

EWIS 2020 Call for papers

Democratic Security: Concepts, Practices and Consequences

Workshop Conveners:

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Workshop summary

Security is often seen as a problem for or even as opposed to democracy. This workshop seeks to move beyond an emphasis on security as per se undemocratic and repressive by engaging with concepts and practices of 'democratic security'. The study of security tends to focus on attempts to curtail democracy through claims to exceptional rights by government officials, technocratic risk-management by security professionals or the operation of modern technologies of control. While these are important facets of security, such a perspective discounts the manifold practices of deliberation, accountability, contestation and control already existing in the field of security provision as well as the work of a broad variety of actors in diverse arenas. Moreover, it dismisses the opportunity that security – or specific forms thereof – might also have 'positive' effects for democracy, or at least be changed in that direction.

This workshop, therefore, emphasizes efforts to provide and frame security in line with central principles of democracy. The widening and deepening of security as well as its growing importance as a public value and political narrative has not only justified new security measures and powers for security agencies; it also facilitated new practices of deliberation, accountability, contestation and control. For example, parliaments have established committees of inquiry to investigate intelligence scandals, civil society groups have started campaigns against specific forms of surveillance or border protection, and courts have negotiated the legality of controversial security practices, such as data retention. In addition to rather mundane and well-established practices, such as parliamentary oversight, there are efforts to transfer new and innovative formats of public debate, consultation and evaluation to the security field. In times of eroding societal cohesion and support for established institutions, there are also increasing calls that a basic sense of (democratic) security is indispensable for mutual trust and the non-violent conduct of political conflict. This workshop is interested in already existing concepts and practices of democratic security as well as in ideas and efforts to increase the democratic quality of security provision.

The workshop invites papers that study how and where democratic security can and does happen in this purportedly special field. We invite papers that conceptualize, observe and evaluate democratic security. Papers are welcomed covering different perspectives and areas, but are encouraged to speak to one or several of the following or related questions. 1. Concepts: What is or could be 'democratic security'? How can we make sense of the general relationship between security and democracy beyond existing problematisations? Can conceptions of democracy developed in other areas be transferred to the security realm, including at the international level? 2. Practices: How do democracies actually 'do' security? Which practices of democratic security in different arenas and by different actors do we observe? How do they work? Which experiments with new and innovative forms of democratic security exist? 3. Consequences: How do these practices actually affect the democratic quality of security policy? How does this impact the effectiveness of security provision? Are there ambivalences and unintended consequences?