

Fifth Venice World Multidisciplinary Conference on Republics and Republicanism

Power, Freedom and Oligarchy

Venice International University

26-28 June 2026

ABSTRACTS

FRIDAY 26 JUNE

9:45-11:00 KEYNOTE SPEECH – Room 1E (plenary)

Oligarchic Power as Worldmaking

Camila Vergara, Senior Lecturer, University of Essex

We live in the age of oligarchic democracies, in societies in which oligarchic power shapes the world with the seeming consent of the oppressed. This presentation will explore oligarchic power as worldmaking, the ability to craft republics based on oligarchic principles that are enacted through economic and social technologies. In the first section I address the concept of ‘oligarchic power’ through a critical approach to current agent-centred definitions of oligarchy as well as to the conflation of power and domination. Building on Guido Parietti’s definition of power as “the condition of having available possibilities and representing them as such” and Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, I argue oligarchic power within oligarchic democracies combines “power over” (domination) and the effective ability to shape the shared world. In the second section I focus on what Machiavelli identifies as the oligarchic *umori*—the desires to possess and to dominate—and how the few spread these desires among the common people, who end up decreeing their own ruin. Following Pierre Bourdieu’s “cleft habitus” —the conflicted state resulting from having a plebeian past and experiencing new elite social conditions— I analyse the tension resulting from the mixture of plebeian conditions and the widespread oligarchic logic of extraction and luxury as an ‘engrafted habitus,’ a technology by which oligarchic desire is inserted into the people’s psyche. In the final section I engage with the innerworkings of this oligarchic technology, which prompts the masses to actively participate in the rooting and growth of oligarchy. I trace this new technology of power to the neoliberal ideology that popularised the conversion of citizens into rational consumer-shareholders and to the algorithmic worldmaking capacity of the few that currently shape our mediated reality.

11:20-12:50 PANELS 1-2

PANEL 1 – Room 1E Anti-Oligarchic Theory

Against Democratic Erosion: Liberal Crisis, Democratic Resilience and Republican Legitimacy

Sabrina Zucca, Helmut-Schmidt-Universität, Germany

This lecture develops a republican account of political legitimacy that conceives of freedom not merely as individual independence. Instead, it understands freedom as an intersubjectively constituted social practice. Contemporary crises of liberal democracy—marked by authoritarian populism, oligarchic concentrations of power, and the erosion of public justification—frame the central normative problem: legitimacy. Drawing on both classical and contemporary republican thought, the lecture argues that legitimacy is best understood as worthiness of recognition by free and equal citizens. The argument follows a republican view of freedom as a relational condition. Freedom unfolds and is limited within structures of mutual recognition. The legitimacy of political authority depends on how much it is acknowledged as justified by those subjects to it. This approach shifts the focus from the origins of power to the conditions under which its use can continue to earn normative recognition. Central to this account is the republican view of the connection between individuals and society. A republic is a

political community in which authority is grounded in citizens' freedom and exercised for the common good. Law and politics are not outside limits placed on individuals. Instead, they are expressions of civic agency and shared self-determination. The state is made up of moral subjects—free agents who are equal under the law. Equality in freedom forms the foundation of all legal order. The idea of self-determination shows a key tension in republican thought. Autonomy is both individual self-authorship and collective autonomy. Citizens must determine common goals by making shared rules and practices. Modern republican theory addresses this tension. It treats reason as an intersubjective practice linking individuals and the community. Against this background, the lecture examines how legal and political institutions can secure republican freedom. Underlying this approach is a republican understanding of rationality that connects reasonable equality with legal universality, both rooted in the idea of human dignity. By reformulating freedom and equality as collectively produced conditions of political legitimacy, the lecture outlines ways to protect democracies against contemporary crises and to formulate legitimate resistance to authoritarian claims of power. This republican perspective thus highlights how institutional structures, intersubjective recognition, and civic engagement can work together to sustain democracy and freedom amid growing political and social challenges.

Liberal Plebeianism: A New Theory of Anti-Oligarchic Democracy

Gordon Arlen, University of Melbourne, Australia

Plebeian democracy has emerged, in recent years, as a new paradigm in democratic theory. Inspired by pre-modern authors like Machiavelli, plebeians call for “class-specific” institutions, “tribunes,” and other democratic innovations that respond to the growing oligarchic influence over political life (McCormick 2011; Green 2016; Arlen 2019; Vergara 2020). But a shadow hovers over this plebeian revival: is plebeianism just a more sophisticated expression of illiberal populism, empowering the demos to trample on liberal norms? Much of this uncertainty, I argue, reflects the failure of contemporary plebeianism to clearly stake out its relationship to liberalism. While most plebeians affirm mainstream liberal values in areas like human rights, they are quite reluctant to embrace liberalism full stop, instead offering plebeianism as an alternative to neoliberal hegemony.

I believe democracy is best served through a synthesis of liberal and plebeian commitments. I begin by articulating the principles of plebeian democratic theory, before showing how these principles can coexist with core liberal commitments. I depart from liberal egalitarian approaches which, in my view, are too quick to hide behind legal formalities and abstract principles of justice. Liberals must engage with real-world politics through a more robust account of oligarchic power. However, plebeians must acknowledge that liberal principles do have value and can help to safeguard democracy against oligarchy. The focus must be nurturing alliances and converging around anti-oligarchic reform agendas. I develop this liberal plebeian strategy conceptually, normatively, and institutionally, offering a new framing for contemporary democratic theory.

Should Anti-Oligarchic Tribunates be Class-Specific?

Vincent Harting, London School of Economics and Political Science, England

Debates within anti-oligarchic republican thought have become increasingly complex. As the literature has developed theoretical depth and intuitive appeal, divergences between its advocates have also become clearer. This paper focuses on one such divergence: should anti-oligarchic (or “plebeian”) institutions be class-specific? Foundational proposals, such as McCormick’s (2011) People’s Tribune, endorse class-specificity by excluding wealthy agents. In response, some argue that this design violates universal political equality (e.g., Vergara, 2020), a type of concern that I have previously discussed in Harting (2023). Yet another line of reasoning, due to Prinz and Westphal (2023), is that class-specific institutional design, particularly based on wealth thresholds, “... fails to recognize the internal diversity of plebeian voices and the complexity of concentrated power” and that we should reject this form of deciding composition within them. Thus, they argue that this reasoning yields a case for a tribunitian model which is class neutral, and whose composition should be decided in the course of the existence

of such an institution – what I will henceforth call the *dynamic argument* for composition. My aim in this paper is to show that we should resist this conclusion. I will argue that, while the *dynamic argument* is compelling, it should not lead us to reject class-specific institutional design. Rather, the challenge is to arrive at a better understanding of what class should mean both in theorizing the composition of anti-oligarchic institutions in particular and oligarchization more generally. I suggest that a structural understanding of class relations, close to some Marxist approaches, coupled with a radical critique of capitalism – and not only wealth maldistribution – is essential for addressing this question, and that several benefits arise from this. The paper thus argues that class-specificity should have a central place in further developments of anti-oligarchic democratic theory.

Citizens' Assemblies between Opinion and Interest: Republican Freedom, Oligarchic Drift, and the "Minor-Key" Institution of Public Life

Ünsal Doğan Başkır, İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi, Türkiye

Citizens' assemblies have proliferated in recent years as democratic innovations promising to counter oligarchic drift, polarization, and the erosion of public trust. Yet their republican meaning remains theoretically underspecified and politically contested. This paper places citizens' assemblies at the center of a republican inquiry into power, freedom, and oligarchy, asking what these bodies are within a *res publica*. Do they represent interests (aggregated preferences and policy demands) or opinions (public judgments formed through speech, plurality, and contestation)? This conceptual distinction is not semantic; it determines whether assemblies merely supplement representative government or alter the architecture of civic freedom.

The paper develops a two-level argument by situating citizens' assemblies within a theoretical pendulum between Philip Pettit and Hannah Arendt. On a Pettitian reading, assemblies are primarily contestatory devices: state-authorized forums that refine interests, improve responsiveness, and check domination without claiming agenda-setting authority. On an Arendtian reading, participatory institutions are spaces where citizens generate opinions and thereby enact political freedom as public world-building—an experience irreducible to consultation or policy feedback. To anchor this theoretical tension, the paper examines two contrasting cases: *the Irish Citizens' Assembly* as an agenda-shaping but time-bound institution and the permanent *Citizens' Council of Ostbelgien* as an attempt to institutionalize deliberation within ordinary politics. These cases illuminate the democratic consequences of design choices regarding permanence, mandate, agenda power, and the relation between deliberation and law-making.

