

DEMOCRACY IN CRISIS? CHALLENGES TO DIRECT DEMOCRACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Philippe Mastronardi & Barbara Bleisch (Moderator)**

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Is democracy currently facing a crisis? Several developments are interpreted as assaults upon democracy. It is argued that new populist movements threaten to undermine democracy and its independent institutions or that globalisation and internationalisation compromise democratic self-government. In Switzerland, the federal popular initiative, an instrument of direct democracy, has become the focus of controversial debate as numerous popular initiatives provoke collisions with international law and human rights treaties in particular. However, similar tensions and conflicts can be observed in other countries in Europe and the World. Hence we ask, is democracy facing a crisis?

The panel discussion will bring together prominent guests to debate current challenges to direct democracy in the 21st century from a legal, political and philosophical point of view. The discussion will be held in German.



Christine Abbt is a professor of philosophy at the University of Lucerne and a private lecturer at the University of Zurich. She studied German language and literature studies, philosophy and religion at the University of Zurich. After receiving her doctorate in philosophy at the University of Zurich, she worked as a research assistant at the universities of Basel and Zurich. She has been a research fellow at universities and institutions in Germany, Australia, Italy, Austria and the USA, and received her habilitation at the University of Zurich in 2016 on the topic of memory, remembering and forgetting. She is currently vice-president of the Swiss Society for Cultural Theory and Semiotics and leads the Centre for Enlightenment, Critical Thinking and Plurality at the University of Lucerne. Her research focuses on political philosophy, aesthetics, philosophy of literature, theory of memory and epistemology.



Lukas Bärffuss lives and works as a writer in Zurich. He has written novels (*One Hundred Days*, 2008; *Koala*, 2014 and *Hagard*, 2017) and plays (*The Sexual Neuroses of Our Parents*, *The Bus and Oil*, among others) that are being staged to critical acclaim around the world. His works have been awarded the Mülheimer Dramatikerpreis (2005), the Berliner Literaturpreis (2013) and the Swiss Literature Prize (2014). He has published two collections of essays (*Stil und Moral*, 2015 and *Krieg und Liebe*, 2018). Since 2015, Lukas Bärffuss has been a member of the German Academy of Language and Literature.



Matthias Mahlmann is full professor of Philosophy and Theory of Law, Legal Sociology and Public International Law at the University of Zurich. He was the 2017 Bok Visiting International Professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and is also a recurrent Visiting Professor at the Central European University, Budapest. He has held visiting professorships at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, the Georgetown University Law Center, Washington, D.C. and the Turkish-German University in Istanbul. From 2013 to 2017 he was the president of the Swiss Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy and he has been a member of the Executive Committee of the IVR since 2015. Prof. Mahlmann has published on a wide range of topics concerning questions of legal theory and philosophy, but also on comparative constitutional law, fundamental and human rights, as well as neurosciences and their impact on the law.



Philippe Mastronardi is a Professor Emeritus at the University of St. Gallen (HSG) where he taught public law for 17 years. After graduating and receiving a doctorate at the University of Bern, he worked as secretary of the Federal Control Committee from 1978 to 1994. He was president of the Swiss Council for Economic and Social Policies 'Kontrapunkt' from 2007 to 2014 and is a member of the management board of the Network for Socially Responsible Economy NSW/RSE. His research interests focus particularly on the overlaps between politics, economics and science. His most important publications concern legal thinking, constitutional theory and legal theory.



Barbara Bleisch (Moderator) studied philosophy, German language and literature studies and religious studies in Zurich, Basel and Tübingen. She was awarded a doctorate in Philosophy in 2007 at the University of Zurich. Since 2002, Bleisch has been working as a research associate at the Centre of Ethics at the University of Zurich, where she was director of the Advanced Studies in Applied Ethics from 2005 to 2009. She has held appointments as a research fellow at the University of Bern (2012-2015) and Queen's University Belfast in 2014. In addition to her academic work, Bleisch has regularly hosted the television show "Sternstunde Philosophie" on Swiss Television since 2010. She has worked as a journalist for various newspapers and is currently a columnist at Philosophie magazine.