



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



SYDNEY
DEMOCRACY
NETWORK

The Future of Elections



Wednesday October 28
2:00-6:30pm

THE ELECTORAL INTEGRITY PROJECT

WHY ELECTIONS FAIL AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

Senate Boardroom
Lobby Q, Quadrangle
University of Sydney
Wednesday October 28



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The Future of Elections

www.sydneydemocracynetwork.org



Arrival

2:00 - 2:15

Welcome and Introduction *Chair: John Keane (University of Sydney)*

Stephen Mills

Elections and Changing Campaign Practices

Anika Gauja

How Elections have Shaped Political Parties

Carolien van Ham

Elections without Choice, Elections without Consequence?

Ferran Martínez i Coma

Turnout Patterns Around The World

Matthew Wood

The Problem of Hyper-Democracy and the Solution of the Nexus Politics

Max Grömping

From Global Declarations to #reclaimnaija: Monitory Electoral Governance in the Digital Era

3:45 - 4:00

AFTERNOON TEA

Giovanni Navarra

Elections and Networked Citizens: An Overview

Adele Webb

Elections and Democracy: Insights from the Philippines

Esha Madhavan

Elections in India – Some Unique Trends and Challenges and the Rise of a New Form of Civil Society

Audrey Koh

An Iron Fist in a Velvet Glove: Remarks on Elections in Singapore

Naser Ghobadzadeh

Democratisation by Elections or Theocratic Resilience

Simon Tormey

The Post-Representative Election

Round Table and Conclusions

THE ELECTORAL INTEGRITY PROJECT

WHY ELECTIONS FAIL AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT



Dr Anika Gauja

How Elections Have Shaped Political Parties

When most people think of parties, they think of them as competing in – and hence structuring – the electoral contest. Choices to voters are presented, for example, in terms of party alternatives. Adopting a different perspective, I will explore not how parties shape elections, but how elections shape parties. I address this in two ways. The first way is to examine how electoral systems and the 'logic of electoral competition' have shaped the policy agendas of political parties, perhaps contributing to the rise, then decline of the catch-all party and the subsequent rise of micro parties. The second dimension is how the 'norms' of democratic elections have shaped the internal practices of political parties, exemplified by the unprecedented rise in the use of primaries for party candidate and leadership elections around the world. Political parties have implemented primaries in order to restore legitimacy to themselves as democratic organisations, but at what cost to the coherence of their organisations?

Anika Gauja is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Government and International Relations. Her current work, funded by and ARC DECRA (2013-2015) looks at organisational reform within political parties, particularly the way in which parties are adopting new decision-making processes to meet the changing participatory preferences of citizens. Her books include *The Politics of Party Policy* (2013), *Party Members and Activists* (2015), *Contemporary Australian Political Party Organisations* (2015) and *Party Reform: The Causes, Challenges and Consequences of Organisational Change*, to be published with Oxford University Press in 2016.



Dr Naser Ghobadzadeh

Democratisation by Elections or Theocratic Resilience

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been holding elections despite the fact they have been posing formidable challenges against the ruling clergy. Similar to the reformist movement that emerged subsequent to the 1997 elections, political turmoil engulfed the country after the 2009 elections, threatening the regime with demise. However, Ayatollahs remain firmly committed to holding elections. This begs the question of what benefit elections bring to the ruling clergy? Addressing this question, this presentation will argue that rather than increasing the possibility of a transition from authoritarianism, the semi-competitive elections contribute to authoritarian resilience. Despite the myriad problems associated with elections, Ayatollahs have made them meaningful ingredients of politics. Not only do electoral politics occupy a significant place within the overall polity, their outcomes lead to policy changes and shifts of power among the political factions. However, the ruling clergy ensure that electoral competition will not culminate in a "battle over the basic rules". This stage-setting function of elections marginalises voices engaged in a meta-game of structural change.

Naser Ghobadzadeh is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Social Justice, the Australian Catholic University (ACU). Researching the intersection of religion and politics, his interests lie in the study of Islamic political theology, secularism, state-religion-society relations, and Middle East and Iranian politics. Naser has authored two books in the Persian language, including *A Study of People's Divergence from the Ruling System* (2002) and *The Caspian Sea: Legal regime, neighbouring countries and US policies* (2005). In 2014 Oxford University Press, NY published his book, *Religious Secularity: a theological challenge to the Islamic state*. His articles have been published in internationally refereed journals such as *Democratization*, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics and Discourse*.



