

ECPR General Conference
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Section Proposal

Chair: Anthoula Malkopoulou (Uppsala University)

Co-Chair: Annelien De Dijn (University of Amsterdam)

Section Title: **Contested Concepts and their Trajectories**

Many of the key concepts used in political science and theory are 'essentially contested'. They provoke, as Walter Gallie pointed out, endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users, and these disputes cannot be settled by appeal to empirical evidence, linguistic usage, or the canons of logic alone.

We propose a series of panels that use a contextualist approach to tackle a wide range of contested concepts. They involve rethinking, first and foremost, political ideologies such as 'liberalism', and critically discussing constitutional principles such as 'militant democracy'. The second set of panels revisits the fundamental political concepts of 'the people' and 'human rights', as well as methodological axioms such as 'deliberation' and key thinkers like Max Weber, shedding light on neglected or forgotten aspects of their study. The third group of panels focuses on concepts related to international and EU politics, drawing attention to how these supranational processes are defined by and redefine basic political ideas such as democracy, liberty and representation.

Drawing on a variety of textual and empirical material, papers in this section will illustrate that concepts are historically and politically contingent. They can become subjects of public debate and political controversy, just as they can guide (or restrain) political research and inspire scholarly discussion.

3-8 keywords: concepts, ideas, discourses, political theory, context, debate, contingency, ideologies

Panel I - Annelien De Dijn

What is liberalism?

Liberalism is often seen as the constitutive ideology of the West. But what exactly does it mean to be a liberal or to espouse liberal values? That question is rather harder to answer. Liberalism is a term employed in a dizzying variety of ways in political thought and social science. This panel examines how our contemporary understanding of liberalism took shape since the term was first introduced into political debate in the early 19th century. In doing so, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the norms and

values we inhabit today.

Panel II - Anthoula Malkopoulou

The concept of 'militant democracy' and its alternatives

This panel will discuss the 'militant democracy' paradigm and its alternatives. It invites theorists to critically reflect on historical and contemporary responses to extremist politics and antidemocratic ideologies. Such responses may include party bans, hate speech prosecution, increased security measures, international sanctions, systematic political isolation, preventive social inclusion, civic education programs and so on. The aim is to bring specifically into focus the ethical and normative implications of various types of democratic self-defense: how do they affect our conceptions of democracy, legitimacy, liberty and human rights?

Panel III - Samuel Hayat & Dirk Jörke/Discussant: Veith Selk

The people and the masses in conceptual history

The emergence of mass politics in the 19th century deeply changed the way the people was conceptualized - but also its own influence on conceptual change. This panel will gather contributions about the people as both an object and a subject of conceptual history from 19th century to the present. Particular attention will be given to papers that discuss the tension between populist politics and political liberalism with regard to the political role of the people.

Panel IV - Lena Halldenius

Histories of the concept of human rights

Does the concept of human rights have a history? If it does, and what such a history could look like, will depend on one's understanding of what the concept of human rights is about, but also of what the enterprise of tracing ideas over time is about. This panel will grapple with methodological and conceptual challenges involved in trying to frame a history (or histories) of this contested concept.

Panel V - Kari Palonen

Max Weber as political thinker

Max Weber's style of theorizing politics was related to the institutions and practices of his day and their wider implications. For example his methodological studies, using the British Parliament as the rhetorical model of procedural 'objectivity' and 'value freedom', are also explicitly 'political'. His views on university politics, both against the discrimination of socialists and Jews and the growing powers of bureaucracy and business professors, are also unknown yet highly topical today.

Panel VI - Anna Kronlund & Taru Haapala

Politics of 'deliberation'

The aim of this panel is to discuss the concept of deliberation. Deliberation takes place in different forms and stages of decision-making procedures. While the common idea of deliberation emphasizes consensus and final outcomes, dissensus –presenting opposite views and alternatives– is also a relevant part of political decision-making. ‘Deliberation’ can also be seen as a broader political phenomenon and not only in relation to democracy or representation. The panel welcomes both theoretical and empirical papers on deliberation, as an act or paradigm of politics, its conceptualizations and different aspects and implications.

Panel VII - Elena Garcia-Guitan and Claudia Wiesner

Rethinking political representation in the EU

The aim of the panel is to analyze whether and to what extent there still is a democratic deficit in the EU with regard to political and institutional representation. Taking into account different possible conceptions of political representation, current proposals of EU institutional reforms shall be assessed and new ones elaborated. The panel welcome papers that incorporate an analysis of the concept of representation applied to the design of the system of representation appropriate to the complex political reality of the EU.

Panel VIII – Heino Nyssönen & Fred Dias

Conceptual history and world politics

This panel invites contributions to the study of world politics through *conceptual history* or *Begriffsgeschichte*, whose central premise is that key concepts are always controversial, linked to interests and open for contestation. We are interested in old and new concepts and their use in world politics, including but not restricted to international order, power politics, interdependence, war and peace, civil war, statehood, democratization, security, liberty, genocide and so on. We welcome papers dealing with concepts and conceptual changes in international politics from different research areas, including international theory, comparative international politics, diplomacy studies and European studies.