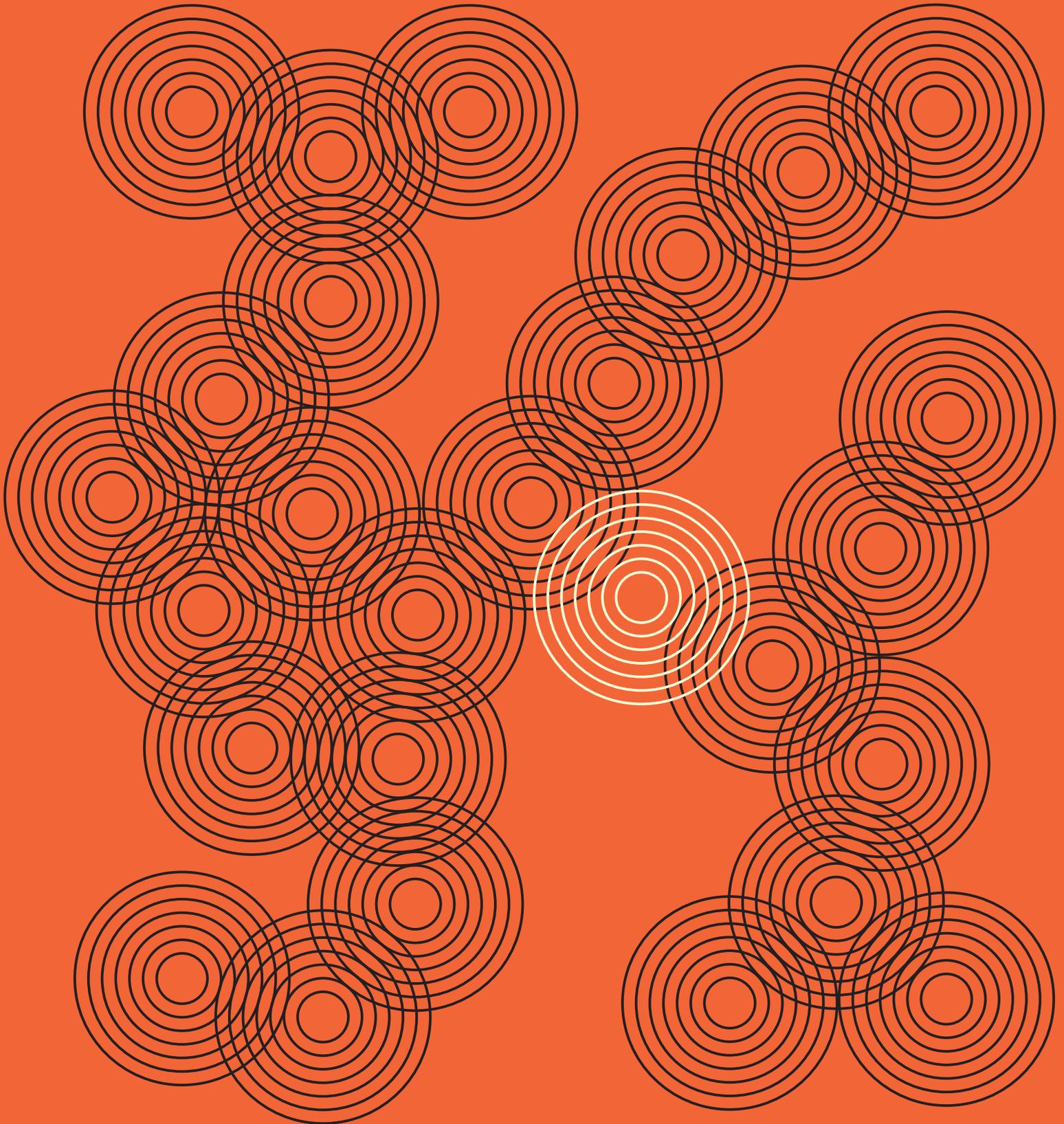


# The Politics of Interaction

## Goffman From a Political Perspective

Nov. 28-29, 2022

EHESS, Campus Condorcet, Aubervilliers



Conference for the Erving Goffman centennial, organized on Nov. 28-29, 2022  
at EHESS (Condorcet Campus) by Mathieu Berger (UCLouvain-IACCHOS), Daniel Cefaï  
(EHESS-CEMS) and Carole Gayet-Viaud (CNRS-CESDIP).

## Call for abstracts

Erving Goffman was born 100 years ago and his work, read and reread, has nourished a great diversity of works for several decades. Approaching social life through the 'interaction order', which he proposed in his dissertation in 1953 and he thematized until his president's conference at the ASA in 1981, has proved to be highly fruitful, notably in the investigation of 'the political'. This centenary offers an opportunity to take stock of it and, in the light of its contemporary uses, to open up new avenues of research on *the politics of interaction*, with and beyond Goffman's teaching.

We would like to gather a set of researches in which Goffman's work is put to the test of situations and objects that push it to its limits, requiring a fresh look at his take on the political. In the streets, in public debates, in workplace situations, in the police/population interaction, in patient/physician, or social worker/recipient relations, in the household space, from parenting to marital disputes, in forms of civic engagement and political mobilization, how has the study of the interaction order given us new insights? Goffman's oeuvre abounds with interrogations that lead us to question what we call 'political'. It challenges a simplistic understanding of the emergence and operation of social norms. Although he has contributed to renewed approaches to urban public spaces, civil and civic engagement, gender and race relations, Goffman is often accused of being apolitical. He is criticized for confining his analyses to short sequences of interaction and to small-scale situations, to 'microsociological' objects, disconnected or too loosely connected to political, sociological or historical issues.

How can we link the analysis of interactions to other spatial and temporal scales of social reality, which transcend the here and now of a scene of copresence? How to interpret the central theoretical and practical question of the 'loose coupling' (1983) which articulates the interaction order on the one hand, and the order of structures or institutions on the other hand? What are the consequences of this coupling in the conduct of the inquiry and the analyses produced? Should we see it as an endorsement of the opposition between micro and macro, sometimes adding a meso layer to make the connection? To what extent should

we stick to a definition of the situation in terms of 'copresence'? And how has this copresence, increasingly mediated by all sorts of artifacts, been transformed recently? How to question the situated forms of social life, in what they have of uncertain, of indeterminate (but not of arbitrary or gratuitous), without affirming their complete autonomy (presentist/dramaturgical reductions), nor to consider them as mere 'micro' illustrations of an order determined by social structures or historical processes to be found elsewhere (structuralist reduction)?

These questions will be addressed through empirical investigations. What happens to copresence and public order when information and communication mediations multiply? What responses are given to interaction disorders? How does the Goffmanian framework shed light on the forms of dispute, conflict and conciliation? What can be said of gender and racial orders, when they are grasped as interaction orders? How have the dynamics of stigmatization and discrimination - and their contestation - been transformed since the 1960s? How can Goffman's theory of gatherings be used to study participatory assemblies or collective mobilizations? Does the study of phenomena of 'interactional vandalism' help us to better understand certain pathologies of public engagement in our democracies?

**Abstracts (300-500 words), specifying the question addressed and the empirical material involved, should be sent by April 30, 2022 to:**

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