

Information
The Future of Democracy
Graduate & Post-Graduate Conference on
Innovative Scenarios for the Future of Representative Democracy

7 – 9 April 2017

Goethe University Frankfurt am Main
Research Unit Democratic Innovations

General information

From 7th to 9th April 2017, the research unit Democratic Innovations will organize a **Graduate & Post-Graduate Conference on Innovative Scenarios for the Future of Representative Democracy entitled “The Future of Democracy”** at the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. After a successful November 2016 call (now closed), the organizers selected (on competitive grounds) 14 papers by German and European (Finland, France, Hungary, Sweden and Switzerland) young scientists. These include empirical and theoretical contributions, with a broad geographical scope ranging from the local level to the regional level, from national to European, international and transnational contexts.

Concept:

Today, the system of representative and elite-centered democracy stands worldwide under considerable pressure. Existing institutions of the representative system – necessary for effective democratic decision making and implementation – are increasingly losing their legitimization power. The symptoms of this development are a significant decline in trust in formal institutions, decreasing membership of political parties, and a growing gap between citizens and their representatives combined with a significant increase in unconventional participation and mass protests against government policies.

However, the current system of representative democracy is not the end of the democratic development. Within established, but also in new and consolidating democracies a process of rethinking, search for new directions, and development of innovative scenarios is taking place. One of the focal points of this process is to enable more participation of citizens in political processes, be it through increasing inclusiveness of representative democracy (e. g. personalization of electoral law, lowering of voting age, lowering quorums), by extending direct democracy or by introducing consultative-deliberative procedures. The future of democracy may be an innovative combination of representative, participatory and deliberative democratic elements.

This graduate & post-graduate conference takes the opportunity to address these questions and focuses on the actors and the instruments of these innovations, to investigate the specific procedures carried out, and the relevant contextual factors. Last but not least, in a wider focus of the conference are the effects of these processes. Within this framework, a broad range of proposals is welcome, and asked to engage with the following question: What impact and contribution do the scenarios in question provide for the future of democracy?

Accepted papers have been organized into the following three sections:

Section 1. The Input Dimension: Actors and Instruments

The first thematic section of the conference focuses on various aspects of involvement in participative procedures (both on-site and online). Here papers concentrating on more traditional questions of who participates and why, as well as addressing individual factors and mobilization processes within representative, directly democratic and deliberative-consultative procedures will be presented.

Section 2. The Process and Context Dimension

The second section of the conference will examine procedural and contextual dimensions of the respective democratic innovations. Here, papers will engage with procedural aspects - mechanisms/strategies used to assert interests, procedural design and implementation; and contextual aspects - which states/provinces/municipalities experiment with which democratic innovations and why?

Section 3. The Dimension of Effects

The third section concentrates on the effects of democratic innovations. Here papers examining policy effects, issue congruence between citizens' preferences and elite decisions, as well as papers analyzing the quality of the deliberations within participative processes and individual characteristics of participants will be presented.

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