In dialogue with *Biennale Arte 2026*'s attention to “lower frequencies,” “islands,” and the sustaining labor of collective life, this paper proposes that citizens' assemblies can be read as *minor-key* republican institutions: modest in scale yet potentially decisive in keeping public freedom alive within larger political forms.

PANEL 2 – Room 1G Constitutional issues and New Frontiers

Republicanism and the Mutable Constitution

Seán Rainford, Dublin City University, Ireland

The unconstitutional constitutional amendments doctrine (‘UCAD’) is a major topic of interest in comparative constitutional studies. It holds that constitutions possess an essential core or ‘basic structure’ which cannot be amended by that constitution’s designated amending power. The doctrine generally allows the judiciary to strike down constitutional amendments that violate this unamendable core. This paper considers the republican attitude to unamendability. It first sets out a strand of thought among early modern republicans – from Niccolò Machiavelli to Algernon Sidney and Thomas Jefferson – before considering neo-republicanism as set out by Philip Pettit.

This paper lays out the conflicts that exist between unamendability and republicanism, summarised in five points. 1) The *mutability* of all constitutions is a reality of which early modern republicans were

cognisant. Like all human creations, they were imperfect and would corrupt if not repeatedly subjected to fundamental change. 2) Republicans' understanding of constituent power as a *living political force* is distinct from that underpinning unamendability; limiting amendability therefore attempts to limit the people's democratic power. 3) The *contestability* of all laws is the minimum requirement for democratic legitimacy demanded by republicans; making important constitutional issues *incontestable* through unamendability detracts from legitimacy. 4) The consequence of judicially-enforced unamendability is to make the judiciary the 'final say sovereign' within a constitution – this significantly lessens the attractiveness of judicial review to republicans. 5) The danger of 'unrepublican' amendments is best addressed at the level of *civic virtue* rather than through rigid legal constraints.

Constitutional Court Responsibility: Towards Reducing Domination via Republican Constitutional Pluralism

Max Steuer, Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, Slovakia / Universität Münster, Germany

The illiberal actions of several governments in the Visegrád Four region of Central Europe—notably Hungary since 2010, Poland between 2025—2023 and Slovakia in the 2020s—were associated with the inability of the EU institutions to mount an effective response embedded in the values of Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU). They have also fueled criticisms of constitutional pluralism (CP), which stands for fundamental rights enjoying primacy over hierarchies between legal orders (in this case, EU law and EU member state constitutional law). Some contemporary accounts maintain that CP, albeit theoretically attractive, remains threatened in the EU due to the illiberal surges. Others have rejected CP altogether as a dangerous idea for realizing EU values that instead necessitates the supremacy of EU law as interpreted by the Court of Justice of the EU. This contribution responds to the critiques of constitutional pluralism by grounding it in republican premises of democracy via non-domination both at national (member state/individuals-nexus) and supranational (EU institutions/other member states/individuals- nexus) levels. The republican approach to CP is then applied to selected outputs of constitutional courts, with focus on the Visegrad Four countries, to illustrate their by and large missed potential in the fulfilment of their constitutional mission. At the same time, the decisions of the constitutional courts undermining CP may fuel responses by political actors (including the Court of Justice) that are compatible with republican CP. The contribution concludes by arguing for the recapturing of the meaning of constitutional pluralism from illiberal actors by constitutional courts, using its republican variant.

Under the Sword of Damocles: Identity Harassment and Freedom as Non-Domination

Melisa Acar, University of Glasgow, Scotland

This paper theorizes identity harassment as a distinct and underrecognized form of domination within republican political theory. Identity harassment occurs when individuals are forcibly ascribed an identity they do not claim and are then implicitly or explicitly associated with the most morally stigmatized, extreme, or suspect exemplars of that identity. Unlike stereotyping, which relies on overgeneralization without invoking extreme moral corruption; stigmatization, which devalues groups through diffuse negative meanings; or marginalization, which excludes individuals from participation, identity harassment imposes a degrading identity relation that structurally reshapes agency. Through examples such as atheists presumed to pursue hedonism, Jewish individuals suspected of endorsing violence, or Muslim students treated as politically suspect, the paper shows that those subjected to identity harassment live under a standing vulnerability in which morally loaded associations can be activated at will. The identity markers (such as appearance, accent, or dress) function as epistemic shortcuts that make hostile inferences available, even when no explicit accusation is made. This “Damoclean” condition induces self-monitoring, defensive self-presentation, and a heightened

vigilance that shapes everyday agency.

From a republican perspective, this standing exposure to discretionary moral judgment constitutes domination independently of actual interference. The analysis situates identity harassment at the intersection of epistemic injustice and republican unfreedom: it distorts credibility assessments, and undermines civic standing by denying individuals the assurance that they can speak without fear of arbitrary moral sanction. By conceptualizing identity harassment as a structural form of domination, the paper expands republican theory's capacity to diagnose contemporary forms of unfreedom.

Involving Non-Humans in the Green Community: Sound as a Tool for Understanding Non-human Will

Martina Zanetti

Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna Pisa, Italy

Following Fremaux's (2019) claim that a shift away from human-centered metaphysical perspectives toward a post-anthropocentric framework is required, Green Republicanism (Barry, 2008, 2012; Fremaux, 2019) is revised in light of Karen Barad's Agential Realism (1999, 2003, 2007, 2010). Grounded in a feminist STS-rooted critical realist onto-epistemology, ethical and political subjectivity no longer applies exclusively to humans; rather, the ontology of ethics is reworked such that ethical and political subjects are both human and nonhuman entities intra-actively constituted as components of "phenomena" in the Baradian sense, namely configurations of reality enacted through material-discursive apparatuses.

Within such a green virtue ethical (GVE) framework reshaped through a Baradian lens, sound is investigated as a medium for facilitating ethical and political exchange with non-humans. Building on Danielle Celermajer and co-authors' argument that communication, no less than representation, is central to a nonhuman-oriented green state (2020, 2021), sound — particularly within the context of bioacoustics (Gagliano et al., 2012; Gagliano, 2013; Mishra, Ghosh and Bae, 2016; Gagliano et al., 2017; Rodrigo-Moreno et al., 2017; Khait et al., 2019; Nakade and Dhadse, 2022), and the study of sonic relationships between yeast and winemakers (Chartier, 2021, 2022; Chartier et al., 2022) — is investigated as a tool for engaging with nonhuman forms of will.

Within the adopted onto-ethical phenomenic framework, considering both experimentally generated sonic stimuli and organism-generated sonic frequencies, the sonic experimental apparatus — including both the scientist conducting the experiment and the tools used to carry it out — and the non-human co-constituent are seen as forming the two components of the Baradian phenomenon, respectively the "agencies" and the "object of observation". In this contingent and arational ethical and political context, such enactment is recognized as a practice of knowing in Barad's sense, insofar as it relies on forms of communication that exceed exclusively rational or linguistic modes of exchange, becoming non-verbal. With their material, embodied, and affective character, sonic intra-actions become protagonists of practices for understanding how to act ethically towards the other. Their ethical significance lies in their capacity to reconfigure responsiveness and relationality toward nonhuman others within a redefined green political framework.

14:20-15:35 PANELS 3-4

PANEL 3 – Room 1E Anti-Oligarchic Case Studies

The only True and Worthy Government: Democratic Responses to Oligarchy in the 17th century Dutch Republic

Pim Trommelen, The Ohio State University, US

The republican revival has rekindled interest in the history of mixed constitutionalism and its relationship to contemporary democracy. Less explored, however, is a distinct approach to democratic republicanism developed in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. This paper turns to the work of Johan (1622-1660) and Pieter De la Court (1618-1685), who invert the civic republican relationship between the common good and individual interest: the advancement of each person's self-love is itself

an expression of the common good. This inversion allows the brothers to break from the dominant republican defense of mixed constitutionalism and advance a defense of popular sovereignty. Drawing strategically on a Hobbesian anthropology, they reject the mixed constitution as a fiction that conceals oligarchic domination. In its place, they propose a vision of unitary sovereignty centered on popular participation and the cultivation of reason. Because human action is driven by self-love, they argue that political legitimacy requires a government that equally advances each person's self-love. At a moment when contemporary democratic legitimacy is increasingly contested, the De la Courts offer an alternative vision of popular rule.

Political equality and "oligarchization of democracy": a critical-normative reflection on some institutional arrangements recently adopted in Brazil to promote republican citizenship

Rodrigo Ribeiro de Sousa, Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp), São Paulo, Brazil

The persistent dominance of political elites within various contemporary representative governments, coupled with the erosion of the programmatic character of political parties, has led to intense reflection in recent years on the limits and capabilities of democracy as a system of government. Problems such as the persistence of profound social inequalities and the inability to include minorities – and even majorities, as in the Brazilian case – point to a process of "oligarchization" of democracies, marked by attempts to exclude or neutralize the people politically, entirely incompatible with republican and democratic values.