Max Grömping

From Global Declarations to #reclaimnaija: Monitory Electoral Governance in the Digital Era

Do elections with integrity have a future? Parts of the OECD world may experience declining voter turnout, and closed autocracies see continuing electoral disaffection. But citizens of many countries 'in the middle' - electoral democracies and autocracies alike - are fiercely protective of their vote. This is evident by the stunning proliferation of election watch NGOs, networks, grassroots groups, crowdsourced quick counts, or electoral reform advocacy platforms. Several parallel developments characterize this multi-level 'monitory' ecology of electoral governance.

First, a transnational advocacy network of primarily Western-based non- and inter-governmental organizations promotes 'electoral integrity' - including mandatory election monitoring - as a global norm. Even authoritarian regimes now allow a degree of monitoring, balancing between the risk of exposure of fraud and the benefit of international legitimacy. *Second*, domestic election monitoring initiatives - some foreign transplants, some bottom-up social movements - form the local roots of the transnational network. They are now active in at least 90 countries. *Third*, in face of accusations of Western meddling on the one hand, and 'zombie' monitors certifying fraudulent elections on behest of autocrats on the other hand, there is a concerted move towards professionalization and 'expertization' of these initiatives. Fourth, leveraging the affordances of social media and mobile phones has in parallel, enabled a new breed of crowd-sourced 'electoral governance by laypersons'.

Taken together, these trends suggest not a decline but rather a resurgence of the importance of elections with integrity.

Max Grömping is a researcher for the Electoral Integrity Project and a PhD candidate at the Department of Government and International Relations, University of Sydney. His work assesses the dynamics of 'crowd' participation in domestic elections, monitoring its impact on the integrity of elections. He is furthermore interested in the politics of social media and mobile media in advocacy and activism, and comparative democratization with a regional focus on Southeast Asia. Prior to joining the University of Sydney he lectured at Thammasat University, Bangkok.



Audrey Koh

An Iron Fist in a Velvet Glove: Remarks on Elections in Singapore

The 2015 Singapore General Elections (GE) was to be a watershed event. Before 2015, most constituencies were won by walkovers. With opposition parties strategically contesting in every constituency, the 2015 GE gave every Singaporean an unprecedented chance to vote at the elections. But the final results still surprised political spectators and online punters - the People's Action Party (PAP) won by 69.9% of votes and achieved a record +9.7% swing from 2011.

In the age of the monitory democracy and with the passing of founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew, ruling with an iron-fist in Singapore seems to be a device of the past. Or has it been merely covered up with the velvet glove of political narratives and rhetoric? This presentation will chart briefly the evolution of the Singapore elections since the PAP gained a one-party rule, discuss the role of political narratives vis-à-vis the public sphere in the lead-up to the 2015 elections, and pose questions for the future of elections and democracy in Singapore.

Audrey Koh is a current graduate student in the University of Sydney, in the Department of Government and International Relations. She holds a Masters in Strategic Public Relations from the University and is staff with the Sydney Democracy Network and the Department of Media and Communications. Coming from Singapore, Audrey is no stranger to political narratives and rhetoric - having had work experience in public communications, community outreach and feedback management.



Esha Madhavan

Elections in India – Some Unique Trends and Challenges and the Rise of a New Form of Civil Society

Elections in India are marked by many unique trends and challenges affecting such matters as voter turnout, seat reservations and mounting campaign costs. My comments will focus especially on the 'India Against Corruption Movement', a remarkable civil society initiative that raises important new questions about the future of elections in India.

Esha Madhavan is a Union Grants Commission PhD Research Fellow at the Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Madras, India. In her PhD thesis, entitled 'Internet and Democratic Politics in India: a study from communication perspective', she investigated the public sphere potential of the Internet in the context of India's democratic politics. Her interests include conceptualising and measuring democracy. She is currently researching the possibility of electoral reforms involving the use of ICTs.



Dr Ferran Martínez i Coma

Turnout Patterns around the World

My contribution will show how turnout rates have evolved since 1945 for almost all the countries in the world. Data will be presented for all the continents and turnout rates among different regime types will be compared.

