



Nordic Summer University



European Humanities  
University

**Study Circle 5:  
Patterns of Dysfunction in Contemporary Democracies  
Impact on Human Rights and Governance  
Joint Venture Between NSU and EHU.**

**REVISED CALL FOR PAPERS SUMMER SESSION 2020**

**THE ELITE-PEOPLE GAP**

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**Due to the extra-ordinary situation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a physical meeting with big numbers of people might not be possible in the summer of 2020. We are now inviting you to suggest alternative forms of interaction and community-building activities. See below under the heading “Practical Information” how to propose a Trace – Alternative format of the presentation.**

More information about NSU. (See <http://www.nordic.university>)

Table of contents

- 1) Opening Focus: The Elite-People Gap
- 2) Other Themes
- 3) Practical Information
- 4) Presentation of European Humanities University, the Nordic Summer University.

**For the summer 2020 we would propose a special opening focus on:**

## THE ELITE-PEOPLE GAP

An opening focus will head the program of the session sincerely welcoming other subjects related to our six themes in the program to follow.

To conclude we should consider the elite-people gap. Does it really exist? Who are the elite? Is this just a manipulating term? Do we rather have split societies, where some parts have profited while others were left behind? Is this phenomenon generational? Is it rather due to new yearnings of democracy, which the traditional model cannot fulfil? Should we consider new forms of democracy or political participation? Do illiberal democracies manage to fill the gap trading security (social, internal, external) against obedience? Is the elite-people gap somehow inherent in liberal democracies?

See end of CFP for bibliographical information.

**Other themes are:**

### **1. Populism and democracy**

The reason for populist movements are many and we have probably not understood these movements properly yet. Reasons vary from country to country, but there seems to be some standards such as hostility to globalization and distrust of the so-called establishment. There is a strong wish to be heard, that one's vote count, and a feeling that they have been forgotten. In many countries populism has been fuelled by fear of immigration and social instability. It is often seen as a challenge to representative democracy. This was clearly illustrated by the Brexit referendum, where a parliamentary majority to remain was defeated by a popular vote to leave.

Rosanvallon argues that bureaucracy together with the judiciary, the regulatory bodies and electoral representation have its own kind of legitimacy which is part of our general notion of democratic legitimacy. (Rosanvallon 2008) Populism, on the other hand, pretends to appeal directly to the people against politicians and technocrats, and research does confirm a gap between citizens and leaders. (Startin & Krouwel 2013) It has been argued that populism and technocracy actually reinforce each other by a common critique of party politics. (Bickerton & Accetti 2015, Leonard 2011) From a left-wing perspective Laclau proposes to short-circuiting party politics by constructing a political subject from a large range of social demands which is construed as the people and supposed to subvert and reconstruct society. (Laclau 2005) In its turn, this view has been criticized as the construction of an imaginary people without any fixed contours. (Zarka 2016)

Lately populism has surged as a consequence of the migration crisis. Elections in Austria and Germany have given very high scores to populist anti-immigration parties. Support for these parties is also high in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland and France. What are the ideological suppositions of these parties? How should we understand them? It is puzzling that Mecklenburg-Schwerin, which receives so few refugees and experience an economic upturn (though still one of the poorer parts of Germany), is so anti-immigration? Are the Media responsible or should we look for some other reason?

### **2. Globalization and democracy**

Economic globalization is made responsible for the loss of jobs; critics claim that benefits have been taken away by the elite. Who profited from globalization and where certain stretches of society abandoned along the road? What would the European societies have looked like without globalization? Politically, free trade and liberalization of capital movements have prompted some to ask whether democratic decision-making decides anything any more. Are politicians only adapting

to circumstances they do not control. This reproach has been directed against globalization as such and the EU in particular. The EU treaties have established free trade and movements of goods, services and persons as a basic principle. The WTO imposes rules of free trade on all its members. Does this engage the member countries in fierce competition leading to lower levels of pay and working conditions? Are democratic institutions no longer able to decide about the kind of society which should be instituted? How should we cope with this in terms of justice?

