

Workshop-Symposium at the University of Groningen
Chair of European Politics and Society
Sponsored by the European Commission and its Joint Research Centre (JRC)

Reframing European Identity and Legitimacy in an Age of Populism: Arendtian Politics, Conceptual Metaphors, and the Future of the European Union

Time: Thu, May 31, 14:00-19:30 & Friday, June 1, 9:45-13:15.
Place: Van Swinderen Huys, University of Groningen

As part of a JRC/EC-initiated and sponsored project on “Reframing the EU” we are organising a symposium-workshop on the theme *Reframing European Identity and Democratic Legitimacy in an Age of Populism* at the University of Groningen. Following up on a first workshop at the European Commission in November 2017, the workshop-symposium seeks to explore the conceptual, theoretical and empirical relations between Arendtian politics, conceptual metaphors of EU policy-making, and the future of the European Union at a critical juncture of its existence.

The primary goal is to explore the impact of critical Arendtian understandings of (European) politics, action as speech, power, and society for alternative, European shared identities and policies grounding the democratic legitimacy of the EU polity. Turning to new ways of thinking on European identity and legitimacy is all the more important today in response to the EU’s (legitimacy) crises and current challenges by populist actors advocating an anti-European, nativist-nationalist cultural closure.

The shared assumption of the workshop-symposium is that conventional, technocratic and economic ‘modern’ solutions are part of the problem; they took part in causing European legitimacy crises and helped enable the populist surge in the first place. New institutionalist-procedural governance frameworks, as recently proposed and discussed by European leaders, may be helpful but also fall short in addressing deep-seated, underlying problems of legitimacy, identity, and cultural conflict. Arendtian approaches, which emphasize politics as speech and dialogue and point beyond economic, culturalist and technocratic models, seem to be especially equipped to rethink conceptual metaphors in Europe, post-national European identity, and the future of EU policy-making and the European Union at large.

Our goal is to bring together some key people working on pressing questions of European identity and, in particular, employing lenses of Arendtian theory and conceptual metaphor research in the conversation about the future of the European Union. These experts include representatives from the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre, Arendt scholars and cultural/political theorists from European academia, and experts from the University of

Groningen, who will come together to discuss and share ideas and approaches with the objective of making Arendt's inspired framework accessible for policy-makers and the general public.

While the first part of the workshop will offer presentations open to the public, the second part will be restricted to a small group of selected experts. The symposium-workshop combines traditional presentations and discussion formats with more non-conventional exploratory frameworks hoping to engender proposals and discussions of EU policy directions under conditions of publicity in the digital age. Attendees will be encouraged to read a literature review and papers provided 10 days ahead of the symposium, and potentially submit some questions and comments.

Structure:

Thursday, May 31: Symposium (open to the public)

14:00-14:15 *Opening & Introduction* (Lars Rensmann, University of Groningen)

14:15-15:15 *Beyond Technocracy, Neoliberalism and Populism: Politically Reframing EU Identity and Legitimacy with Arendt* (Theory Input and Discussion, Lars Rensmann, University of Groningen)

15:15-16:15 *Beyond Jobs, Growth, and Crisis: Rethinking EU Politics and Policy-Making with Hannah Arendt* (Theory Input and Discussion, Nicole Dewandre, European Commission/JRC, Brussels)

16:15-16:30 Coffee Break

16:30-17:30 *Arendt, Collective Memory, and European (Union) Identity* (Theory Input and Discussion, Peter Verovsek, University of Sheffield, UK)

17:30-18:30 *Imagining Europe's Tomorrow: Towards a Culturally Transposable Model of Conceptual Metaphors* (Theory Input and Discussion, Pablo Valdivia, University of Groningen)

Friday, June 1: Workshop

9:45 Transition and Follow-Up Threads

10:00-11:00 *Post-factuality and Disinformation: Rethinking the EU's Response* (Theory Input and Discussion, Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen, University of Tampere).

11:00-12:00 *Conceptual and Policy Inputs from Symposium Participants: Arendt, Identity and Legitimacy, and EU Policy Regimes in the Digital Age* (5 minutes each)

12:00-12:15 Coffee Break

12:15-12:45 *How to Turn the Populist Tide? Critical Reflections and Policy Recommendations: Towards New Metaphor & Policy Regimes and Post-National Identities in the European Union after Arendt* (Joint Reflection)

12:45-13:00 Concluding Remarks

13:00 Joint Lunch

Participants:

Dr Stefan Couperus, University of Groningen
Prof dr Lars Rensmann, University of Groningen
Dr Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen, University of Tampere, Finland
Dr Nicole Dewandre, EC-JRC, Brussels
Dr Piero Tortola, University of Groningen
Prof dr Pablo Valdivia, University of Groningen
Dr Anna-Sophie Maas, University of Groningen
Orsolya Gulyás, European Future Innovation System Centre
Dr Peter J. Verovsek, University of Sheffield, UK
Tobias Albrecht, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany
Dr Judith Vega, University of Groningen
Dr Titus Stahl, University of Groningen
Dr Alberto Godioli, University of Groningen
Dora Vrhoci, University of Groningen