Dr Ferran Martínez i Coma is a Research Associate in the Electoral Integrity Project at the University of Sydney. Before this, he was assistant professor at Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas in Mexico City (2007-2010). He worked as a Senior Advisor for the Spanish Prime Minister (2010-2011), in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in Madrid (2012) and the Barcelona Mayor (2006-2007). Ferran has published, among others, in *EJPR*, *Electoral Studies*, *Party Politics*, *Nations & Nationalism*, and *Applied Economics Letters*, as well as in Spanish academic journals. His dissertation on "Why do electoral campaigns matter? (¿Por qué importan las campañas electorales?)", was published in 2008 as a book by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS). His research has been funded, among others, by the Fulbright Commission, Caja Madrid Foundation and Juan March Institute, where he is a Doctor Member. He co-edited *Advancing Electoral Integrity* (OUP 2014) and *Contentious Elections* (Routledge 2015). His most recent book on Spanish politics -with his colleagues in the blog Piedras de Papel- is *Aragon es nuestro Ohio* (Malpaso 2015).



Dr Stephen Mills

Elections and Changing Campaign Practices

Free and fair elections operate both as expressions of individual autonomy and as mechanisms to achieve collective goals. Campaigning describes both a managerial activity for the professionals and an important form of expression and participation by activists and everyday citizens. The apparent tensions between these activities deserve critical attention. How well, if at all, do changing election campaign practices promote these functions?

Dr Stephen Mills is the author of *The Professionals: Strategy, Money and the Rise of the Political Campaigner in Australia* (2014), which built on his pioneering study *The New Machine Men* (1986). He also wrote *The Hawke Years* (1993), dealing with the prime ministership of Bob Hawke, for whom he worked as speechwriter from 1986 to 1991. He is a lecturer at the Graduate School of Government at the University of Sydney, and was a Harkness Fellow (1983–85) and graduate of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He is a former journalist and editor with Fairfax.



Dr Giovanni Navarra

Elections and Networked Citizens: An Overview

This paper looks at the relationship between citizens and elections through the prism of communication media networks. It aims to give an overview of the different ways in which digital networked media have influenced recent electoral contexts and have helped citizens keep tabs on their representatives throughout the whole election cycle. The role of digital networked media is explored by analysing several cases in America, Italy, Spain, Malaysia and China. These cases exemplify the vital use of digital communication networks in raising public awareness on important but politically unpopular issues (such as land disputes and the impact of megaprojects); in organising nation-wide political demonstrations against the ruling class or to propose new laws to the parliament. The analysis clarifies how new communication media networks play a significant role in helping to establish and consolidate grassroots political movements and swing elections in favour of underdog candidates.

Dr Giovanni Navarra is Post-Doctoral Research Associate based at the Sydney Democracy Network at the University of Sydney. He is currently working on a research project focusing on the effects communication media has on prevailing power-dynamics, between state and citizens in China. Previously he has worked on the changing dynamics of Citizens' engagement in media-saturated societies. He is also the co-editor of the *Democracy Futures* series, a joint global initiative between the Sydney Democracy Network and *The Conversation*; and the convener of SDN fortnightly research seminars series. He has a PhD in Politics and Media from the University of Westminster and a Degree in Philosophy from the University of Catania.



Professor Simon Tormey

The Post-Representative Election

Given that in the advanced democracies virtually every lead indicator concerning our engagement with electoral politics shows decline (turnout; membership of parties; trust in politicians; interest and understanding of politics), what is the status of elections and the electoral process? Rosanvallon suggests that we have shifted from an affirmative notion of the electoral process to a negative one – that we vote in a spirit of negation, as opposed to affirmation of a representative, an ideology or set of beliefs. Keane seeks to place elections within the larger frame of the monitory democracy thesis that politics as a now ubiquitous process of surveillance, or perhaps *sousveillance*, of power holders. The case of Spain suggests yet another possibility: the election as a moment for the auto-critique of representation by those seeking wider, deeper forms of democratic interaction and, paradoxically, the displacement of a “spectacular” politics based on the electoral cycle with “everyday” politics – or the return of politics to citizens. This would suggest that elections need not necessarily be viewed as “negative” or monitory in character, but also moments for the pragmatic pursuit of a thickening or deepening of democracy itself. Seen in this way, elections become at one level an event inviting the auto-critique of the thin, elite-dominated spectacle that so many democratic theorists perceive elections to have become. Ironically, elections then become the moment when the full limitation of electoral politics can be exposed, debated and triumphantly transcended through the election of “post” or “non” representative representatives.

