

Exeter Workshop

Organized by the Centre for Political Thought, University of Exeter

Representation in Historical and Transcultural Perspectives

4-5 June 2019

Workshop Programme

Part One

Tuesday 4 June, 2.00pm-6.30pm

Room Ibrahim Ahmed, Reed Hall, University of Exeter (Streatham Campus)

2.00-4.00pm – Session One: *Representation in history*

Chair: Dario Castiglione

Introduced by Manuela Albertone and Iain Hampsher-Monk

4.00-4.30pm – Coffee/Tea Break

4.30-6.30pm – Session Two: *Representation as a polysemic or a meta-concept?*

Chair: Robert Lamb

Introduced by Michel Troper and Alessandro Mulieri

Part Two

Wednesday 5 June, 9.00am-1.00pm

Room Devonshire B, Mercure Roudgemont Hotel, Queen Street (opposite Central Station)

9.00-10.30am – Session One: *Representation across disciplines*

Chair: Ross Carroll

Introduced by Pierre Brunet and Dario Castiglione

10.30-11.00am – Coffee/Tea Break

11.00am-1.00pm – Session Two: *Representation across political cultures*

Chair: Sarah Lucas

Introduced by Regenia Gagnier and Yves Sintomer

1.00-2.00pm – Lunch

The afternoon session is for the Exeter colleagues to discuss the formation and programme of activities of an Interdisciplinary Research Group (IRG) on “Global Political Languages: Historical and Transcultural Entanglements”. Colleagues from outside Exeter are welcome to participate to the discussion, if they wish.

2.00-3.15pm – Definition of the IRG’s research agenda and scope of activities.

3.15-3.30pm – Coffee/Tea Break

3.30-4.30pm – Discussions of main activity programme for 2019-2020.

Rationale of the Workshop

Representation is a key concept in modern politics and constitutional law. It is central to the conceptualization of the state as *representative* of the political community, in the sense that it embodies it. It is central to the structuring of modern government, where *representative* institutions have become the legitimate holders of legislative power and, at least formally, have control over the executive and administrative functions of the state.

Ideas of representation and representativeness are central to the justification of the exercise of power in modern democratic societies who subscribe to the general principles of liberty, equality and self-government. Even regimes that are not “democratic” in the sense normally associated with modern constitutional and pluralist states subscribe to the idea that their own institutions of political power (leaders, one-party-systems) are “representative” of the people and the community at large. It is indeed possible to say that modern politics is essentially *representative* in form. At the same time, there is constant talk of the “crisis of representation.” This has contributed to the flourishing of new reflections on the history and meaning of representation, and of its conceptual and institutional transformation through history and across different contexts.

As part of these reflections, there has been a renewed interest on how the juridico-political discourse on representation has intertwined in complex ways with non-political uses and languages: from theology to philosophy; from the figurative arts to theatre. Moreover, it has become apparent how the general idea of representation is also traversed by several tensions. Representation is one of those verbal nouns that shows product/activity ambiguity, so that it can refer both to the *act* of representing and to the *thing* that does the representation. Louis Marin has suggested that there are two main dimensions in the act of representing: a “transitive” dimension, through which the linguistic or visual signifier *refers* to something else; and a “reflexive” dimension, through which the signifier *presents* itself as representing something else. A very similar tension can be illustrated by distinguishing between representation as the process of *reflecting* and (re)producing images, conveying meanings through signs and symbols; and representation as a form of *embodiment*, a way of performing and staging an event.

Besides this semantic richness, the history of the juridico-political idea of representation has been characterized by a variety of applications in different historical contexts, through different institutional practices, and in connection with other important areas of activity, such as the economy, culture, or in relation to various forms of social differentiation on the basis of gender, race, class, status. These connections have contributed to some of the vocabulary and practices of modern political representation (“interest”, “descriptive representation”, etc.).

The Exeter Workshop wishes to discuss some of these issues by focussing on the question of the historical continuity/rupture of the “language” of political representation, and on how the idea of political representation *translates* across cultures and disciplinary domains.

Organization of the Workshop

The Workshop is organized in two parts, with two sessions for each part.

Part 1 of the workshop will be looking at the more historical and conceptual dimensions of the formation and evolution of modern ideas of (political) representation. It will address familiar questions in hermeneutic studies and conceptual history

- The first session of Part 1 is more on the “historical” question of whether the “problem” (“language”, “practices”) of representation can be identified with more or less precision across time. This session will of course overlap with all the others, but it should try to concentrate on the diachronic/synchronic diachronic and synchronic aspects in the history of ideas, traditions and languages, and the issue of continuity and rupture in them. Can these ideas and traditions only be understood within particular contexts and in function of specific intentions and usages that give meaning to utterances? Or are there clear continuities in usages and practices, pointing at a more permanent sets of practical and theoretical problems, making it possible to establish a form of trans-historical narrative or conversation? The session may also extend the discussion to the relation between the more institutional understanding of representation with other distinctive (but related) uses of political “representation”, including figurative, symbolic and rhetorical ways in which political entities and the political space have been represented.
- The second session in Part 1 is closely related to the first one, but it is more focused on conceptual issues. One of such issues is the polysemic nature of key concepts, and whether this presents particular problems particularly in connection with the “representation.” A second one is whether the synchronic elements of political languages can be captured by (or can be related to) the heuristic use of the idea of a “meta-concept,” whether “representation” itself could perhaps be also considered as a “meta-concept.” A third issue, finally is whether most concepts work within historical constellations, so they also need to be related to others in order to be understood properly. In the case of political representation, for instance, it is often combined with other modern concepts such as sovereignty, statehood, the people, the nation, and democracy, thus acquiring its meaning from a particular conceptual constellation.