In Brazil, for example, according to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), although black people represent 55.8% of the population, only 24.4% of the members of the Chamber of Deputies are black. With regard to women, despite Brazilian women represent 52.5% of the electorate, according to data from the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), in the 2020 municipal elections only 16% of the positions in the municipal legislative branch were filled by women (compared to 13.5% in the 2016 elections) and 12.2% of the positions in the executive branch (compared to 11.5% in 2016). These facts, which in themselves represent a departure from the idea of equality, fundamental to democracy, hinder – and in many cases, make impossible – the realization of the republican ideal of non-domination, as formulated by Philip Pettit.

Starting from the observation of the practical limitations of contemporary representative governments in general, and the Brazilian case in particular, the purpose of this article is to discuss to what extent some normative proposals adopted by Brazilian institutions – such as the expanded use of "parliamentary amendments" by the National Congress and the adoption of quotas for candidacies of women and black people, among others – can contribute to republican theoretical reflection and to the institutional arrangement of contemporary States and their respective legal systems, in order to foster the realization of the fundamental value of equality and guarantee the full exercise of republican citizenship.

PANEL 4 – Room 1G 19th Century British Political Thought: Price and Bentham

Liberty as Self-Government, Representation and Citizenship. The Republicanism of Richard Price

Cristopher Hamel, Université de Rouen Normandie, France

This paper argues that the conception of liberty as self-government developed in Richard Price's *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776) should be considered an original republican vision for at least three reasons.

Firstly, on an institutional level: the very reasons Price gives for not advocating the establishment of a republican regime in Britain show his preference for republican institutions. Thus, if he does not recommend them for Britain, it is because he considers his own country as too corrupt.

Secondly, the question of representation: while he acknowledges the need for representation in large states, Price does not abandon the ideal of self-government, arguing that a free people govern themselves when they control the rulers they have elected. Thus, Price opens up an unexplored path in

the overall picture offered by Bernard Manin, a path in which representation is not a substitute but an approximation of self-government.

Thirdly, the concept of citizenship: Price refuses to adopt the distinction forged by his friend Joseph Priestley between civil liberty (the protection of the individual sphere) and political liberty (the exercise of political power). Participation is not a means for citizens to preserve their individual rights, but rather an essential component of their freedom.

These three points are explored through a study of Price's text and confirmed by an examination of the numerous pamphlets written to refute it.

The conclusion will highlight the contemporary relevance of such a vision of civil liberty.

Liberty, Security and Utility: Questioning Bentham's relation to republicanism

Emmanuelle de Champs, CY Cergy Paris Université, France

Jeremy Bentham's relationship with the republican tradition is a fraught one. His publishing career in political theory started in 1776 with a stringent attack on Richard Price. Against Price and the defenders of American independence who equated liberty as self-government, Bentham defined it as "negative", or the absence of restraint and constraint. This, however, could not be held up as a political ideal without creating anarchy, as he argued in the mid-1790s in *Nonsense Upon Stilts*, written against the "anarchical fallacies" contained in the French Declarations of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Against this, the cornerstone of Bentham's political and constitutional theory was reframed as "security": only under a system that offered "securities against misrule" could political liberty be achieved (Rosen). In the 1810s, this move coincided with Bentham's adoption of parliamentary reform and his commitment to republican government and representative democracy in Britain (Schofield, 2006).

This has made Bentham's thought difficult to read in terms of a republican or neo-Roman framework. In *Liberty before Liberalism*, Skinner took stock of Bentham's clear opposition to Price and the "neo-Roman" tradition. On the whole, however, Skinner places Bentham within a "utilitarian liberal" tradition that runs from Paley to Sidgwick (Dawson and De Djin, *Rethinking Liberty before Liberalism* 2022, p.8). More recently this narrative has been challenged by theorists such as Richard Tuck and Richard Bellamy who are using Bentham's democratic arguments to refine Skinner's opposition between republicanism and liberalism.

Can republican historiography be reconciled with a historical reading of Bentham's political thought? This is the question this paper addresses.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bellamy, Richard, and Albert Weale. 'Republicanism, Democracy and History'. In *Republicanism and Democracy*, edited by Skadi Siiri Krause and Dirk Jörke. Springer International, 2022

Dijn, Annelien de, and Hannah Dawson, eds. 'Introduction'. In *Rethinking Liberty before Liberalism*. Cambridge University Press, 2022, pp. 1-14

Rosen, Frederick, "Negative Liberty", *Classical Utilitarianism from Hume to Mill*. Routledge, 2003, pp. 245-55

Schofield, Philip. *Utility and Democracy: The Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham*. Oxford University Press, 2006

Tuck, Richard. *Active and Passive Citizens: A Defense of Majoritarian Democracy*. With Stephen Macedo. Princeton University Press, 2024

15:35-16:50 PANELS 5-6

PANEL 5 – Room 1E Republicanism and Feminist Theory

Between Private Order and Public Freedom: Family, Gender, and the Crisis of the Public/Private Divide in Republican Thought

Keiju Vihreäsalo, University of Helsinki, Finland

Republican political thought has long been concerned with freedom, law, and the prevention of arbitrary power in the public realm. Yet this concern has historically relied on a sharp distinction

between the public and the private, a division that has profoundly shaped family life, gender relations, and access to political membership. While republican traditions have emphasized civic liberty and self-government, they have often treated the family as a naturalized, pre-political sphere, thereby obscuring relations of power, dependency, and authority that are constitutive of social and political life itself. This paper examines the intersection of state, family, and gender through the lens of republicanism, focusing on the political work performed by the public/private divide. I argue that this division has not merely reflected social reality but actively produced and stabilized a gendered order in which women's labour, reproductive capacities, and bodily autonomy were relegated to the private sphere, while full citizenship and political agency were associated with public participation. Care, social reproduction, and everyday life—conditions of possibility for the *res publica*—have thus remained largely outside the scope of republican political theory.

The paper situates these questions in the context of contemporary debates over family, gender, and political authority, in which appeals to traditional divisions between public and private have regained visibility. Such debates draw attention to the enduring normative power of the public/private distinction and to its role in shaping claims about social order, legitimacy, and freedom particularly in relation to gender.

By bringing feminist critiques into dialogue with republican concepts of freedom, domination, and civic responsibility, the paper explores how the family emerges not as a marginal concern but as one of republicanism's unresolved core questions. It discusses options of how an inclusive and critically reinterpreted republicanism might rethink the boundaries between public and private in order to address gendered power relations, dependency, and care, and how such a re-reading could contribute to contemporary debates on liberty, justice, and the common good.

Care and Republic: Arendt and Luxemburg in Feminist Dialogue

Marcela da Silva Uchôa, Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal

This article proposes a philosophical reconstruction of republican theory through a reappraisal of Hannah Arendt's republicanism in light of feminist theories of care and social reproduction, with Rosa Luxemburg serving as a critical conceptual bridge between these traditions. Arendtian republicanism locates freedom in public action, plurality, and political judgment, yet it is structured around a constitutive separation between the political realm and the so-called "social question," which encompasses labor, necessity, and dependency.

Feminist theories of care and social reproduction have identified significant blind spots in this framework, particularly with regard to gender and race. Most notably, they challenge Arendt's failure to recognize dependency, vulnerability, and reproductive labor as constitutive dimensions of political life rather than as pre-political conditions.

Rosa Luxemburg's thought provides a decisive point of articulation for this dialogue. Luxemburg was a key reference both for Arendt's understanding of political action and spontaneity and for Marxist-feminist analyses of social reproduction. Drawing on this shared Luxemburgian legacy, the article develops a renewed conception of republican freedom that is attentive to vulnerability and to the material conditions of political life.

In doing so, it contributes to contemporary debates on feminism and republicanism by challenging both liberal autonomy and populist voluntarism, and by arguing that a coherent republican theory must reconceptualize care as a fundamental political concern in the shaping of democratic institutions and forms of life.

PANEL 6 – Room 1G Greek and Venetian Republican Themes

The Katechon as a Proto-Republican Community: Eschatological Letters of Maximus the Greek

Andrei Papin, EUSP - European University at Saint-Petersburg, Russia

In late medieval and early modern political theology, the Pauline concept of the *katechon*—the force that

“restrains” the advent of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:6–7) — was most often associated with imperial or royal authority. From Byzantine political thought to modern interpretations by Carl Schmitt, the *katechon* functioned as a figure of sovereign power that temporarily preserves order against eschatological collapse.

