposium will honour Claus Offe’s intellectual achievements by taking his compelling argument as a point of departure, highlighting his insights and contributions to a better future for our societies, and embracing the spirit of “thoughtful wishing” that he championed.

The symposium includes a series of panel discussions with representatives from politics and academia to debate the intellectual legacy of Claus Offe.

Speakers and panellists will focus on key elements of Claus Offe’s work and apply them to current political challenges and debates. Brief opening statements or keynote speeches will set the stage, bridging academic discussions and current political debates. They will address one key question:

“How can Claus Offe’s contributions and insights help shape the future?”

Throughout the conference, we will revisit excerpts from Claus Offe’s writing and reflections, applying his perspective to current challenges.



SYMPOSIUM IN MEMORIAM CLAUS OFFE (1940–2025) Social Science for a Better World

Henrik Enderlein Forum | Hertie School | Friday, 27 March 2026 & Saturday, 28 March 2026

PROGRAMME

FRIDAY, 27 MARCH 2026

1:45 – 2:00 pm | Welcome
Cornelia Woll

2:00 – 3:30 pm | Panel 1: Democracy: *How to defend and grow it, and how to recognise its limitations*

Moderator: **Helmut Anheier**

Keynote speech: **Michael Zürn**

Panellists: **Micheline Ishay, Wolfgang Merkel** and **Tine Stein**

4:00 – 5:30 pm | Panel 2: *Political and economic transition*

Moderator: **Michaela Kreyenfeld**

Keynote speech: **Steffen Mau**

Panellists: **Dorothee Bohle, Laszlo Bruszt** and **Herbert Kitschelt**

6:00 – 7:30 pm | Public lecture: *Social science and social progress*

Moderator: **Melinda Crane**

Setting the stage with Claus Offe's reflections: **Ulrich Preuss** and **Helmut Anheier**

Panellists: **Sven Giegold, Gesine Schwan** and **Lea Ypi**

7:30 pm | Reception

SATURDAY, 28 MARCH 2026

9:00 – 10:30 am | Panel 3: *Social policy and capitalism*

Moderator: **Michaela Kreyenfeld**

Keynote speech: **Anke Hassel**

Discussion: **David Abraham, Ilona Ostner** and **Philippe van Parijs**

11:00 am – 12:30 pm | Panel 4: *Thinking with Claus Offe*

Moderator: **Cornelia Woll**

Presentations:

“Public Sphere in the Digital Age” – **Ulrich Preuß**

“Reflections on the United States” – **Hans Joas**

Discussion: **Peter A. Kraus**

12:30 – 12:45 pm | Closing

Cornelia Woll

SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS



DAVID ABRAHAM

Professor of Law at the University of Miami



HELMUT ANHEIER

Senior Professor of Sociology at the Hertie School, member of the faculty at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Luskin School of Public Affairs and visiting professor at LSE Ideas, London School of Economics and Political Science



DOROTHEE BOHLE

Professor for Comparative Political Science at the University of Vienna



LASZLO BRUSZT

Director of the CEU Democracy Institute and Professor of Sociology at the Central European University



MELINDA CRANE

Chief political correspondent at Deutsche Welle TV



SVEN GIEGOLD

Deputy Federal Chair of Alliance 90/DIE GRÜNEN



ANKE HASSEL

Professor of Public Policy at the Hertie School and Chair of the academic advisory board of the Progressives Zentrum



MICHELINE ISHAY

Professor of Human Rights and International Studies and Director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the Korb School of International Studies

SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS



HANS JOAS

Professor of Sociology and Social Philosophy and Ernst Troeltsch Honorary Professor at the Faculty of Theology, Humboldt University of Berlin



HERBERT KITSCHELT

Professor of International Relations at Duke University, North Carolina



MICHAELA KREYENFELD

Professor of Sociology at the Hertie School and Co-Director of the Einstein Center Population Diversity



PETER A. KRAUS

Professor of Political Science (Comparative Politics) at the University of Augsburg



STEFFEN MAU

German sociologist and Professor of Macrosociology at the Institute for Social Sciences at the Humboldt University in Berlin



WOLFGANG MERKEL

Professor of Political Science at the Humboldt University Berlin and director of the “Democracy and Democratization” research program at the Social Science Research Centre Berlin (WZB)



ILONA OSTNER

Professor of Comparative Social Policy at the University of Göttingen



PHILIPPE VAN PARIJS

Professor of Political Philosophy and Hoover Chair of Economics and Social Ethics, University of Louvain

SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS



ULRICH PREUSS

Professor Emeritus of Law and Politics at the Hertie School



GESINE SCHWAN

Professor of Political Science; Co-founder, Shareholder, and President of the Berlin Governance Platform



TINE STEIN

Professor of Political Science at the Institute of Political Science at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen

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CORNELIA WOLL

Professor of International Political Economy at Hertie School Berlin



LEA YPI

Professor of Political Theory at the London School of Economics and Political Science and a Fellow of the British Academy



MICHAEL ZÜRN

Professor of International and Transnational Relations, Founding Dean of the Hertie School, and Director of the Research Unit Global Governance at the Berlin Social Science Center (WZB)

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