Call for participants

Research Lab

Democratic Regress, Pluralism
and Radical Democracy

Date: 25 - 26 October 2018
Uppsala University, Sweden

Today liberal democracy is being called into question by a variety of anti-establishment movements, both from the left and the right. While new forms of nationalist movements and parties see themselves as the solution to the democratic deficit, others see them as a cause of democratic decline as their allusion to national sovereignty mobilizes against pluralism and the rights of marginalised groups. This controversy reveals the need for a more precise analysis of democratic regress, as the very understanding of its meaning seems to be ambivalent and strongly contested. Drawing on a notion of democratic regress as socially and historically situated, rather than as relying on freestanding normative standards, this Research Lab intends to draw attention to concepts such as pluralism, equality and solidarity. By doing so, the Lab seeks to unpack the assumptions that underlie different understandings of democratic regress and the possibilities of a radicalization of democracy.

The Research Lab invites submissions that offer theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of democratic regress, pluralism and radical democracy. We invite submissions from PhD students and early career researchers from different disciplines, and especially encourage scholars with an activist background to participate. While we are open to submission on the topic more generally, the Lab will focus on two streams, inviting reflections on one or both of the following themes:

Stream 1: The first stream explores how democratic regress can be understood against the background of a wide range of social and political dynamics.

- How do transnational trends such as migration, digitalization, financialisation, gentrification, and tourism shape our perception of democratic regress? Are there common denominators behind different articulations of regress?
- How does the re-emergence of right and left populisms locate within the discourse of popular sovereignty?
- How can we more generally think about the relationship between democratic regress and pluralism?

Stream 2: Drawing on the insights of the discussions in the first stream, the second stream focuses on the possibilities of democratisation.
• In which way does democratic regress and pluralism work as a site of contestation in current forms of resistance such as new municipal movements, Black Lives Matter, Women’s March, LGBT Rights Movements, and pan-European movements such as DiEM25 and European Alternatives?
• What ought to be the role of social movements and democratic innovations in deepening democracy? What should be the role of science and the humanities?

Research Lab
The Research Lab will take place at Uppsala University on the 25 and 26 October 2018. Please submit the following to Zohreh Khoban zohreh.khoban@statsvet.uu.se and Rahel Suess rahel.suess@univie.ac.at by Friday, September 7:

• Paper abstract (up to 500 words). Please outline one particular argument and its connection to one of the streams.
• A brief bio and some reflections (up to 700 words) on how your previous research relates to one of the streams.

The Research Lab aims to promote face-to-face interaction and discussion through a small group format. Accepted participants will be notified by the 20 September at the latest.

Support from Uppsala Forum on Democracy, Peace and Justice at Uppsala University enables us to fund travel costs and accommodation for a limited number of our international participants.

Organisers of the Research Lab:
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