This paper argues that in the late eschatological writings of Maximus the Greek (Mikhail Trivolis, early sixteenth century), this logic undergoes a significant transformation. In texts composed during the 1530s–1540s, Maximus shifts the function of the *katechon* away from the political sovereign and reassigns it to a morally disciplined and unified Christian community. The force that “holds back” the end of time is no longer embodied in a ruler or empire, but in a collective ethical practice grounded in repentance, vigilance, and shared responsibility.

By situating Maximus the Greek within broader early modern apocalyptic expectations and in dialogue with Western figures such as Girolamo Savonarola, the paper shows that this non-sovereign conception of the *katechon* constitutes a distinct form of political theology. While rejecting revolutionary or institutional solutions, Maximus articulates a model of political order based on communal self-restraint rather than domination.

The paper contributes to contemporary debates on republicanism and political authority by highlighting an alternative genealogy of political order in which collective moral agency, rather than sovereignty, functions as the primary stabilizing force. This case invites reconsideration of how political communities can be conceptualized beyond both imperial and modern state-centered frameworks.

Stone, Space, and the Res Publica: Public and Private Epigraphic Speech in the Sacred Spaces of Renaissance Venetian Istria

Josip Banic, Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Croatia

Fifteenth-century Venetian Istria belonged to a republican polity that fused oligarchic governance with a powerful ideology of law, civic order, and the common good. Venetian sovereignty found expression not only through secular institutions but within sacred architectural space, where institutional authority and personal distinction engaged in dense interplay. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital, this paper examines medieval Latin inscriptions from ecclesiastical buildings as sites where republican officeholders converted delegated authority into durable forms of social and familial prestige while simultaneously reinforcing the legitimacy and visibility of the *res publica* itself.

Focusing on inscriptions commissioned by Venetian rectors serving in Istria, the paper explores how representatives of the *Res publica Venetiarum* inscribed their authority within spaces formally dedicated to worship, devotion, and memory. Embedded in sacral contexts, these texts articulated civic office, jurisdiction, benefaction, and continuity of governance, thereby dissolving conventional distinctions between sacred and secular, public and devotional. Rather than effacing the natural person behind the office, epigraphic practice enabled officeholders to fuse institutional legitimacy with personal and familial self-representation.

Sacred epigraphic space thus functioned as a privileged arena for accumulating and displaying symbolic capital, where republican authority could be publicly performed under the protective canopy of piety and communal memory. The boundary between public authority and private interest was not fixed but strategically negotiated through these hybrid forms of representation. By situating ecclesiastical inscriptions within the symbolic economy of the Venetian Republic, the paper demonstrates how oligarchic power in this borderland province simultaneously reinforced institutional order and facilitated personal distinction.

Between Empire and Liberty: Neutrality as a Republican Practice of Power in Venice (1688–1714)

Stefano Cattelan, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

This paper analyses neutrality as a republican practice of power through the case of Venice during the Nine Years’ War (1688–1697) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), two major European conflicts that pitted France, and later the Bourbon powers, against shifting coalitions centred

on the Habsburg Monarchy and the Anglo-Dutch states. Based on original archival research conducted at the Archivio di Stato di Venezia and in Paris (Archives nationales and Archives diplomatiques), the paper examines how the Republic transformed neutrality into an active political strategy aimed at preserving autonomy in an increasingly asymmetric international order.

Far from representing withdrawal or weakness, Venetian neutrality functioned as a legal, diplomatic, and institutional technology of self-government. It operated on two interconnected levels: on land, through the defence of territorial integrity and the regulation of troop movements across the Terraferma; and at sea, through the protection of commerce, the management of prize-law disputes, and the assertion—albeit increasingly contested—of jurisdictional claims in the Adriatic. In both domains, law was deployed not primarily as doctrine but as practice, enabling Venice to negotiate its position vis-à-vis great powers while limiting exposure to domination.

The paper situates these policies within the broader republican tradition, emphasising a conception of liberty grounded in security from arbitrary interference rather than expansion or popular mobilisation. At the same time, it highlights the oligarchic character of Venetian governance: neutrality was crafted and enforced by a patrician elite, yet it served collective ends such as commercial survival, civic peace, and institutional continuity. By examining neutrality as a form of calibrated power rather than abstention, the paper contributes to a comparative understanding of republicanism that foregrounds small-state agency, legal creativity, and restraint.

17:10- 18:55 PANEL 7 (plenary)

PANEL 7 – Room 1E Feminist Voices in Republicanism

Unfreedom as Structural Injustice: The Case of Mary Wollstonecraft
Signy Gutnick Allen, Universität Zürich, Switzerland

In recent years Mary Wollstonecraft's proto-feminist manifestos, the *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), have increasingly been read through the lens of the republican conceptions of freedom. Scholars including Alan Coffee and Lena Halldenius have thus powerfully argued that, from its genesis, Western feminism figured the problem of patriarchy as the problem of women's domination by individual men and, more indirectly, by legal and social systems, a framing often echoed by contemporary thinkers.

This paper turns to a concept which is less frequently named in Wollstonecraft's work, but which is, I argue, central to her thinking: justice. By taking seriously her rhetorical and substantive use of 'rights', we can recognise the extent to which Wollstonecraft connected liberation with an account of duties, both to the self and to others. For her, I suggest, justice and freedom were, while distinct, nonetheless co-constitutive and mutually re-enforcing.

The paper argues that approaching Wollstonecraft with this additional framing has three benefits. It allows us to recognise the extent to which her work was a reaction against the justice-centred theories proposed by leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, including Hume and Smith. Secondly, this reaction, I claim, specifically drew on intuitions about justice which anticipated contemporary accounts of structural injustice. Finally, this perhaps surprising result pushes us to think further about a long-running historical relationship between theories of freedom as non-domination and those of structural injustice.

Feminist Republicanism: The Political Ideas of French Revolutionary Women, 1789-1794
Nicolai Von Eggers, Aarhus Universitet, Denmark

While scholarship has tended to focus on republican men, and while republicanism is oftentimes associated with masculinism, there is also a feminist case to be made for republicanism and the republican tradition. This was clear already to many women in the French Revolution who took up the language and ideas of republicanism to argue in favour of female citizenship.

In this paper, I focus on the writings of a number of French revolutionary women – including Louise de Keralio, Etta Palm d’Aelders, Pauline Léon, and madame Mouret – in order to reconstruct how they used a republican conception of politics to argue for social change. Arguing that arbitrary power and despotism had to be overcome in every aspect of social life in order to realise the republic, French women applied republican ideas to analyse and criticise gender roles. They consequently used notions of virtue, corruption, and domination to argue in favour of social reform, including laws regarding divorce, inheritance, child support, and property rights.

Based on these readings, I will argue that republicanism offers a form of social ontology that goes beyond a mere conceptualisation of the political sphere but offers a language both descriptive and normative of human relations as such. As a consequence, I will argue that republicanism also has something to offer contemporary debates over feminism, and that it is helpful in this aspect to revisit the feminist republican tradition of the French revolutionary women.

Harriet Jacobs, Sexual Violence and Feminist Republicanism

Alan Coffee, Dickson Poon School of Law, King’s College London, England

In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs challenges two longstanding and widespread misnomers about republican theory. The first is that we should be reluctant to read historical women into this tradition because it has been written exclusively by men and from a masculine perspective. The second is the influential belief that only those who are willing to defend their own, and the collective, freedom even in the face of death are deserving of citizenship. In so doing, I argue, Jacobs lays the foundations, I argue, for a distinctively feminist republicanism.

To demonstrate this, I contrast her framing of the republican paradigm in her narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* with Frederick Douglass’s well-known account of his fight with the overseer, Covey. Whereas Douglass’s story highlights a lone individual staring down and overcoming an imminent and unjust threat to his life, marking his psychological transition from wretched slave to worthy freeman, Jacobs presents a much more nuanced account of the relationships both amongst slaves and between enslaved and free people. Freedom for Jacobs always entails support from and concern for others, particularly her own children. A second distinctive aspect of her account is the ever-present threat of sexual violence uppermost in the minds of female slaves.