Professor Simon Tormey is a political theorist and Head of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Sydney. Prior to his appointment at Sydney in 2009 he was Professor and Head of the School of Politics and International Relations and founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice (CSSGJ) at the University of Nottingham UK. He was educated at the University of Wales, Swansea receiving his doctorate in 1991. He was a Research Scholar and Lecturer at the University of Leicester before joining Nottingham in 1990. In 2005 he was awarded a personal chair (‘professorship’) in Politics and Critical Theory. His *The End of Representative Politics* (2015) has been widely reviewed. His current writing project concerns the contemporary crisis of representative politics, and whether this presages the onset of new styles of modes of mobilisation, organisation or governance. Simon is co-editor of ‘Reappraising the Political’ a monograph series with Manchester University Press (with Jon Simons – Indiana). For many years he was an editor of *Contemporary Political Theory*, one of the leading theory journals in the world.



Dr Carolien van Ham

Elections without Choice, Elections without Consequence?

Increasingly, transitional regimes appear to have made only cosmetic shifts towards democracy, adopting its formal institutions but not its substance, as illustrated by recent elections in such varied contexts as Egypt, Mozambique and Afghanistan, that were reported to be among the worst elections held globally in 2014 (Year in Elections, 2014). These are *elections without choice*, as elections are increasingly hollowed out from the inside, their internal functioning and integrity being undermined by a vast ‘menu of manipulation’ (Schedler 2002).

At the same time, in established democracies, developments such as the global economic crisis, increasingly globalized market and political forces, and (in the case of Europe) increasing governance by non-elected experts and supra-national governance arrangements, question to what extent elections still allow citizens to have a say in public decision making. These are *elections without consequence* for decision-making on public affairs. In this talk, I will review empirical evidence for the erosion of choice and consequence of elections, and argue that the second development is perhaps the most worrying. I then conclude with a reflection on what this means for democracy and democratic reform.

Carolien van Ham is a Lecturer in Comparative Politics at the University of New South Wales, Australia, and an ARC Discovery Early Career Research Award recipient (2015-2017). Prior to coming to UNSW, Dr. van Ham worked as a research fellow at the University of Twente, the Electoral Integrity Project and the Varieties of Democracy Project. She received her PhD from the European University Institute. Her research focuses on democratization and authoritarianism, election integrity, and political representation and legitimacy. Dr. Van Ham has published articles on election integrity, representation and turnout in the *European Journal of Political Science*, *Government and Opposition*, *Democratization*, *West European Politics and Electoral Studies*, a book on legitimacy in the Netherlands, and book chapters in various edited volumes.



Adele Webb

Elections and Democracy: Insights from the Philippines

It was called 'the greatest political experiment the world has ever seen'. After purchasing the Philippine archipelago from Spain in 1899, the U.S defeated the First Philippine Republic in a bloody three-year war, and then set about establishing, in the name of 'enlightened imperialism,' an international showcase of democracy. The first election was held in Bulacan, May 1899, as reward for the towns' quelling all signs of nationalist revolutionary resistance. By 1907, municipal elections were taking place more widely, though voting was so restricted only two per cent of the Filipino population qualified. In 1935 the first Philippine general election was held, including the direct election of President for the newly established Commonwealth. And so ran America's first democratic export experiment. Yet by 1988 Benedict Anderson had famously labelled the Philippines a 'cacique democracy,' likening elections to a well-run casino where the dealer always ends in the black; or to a competitive sport in which people are persuaded to cheer, not realising they have been excluded from the match. What insights can be drawn from the history of elections in the Philippines: do Filipinos still turn out to elections en masse because they have been duped; or has its history seen elections develop normative meanings, values and even functions outside those assumed by scholars in the 'West'.

Adele is a PhD candidate at SDN and the Department of Government and International Relations. Her thesis draws on both political theory and political sociology to revisit the theme of the middle classes and democracy. Using a longitudinal case study of the Philippines, the research examines how past conflicts, historical structures and the lived experience of democracy in the Philippines have figured into, shaped, or contained the democratic imaginary of Filipino middle classes. The study hopes to contribute to a 'de-westernising' of democratic theory and the development of new insights helpful in understanding the relationship of middle classes to democracy in a contemporary global context. The PhD builds upon seven years as a researcher, lobbyist and strategist in the global justice movement, including five years as director of Sydney-based NGO Jubilee Australia, and experience working with civil society in Southern Africa and the Philippines. Adele has degrees in Law and History from the University of New South Wales, Development Studies from the University of South Africa, and a Masters in Political Sociology from the London School of Economics.