([http://opendemocracy.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?](http://opendemocracy.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=9c663f765f28cdb71116aa9ac&id=1b0a762d04&e=20c21a5d20)

[u=9c663f765f28cdb71116aa9ac&id=1b0a762d04&e=20c21a5d20](http://opendemocracy.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=9c663f765f28cdb71116aa9ac&id=1b0a762d04&e=20c21a5d20)) Are governments powerless faced with multinational corporations such as Google? The latest EU tax complaint against Google will say something about the balance of power between government and corporations.

This problem also concerns labour law and collective bargaining. Existing structures are challenged by competition from the outside and it is difficult to maintain higher standards, if products, services and persons from the outside can propose cheaper solutions. This was poignantly illustrated by the Polish plumber during the French referendum on the EU Constitution Treaty. The fear of the Polish plumber probably decided for a no to the treaty. Should democracies then be autarchic republics as Plato recommends in the Republic? They have, of course, never been like that, but support for democracy, political participation and interest in politics can wane if democratic decision-making is no longer seen as pertinent.

### **3. The Digital Revolution and democracy**

Will digital, AI, robotic and other technologies maintain or advance democracy, or will they constitute an indispensable tool for emerging autocracies or totalitarian ideologies? The digital revolution enables global gossip, plebiscites, polls and populism which challenge representative democracy. The careful scrutiny of proposals for new legislation and its consequences, which at least ideally is part of representative democracy, is run over by various direct expressions of popular sentiment. Can these expressions no longer be channelled through these representative processes? Is the speed of the information flow simply too fast and reactions too immediate for representative democracy to connect with people? (See Andrew Sullivan <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/04/america-tyranny-donald-trump.html>) Is the huge importance of the media fuelling this process, and what kind of manipulation does control of media allow within these processes to the detriment of democracy. Enormous amounts of money and investments are involved in the news and information services so crucial for the good functioning of democracy. In the early times of European democracy the press was generally motivated by political interests in this or that party or part of the population. Today the media might have a stand, but they are often more preoccupied with the audience. To this it will be said that media has to be independent and private ownership secures this independence. This independence should secure pluralistic sources of information, but if all are running after some statistical idea of the audience, information delivery could become rather monotone.

### **4. Security And Democracy**

Terrorism, social instability and other threats have considerably augmented measures of control and surveillance leading to growing interference in the private life of citizens. The scandal surrounding the NSA monitoring of internet activity and collection of big data concerning telephone conversations did attract much attention, but other measures such as increasing video surveillance, checking of credit card data and the like has considerably enhanced the monitoring of the individual as well. Will such measures fragilize the citizen in relation to the control the very same citizen should exercise on its own democratic institutions and politicians? Are we about to construct the infrastructure for authoritarianism ready for take over when the political situation is ripe or have we found a reasonable compromise between security concerns and democracy? (Priest & Arkin, 2011; Andersen, 2016)

## 5. Democratic Deficit in the EU and Global Governance

Several Nordic countries and all the Baltic countries are members of the EU. Questions of democracy in these countries are therefore linked to the EU. Is the EU undermining national democracies? How does EU participate in the regional and local levels? Many authors have argued that the European Institutions have a democratic deficit (for example Føllesdal & Hix 2005), but others like Moravcsik (2002) and Majone (1998) have maintained that Europe is sufficiently democratic and compares reasonably well with democratic institutions elsewhere like those in the US. (Cf. Kreppel 2006) Arguing that the EU is legitimate or could become legitimate by some odd reform will not necessarily be sufficient to make people believe that it is legitimate. Normative ideas about legitimacy like the one's espoused by Simmons (1999) and Buchanan (2002) are, of course, interesting in their own right, but they will not necessarily tell us very much about the challenges facing the EU. One might very well wonder whether a more democratic Europe or other institutional changes would silence Eurosceptics or make them enthusiastic followers. It seems like their real grievances lies elsewhere even though any argument ready at hand will be brought to use. The real problem might not be that there is any particular fault with the EU institutions, but rather that some other source of legitimacy is more appealing to many people. Many Eurosceptics to the right or the left sees the EU as an obstacle to their own project whether it is socialist one hammering into the single market and globalization in general, or Catholic conservative blaming EU for upholding a secular society protecting abortion and equal rights, or a nationalist one protecting home grown culture and community through sovereign rights.