Freedom as Non-Domination in Nineteenth-Century Czech Thought: Teréza Nováková and a Feminist Republican Tradition

Adela Radkova, Univerzita Karlova, Prague, Czechia

This paper reconstructs a neglected strand of nineteenth-century Czech and Central European republican thought by examining the political and literary writings of the feminist intellectual Teréza Nováková through the lens of freedom as non-domination. Building on Quentin Skinner’s reconstruction of the neo-Roman conception of liberty as independence from arbitrary power, the paper argues that Nováková articulated a distinctly republican understanding of freedom grounded in opposition to dependence, moral subjection, and unchecked authority, even in contexts lacking formal political equality. Drawing on Nováková’s essays on women’s emancipation, marriage, education, and civic responsibility, I show how she deployed a republican grammar of liberty to analyze forms of domination operating beyond the sphere of formal politics—particularly within gendered social relations, cultural hierarchies, and domestic authority. Like the neo-Roman tradition recovered by Skinner, Nováková understands unfreedom not primarily as direct interference, but as a condition of living at the mercy of another’s will, including forms of dependence sustained by benevolent power, custom, and moral obligation. Situating Nováková within a broader Central European tradition of women writers and feminist intellectuals, the paper highlights how republican ideas of liberty as non-domination were preserved and rearticulated in literary, journalistic, and moral discourses often excluded from canonical histories of political thought. By recovering this tradition, the paper expands prevailing genealogies of republican freedom and demonstrates how freedom as non-domination

functioned as a critical language for contesting gendered domination in nineteenth-century Czech political and cultural life.

Feminist Republicanism in Early Republican Turkey: The Political Thought of Nezihe Muhittin
Banu Turnaoğlu Açı, Cambridge University, England / Sabancı Üniversitesi, Türkiye

This paper examines feminist republicanism through the political thought and activism of Nezihe Muhittin (1889–1958), a central yet often marginalised figure in the early Turkish Republic. Moving beyond dominant narratives that frame Turkish women’s emancipation as a top-down project of state-led modernisation, the paper recovers Muhittin as an original political thinker who articulated a distinct vision of republicanism grounded in women’s agency, civic virtue, and political participation. Drawing on her writings, speeches, and organisational efforts, most notably her role in the attempted establishment of the Women’s People’s Party (Kadınlar Halk Fırkası), the paper argues that Muhittin developed a unique form of feminist republicanism that challenged both patriarchal social structures and the limits of official Kemalist reforms. For Muhittin, the republic could not be reduced to institutional transformation alone; it required the active moral and political inclusion of women as equal participants in the public sphere. In this sense, she reconceptualised key republican principles such as citizenship, virtue, and representation through a feminist lens.

The paper situates Muhittin within broader debates on republicanism and gender, engaging with both classical and modern traditions, while also highlighting the specific historical conditions of the late Ottoman and early Republican context. It shows that her thought reflects a tension between inclusion and exclusion, as well as between state-driven reform and autonomous political mobilisation. By foregrounding Muhittin’s contributions, the paper seeks to challenge Eurocentric and state-centric accounts of republicanism and to expand the canon of political thought to include non-Western feminist voices. It ultimately argues that feminist republicanism in the Turkish context emerged not merely as an extension of state ideology, but as a contested and intellectually rich project shaped by figures such as Muhittin.

SATURDAY 27 JUNE

9:30-10:45 PANELS 8-9

PANEL 8 – Room 1E Machiavelli

From Classical Dictatorship to Derived Constituent Power: Machiavelli's Republican Constitutional Legacy
Jeremie Barthas, Institut d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine Paris, France

This paper aims to bridge the gap between Machiavelli's political theory and the modern concept of 'constituent power.' By examining Machiavelli's Republican constitution of 1522, we argue that his ideas offer valuable insights into the dynamics of constituent power, particularly the 'derived' form. Machiavelli's works, including *The Prince*, *Discourses on Livy*, and *Florentine Histories*, provide a rich framework for understanding political and constitutional mutation. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli introduces the 'new prince' as a founder and liberator, while in the *Discourses on Livy*, he attributes Rome's constitutional evolutions to the interplay between the senatorial order and the plebeians. The *Florentine Histories* suggest that Florence's political antagonisms gave rise to a principle of equality constitutive of the modern republic. This paper focuses on Machiavelli's 1522 constitutional project, which reaffirms the sovereignty of the Florentine people and delegates their constituent power to an organ tasked with defending and completing the new Republican constitution. We argue that this organ's powers, best described as 'derived constituent power,' are influenced by Machiavelli's account of Roman dictatorship in the *Discourses*. By situating this project within its historical context, we shed new light on Machiavelli's constitutional thinking and contribute to the understanding of constituent power dynamics. This analysis opens new critical perspectives on the theory and practice of constituent power, demonstrating Machiavelli's enduring relevance to contemporary constitutional debates.

Captains Must Be Good Orators: Machiavelli and the Rhetoric of Command
Michael Hawley, UNC Chapel Hill, US

Despite his obvious rhetorical skills, Machiavelli devotes virtually no attention (at least explicitly) to teaching rhetoric in his major works. This article argues that this near-silence does not reflect Machiavelli's wholesale contempt for political speech, but that it does reflect a sharp divergence from both his contemporaries and their classical authorities. Aristotle, Cicero, and the Renaissance humanists had defended rhetoric as a means of persuasion, whereby speakers can change the mind of an audience and lead them toward harmony and the common good. Machiavelli dismisses this kind of rhetoric as impotent. Instead, he defends a kind of rhetoric drawn more from battlefield oratory than political deliberation. Such speech seeks not to change judgments but to enflame and inspire listeners to greater vigor in their actions.

This mode of speaking establishes a fundamentally different power dynamic between speaker and listeners than that envisioned by the classical theorists. Whereas, in the classical model, the speaker was a kind of pleader before his audience, now the speaker commands and directs his audience according to his will. In the former, the audience sat in judgment on a speaker, who was at least in that sense subordinate to them, because ultimate decision-making power lay with them. In the latter, listeners are more like soldiers to be directed by their commander. In an age where civic health is threatened in part by a proliferation of Machiavellian rhetoric, it is an urgent task to understand its workings. This article aspires to help us do that.

Custom, Institutions, and the Loss of Republican Liberty in Machiavelli's Florentine Histories
Piao Mao, University of Southampton, England

Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories* offers a republican diagnosis of how a polity can lose liberty not simply through foreign conquest but through the internal personalization of authority and the corrosion of

law. This paper argues that Florence failed to secure the core republican aim of non-arbitrary government because entrenched political customs interacted with systemic institutional deficiencies to block rule by law capable of constraining domination and sustaining a common freedom. Machiavelli's contrast between Rome and Florence is central here. In Rome, conflict between nobles and plebs could be politically productive because institutions translated dissent into public decisions and protected the people from elite arbitrariness, whereas analogous divisions in Florence fed a cycle of subjugation and weakness. I attribute this divergence to a Florentine disposition toward exclusive power and the pursuit of personal reputation through individualized, extra-institutional strategies, which entrenched factional politics, prevented stable mechanisms for contestation, and invited oligarchic capture under the appearance of republican legality. Drawing on a three-stage classification of nineteen conflict episodes, the paper also shows how fifteenth-century factionalism not only generated oligarchic institutions but appropriated civic humanist discourse of concord and solidarity to legitimate elite dominance. Against this background, Machiavelli advances a revitalised republican strategy that does not suppress conflict in the name of harmony, but shapes it institutionally so that dissent safeguards liberty against arbitrary power and sustains civic vitality.

PANEL 9 – Room 1G English and American Revolutions and Civil Wars

Locke's Experiences with Tyranny and the Legal Grounding of his Philosophical Response
Holly Brewer, University of Maryland, US

Locke's life, his theories about justice, and his most influential writings were framed by concerns about how to restrain rulers who have become tyrants. He was deeply aware of how dangerous it could be, even as he struggled to explain how important such resistance was. He understood anarchy as well, and its dangers, but chose a path much closer to principled and organized resistance in later life, compared to 1661, when he supported the restoration. His theories were deeply based not only in the political struggles of his time, but in the legal struggles that surrounded them. It is that deep thought, the considered judgement about human rights, and about government based on consent that emerged from his legal engagement, that makes his ideas so powerful, not only then, but for later generations, including the American Revolutionaries. Much of the Declaration of Independence was shaped by his ideas, such as that revolution could only be justified after a "long train of abuses" (Locke wrote "long train of actings.") Much of the Declaration provides evidence that George III has become a "tyrant" according to Locke's definition, and it builds on claims about the fundamental basis of government that Locke articulated. It was not just the theory of government that made Locke so appealing to them. It was that his philosophy was grounded in debates they understood about law and justice, and basic claims to rights that they wanted to see respected and promoted, even in a world where they were often denied. Locke's considered philosophical responses to the two seventeenth century revolutions in England--that he lived through--thus form a bridge that connects to America's in 1776.

Corruption and newspaper polemics in colonial North America
Becca Palmer, University College London, England

In 1766, 'Paskalos' and 'Philanthrop' exchanged blows across the pages of the *Boston-Gazette* and *Boston Evening-Post*. The former, radical Joseph Warren, criticised Governor Francis Bernard for building a corrupt oligarchy more interested in aggrandising themselves than acting in the public interest. In response, future Attorney-General Jonathan Sewall attacked leading members of the House, including James Otis, for acting as popular demagogues unrelenting in their manipulation of the people. These actors situated themselves within the republican debate over the benefits of empowering the few or the many, using the language of corruption and vice to accuse their opponents of deceit and conspiratorial actions.

