Research workshop

Political Representation in Democratic Systems
With a keynote lecture by Prof. Jane Mansbridge (Harvard Kennedy School)
September 9-10, 2019 | University of Zurich, Switzerland
Co-hosted by the Doctoral Program Democracy Studies and DemocracyNet

Call for Registration (Auditors)

Democracy studies have recently undergone a major change in the way of conceiving representation. Long understood as one political practice among others, representation has been reconceptualized in this new, “constructivist” turn as an inescapable feature of (democratic) politics and lawmakersing processes. On the one hand, it is necessary to the emergence and evolution of interests and preferences within the population and to the mobilization of constituencies in political decision-making processes. On the other hand, it is a practice that is not reserved to elected politicians, but one performed by a much wider range of non-elected actors.

This paradigm shift has raised a variety of new theoretical and empirical questions within democracy studies, such as:

- How should “representation” and “representing” be defined? How to conceptualize it from a philosophical or legal perspective? How can we operationalize and measure it with empirical approaches?
- What does the framing of certain practices as practices of representation add to existing debates? Are political parties, elected politicians, and mini-publics all “representatives” in the same sense, or are there important distinctions? What is the relationship between “representative democracy” and representation?
- Who are the actors representing? Who are the actors represented? How can they be identified?
- What influences the success or failure of practices of representation, e.g., at mobilizing (new) constituencies, at making issues and interests salient, at framing debates? What legal and institutional mechanisms enable the emergence or sanction of democratic representative actors? How do practices of representation differ in democratic and in non-democratic contexts?
- Against what normative criteria should we evaluate instances of representation and representative actors? How should we understand demands for congruence or responsiveness on the part of citizens in relation to good representation? And what institutional arrangements can help realizing democratic representation?

These and other questions will be at the center of the Research Workshop “Political Representation in Democratic Systems.” This workshop aims at bringing together researchers from different disciplines (including, but not limited to, political science and political theory, law, philosophy, history, and sociology) in academic discussions about issues related to political representation. The aim of the workshop is for junior researchers (PhDs and Postdocs) to present their working papers or project proposals and to gain feedback from all participants as well as from advanced scholars. The workshop will also include a public keynote lecture on “Recursive Representation” by Prof. Jane Mansbridge (Adams Professor of Political Leadership and Democratic Values, Harvard Kennedy School).

More information: https://democracynet.eu/ws2019/

Registration

Junior researchers interested in attending the workshop without presenting can apply by sending an e-mail to Chiara Valsangiacomo (chiara.valsangiacomo@uzh.ch) by August 16, 2019. The number of spots is limited; the selection will be on a first come, first served basis. You will receive a confirmation e-mail by the end of August.

Conditions of participation

Accepted auditors can be granted 1 ECTS for their participation; conditions include attendance at the entire workshop (including public lecture), active participation as well as the provision, in advance of the workshop, of written feedback to two speakers. The workshop is free of charge. Travel and accommodation are at the expense of participants.

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