



Exeter – Fudan Global Thought Network

Citizens' Empowerment in Global Perspective

Online Workshop, 6 July 2021

9.00-10.30am UK time/16.00-17.30 Beijing Time

11.00-12.30 UK time/18.00-19.30 Beijing Time

As we approach the middle of the first half of the 21st century, levels of citizen empowerment have undergone profound transformations the world over. Comprising two mutually reinforcing logics of, first, meaningful civic involvement in political processes and, second, a positive disposition towards governance practices based on the promotion of citizens' trust in the way in which governing officials and institutions discharge their decisional and administrative tasks, the project of citizens' empowerment aims to strengthen popular input and control over the political outcomes that affect citizens' lives (Zimmerman 2000; Qin and He 2021).

In traditional pluralistic democracies, the ability – both actual and perceived – of citizens to influence political decisions appears to be approaching a crisis. In spite of the many promises since the 1960s of achieving a “deeper” and “stronger” form of democracy through the development of new participatory innovations, an enhanced role for civil society organizations, and the emergence of new social movements, alongside traditional institutions of political representation; citizen empowerment may have actually declined rather than increased (Mansbridge 1999). Recent research has shown that citizens – especially younger citizens – feel disenchanted with and excluded from the democratic process altogether (Foa et al. 2020), something that has more recently fuelled a populist politics of anger and resentment. Such a politics cannot be understood if not in the context of, and as a reaction to forms of technocratic governance justified on the basis of the increasing complexity of social problems, and whose effect has been that of insulating the governing class from ordinary citizens, and the hollowing out of politics (Maier 2013). Moreover, certain aspects of the managerial revolution in public administration have turned citizens into consumers, eroding a sense of the public and of community, while promoting more individualistic and market-like solutions to collective problems. This, together with the increasing and unchallenged power of private corporations have contributed to what some commentators regard as a form of “post-democracy” (Crouch 2004, Streeck 2016)

In states not typically considered democratic, or where electoral democracy has only recently been established, the promise of a democratic transition towards the Western model of the rule of law and a pluralist representative system, fuelled by demands of personal freedom and a more liberal economic model, has proved, if not entirely illusory, at least over-optimistic.

Nonetheless, even in some of these countries there are pressures for the empowerment of citizens and local participatory mechanisms are on the rise. Yet while citizens report feelings of empowerment resulting from their participation, their actual ability to effect political change through these mechanisms is limited (Owen 2020; Qin and He 2021).

In short, in democracies and non-democracies alike, transformations in citizens' political subjectivities are occurring against a backdrop of re-centralisation, political polarisation, governmental secrecy, and democratic and constitutional backsliding, all processes that run counter to a logic of empowerment.

What do these countervailing trends mean for our broader understanding of democratic practices and institutions and how can we distinguish them from their iteration in non-democratic forms of governance? What are the prospects for the empowerment project in an era of rising global illiberalism? Is citizen empowerment simply a relic of a now obsolete form of governance? This workshop seeks to interrogate and showcase citizen empowerment in the 21st Century, in liberal and non-liberal contexts, from both normative and practice-oriented perspectives.

Session One:

This session explores citizen empowerment in practice. It showcases a range of citizen empowerment tools, from participatory budgeting and public deliberation, to voluntary forms of association, organization, and mobilization; from more informal and interactive forms of political representation, to a more active involvement in administrative decision and the management of public resources and services. Although the focus of the presentations is on China, participants are invited to engage comparatively.

Yuan Li, Yanjun Zhu and Catherine Owen
Fudan University and the University of Exeter
'Participatory Budgeting and Party-Building in Shanghai'

Samuel Hayat
French National Centre for Scientific Research
'Unrepresentative Claims: Refusing to Represent as a Source of Power and Legitimacy'

Xuan Qin
Fudan University
'The Politics of Authoritarian Empowerment: Participatory Pricing in China'

Emilie Frenkiel, TBC
Université Paris Est Créteil
'Who are Chengdu's village representative councils (*cunmin yishihui*) empowering?'

Chair: Alice Moseley, *University of Exeter*

Session Two:

This session explores theories of empowerment, considering its foundation upon trust, and direct and indirect forms of citizens' involvement in decision making, and imagining ways in which to re-invigorate the empowerment project. It will take the form of a more free-flowing discussion, with speakers making brief initial interventions, followed by group discussion.

Speakers:

Dario Castiglione, *University of Exeter*

Chunrong Liu, *Fudan University*

Yves Sintomer, *Paris 8 University*

Chair: Catherine Owen, *University of Exeter*

SPEAKER BIOS

Dario Castiglione is Director of the Centre for Political Thought at the University of Exeter. His main areas of research comprise democratic theory and the history of early modern political philosophy. He has written on representation, citizenship and constitutionalism; theories of civil society and social capital; the nature of the European Union; and the Scottish Enlightenment. His recent publications include *Creating Political Presence: The New Politics of Representation* (co-edited, Chicago UP, 2018), and with Richard Bellamy, *From Maastricht to Brexit: Democracy, Constitutionalism and Citizenship in the EU* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2019).