I argue in this paper that, because the language of newspapers was public facing, these concepts were not often explicitly defined. Instead, they were deployed superficially to elicit an immediate response

from the public. Such language was therefore far more pragmatic than the ideological discourse mined from pamphlets. I then posit that these accusations of corrupt power and oligarchy, both in Boston and across the colonies, suggested to readers that there was an existential threat to their liberties from within their own structures of governance, which was then exacerbated by the perceived corruption within the British administration. Nevertheless, I divorce republican language from the Patriot cause, and recognise that its concepts could be deployed by both future Patriots and Loyalists. This challenges existing scholarship that emphasises contestation in conceptual histories of the Revolution, and maintains that, prior to independence, much of the colonial public agreed over the utility of republican concepts but fought to control their application.

11:05-12:05 PANELS 10-11

PANEL 10 – Room 1E Visualizing Republicanism

Documentary Photography of the Provisional Government in Russia, March-October, 1917

Martin Miller, Duke University, US

In February 1917, the Imperial regime which had governed the vast territory of the Russian Empire under the auspices of the Romanov dynasty collapsed overnight and was replaced by an unelected parliamentary system of rulership. The leaders of this newly named Provisional Government were former members of the Imperial Duma, a restricted elected body of delegates that had emerged during the unsuccessful 1905 revolution which, in turn, had been inspired by the rural Zemstvo movement, rooted in principles of political authority that dated back to the medieval republic of Novgorod in northern Russia.

The situation in Russia after February was complicated in several ways. First, there was the danger of further German advances into the country as the warfare continued. Second, the first major legislative act of the Provisional Government was to allow all political exiles in Europe to return to Russia, as well as all political prisoners in Siberian camps. Third, the regional network of Zemstvos created prior to the 1905 upheaval were now transformed into an array of opposition political parties under the banner of Soviets (councils), most of which opposed the moderate republicanism of the Provisional Government. Thus, Russia after February had a republican government without a parliament (elections were promised after victory in the war) and a rural parliamentary system of soviets without a government. Though there is a vast scholarly literature on the Provisional Government, little attention has been paid to the impact of its pictorial representation. There were a huge number of photographs published at the time that I plan to divide into several categories of influence. Most important was the distribution in newspapers and magazines of the officers of state power. The leadership of the Provisional Government needed to replace the exclusivity of the former royal house of the tsarist regime to justify its effort to create a new rulership bound in republican principles.

In many respects, the images of the post-tsarist government reflected formats that had been defined by the Romanovs, despite their efforts to present themselves as a constitutional alternative to the former autocracy. As a result, the photographs of Prince Georgii Lvov, who headed the original council of the Provisional Government, reflected the solemnity of the Old Regime. Similarly, photographs of the cabinet of ministers-- Mikhail Tereshchenko (Minister of Finance), Sofia Panina (head of State Welfare), Boris Bakhmetoff (ambassador to the U.S.), and Pavel Miliukov (Minister of Foreign Affairs)—followed the pattern.

With the country now liberated from the severe censorship of the Imperial regime, photos appeared in the burgeoning radical press of mass demonstrations, especially in Petrograd and Moscow, led by socialists and communists from the provincial Soviets displaying banners criticizing the Provisional Government's claim to power.

My argument is that by analyzing the visual iconography of the Provisional Government in 1917, we can more clearly see how it sought to empower itself within a republican discourse. The fact that it did not succeed illuminates the importance of Russia's loss of a constitutionalist form of governance, which

was ensured by the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917.

Making Things Visible: Cartography as a Cause and a Means of Overcoming World Alienation

Ivan Naumov, EUSP - European University at St. Petersburg, Russia

One of the central concepts of the republican theorist Hannah Arendt, characterizing the modern era, is "world alienation". This is not merely social estrangement, but specifically a loss of interest in the common things which can be understood as the tangible and intangible mediators of political life that constitute a shared, stable world. This paper argues that cartography has played a paradoxical role in this dynamic, serving as both a key historical *cause* of alienation and a potential *means* for its overcoming.

According to Arendt, modern scientific cartography is implicated in causing alienation. By objectifying the Earth into a mastered, totalizing "Globe", it displaced the plural, experiential world, eroding the political salience of a common place.

In response, the paper proposes a republican recuperation of mapping. It posits that participatory cartography can function as an antidote by deliberately making things visible. When a community collaboratively maps its territory, it transforms that space into a new "common thing" that makes the complex web of human and non-human actors, relations, and conflicts legible and subject to public debate. This theoretical framework is exemplified by Bruno Latour's *Où Atterrir?* experiment, which materializes such a civic cartography for the New Climatic Regime.

Thus, the map is reimagined from an instrument of detachment into a foundational tool of political world-building. The paper suggests that by rendering the constituents of the common world visible, participatory cartography can reactivate public concern, anchor political discourse, and prevent the very alienation its modern form helped to create.

PANEL 11 – Room 1G Politics and Revolution 1750-1850

The plea for the distribution of wealth and the dynamics of meritocracy in 18th century Europe (Britain, Corsica, France)

Myriam-Isabelle Ducrocq, Université Paris Nanterre, France

The first English Revolution (1642-1660) witnessed an intense theoretical production about the relation between the distribution of wealth and the distribution of power throughout the population. How could the people have a larger share of power, when property seemed to be the *sine qua non* condition for political independence? In this debate, Harrington took a firm stand against the advocates of the community of goods and proposed the model of a commonwealth which looked to the Venetian republic for stability. But he also attacked aristocratic privileges, reproduced via primogeniture and entail and acting as disincentives to industry. In this paper, I will argue that Harrington's proposals for distributive laws within the propertied classes circulated in the second half of 18th century Europe and inspired various programmes aiming to diffuse property among the population. I will examine and compare Rousseau's and Catharine Macaulay's constitutions for Corsica (1765 and 1768), Rutledge and Billaud-Varenne's draft reforms under the French Revolution (1792 and 1793), as well as John Millar's proposals in his *Letters of Sidney* (1796). Although they varied according to specific historical and national contexts, they stemmed from the general conception that the days of feudal aristocracy were over and the time had come for a democratic age.

Neglected Moments of Central European Republicanism in 1848: The Discourse of the Austrian/Bohemian Revolution

Jan Květina, Univerzity Hradec Králové, Czechia

The growing interest in investigating republicanism beyond the traditional Western European frame has in recent years brought renewed attention both to Central European variants of early modern classical republicanism and to post-Enlightenment forms of political radicalism (e.g., German, Polish, or Hungarian "Jacobinism"). Yet, in this expanding field the question of radical Austrian—more specifically, Bohemian—republicanism has largely remained marginal. Whereas the political discourse

of the revolutionary year 1848 is, in various historiographical contexts, frequently interpreted through the prism of a revival of republican ideas, interpretations of the Czech so-called “Pentecost riots” have tended to remain embedded in established national-liberation, liberal, or socialist paradigms. A range of indications nonetheless suggests that dominant historiographical approaches to date have overlooked a crucial dimension of the political language employed by Austrian, and especially Bohemian, revolutionary actors. Some of them, particularly in 1848, began to frame the so-called “Czech question” within the Habsburg Monarchy in terms of rejecting oligarchic rule, demanding universal suffrage, and addressing the social question through the agency of civil society. For these reasons, this paper seeks to reinterpret the so-called Czech radical democrats of the late 1840s and early 1850s from the perspective of republican political theory: 1) What were the 1848 Bohemian images of the then-existing republics?; 2) To what extent did Bohemian thinkers interpret key political concepts (freedom, equality, citizenship, relationship to the church etc.) in accordance with the European republican tradition (French, German, Italian, Polish) at that time?; (3) To what extent did this current articulate an explicit anti-monarchism and anti-elitism, and did it countenance the possibility of dismantling the Habsburg Monarchy as a form of state?

