

Call for Papers



Activation – Self-Management – Overload

Political Participation beyond the Post-democratic Turn

International Research Workshop
27th – 29th of September 2017

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY (IGN)

Vienna University for Economics and Business

Convenors: Ingolfur Blühdorn, Felix Butzlaff

This international research workshop is concerned with the ongoing transformation of democracy in the post-democratic constellation. It proceeds from the assumption that in advanced modern consumer societies, social perceptions and expectations of democracy have profoundly changed – and become highly ambivalent. Inter alia, this is reflected in the change of understandings, functions, norms and forms of, and attitudes towards, *political participation*.

This two-and-a-half-day expert gathering will explore how the conditions of contemporary modernity and liberal consumer capitalism recondition the meaning and reframe the function of participation, one of the constitutive elements of democracy. What does participation mean in the post-democratic constellation? What are the expectations different actors associate with the concept? What forms does participation take beyond the post-democratic turn? What functions does it fulfil – for particular actors and from the perspective of social theory?

The workshop focuses specifically on societies whose political culture has been shaped by the European project of Enlightenment and modernity. It explicitly does not want to engage in reproducing the well-known narratives about democratic participation, but aims to venture into new intellectual territories. To allow for intensive discussion, the number of participants is restricted. Some of the attendees (e.g. Frank Fischer, Dirk Jörke, Sherilyn MacGregor, John M. Meyer, Frank Nullmeier, David Schlosberg, Dietlind Stolle, Erik Swyngedouw) will contribute by invitation. This call for papers addresses itself to scholars from all academic subject disciplines who are engaged in original and innovative work on the topic. Full draft papers need to be submitted and will be circulated in advance. A selection of revised papers will be published in a volume with a major University Press and/or as a special issue of an international journal. Participants are expected to attend the full workshop. There is no conference fee.

The Post-democratic Turn

The conditions of advanced modern societies seem increasingly unsuitable for democratic governance. Ongoing processes of modernisation are continuously chipping away at the very foundations of democracy. Processes of *second-order emancipation*, i.e. the partial liberation from earlier emancipatory commitments (social, ecological, political), seem to induce a *legitimacy crisis of democracy*. Yet, beyond the post-democratic turn, demands for more participation keep proliferating. Who makes such demands? What forms does participation take in the post-democratic condition? What functions does it fulfil? Which parts of societies participate – and in what? We invite conceptual/theoretical papers and theoretically informed empirical studies under three main headings:

A Activation: New Resources for the Neo-liberal State

The neo-liberal state has initiated processes of engagement and participation in the mode of *citizen activation*. What does this mean for the orthodoxy of democratic participation as an ideal? How do citizens respond to being activated for agendas which they have not defined and do not control? We are interested in issues like: engagement without empowerment; choice and self-responsibility; nudging and responsabilisation; the managed sovereign; burden- and blame-shifting; activism and activation; etc.

B Self-management: Post-growth and Resilience

As the state fails to deliver, and the post-growth society is becoming a factual reality, new practice-based movements are evolving to develop participatory solutions to social, economic and environmental problems. Are such movements the avant-garde of a societal transformation or rather the cost-efficient self-management of the marginalised? Issues of interest include: capacity building – for what?; transformative potentials of DIY experiments; retreat into de-politicized niches; communitarianism revisited; self-organization and resilience; participation as an obstacle to transformative agendas; etc.

C Overload: Withdrawal, Liberation and Revolt

In the past, there was concern that the state could be overwhelmed by the citizenry's demands for more participation. Today, the participation demands on citizens may signal the reverse – and powerfully reinforce anti-democratic and anti-political sentiments. Papers may explore: ungovernability revisited; reverse democratic overload; the treadmill of participation; liberation from democratic commitments; societal distribution of participation and engagement; relationship between participation and emancipation; populist reframings of progress; revolt of the excluded; etc.

Schedule for submitting abstracts (400 words) and full draft papers (7.000 words):

Deadline for abstracts: 19th March 2017

Notification of acceptance: 2nd April 2017

Deadline for full draft papers: 31st August 2017

Please send your abstracts to: felix.butzlaff@wu.ac.at

Limited travel/accommodation support might be available.