Research workshop: Report

Citizenship and Democracy

September 11-12, 2017
IPZ, University of Zurich, Switzerland

This DemocracyNet.eu and DPDS research workshop gathered 17 junior researchers in Zurich during two days, on September 11-12, 2017. It enabled all participants to engage in interdisciplinary academic discussions with other DPDS students, members of the association DemocracyNet.eu, and other researchers working in the field of democracy studies. The academic discussions were structured in three panels, presenting a variety of approaches and issues regarding citizenship and democracy, on which each speaker received detailed and valuable feedback from their discussants and from all the participants to the workshop. Besides, all participants were invited to adopt an active role and to start thinking about projects and collaborations they would like to develop with or without the association DemocracyNet.eu.

Participants
Hans Asenbaum (University of Westminster, London)
Palmo Brunner (University of Zurich)
Alice el-Wakil (University of Zurich, ZDA)
Lea Heyne (University of Zurich, ZDA)
Deborah Kalte (ZDA)
Matteo Laruffa (LUISS Guido Carli University, Rome)
Spencer McKay (University of British Columbia, Vancouver)
Henri-Pierre Mottironi (University of Lausanne)
Masakazu Ogami (University of Zurich)
Koray Özdil (University of Zurich)
Sarah Perry (University of Mannheim)
Lukas Peter (University of Zurich)
Marco Radojevic (University of Zurich)
Martha Sandoval (University of Zurich, ZDA)
Michael Strebel (University of Zurich)
Jinyu Sun (University College London)
Rebecca Welge (University of Zurich)

Papers presented

Panel I: Citizenship in (Non-)Democracies
Chair: Lea Heyne, University of Zurich and ZDA

Sarah Perry: "Democracy, Effectiveness and Legitimacy"
Discussant: Matteo Laruffa
       For centuries, empirical social research has shown that political support is declining in most democracies. For a long time, the lack of political support was explained by deficits in the legitimacy of democratic politics, which were perceived by especially critical citizens with higher education and also otherwise higher socioeconomic characteristics. Meanwhile, there is growing evidence suggesting that more and more people from the middle and lower status groups are showing low records of political support. The reasons for the deficit in political support among the less privileged groups of society are probably rather to

be found in the effectiveness of democratic politics. However, many citizens do not see their personal situation improving despite changing political incumbents. So, permanently disadvantaged people are also increasingly in doubt of the legitimacy of democratic politics. The lack of support on the basis of legitimate and effective politics is, furthermore, intensified by the size of political units. In smaller political units the focus is on the effectiveness of politics, in larger political units the focus is on the legitimacy of politics; increasing dissatisfaction with the respective component of political support. The expectations are tested under the utilization of data from the Democracy Audit Mannheim and the Democracy Monitoring Baden-Württemberg. The results show that political support is higher among people with many resources than people with few resources. Moreover, political support on the basis of political effectiveness is the lower, the smaller a political unit is. Beyond, the effect of resources on political support is especially strong with respect to the legitimacy of politics in larger political units.

Jinyu Sun: "From the Natural Duty of Justice to Political Obligations in Non-Democracies"
Discussant: Henri-Pierre Mottironi
Natural duty theories are among the classical theories of political obligations. The main idea is that our natural duty requires us to support political institutions of a just state. At first glance, natural duty theories seem to be difficult to be applied in a non-democratic state. However, the merit of the natural duty theories is that natural duties bind every moral person, including those who are citizens of a non-democratic state. I aim to explore the implications of natural duty theories for non-democratic states in this research project. More precisely, I want to investigate the following questions: on the basis of natural duty of justice, is democracy a necessary condition for political obligations, so that citizens in non-democratic states have no political obligations? If not, on the basis of natural duty of justice, what political obligations do citizens have in non-democracies?

Panel II: Patterns of democratic participation
Chair: Alice el-Wakil, University of Zurich and ZDA

Hans Asenbaum: "Anonymity in participatory spaces on the internet"
Discussant: Sarah Perry
As democratic subjectivity is reconfigured through digital communication, this essay asks: Who are we in digital democracy? It revisits the poststructuralist inspired debate about cyberdemocracy in the 1990s, which conceptualised the democratic subject as disembodied self, reifying through textuality in cyberspace. In contrast, current debates on new materialism offer novel perspectives with attention to the body and the materiality of things. Traces of digital new materialism can be found in early writings on the internet, but insights about digital embodiment and its effects on democracy have yet to be incorporated by democratic theory. By discussing three cases of political online participation, in which users materialise their bodies as classed, raced, queered, and nationalised subjects, this essay contributes to a novel understanding of embodied democratic subjectivity through the digital.

