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Call for Papers: Graduate workshop “Justice and Democracy: Assessing Political Legitimacy” With Prof. Philippe Van Parijs

University of Zurich, February 18-19, 2016

The tension between democracy and justice, which culminates in the question of democratic legitimacy, is a central topic of investigation in empirical and philosophical political studies on democracy: Is a government legitimate if citizens are fairly satisfied with their democracy despite very few possibilities to participate, to candidate in elections, or to exercise individual fundamental rights, as is the case in Russia? How democratic is a country with a constitutional law adopted through a popular vote that bans minarets, and thus limits the religious freedom of some minorities, as is the case in Switzerland? Is a vote legitimate when the turnout rate is relatively low, so that the majority that wins the vote represents merely a fraction of the population? Would more social justice, for example instituted by a form of guaranteed basic income, improve democracy?

Far from being settled, these questions have important implications for real-existing democracies and processes of democratization. Substantial arguments should consider both the most recent developments in social science and in normative political theory. This interdisciplinary workshop thus aims at bridging the gap between democratic ideals and practices and enhancing the dialogue between political theory and empirical social science in order to gain critical insights and to provide better guidelines for political action.

The workshop offers young researchers (PhDs and Postdocs) the opportunity to discuss these issues and present their work in three different panels. All presenters will benefit from the feedback of the international expert Prof. Phillippe Van Parijs (Université Catholique de Louvain), and of advanced scholars based in Switzerland (senior discussants: Dr. M. Ferrín; Prof. M. Steenbergen; Dr. Y. Welp). Active participation from the participants is expected. A public keynote speech by Prof. Van Parijs on justice, democracy and basic income will complement the academic panels.

The workshop “Justice and Democracy: Assessing Political Legitimacy” is embedded in the event series “[Democracy: Bridging Facts and Norms](#)”. This series wants to provide young researchers interested in democracy with a space for interdisciplinary discussion while at the same time making academic debates accessible to a wider audience by organising public events focused on current political issues. It is jointly organized by Zurich-based theoretical and empirical junior researchers in democracy studies from the [NCCR Democracy](#), the [Centre for Democracy Studies Aarau](#), and [DemocracyNet.eu](#).

For this workshop, junior scholars are invited to present their work on democracy, legitimacy and justice. We are particularly interested in papers tackling three core issues: (1) Is any outcome of democratic procedures just and legitimate? If so, why (not)? (2) Do justice and legitimacy depend on public support, on efficient policy outcomes, or on fair procedures? If so, why (not)? (3) Which real-existing procedures and outcomes are perceived as just and legitimate – by citizens, politicians, or experts –, and why (not)? Both theoretical and empirical papers (using qualitative or quantitative methods) can be submitted. In order to discuss different approaches to democracy studies, we invite researchers from any discipline relevant to the topic, including but not exclusively, political science, philosophy, law, sociology, and economy, to send their abstracts.

Abstracts of 300 to 500 words should be submitted to lea.heyne@zda.uzh.ch by October 31st, 2015. Accepted presenters will be notified by November 15th, 2015.