

WORKSHOP OF THE RC34 ON THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE ON THE QoD?

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Good afternoon.

Welcome Colleagues and Friends.

We, the chairs and coordinators of this new research committee, have called this workshop in order to create an opportunity to introduce what we want to do and what we want to propose for its activities.

Let me say a few words about its objectives.

The RC34 on the Quality of Democracy aims to create an academic space through which we could exam and contribute to one of the most interesting and recent comparative approaches in the analyses of the processes of democratization and existing democracies all over the world.

In recent decades, discontent, dissatisfaction and political distrust have been growing political phenomena in old and new democracies. Even so, more and more countries all over the world have been struggling to define themselves as democratic, even in areas previously identified as unfamiliar to the democratic values. Democratization has also brought about a large number of so-called hybrid or uncompleted regimes. Research about the nature and the functioning of the democratic regime is part of a solid agenda in comparative politics since long ago. And it has gone through a much larger and comprehensive development over the last four decades with the beginning of what Samuel Huntington has once called the third wave of democratization. Southern European and Latin America new democracies, and Eastern and Central European transitions all have offered a new complex and multidimensional empirical field, one that has stimulated our academic community to engage in the analyses of both the patterns of political transformations and the new emerging features of political systems established under the contradictory processes of democratization.

As a consequence, our research perspectives have been vastly enriched by the study of transitions **to** and **from** democracy, about favorable and less favorable conditions, and on what make democracy endure; however, more

recently the systemic analyses of democratic regimes found a much complex and rich ground on the questions involved in the assessment of its quality. Arend Lijphart, Guilherme O'Donnell, Leonardo Morlino, Larry Diamond and others, not to mention Robert Dahl, have called our attention to relevant aspects related directly or indirectly to the topic. The new approach involves then an innovative analytical and methodological proposal which keeps altogether both qualitative and quantitative analyses, allowing us to compare all types of existing democracies.

As we have said in one of our presentations in the website of IPSA, this new research committee wants to cast new light on the empirical analysis of the quality of democracy and wants to provide scholars with a new space in which they can meet and share methodological and empirical works aiming to deep our understanding of the mechanisms that lead democratic processes, such as its changes, subversions, anchoring, etc. In fact, taking into account the political changes occurred in the world in the period between 1974 and today, the purpose of this new RC is to explore possible theoretical developments in the analysis of this widespread and important phenomenon, in order to respond to a number of relevant questions which are yet to be answered in a more adequate and satisfactory manner.

What are the reasons for the declining quality of democracy in some well known cases, and where can it lead to? What are the essential aspects of improving democratic quality? How rulers can be held accountable to ruled in new and old democratic regimes? How responsive policy making can contribute to more accountable governments? To what extent equality and freedom are related? What are the patterns of Executive-Legislative relations in the old and new democracies? These are some of the research questions that might contribute to the reshaping of the traditional empirical theory of democracy and lead to a renewed interest in classic political science topics such as elections, parties, civil society, institutions and institutional design, decision making, policies and their implementation.

This workshop was planned to refer to the new perspectives in the exam of the empirical analysis of democratic processes, drawing lessons from the well known scholarly tradition of the democratic theory and endorsing the multi-dimensional view of the regime which has been progressively worked out by recent research assessing the emergence and changes of democracies.

Thank you.

