

*Call for Papers*

**“Democracy, Technocracy, and the Role of Citizens – A Critical Reflection”**

*The MANCEPT Workshops in Political Theory, the Manchester Centre for Political Theory, University of Manchester*

10-12 September 2018

For a long time, researchers in the field of political science and political theory have been preoccupied with the fact that political participation of citizens of liberal democracies is declining. The worry is that trust in liberal democracy as the best system available is withering away. In reaction, various political actors and researchers explore the potential of expert, technocratic visions of democracy, democracy as corporation, managerial models of democracy, democracy without participation and the like. In the face of tensions caused by the challenges of societal, economic, cultural, moral, and religious diversity, illiberal versions of democracy are more or less openly promoted as a substitute to the allegedly ill-functioning system of liberal democracy.

In our workshop, we invite speakers to address real-world phenomena as wide-spread aversion to politics, alienation from politics, lack of understanding of political processes, people’s feeling of not being represented, declining political participation, and general civic apathy. We also intend to explore the role and perceived lack of political knowledge and involvement on the part of citizens in existing liberal democracies.

The aim of the workshop is to further explore the debate between three broadly defined answers to the problem of the lack of participation and lack of civic competences/knowledge: i. ‘democracy without participation’ – rule of experts, technocratic or managerial solutions, or epistocracy; ii. the populist alternative of ‘participation without knowledge’; and iii. ‘democracy with participation’, i.e. the conceptions of democracy firmly rooted in civil society and its competences.

Debating these diverging trajectories, we suggest papers address critically the recurring challenges to technocratic reason and reductionist conceptions of civil society and democracy, as articulated by Critical Theory (but also Feminist thought, difference theory, etc.). We would like to examine the validity of the claims asserting that democracy’s aim must be to empower citizens by means of supporting their presence in the public sphere, their equality (by means of inclusion and struggle against all forms of oppression), equal potential as citizens (as opposed to formal equality before the law), providing for inclusive institutions and spaces of civic involvement.

For this purpose, in the four sections of our workshop we intend to explore the following (and related) indicatory topics:

1. **Democracy, technocracy, and instrumental reason:** the value of output efficiency in contemporary democracy.
  - a. Technocratic society, economic reductionism, and the role of social science in relation to the contemporary crisis of democracy.

- b. The viability of the parallel between the sphere of politics and business management: can democracy be run as corporation?
- 2. **Beyond democracy:** can we separate democratic government from civic participation? The merit of 'realist' conceptions of democracy.
  - a. The epistemic benefits and limits of the rule of experts and civic participation;
- 3. **Reviving participation:** The structural conditions of civic participation; equality and oppression as determinants of participation.
  - a. Civic community, inclusion, and the sense of belonging – interpersonal (relational) aspects civic engagement.
  - b. Women and citizenship.
- 4. **The role of knowledge and civic education in civic participation.**
  - a. Romanticizing democracy and preventing democratic disillusion.

We invite paper proposals from a wide range of disciplines, including political theory, political philosophy, sociology, political science, cultural sciences, theory of science, economics, and history.

Please submit proposals to [manceptdemocracy2018@gmail.com](mailto:manceptdemocracy2018@gmail.com) by 28 May 2018. Participants will be notified of acceptance by 4 June 2018.

### **Workshop convenors**

Lenka Strnadová, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen ([lstrnad@kap.zcu.cz](mailto:lstrnad@kap.zcu.cz))

Gonçalo Marcelo, University of Coimbra/Católica Porto Business School, ([goncalomarcelo@gmail.com](mailto:goncalomarcelo@gmail.com))

### **Workshop registration fees**

Academics - £230

Graduate students and retirees - £135 (subject to bursary application and acceptance of the paper proposal)

### **Time schedule**

Deadline for proposals                      28 May 2018

Notification of acceptance                  4 June 2018

Deadline for bursary applications          23 June 2018

For more information, please go to <http://www.mancept.com/mancept-workshops/>.