13.35-14:50 PANELS 12-13

PANEL 12 – Room 1E **Postcolonial Republicanism**

The Enslaver State: Republican Assimilationism and Its Critics
Mayaki Kimba, Columbia University, US

In the tradition of French republicanism, assimilation has traditionally been treated as a project of freedom, enabling citizens to be equal by freeing them from unequal privileges, localized legal regimes, and regional distinctions. The 1946 French *loi de départementalisation* arose in this spirit, transforming former colonies into overseas departments, such that their governance would be identical to departments in metropolitan France. Yet by the late 1960s, this assimilationist idea came in for sustained criticism, including from anticolonial thinkers such as Aimé Césaire who had initially championed departmentalization. Such criticism often targeted the role of BUMIDOM, an agency created in 1963 and tasked with the promotion of emigration from French overseas departments to the metropole. Anticolonial critics began accusing BUMIDOM of being a *négrier*, that is, a trader in Black slaves. They applied the same moniker to republican statesmen Charles de Gaulle and Michel Debré. A study of archival documents and published material shows that the *négrier* accusation was not a rhetorical insult, but part of an elaborated critique foregrounding the afterlives of empire and slavery, which resulted in freedom remaining an unachieved project even following departmentalization, and which explained why economic policy in overseas departments served not the interests of the citizens who called those departments home, but instead capitalist firms based in metropolitan France. In reconstructing this history of political thought from work in the archives of social history, this paper reflects on power, freedom, and oligarchy in relation to the idea of assimilationism in French republican thought and politics.

Exploitation as the Domination of Racialized Labor: Property, Inequality, and the Dark Ghetto
Nicholas Vrousalis, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, Netherlands / University of Athens, Greece

This paper argues that racial exploitation should be conceived as a form of domination of racialized labor capacity. Racialized labor capacity is labor capacity that gets culturally essentialized as possessing certain features, which are functional for its persistent domination. To illustrate this thesis, I will draw on the literature on the modern ghetto. I will argue that our best account of the ghetto’s central injustice is the double bind between exploitation and exclusion. I will then show that, according to the domination view, racial exploitation is only possible as the confluence between power over racialized

labor, on the one hand, and private property as the power-conferring feature, on the other. It follows that we will not understand racial exploitation until we understand the confluence of racialized labor with private property—essentially real estate capital and affluent homeowners.

Reimagining the republic: equality, fraternity and the eradication of caste in Ambedkar's political writings
Manjeet Ramgotra, SOAS University of London, England

The fight for Indian independence in the late nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century presented the opportunity to shake the yoke colonial domination through revolution and to create a new political order that promised equality and freedom. At this potent moment of creating new political subjects and institutions, the question of eradicating caste and transforming the ancient Hindu religion and practice came to the fore. The anticolonial movement sought to overturn structures of colonial rule whereby the coloniser claimed superiority over the colonised by racializing and emasculating the latter. Yet similar hierarchies were present in systems of caste and gender inequalities. The Dalit leader and principal architect of the Indian Republican constitution, BR Ambedkar underlined the contradictions between the nonviolent independence movement that did not promote adequate structural reform to eradicate caste and the everyday violence deployed to maintain caste. He critically analysed oppressive systems of power that entrenched hierarchical relationships between ruler and ruled in his effort to rethink democratic politics and to create an egalitarian system of political rule that would annihilate caste. To Ambedkar, to produce real socio-political equality, political and economic reform alone were insufficient. These had to be accompanied by structural reform of religious and social institutions. To overcome the segregationist stigma of caste, he drew upon the French republican notion of fraternity and promoted social solidarity and equal social relations. Constitutionally, he promoted minority rights and proposed a conception of electoral and governing institutions that would give effective political weight to Dalits within the legislature and republic. This paper examines Ambedkar's egalitarian and participatory conception of the nascent Indian republic.

PANEL 13 – Room 1G Republicanism in the Digital Era

Pop-up Polis: Zuzalu and the limits of technological republicanism
Olga Bychkova, Independent Scholar - formerly EUSP, Russia

In 2023, Ethereum co-founder Vitalik Buterin launched Zuzalu—a two-month ‘pop-up city’ experiment in Montenegro that brought together 200 crypto executives, biotech entrepreneurs, and researchers. The project employed republican vocabulary: community self-governance, shared rules encoded in blockchain protocols, and collective pursuit of common goods such as human longevity and open-source technology. Participants used Zupass, a zero-knowledge proof identity system, and Zupoll for collective decision-making, which can be seen as technological implementations of classical republican practices of citizenship verification and voting.

My research examines Zuzalu through the lens of classical republican theory, building on my earlier work analyzing blockchain governance as a form of *res publica* (Bychkova & Kosmarski, 2023). The analysis draws on public documentation, media coverage, and Buterin's reflections. I argue that Zuzalu, despite employing republican vocabulary, fails to meet the minimal procedural and legal constraints on arbitrary power characteristic of early republics such as Venice and Florence: lacking transparent membership criteria, codified decision-making procedures, and mechanisms to prevent domination by founders. The project's invite-only membership, opaque selection criteria, and concentration of founding authority contradict republican principles of transparent rules and civic equality. Buterin himself acknowledged that governance and membership remain unresolved.

Drawing on the republican concept of freedom as non-domination, I explore how Zuzalu prioritizes ‘exit’ over ‘voice,’ offering escape from existing political structures rather than transformation through collective self-rule. This analysis contributes to broader debates about whether blockchain-enabled

communities can genuinely embody republican principles or merely create new forms of techno-feudalism dressed in republican garb.

AI Prediction as Domination: A Republican Perspective

Hans de Zwart, Radboud Universiteit, Netherlands / Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands

This paper examines machine learning-based predictive optimisation through the lens of contemporary republican political philosophy. While public institutions increasingly deploy these technologies for decision-making about individuals—from welfare fraud detection to pretrial risk assessment—the focus has largely been on fairness and bias rather than more fundamental political questions. Drawing on republicanism’s conception of freedom as non-domination, this article argues that predictive optimisation creates three significant problems that undermine political freedom: (1) the impossibility of common knowledge regarding the reasoning behind decisions, (2) the depoliticisation of decision-making through technocratic governance, and (3) the absence of meaningful possibilities for contestation. Through philosophical analysis, the article demonstrates that these problems are intrinsic to machine learning-based decision systems rather than implementation failures. It concludes that if freedom from domination is valued as a normative concept, public institutions should prefer rule-based over machine learning-based automated decision-making. The article points to promising work on simplifying complex machine learning models into interpretable rule-based systems with comparable predictive accuracy as a potential way forward that better aligns with republican principles of controlled power and political freedom.

AI-Augmented Deliberation: hybrid assemblies, platforms, and republican decision-making

Andrei Mogoutov, Sciences Po, médialab, Paris, France

AI4AD (AI for Augmented Deliberation) is a research and teaching project jointly hosted by Sorbonne Université and Sciences Po that investigates how artificial intelligence can support collective deliberation and decision-making. The project is grounded in a republican understanding of politics, in which freedom depends on non-domination, public contestation, and institutional arrangements that prevent the concentration of power. From this perspective, deliberative platforms are not neutral tools but emerging public institutions that shape how authority, legitimacy, and civic participation are exercised.

AI4AD explores hybrid deliberative assemblies: structured spaces where human participants and AI agents interact under explicit normative and procedural constraints. Rather than treating AI as an autonomous rational actor, the project examines how computational systems can be designed to augment deliberation while remaining accountable to collective oversight. The platform itself is conceived as a republican infrastructure, organizing interaction, making power relations visible, and safeguarding pluralism.

Methodologically, the project is grounded in a structured analysis of discourse across political, institutional, and organizational contexts. It distinguishes three complementary dimensions of public reasoning: logos, capturing logical and argumentative structure through abstract argumentation frameworks; pathos, capturing emotional tone and rhetorical orientation; and ethos, capturing authority, credibility, and roles inspired by actantial models and actor-network theory. These dimensions are extracted through NLP pipelines and LLM-assisted annotation and integrated into a unified representation of deliberative processes.

AI4AD introduces a geometric model of deliberation in which discourse trajectories are mapped within a three-dimensional rhetorical space defined by logos, pathos, and ethos. This representation supports both qualitative interpretation and quantitative assessment of deliberative quality, extending existing deliberation quality indexes to broader forms of collective decision-making. In parallel, the project develops an experimental deliberation platform where AI agents act as moderators, reformulators, or evaluators, providing structured feedback rather than automated decisions. The project thus contributes

to a contemporary republican rethinking of deliberation, platforms, and collective self-government in digitally mediated public spheres

14:50-16:20 PANELS 14-15

PANEL 14 – Room 1E Reviewing Neo-Republicanism

Republican Non-Domination Beyond the Polis: Interconnected Demoi and Global Capitalism

Peter Bloom, University of Essex, England

Republicanism's commitment to freedom as non-domination has traditionally been grounded in a conception of the demos as a bounded political community capable of collectively contesting power. From classical republican concerns with corruption and oligarchy to neo-republican formulations of non-domination as freedom from arbitrary interference (Skinner 1998; Pettit 1997), domination is largely theorized as a relation internal to the polis. This paper argues that such an orientation is increasingly inadequate under contemporary global capitalism, where domination is structurally transnational and often exercised beyond the reach of any single political community.

