



Università  
degli Studi  
di Ferrara



Auditorium Santa Lucia, Via Ariosto 35

**6 December 2018**

15:00-17:30

**Paul James**

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and Director of the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University

*The Nexus between  
Sustainability and Human Capacities  
for Making Flourishing Life-Worlds*

Achieving sustainability and wellbeing have become interwoven developmental aspirations without being adequately theorized. Wellbeing is a concept that evokes health and vitality. But it could equally lead to individualistic complacency and consumerist self-satisfaction. Sustainability in its direct sense means the capacity to endure, a process fundamental to vital human life as we confront the consequences of the Anthropocene. But it could also turn into the endurance of the bad, as much as the good. In both these cases, there is a lot of conceptual and political work to be done. The capacities to sustain and to generate wellbeing need to be brought together in an integrated framework that goes beyond the usual liberal emphasis on capabilities grounded in a singular notion of freedom. Indebted to Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum but deeply uncomfortable with the liberal basis of their approach, this talk reframes both concepts within an ontologically grounded social understanding of capacities. Here capacities become understood as fundamental to the human condition, not just capabilities held by individuals. The talk is framed by the Circles of Social Life approach.

CHAIRS

Gianfranco Franz

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Coordinators of *Routes towards Sustainability*

DISCUSSANTS

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