One way to get around difficulties concerning unity and cultural diversity is through the implementation of the subsidiarity principle which has potential for a better understanding of the evolution of democracy. Subsidiarity creates an area of public action for the individuals giving them both responsibility and a definite personality. This important principle of EU law should be implemented creatively. It is an important fact that the subsidiarity principle is uncommon in Eastern Europe, something which merits further investigation.

Global governance as it is today is not democratic. The UN has, of course, a general assembly, but the Security Council has the last word. Should we try to democratize this institution or heed Kant's words that a universal republic would be the worst tyranny? (Kant, 1917) Could global governance be democratized in other ways, through social movements, ONG's or other? Should we rather count on some kind of global constitutionalism? (Peters, 2015) Others like Thomas Pogge and Allen Buchanan would consider global governance in terms of justice rather than democracy. (Pogge, 2002; Buchanan, 2004) Are there limits to democracy and how should democracy fit into global governance? It seems that some people feel estranged from a complex and opaque global system, which impacts their daily life in ways which are difficult to discern. Are there limits to how global we can get, or should we accept that democracy has a limited applicability?

There are important difficulties in the system of representation on the global level. What kind of representation should one use in the global system of governance? What is the connection between social complexity and global governance? How can global actors participate in global governance? How should religious communities and churches participate in global governance?

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## Practical Information

We invite and encourage you to suggest online or small local gatherings (if and how it is possible) that produce a trace which can be shared with the larger community. We also accept more traditional forms of paper presentations however, organising that in more workshop modes of interaction so that we can avoid sitting all day in front of computer screens.

Thus, participation in the Summer Session of 2020 can take a variety of different forms. You may contribute with a more traditional academic paper and/or send in a suggestion for what we have called traces - this can be a online workshop, local meeting, an online panel discussion of papers, a reading or performance, sharing of a meal or walk together (considering the appropriate manner of physical interaction that is possible in the time and place where you are situated), presenting a piece of art or shared activity. Suggesting a trace will enable you to also receive a grant which supports the creation of that trace. Each circle will be able to suggest 6 traces to be given a grant of 7000 DKK. Traces can be made individually or together with other participants.

The board of NSU has stipulated the following guidelines for how traces may be elected. A trace needs to be:

- produced by a single individual or group of participants.
- sharable and open to all during the Summer Session time frame.
- fitting to NSU's overall goals, aims and vision.
- related to the circle's theme.
- created with its main language English or a Scandinavian or Baltic language.
- those who make a trace must be a member of NSU (pay membership fee) & participate in the democratic forum of NSU (may become a delegate for the General Assembly meeting)
- the team or individual creating a trace needs to provide some promotion material considered as an INVITATION to the trace, before the Summer Session with: picture & 200-500 words.
- those who make a trace need to provide a brief report of the trace to their coordinator (form to be provided by Board, including amount of participants, goals, etc) after the trace has been produced

Feel free to suggest and send in your creative ideas together with a short biographical description, no longer than 500 words. We strongly encourage you to craft a format that suits your presentation, such as a workshop, experiment, exercise, or interactive dialogue that allows sharing in an appropriate manner taking the current situation in the world into consideration. Interaction with other circles

During the summer session of the Nordic Summer University nine different study circles have a full program during the days, and participants are welcome to join the programs depending on their interests. This year, the circles might meet physically according to region or town, rather than according to topic.

This can be organised by a specific circle or a combination of circles. Trace/Proposal deadline Please send in proposals for a trace, which can include a paper, presentation, workshop or other type of experiment by May 31st, 2020, to the coordinators. Please indicate what format of presentation you are interested in, and how you envision the resulting trace that can be shared with other participants in virtual or other manner. Please also send in a short bio (5-10 lines) we can share with all participants beforehand. You are also welcome to participate without giving a presentation. Please apply by the same deadline if you'd like to join as a participant. Offering grants to create traces Several grants will be made available for individuals or groups organising the production of a trace in collaboration with the other participants. A trace can be small - a picture of a local meeting - or big - a panel discussion, podcast with interviews, experimental writing workshop, etc.