Emilie Frenkiel is an associate professor at the Université Paris Est Créteil and a researcher and vice-director of the LIPHA research institute. She holds a PhD in political studies (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales). Her research focuses on political representation, citizen participation and online deliberation in China. She has taught and studied in France, Great Britain and China. She is one of the editors in chief of *laviedesidees.fr* and *booksandideas.net*. She has published *Conditional Democracy: The Contemporary Debate on Political Reform in Chinese Universities*, (ECPR Press, February 2015); *Parler politique en Chine*, (Presses Universitaires de France, March 2014) and, co-edited with Jean-Louis Rocca, *La Chine en mouvements*, (Presses Universitaires de France, October 2013).

Samuel Hayat is a Researcher in Politics at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in Lille. At the intersection of the history of ideas, historical sociology, and political theory, he works primarily on political representation and on nineteenth-century revolutions and workers' movements. He currently leads a research project entitled "Workplace political theory. Reconceptualising exploitation, democracy and justice through workers' reflexive writings", which attempts to reevaluate core concepts in political theory in the light of workers' writings. He recently published *Quand la république était révolutionnaire. Citoyenneté et représentation en 1848* (Paris: Seuil, 2014) and *Démocratie* (Paris: Anamosa, 2020).

Yuan Li is a PhD Candidate in the School of International Relations & Public Affairs at Fudan University. His research interests encompass a range of topics relating to Chinese governance, including grassroots governance, local government and media politics. He received his MA in Social Science at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and his BA in International Politics at Shanghai International Studies University. Prior to his postgraduate studies, he worked as a village committee assistant in Qingpu district, Shanghai.

Chunrong Liu is an associate professor of political science at School of International Relations and Public Affairs (SIRPA), Fudan University and a research associate at Nordic Institute of Asian studies (NIAS). He obtained his PhD degree from City University of Hong Kong in 2005

and conducted post-doctoral research at Georgetown University. Dr. Liu's research interests are in the areas of political sociology and comparative politics. He has published widely on the dynamics of state-society relations in post-reform China, including several authored or co-authored books in Chinese such as *Bring the Grassroots Back In* (2019), *Community Governance and Marginal Innovations in Chinese Politics* (2018), *Chinese Society along the Huangpu River* (2016). He also serves as the founding managing director of Fudan-European Centre for China Studies.

Alice Moseley is Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Exeter, UK. Prior to her appointment at Exeter, she lectured at the University of Southampton. Her research interests are in three main areas: (i) behavioural public policy and public administration; (ii) citizen involvement in public policy especially deliberative public engagement (iii) various other aspects of civic and political engagement (eg electoral participation, political participation of under-represented groups). Her most recent research has been published in *Policy and Politics*, *Journal of European Public Policy* and *Politics and Governance*.

Catherine Owen is Senior Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Exeter, UK. Previously she was British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow also at Exeter. Her research interests include participatory governance in authoritarian contexts. Prior to her appointments at Exeter, Catherine lectured in the Department of History and Civilization at Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, China. Catherine has held Visiting Fellowships at the European University at St Petersburg, Fudan University Shanghai, the St Petersburg branch of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, and the Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki. Her most recent research has been published in *The China Quarterly*, *Review of International Studies*, and *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*.

Xuan Qin is a lecturer and research fellow in the Institute for Advanced Study in Social Sciences in Fudan University. She received her B.A. from Beijing Normal University, her M.A. from Peking University and her Ph.D. from Nanyang Technological University. Her research covers deliberative democracy, grass-root governance and democratic theory. Her book, *Reinforcing Authoritarianism through Democracy*, was published by Palgrave Pivot in 2021. Her articles are found in journals including *International Political Science Review*, *The China Quarterly*, *Chinese Political Science Review*, and *Japanese Journal of Political Science*.

Yves Sintomer is senior fellow at the French University Institute, and professor of political science at Paris 8 University. He has or has held academic positions at a number of institutions: Neuchâtel, Lausanne, Bask country, Harvard, Tsinghua (Beijing), Frankfurt, Madrid, Louvain-la-Neuve, Catania, Marc Bloch Center (Berlin). His writings have been published in 18 languages, and include *Participatory Budgeting in Europe: Democracy and Public Governance* (with C. Herzberg and A. Röcke), Ashgate, London, 2016.

YanJun Zhu is an MA student in the Department of Sociology at Fudan University, Shanghai. Her research interests include discourse analysis, Chinese political culture, and Chinese governance in the New Era. She is also interested in the history of the exchange of ideas between China and the West, as a lens to explore processes of globalisation and modernity. In addition, YanJun is a timpanist in Fudan University symphony orchestra.