Dr Matthew Wood

The Problem of Hyper-Democracy and the Solution of Nexus Politics

This presentation will focus on two concepts: hyper-democracy and nexus politics. Hyper-democracy refers to the dysfunctional element of contemporary democracy wherein attempts to put limits and constraints upon popular democratic will lead to an increase, not a decrease in political turbulence and pressure. This draws from recently published work in the journal *New Political Science*. Nexus politics refers to an alternative way of dissipating political pressures wherein governing institutions attempt to capture and channel bottom-up political pressure in a way that more adequately responds to public demands voiced at an 'everyday' level.

Dr Matt Wood is a Lecturer in the Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield and Deputy Director of the Sir Bernard Crick Centre. He holds a three year Future Research Leaders Fellowship from the UK Economic and Social Research Council. Matt is currently writing two books on the Politics of Post-Democracy and Legitimacy in the European Union.



The Future of Elections

We live in times shaped by the conviction that periodic 'free and fair' elections are the heart and soul of democracy. Since 1945, when only a dozen parliamentary democracies were left on our planet, elections have come to be seen widely as the best way of forming good governments, sometimes even as a 'timeless' and non-negotiable feature of political life. Article 21 of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted in December 1948, famously set the standard: 'The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage'.

This is the orthodoxy. Yet all's not well in the house of elections; public fractiousness and political dissent are brewing. There are signs of rising citizen disaffection with mainstream 'catch-all' parties accused of failing to be all good things to all voters. Support for populist parties is rising. Experiments with 'anti-political', direct-action social networks are flourishing. In some quarters,

voting is judged a worthless waste of time, money and energy. And more than a few democracies are shaped by the Philippines syndrome: a strangely contradictory trend marked by elections that come wrapped in intense media coverage and great public excitement mixed with bitter disappointment about the sidelining of elected governments by big banks, big money and the outsourcing of state functions to cross-border power chains. The feeling that elections are pointless manipulations by the rich and powerful finds its nadir in the whole phenomenon of 'electoral authoritarianism' in Russia, China, central Asia and elsewhere: the use by oligarchs of periodic elections as an instrument for consolidating arbitrary power.

Pressured by such developments, the passion and purpose that fuelled the historic post-1789 struggles for 'one person, one vote' seem to be dying, or dead. So it comes as an odd surprise that our times are equally marked by organised refusals to let hollowed-out elections get the

upper hand. There are not only signs of renewed interest in making elections 'free and fair'; many efforts are under way to multiply their forms and invest them with new meaning.

The trends take our world of global politics into the future, towards the unknown. Since 1945, a whole new anthropology of electoral practices has taken root in such 'non-Western' contexts as India, Sierra Leone, Bhutan, Taiwan and Iran. The political geography of elections is changing. Global communications enable diaspora voting. National elections are witnessed by regional and global publics. Elections are exported, by force of arms. Voting in cross-border settings is spreading; it now shapes the life of organisations such as the IOC, WTO, European Parliament, Tibetan Administration and the Antarctica Treaty System. Alternative sites of elected and un-elected representation are meanwhile multiplying; monitory democracy gains ground at the expense of old-fashioned parliamentary democracy. The contours of elections are also being reshaped by crowd sourcing, election monitoring, integrity projects and the growth

of micro-parties and 'liquid' party procedures. In more than a few global contexts, efforts to extend votes to the dead and the unborn and to the world of living species and inanimate things are also on the political agenda.

These various attempts to counter feelings of the worthlessness of voting ('elections without democracy') can be interpreted as experiments in breathing new life back into the spirit and substance of elections. They raise fundamental questions of global political importance: in spite of their declining importance in determining who gets what, when and how, do elections with integrity have a future? Do they still matter and, if so, is their rejuvenation, against formidable odds, now among the vital political imperatives of our age? Or are elections slowly losing their grip on democracy? Are they perhaps in terminal decline? Is the universal belief in the universality of 'free and fair' elections a mid-20th-century delusion, a worn-out dogma now urgently in need of replacement by fresh visions and new democratic innovations fit for our times?

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