



HGGS Summer Forum 2025: "Us and Them"

The concepts of "Us" and "Them" are deeply embedded in human thought, shaping our perceptions of identity, belonging, and alterity throughout human history. These terms allow us to construct social, cultural, and political boundaries, bringing a sense of order to a chaotic reality. In today's world, fake news, polarization and the rise of identity politics present pressing global challenges that demand urgent attention. From geopolitical tensions to cultural misunderstandings, the dynamics of "Us and Them" resonate across different disciplines, offering a platform to examine the logic of this dichotomy. The **HGGS Summer Forum 2025** aims to encourage discussion about various approaches such as integration, tolerance, mutual understanding, or agonistic pluralism emphasizing the value of conflict. Building on last year's forum theme 'Bridges and Crossings', 'our' forum invites candidates, researchers, and academics from diverse disciplines to turn toward the formation of gaps and whether these gaps need to be crossed.

Some examples for key questions we would like to encourage:

- How do we define and perceive "ourselves" through "others" or vice versa?
- What role do cultural, historical, economic, legal, artistic, and sociopolitical dimensions play in shaping the 'Us and Them' divide? How do contemporary global events and international relations influence the construction, perception, and potential transformation of these terms across various contexts, including through historical case studies?
- How do people embrace and conciliate different identities (i.e., different ideas of 'Us') in different contexts? Does this generate multiple and conflicting notions of identity and otherness?
- How can interdisciplinary research contribute to addressing the challenges posed by this dichotomy?
- How are the 'Us and Them' dynamics affected by geography, space and the environment? How do space and 'natural' borders shape the 'Us and Them' dichotomy?
- How can linguistic and discursive elements contribute to the understanding, articulation, and elaboration of the dynamics underlying the 'Us and Them' polarity?
- What new challenges does the development of AI bring to the "Us and Them" dichotomy?

Objectives of the Forum:

- To provide a constructive and welcoming space for doctoral candidates, researchers, and academics to share research, ideas, and experiences from a variety of perspectives, including humanities, law, and social sciences.
- To enhance interdisciplinary collaboration and create opportunities for networking and exchange.
- To generate innovative approaches to the challenges posed by the "Us and Them" dichotomy.

Submission Details:

We welcome proposals for conference presentations (15-20 minutes), and/or creative contributions (e.g. creative writing, photography, illustrations) for a printed magazine that will be available at the conference. Submissions should include:

- A title and an abstract of no more than 300 words.
- The author's name, affiliation, and a brief biography (max. 150 words).

Key Dates:

- **Submission Deadline:** March 14, 2025
- **Notification of Acceptance:** April 1st, 2025
- **Forum Date:** June 27, 2025

Venue:

The forum will take place at Heidelberg University and welcomes participants from all disciplines and regions. A limited number of grants of up to €500 per speaker is available to reimburse travel and accommodation expenses.

Contact Information:

For submissions or inquiries, please contact directly: HGGG-FORUM@hggs.uni-heidelberg.de.

We look forward to your contributions and to fostering a lively and enriching discussion at the **HGGG Summer Forum 2025**.