06 / Citizens and the State: Questioning the Government Relationship in a Global Perspective

Topic : WORKSHOPS

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Policy studies are increasingly addressing the citizen angle, that is, how citizens experience, understand, and make sense of the political life that surrounds them and embeds them. From policy feedback works to governance studies, political science at large is increasingly concerned with the important role that citizens themselves play in the political system. This role is a dual one: citizens are both civic agents that influence institutions and policies with their political behaviour and their day-to-day interactions with the administration, but they are also recipients of institutionalised action that in turn shapes and informs their preferences, worldviews, and even social categorisations. This workshop proposes delving into these citizen-centred dynamics, to understand both the strategies and approaches through which citizens engage in political life, but also to better comprehend the relationship that they establish with the political system at a personal level, and the meaning that they attach to it. We are particularly interested in the link between citizens and the state, to see how (if) citizens perceive and engage differently with the multiple existing levels of government or the diversity of policy domains.

The workshop thus proposes to jointly contribute to the constructive turn of political science, drawing from constitutive works to build up our understanding of political preferences from the perspective of ‘ordinary’ citizens. This focus on citizens as change-making social agents is a much-needed contribution to contemporary policy studies, and reflects accurately the concerns of the IPA community about how to critically and carefully re-interpret the effects and causes of policies. The choice to put citizens at the core of the research also allows the workshop to offer a highly diverse content variation, which can easily cover multiple policy dimensions and policy regimes, for a greater understanding of political systems and political dynamics as a whole. Amongst the many questions potentially envisaged for the workshop, we suggest themes such as the following:

- How are citizens socialised into their relationship with the state, and how do they (re-)claim agency when navigating the administration?
- How does the rise of digital governance reshape citizens’ relationship with state institutions?
- How do early-age experiences with educational, legal, or punitive institutions (amongst others) interact with citizens’ trust in the state?
- How do citizens in “left behind” areas (re-)engage with changing governance?
- How does cross-border/supra-national governance shape citizens’ institutional choices?

Diversity of policy domains and geographical scope is particularly encouraged. Likewise, comparative studies – in Europe and beyond – will be appreciated.

CALL FOR PAPERS

There are three axes of analysis that this workshop aims to foster. The first axis is focused on the role of formative interactions between citizens and political institutions/policy domains. We are open to works that focus on specific interactions (e.g., citizens and healthcare, or education, or local government, or several at the same time), but also to studies that disentangle the dynamics and strategies with which citizens confront and navigate political life in their day-to-day (e.g., emotional navigation, communication and representation concerns, normative implications). We encourage works that address the temporal and spatial variability of these interactions, and how it may affect citizens' sense-making and attitudes towards the state at large.

The second proposed axis of analysis is the salience and meaning of these interactions for citizens themselves. For this reason, we encourage qualitative, interpretive papers, who work close to the ground (i.e., to the citizens) to better understand individual perspectives and how they construct larger political

preferences. We are also open to mixed-method works that combine an in-depth analysis of people's experiences with larger bodies of data. In all cases, we seek rigorous contributions that contextualise and expand our knowledge of the relationship between citizens and political institutions from an individual-centred perspective.

Third, we aim to build a collection of works which together will conform a strong comparative contribution, to deepen our understanding of the circumstances, conditions, and mechanisms through which citizens' relationship with the state is shaped. We thus seek a diversity of case studies, in terms of both policy domains and experiences, as explained above, but also geographical scope and levels of government. We encourage especially comparative works in nature, that challenge our perception of different policy domains, or which analyse different political systems side-by-side.

Taken together, these three axes are intended to be complementary rather than mutually exclusive: many submissions are likely to speak to more than one at once, and the collaborative discussion during the workshop will aim to draw out these cross-cutting connections which reflect citizens’ experiences.