

Call for Papers

Liberal Democracy in Crisis? Dialectics of Politicization and Depoliticization

Third Workshop of COST Action RECAST Working Group 1: Practices

Inter-University Centre Dubrovnik (in person and online), Dubrovnik, Croatia
8–9 July 2021

Liberal Democracy in Crisis? Dialectics of Politicization and Depoliticization is the third in a series of three workshops organized by Working Group 1: *Practices* of COST Action CA 16211 *Reappraising Intellectual Debates on Civic Rights and Democracy in Europe* (RECAST). This concluding workshop will sum up the results of the work undertaken within this thematic group, and will also be used as the forum to discuss with WG's participants a planned publication with the tentative title 'Revisiting the Crisis of Democracy: The Dialectics of Politicization and Depoliticization'.

Liberal representative democracy – the unique combination of popular sovereignty, individual rights, limited government and free markets – has been taken as the best form of government. After the fall of communist regimes and the subsequent democratization of Eastern Europe its global victory seemed sealed. Recent developments, however, put this triumph in doubt and now liberal democracy, according to many, is in existential crisis.

Based on the analyses of diverse sets of empirical cases describing practices of depoliticization and repoliticization in both established and 'newer' democracies in Europe, presented by participants in the first two workshops of this series, a theoretical challenge to this position will be presented, to be fully developed in the planned publication. Without ignoring the problems evident in many 'real-existing' democracies, to pronounce democracy terminally ill presupposes a conception of democracy that may turn out to be problematic. If the goal of democracy is to always find the best substantive solutions to societal problems, democracy may appear to be a matter of all or nothing: whenever failing to always guarantee the best outcomes, democracy is doomed.

Against such a position, the conveners of this concluding workshop propose to explore the crisis of liberal democracy from a perspective that takes liberal democracy as an ongoing practice – that of open-ended democratic procedures. A goal of democracy thus conceived is to include different, often conflicting positions and perspectives into decision-making. Critical moments, in this view, play a constructive, even constitutive role for a healthy democracy. It is through various practices of responding (successfully or less so) to multiple critical moments, by engaging in controversies and debate using inclusive democratic procedures that democracy is continually created and recreated.

Democracy in this view is a realm of conflict, a dialectical struggle between practices of politicization, depoliticization and repoliticization. Challenges to democracy may thus ‘undo’ currently dominant democratic forms, but also hold the promise of ‘redoing’ democracy in new forms through innovative practices. This understanding of critical moments as constitutive of democracy opens up new avenues for democratization.

The participants in the workshop are invited to explore concrete examples of democratic practices – social, political, legal, formal and informal – that challenge liberal representative democracy in both deteriorating and invigorating ways, i.e. to explore the different dimensions of doing and undoing democracy through the analysis of actual practices of politicization, depoliticization and repoliticization from different geographic, thematic and theoretical angles. We thus invite contributions to the workshop that address issues that fall in the following problem areas:

Depoliticization: Democracy without Politics

Contributions to this section may analyze the crisis that several sectors of the depoliticized democratic sphere are currently undergoing: for example, the declining role of NGOs, the limits of the international human rights movement, the democratic deficits in the work of expert- and other state bodies, or the trend to increasing agencification of decision-making.

Exclusionary Repoliticisations: Challenges to Democracy and Rights

Contributions to this problem area are expected to analyze such exclusionary practices of repoliticization. Discussions of newer developments, such as ‘identity politics’ and ‘cancel culture’, indicating that emancipatory movements may also develop a downside, are particularly welcome.

Repoliticizations Enhancing Democracy and Civic Rights

We also invite presentations that explore the benefits of diverse practices of repoliticization that hold the promise of healing and further developing our currently ailing democracies. These contributions could explore protest culture, new forms of local politics, through social and even through artistic projects, new forms of repoliticization, aiming to develop new spaces for social interaction, such as, for example, self-organized companies and initiatives, citizen and neighbourhood grass roots organizations, or voluntary refugee centres.

The Workshop

The workshop is planned as a live event that will be held at IUC Dubrovnik, though due to covid-19 conditions, online participation is also an option. As it is a publication-oriented workshop, chosen participants will be invited to circulate short versions (extended abstracts of ca. 2 000 words) of their papers before the workshop, so that the event is focused on discussion and feedback. After the workshop a number of papers presented will be selected for a proposal of an edited volume.

Submission Information

Kindly submit an abstract (up to 350 words) with a CV (up to 150 words and contact details (name, position, affiliation, e-mail address) no later than 11 June 2021 to the three conveners:

Dr. Ana Matan: amatan39@gmail.com
Dr. Meike Schmidt-Gleim: meikesg@gmail.com
Dr. Ruzha Smilova: ruzha.smilova@gmail.com

Timeline

Deadline for submitting abstracts: Friday, 11 June 2021
Acceptance/Rejection: Friday, 18 June
Short Papers (2000 words) due: Wednesday, 30 June
Workshop dates: 8–9 July 2021

Organizers

Working Group 1: *Practices*. 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 Zagreb, Faculty of Political Science (https://www.fpzg.unizg.hr/en/about_us)
Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (<https://www.akbild.ac.at>)
Fulda University (<https://www.hs-fulda.de/en/home>)
Centre for Liberal Strategies (<http://cls-sofia.org>)

Conveners

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