Part 2 of the workshop will explore the way in which representation works across disciplines and different cultural contexts, particularly in relation to non-Western cultures and civilizations.

- The first session part Part 2, can be taken as a continuation and extension of the conceptual session. Its more particular focus is on the way in which there are distinct, though overlapping disciplinary discourses on “representation” (or on key conceptual issues). Do disciplinary discourses present a problem for historical/theoretical interpretation? Given the semantic borrowing between different intellectual fields and disciplines, we wish to discuss how such borrowings have come to shape and influence its political usages, but also see how different disciplines have developed their own narratives and genealogies of the idea of representation.
- The second session of Part 2, will concentrate on how the language of political representation, which has a distinctive European and Western history, has been *translated* (interpreted and transformed), in the process of intellectual *borrowing* and *negotiation* by other political cultures. As part of this discussion we shall also ask whether non-Western cultures have autochthonous linguistic and conceptual equivalents, or whether they have developed similar or equivalent institutional practices that can be comparable to the forms of political representation distinctive of modern western societies. In this respect, we are also interested in exploring the possibility of “reciprocal learning” between cultures, and whether it is possible to think of political representation in a more global context, which transcends local contexts and local knowledge.

Presentations and Background Texts

We expect around 25-28 participants to the workshop. There will be no proper papers to discuss, but two brief presentations for each of the sessions, which are meant to set out some of the problems outlined above with particular regard to the study and the language of political representation.

As a background to our discussion, we shall circulate a number of papers, including a number of chapters from two edited collections recently published or in preparation, which deal with representation. Some of the background papers are in French, but the language of the workshop will be English. The two publications are Manuela Albertone and Dario Castiglione (eds.), *Les Défis de la représentation: Langues, pratiques et figuration du gouvernement* (Classiques Garnier, 2018); and Manuela Albertone and Michel Tropes (eds.), *La représentation politique. Anthologie* (Classiques Garnier, forthcoming).

The number of background papers is considerable, so there is no expectation that participants need to read them in advance, or that the discussion needs to focus exclusively on them. In general, the background papers offer more substantive discussions of the issue of representation, though a few of them also discuss more directly the questions of this workshop. This is a list of the background papers, roughly divided according to their relevance to different sessions (please, notice that the chapters for the *Anthologie* include both a selection of “primary” texts and the relevant “commentary”. The commentary is normally at the end):

Part 1 – Session One: Representation in history

- Thomas Maissen, *Le défi de la représentation. Les personnifications nationales dans l'Europe moderne* (From *Les Défis*)
- *Rome ancienne* (Yan Thomas, Savigny), J.-L. Halpérin
- *Hobbes* (Hobbes, Hanna Pitkin), M. Brito Vieira (From *Anthologie*, English version)
- *Représentation et libéralisme anglais* (Edmund Burke, John Stuart Mill), D. Castiglione – (From *Anthologie*, English version).
- *Rationalisme politique. Femmes et représentation* (Condorcet, Nadia Urbinati), M. Albertone (From *Anthologie*).
- *Représentation et parité* (Françoise Gaspard, Claude Servan-Schreiber, Evelyne Pisier), I. Boukobza, C. Girard (From *Anthologie*).
- *Représentation des entités naturelles* (Benjamin Constant, Dominique Bourg et Kerry Whiteside), P. Brunet (From *Anthologie*)

Part 1 – Session Two: Representation as a polysemic or a meta-concept?

- *Représentation et incarnation* (Marsile de Padoue, Carl Schmitt), A. Mulieri
- Michel Troper, “Le métaconcept de hiérarchie des normes et son utilité pour l’histoire du droit”
- Michel Troper, *Souveraineté et représentation* (From *Les Défis*).
- *Le rôle de la représentation dans la définition du souverain* (Barnave, Roederer, Robespierre, Carré de Malberg), M. Troper (From *Anthologie*).

Part 2 – Session One: Representation across disciplines

- Pierre Brunet, *Représentation et Staatslehre. Entre incarnation et fiction* (From *Les Défis*).
- *Fondements théologiques de la représentation* (Innocent III, Agostino Trionfo, Marsile de Padoue, Hobbes), B. Bourdin (From *Anthologie*).

Part 2 – Session Two: Representation across political cultures

- Regenia Gagnier, “The transcultural transformation of a field”
- Yves Sintomer and Yunyun Zhou, “Representation in Office: A Comparative Study of Local State – Politicians and Civil Servants in China and France”
- *Mao et ligne de masse* (Mao Zedong, Phyllis Frakt), E. Frienkiel (From *Anthologie*).
- *La Chine des Trois représentations* (Les Trois représentations, Cabestan), E. Jourda, P. Pasquino
- *Représentation et Intouchables* (B. R. Ambedkar, M.K. Gandhi), Khilnani – (From *Anthologie*, English version).