

Preferences, Commitments and Choice

Two-day conference on Preferences, Commitments and Choice, which will take place on January 8 & 9, 2021 at the University of Zurich, Switzerland

Organization: Michael Messerli, Catherine Herfeld, Kevin Reuter

Keynote Speakers:

Cristina Bicchieri (University of Pennsylvania)

Daniel Hausman (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Call for Abstracts:

We invite submissions of extended abstracts. Submissions should contain a title and an abstract of up to 500 words. The abstracts should be submitted *via EasyChair* (<https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=pcc1>) by September 30, 2020. Authors will be notified by October 10, 2020.

The concepts of preference, commitment, and choice have a long history in philosophy and the social sciences. At the same time, there is no consensus on how exactly they should be understood. Regarding the concept of preference, for instance, behaviorists have argued that they should be interpreted as being revealed by choices. Others, such as for example mentalists, have argued for more substantive accounts of preferences and interpret them as, e.g., sui generis mental states. One goal of the conference is to take stock and see where discussions about the nature, structure, and interpretations of those three concepts stand and what kind of issues should be discussed to move those discussions forward.

A second goal of the conference is to investigate the phenomenon of counter-preferential choices, the role that commitments play in this context, and how we can think about commitments within a decision-theoretic framework. For instance, while a central tenet of decision theory states that rational individuals do not decide against their preferences, there have been various attempts to argue that a decision based on a commitment could possibly turn counter-preferential. To study this issue further, we will tackle questions such as: 1) How are the concepts of preference, commitment and choice formed in social scientific theories? 2) How shall we understand commitments? 3) What is the relationship between commitments and preferences? 4) Is weak will best characterized as a counter-preferential choice? The nature of commitments is currently under researched and our aim is to revive this discussion.

Finally, we will link this discussion to more general issues regarding rationality and norms, tackling questions such as, e.g., can reasonable choices be understood with decision theory? How do commitments differ from moral and social norms? How do counter-preferential choices and norm-guided behavior relate to each other and how should we conceptualize both?

At this conference, we will discuss those sets of issues from the perspectives of philosophy, economics and psychology, thereby pushing the debates on preferences, choice, and commitment even further towards interdisciplinary approaches. We are looking for both

theoretical as well as empirical contributions to all three sets of issues. Ultimately, we want to bring together leading experts and junior researchers to enable a fruitful and forward-looking discussion.

Please also go to our conference website for any updates: <https://sites.google.com/view/precomchoice>

This conference is financed by the Swiss National Foundation (P200P1_186151).

There is no registration fee. Everybody is welcome to attend.

Scientific Organization:

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