Deborah Kalte: "Gender disparity in Political Consumerism – Personality traits as significant mediators?"
Discussant: Michael Strebel
Today gender disparities in political participation depend heavily on the form of engagement. More traditional, institutionalized forms such as campaign financing or party membership remain clearly male dominated, while women are equally or even more attracted to rather flexible, less institutionalized forms like political consumerism. Drawing on the standard explanations for gender differences in traditional political participation, namely the structural, socialization and situational model, empirical findings indicate them to be rather unhelpful to account for the reversed gender gap in political consumption. These findings suggest that more fundamental, personality-based differences between men and women could have an impact on political behaviour. This article will focus on the explanatory power of personality traits to explain gender disparity in political consumerism.

Panel III: Challenges to democracy
Chair: Lukas Peter, University of Zurich

Henri-Pierre Mottironi: "Theories of inegalitarian suffrage"
Discussant: Martha Sandoval
This paper aims at showing that the joint-stock company, as the most advanced form of economic association, is one of the missing models used in the constitutional and electoral debates before and after

the French Revolution of 1789 in France and England. From this model is derived a theory of citizenship based on property and contribution that underlies inegalitarian forms of suffrage (selective and plural voting) proposed in France and England at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century. Not only does the conception of the citizen-shareholder shed a different light on the close relationship between taxation and representation in democratic theory, it appears to be a forgotten model of the republic in the history of representative democracy.

Matteo Laruffa: "Reading the crisis of democracy under the lens of Giovanni Sartori: A new research agenda beyond the Alarmist Bubble"
Discussant: Jinyu Sun
This paper poses the following question: how can political scientists substantially achieve an advancement in the quest for standards and criteria that allow us to better understand the crisis of democracy? In this sense, the problem is to place the challenge to figure out the crisis of democracy into a specific conceptual context, by going back to its foundations before the distraction of the alarmist proclaims on the collapse of democracies worldwide.
Since the most famous writings on the topic in the Seventies, the use of the expression "crisis of democracy" has grown in a confused and improper manner both in political science and comparative politics. Even if the previous and current discussions on the issue have been valuable, because they represent a valiant attempt to push the boundaries of our knowledge, this debate needs to be challenged on a more conceptual level.
The paper is organized as follows. First, it discusses the Alarmist bubble of democratic deconsolidation and its distraction from the real problem of this research issue. Second, it explains the significance of the main fallacies in our understanding the crisis of democracy. Third, it disentangles the main meanings of the expression crisis of democracy and proposes a refined research agenda for organizing the literature. It considers three research interests: the crisis of democracy as related to governance of democracy, participation in and opposition to democracy. Moreover, the paper provides a conceptual analysis of crisis of democracy based on the guidelines proposed by the Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori. This conceptual analysis includes an assessment of a representative group of seven definitions, and selects one of them as the most promising theoretical base for explaining the phenomenon. Finally, it offers some proposals for further developing one of the concepts of crisis of democracy existing in the literature and guidelines for a more scientific approach to the debate on the issue.
In short, the following pages argue for a radical recasting of the crisis of democracy debate.

Spencer McKay & A. el-Wakil: "Against 'Direct Democracy': Popular Votes in Democratic Theory"
Discussant: Hans Asenbaum
Discussions about the democratic credentials of initiative and referendum processes are relatively absent in democratic theory. This article identifies reasons for this gap in the classification of these institutions as 'direct democratic'. We show that the 'direct' versus 'representative' dichotomy among 'models' of democracy has strongly impacted research on referendum procedures in ways that either prevents them from being taken seriously as topics of research or that unnecessarily limits the scope of questions raised about them. Informed by the most recent developments in democratic theory, we argue in favour of abandoning the concept of 'direct democracy' as understood by most democratic theorists altogether. We propose a new, more fruitful approach for democratic theorists to inform the study of referendum and initiative mechanisms. This approach starts with a change in terminology. We promote the term 'popular vote processes' to describe these mechanisms in general and insist on acknowledging the differences among types of such mechanisms. This terminological change also implies a change in approach to initiative and referendum processes. We argue that democratic theorists should approach popular vote procedures from a democratic systems perspective, which raises new normative and empirical questions.

Working Sessions I + II
Moderation: Alice el-Wakil, Rebecca Welge

The working sessions aimed at fostering collaboration and team-work among researchers by exchanging ideas, creating a network of researchers in the field, and sharing knowledge to initiate new projects. The second working session was devoted to developing new projects.
We addressed the following four project activities in more detail: (a) Developing workshops with a focus on applied science in cooperation with the DPDS within the framework of a planned workshop series, supported by Mercator foundation. (b) Building on the experiences in Yverdon and other former events with a focus on playful learning, workshop participants started to think about games (analog not digital), which

can be used for transfer knowledge into the broader society. (c) Taking up an earlier initiative of DemocracyNet members, workshop participants engaged planning a 5-day summer school on 'Participatory Spaces in Perspective'. (d) Exchanging views on benefits and drawbacks of the current organizational structure of DemocracyNet, workshop participants collected and reflected upon different suggestions regarding the future development of DemocracyNet and its activities.