If you would like to apply for a grant to create a trace that can celebrate the NSU spirit throughout the world, please let us know when you send in your application. As always, NSU is particularly interested in supporting people who are at the outskirts of the Nordic region - the Baltic and West-Nordic communities as well as those with special needs. So please do inform us if your application of a Trace grant falls under the regional support or if the pandemic has had particular financial consequences to you.

There is only a limited amount of grants available per circle, the deadline to apply is May 30th, 2020. When you are offered a grant to produce a trace, you will need to respond by email to accept the grant, otherwise it will be offered to the next person on the list.



## Presentations

**European Humanities University** (<http://www.ehu.lt/en> ) is private non-profit liberal arts Lithuanian University with unique origin and history. Founded in 1992, the university has been headquartered in Vilnius, Lithuania since authorities expelled it from Belarus in 2004. EHU is the only Belarusian University that has succeeded in maintaining its independence and commitment to academic freedom. EHU offers both high residence and low residence (distance learning) degree programs in the humanities and social sciences that fully accord with European standards and norms.

Approximately 1800 students are enrolled in European Humanities University (1/3 high residence students and 2/3 low residence), 249 (99 full-time and 150 part-time) faculty members conduct teaching and research activities in EHU within Historical, Socio-political, Law and Media academic departments and 10 research centers (see: <http://www.ehu.lt/en/research/centers-laboratories-and-institutes>).

The EHU provides students from Belarus and the region with an education in the European liberal arts tradition in a free and democratic environment - an opportunity, unfortunately, not available in Belarus today. At EHU, students can learn media and communications skills in a state-of-the-art [media lab](#), become election observers through a hands on program conducted together with [Belarusian Human Rights House](#) and [Belarus Watch](#) called [Election Observation: Theory and Practice](#) (EOTP), study European politics and policy as part of the political science and European studies program, and many other opportunities. Law students learn about human rights law from Western experts and practice their courtroom skills and meet students from around the world at the Philip C. Jessup International Moot Court Competition. New center for Constitutionalism and Human rights was established in 2012 <http://www.ehu.lt/en/research/research-centers/center-for-constitutionalism-and-human-rights/activities> along with announcement of new academic journal with the same title <http://chr-centre.org/>

These and other opportunities make EHU a unique place for young people from Belarus and the region. The commitment of EHU's faculty, students, staff, and donors is an important signal to Belarusian authorities and society that there is an alternative to state ideological control. For Belarusians who seek the freedom to think creatively and critically—to study, learn, teach, and conduct research without ideological restrictions—EHU provides a home away from home.

**The [Nordic Summer University](#) (NSU) is an independent and open academic institution, which organises seminars crossing academic and national borders. NSU is a democratic institution organized and run by its participants through different study circles.**

Through two yearly seminars the cross-disciplinary study circles fertilise collaboration between academics, build up networks and contribute to create research agendas throughout the Nordic/Baltic countries as well as establishing contacts "abroad". The research in the study circles is documented in publications link: [NSU-Press](#)

The two yearly seminars take place in the Nordic/Baltic countries. In the winter each study circle organize their own seminar; in the summer all circles are brought together for also enhancing further cross-disciplinary collaboration. Furthermore, the summer meeting is also the political organ of NSU inviting all participants to exercise their influence on the activities of NSU.

It is the policy of NSU to maintain an environment that encourages and fosters appropriate conduct among all persons and respect for individual values. NSU opposes any policy or practice, which discriminates against any individual or group on grounds of race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, class, age, disability, creed, and ethnic/national origins. NSU aims at being an open and inclusive organization.

NSU receives financial support from the [Nordic Council of Ministers](#) and operates in cooperation with [Foreningerne Nordens Forbund](#) (FNF).



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