

Call for Papers

Critiques of Liberalism and Challenges to Democracy: Understanding the Conservative Standpoint

Research Workshop – COST Action CA 16211 RECAST
Working Group 2: *Languages and Ideologies*

University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic
14–15 February 2019

The common understanding of conservatism as an ideology draws attention to its unique elements that make it into an identifiable discourse. Many scholars believe that, like any other ideology, conservatism retains some core elements, i.e. concepts and values, which provide its internal structure. Although this structural aspect is neither immutable nor agreed upon, conservatism as a language or ideology has been regarded as having some recognisable characteristics, and as such it is susceptible to rhetorical analysis.

But the integrity and internal coherence of conservatism might also be understood differently. Whether we focus on conservatism from a historical perspective or the plurality of contemporary critiques of liberalism, a conservative standpoint constitutes a challenge for the basis of certain values of European political and societal order related primarily to liberal egalitarian conceptions of the individual, social justice, pluralism, equality, respect and/or tolerance, and democratic inclusion.

Bringing the challenges to liberal democracies into the spotlight, we can hear of the withering away of democratic civic competences, the increased individualization and alienation of societies from democratic politics, the rising tension between the universalist roots of liberal rights and particular culture and group-based claims. Different concepts, values, and rhetorical figures commonly regarded as part of conservative ideologies appear to have been scattered across the ideological spectrum in response to the obvious troubles liberalism experiences in the face of these challenges. Is there a general retreat to conservative values, language, and arguments that cut across and impact many of the contemporary stands in political debate and ideologies – for instance environmentalism, populism, nationalism, neoliberalism, but also feminism or multiculturalism? In the face of a looming crisis of liberal democracy, environmental concerns, and social turmoil, is there a “disposition” toward being conservative regardless of our proclaimed ideological inclinations?

The key task of this workshop is to explore, whether from a historical or normative perspective, the position of conservatism as a thread connecting an otherwise diverse critical reaction towards liberalism and liberal democracy.

We invite paper proposals from a wide range of disciplines, including political science, political theory, history, philosophy, law, or journalism.



We welcome papers dealing with questions such as:

- Where does conservatism stand in the context of contemporary and historical ideological configurations? What are the rhetorical strategies involved in these configurations?
- Is contemporary conservatism a fully fledged ideology or should we rather approach it as a standpoint, group of values, or style of politics attached to different ideological strands and rhetorical strategies travelling across the whole ideological spectrum?
- Is conservatism merely a response to those who attack the status quo? Is there a necessary defensive trait? Could we even talk about the “conservatism of fear”?
- With regard to the current challenges of liberal democracies (environmental, societal, institutional, moral, or economic), what are the conservative standpoints and how are they framed within political programmes and ideologies?
- How has conservative political thinking been redescribed historically? Has its position vis-à-vis other ideologies changed, and how?
- Has conservatism’s interaction with liberal democracy shifted from its birth as an ideology up till today, or can we see the original conservative dispositions being reinstated in contemporary contexts? What is conservatism’s contribution to the debates on the tensions of democracy?

Please submit your proposal (title, abstract of up to 200 words and short bio)
to pilsencostworkshop@gmail.com by **15 December 2018**

Participants will be notified of acceptance by 7 January 2019

RECAST can fund a number of selected presentations depending on budget availability. Self-funded participants whose paper proposals have been accepted are also welcome.

Organisers

Working Group 2: *Languages and Ideologies*. COST Action CA 16211 RECAST: *Reappraising Intellectual Debates on Civic Rights and Democracy in Europe*
(https://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/ca/CA16211 & <https://www.uma.es/costactionrecast>)

University of West Bohemia, Department of Politics and International Relations
(<https://kap.zcu.cz/en/about/index.html>)

Concepta: International Research School in Conceptual History and Political Thought
(<https://www.historyofconcepts.net/concept>)

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