Drawing critically on Michael J. Thompson's reconstruction of radical republicanism, particularly his distinction between extractive and constitutive domination (Thompson 2018) and his Marxian extension of republican critique into political economy (Thompson 2019), the argument shows that republican theory already contains resources for addressing these conditions. Thompson's intervention shifts republicanism away from narrow accounts of arbitrary interference toward a structural analysis of domination as surplus extraction and normative legitimation. However, it continues to presuppose a relatively unified demos capable of democratic contestation, a presupposition that falters in a global political economy structured by colonial legacies, necropolitical regimes of scarcity, and transnational circuits of power.

In response, the article advances internationalist Indigenous thought as an original normative and ontological extension of radical republicanism (see Bloom, 2026). By reconceptualizing political community through relationality, reciprocity, and interdependence, and by theorizing the demos as a constellation of interconnected demoi, republican non-domination is rearticulated beyond the nation-state without collapsing into liberal cosmopolitanism.

Rhetoric and Liberty in Quentin Skinner's Republican Thought

Giuseppe Ballacci, Universidade do Minho, Portugal

While Skinner is celebrated for his influential reconstruction of the republican conception of liberty, less attention has been paid to his recovery of the rhetorical tradition. Yet these traditions converge significantly. Rhetorical practices such as arguing *in utramque partem* and *paradiastole* offer powerful resources for questioning authority, while rhetoric's insights on the form-content interconnection challenge the supposed neutrality of reason-based political theories. In this sense, rhetoric strengthens republican freedom by restoring politics as a field of contestation marked by irreducible ideological differences and power relations. However, the rhetorical tradition was not characterized solely by this agonistic understanding of politics. A further, equally important dimension was the attempt—by figures like Aristotle and Cicero—to reconcile rhetoric with philosophy. From this perspective, rhetoric is not merely a sophistic technique for “doing things with words,” but a way of orienting politics by shaping its constitutive frames. Although Skinner does not overlook this dimension, he does not seem especially receptive to its normative implications (unlike in the case of rhetoric's other features). This omission limits his ability to articulate a productive link between rhetoric and republican liberty. Indeed, if republican liberty depends on identifying criteria that determine whether power is exercised non-arbitrarily, then such criteria can only emerge from a process of political deliberation that, as deliberative theorists argue, must also possess an epistemic dimension. Without acknowledging this

dimension—implicit in the attempt to unite rhetoric and philosophy—it becomes difficult to provide meaningful criteria for assessing when power ceases to be arbitrary.

Liberty as non-domination: a review of Skinner and Pettit's historical interpretation

Alberto Ribeiro Gonçalves de Barros, Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas -
Universidade de São Paulo/CNPq

The idea of liberty as non-domination has a central place in the neo-republican program of Philip Pettit. Pettit often acknowledges his debt to Quentin Skinner's historical work, without which he would not have found out the conception of liberty in the classical republican tradition. The main intention of the paper is to discuss Skinner's historical interpretation out of which Pettit conceives republican liberty as non-domination. This conception might really be found in seventeenth-century English republicanism, such as in the political writings of John Milton, Marchamont Nedham, James Harrington and Algernon Sidney. However, it does not seem to be so relevant in other important sources of modern republicanism, such as Machiavelli's and Rousseau's political writings. Hence, the conception of liberty as non-domination seems to express only part of the classical republican tradition, perhaps the one closest to a nascent liberalism. This could explain the proximity of Pettit's neo-republicanism to some currents of contemporary liberalism.

The Republican Project and the Sociology of (Scientific) Knowledge in Turbulent Times

Rafal Pawel Wierzechoslowski, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland

As Henry Kissinger's biographer, the eminent Scottish historian and conservative public intellectual Niall Ferguson, recently noted, we are living in a Cold War II.

In the context of the Venice conference, this observation is of some significance, because it raises the question of whether, as in the past, the political philosophy of the “free world” will take on the dimension of committed Cold War liberalism. I will ignore the fact that the binary division between us and them is much more blurred in this situation. It is much more difficult, as in the case of the Cold War I, to identify its actors according to the dichotomous key between western individualism and freedom on the one hand, and communist collectivism and coercion on the other; even in the context of surveillance capitalism.

Ferguson's diagnosis is relevant for my considerations, because the emergence of the republican project, which was the result of a contextualist methodological turn in historical research (the Cambridge school – Q. Skinner), as well as interest in the community dimension in social science philosophy (P. Pettit), can be interpreted in terms of the intellectual pursuits of the next generation of researchers who entered the academic scene at the end of the Cold War generation, including public intellectuals like R. Aron, I. Berlin, or R. Popper.

When, 50 years ago, at the end 1980s, Quentin Skinner led seminars on the English idea of freedom at Raymond Aron's institute in Paris, and Philip Pettit wrote about the idea of a social democratic state in the context of discussions around John Rawls' theory of justice both were the voice of a new generation of political philosophers, a generation post-Cold War intellectuals and scholars.

If it is true that we are currently entering a period of Cold War II as Niall Ferguson suggests, then it is reasonable to ask whether this new period (new conditions) poses any new challenges for the republican idea. Considering the question, we should not forget the republican project, understood in accordance with Pettit's famous definition is a “*research program, not a comprehensive blueprint or ideology,*” is supposed to function in such a situation.

It seems that regardless of the many discussions concerning the feasibility of this ideal, especially among the younger generation of researchers who point to the need to take into account various aspects related to the problem of domination (e.g., social classes) in different areas of economic, social, and political life, an important factor to be taken into account are issues related to changes in the social

functioning of knowledge (including scientific knowledge). These are important not only for understanding contemporary post-industrial societies, now referred to as knowledge-based societies (Nico Stehr recent books), but also for the formation of new relationships within them (knowledge capitalism), which may influence the emergence of new aspects related to the issue of domination and ways of limiting it.

Understanding knowledge as capacity to act and also linking knowledge with power (Macht) – but also with those who do not have it (powerless). Link this to the category of empowerment (common knowledge) of subjects in political society.

Another problem relates to the aspect of normativity and social communication: the problem of rules (Pettit and Fuller) who decides what rules apply. In his writings from the early 1990s, which provide a certain ontological framework for republicanism, Pettit pointed to the possibility of moving beyond Saul Kripke's skeptical position (Kripkenstein's problem), pointed to the unreliability of intuitively recognized rules (we only become aware of them when they fail), so a rational (ratiocinative) subject should be open to corrective conversation (sub iudice conversationis).

At the same time, it seems that the concept (category) of the post-truth condition introduced by the American sociologist and philosopher of science Steve Fuller in his recent books, as a certain framework (social mechanisms) within which the parties use mechanisms of rule change (the fox strategy as opposed to the lion strategy) during the game itself. This strategy can be considered neutral—because the fox can be republican in nature, but it can also be populist in nature. However, if Fuller's observations are considered sound, then the principle of conversationis changes—because we are dealing here with the possibility of using various tricks (disloyal eristic tricks) in order to win. The issue of changing the rules during the game as a form of power play using knowledge overlaps with the new situation related to the customization of knowledge, i.e., knowledge for personal use; the spread of such an attitude in the social use of knowledge may, on the one hand, cause individuals and institutions with certificates legitimizing their expert status to lose their distinguished position, but on the other hand, it may promote a certain democratization and greater transparency both in access to data (plus evidence) and in the legitimization of its technological applications (merchants of dobutts in contexts of Big Pharma, big tech problems, etc.).

PANEL 15 – Room 1G State, Civil Society and Freedom from Bodin to Schumpeter

Liberty, A Thing Much Dearer Than Life: Fatherly Sovereign and Free Subjects in Bodin
Bingshu Zhao, University of Exeter, England

Jean Bodin has often been considered a figure of absolutism. Recent constitutionalist interpretations recognized the distinction between sovereignty and government but tended to treat the family as a negative model for lordly government in contrast to the lawful government, while the scholarship from a gender perspective argued that Bodin's concept of sovereignty is modelled on the husband's power in marriage. This paper, instead, highlights Bodin's emphasis on free-born children's liberty, 'a thing much dearer than life' that the father 'could not take away', and his distinction between the father-children and the master-slave relationships.

Bodin employs the father-child relationship to illustrate the ideal sovereign and his free subjects. The best sovereign is like an educator and a merciful father in a harmonious and moral bond with his children-like subjects, nurturing noble minds and protecting their freedom and property according to natural law. As the establishment of sovereignty, being an outcome of wars, brought unnatural and violent slavery into the family and the commonwealth, Bodin advocates for the gradual enfranchisement and abolition of slavery. The liberating process of human history means more indirect rule through legislation and office, while less through personal and arbitrary will and prerogatives. The father in the parental relationship, as I will argue, is the central idea that conveys self-limiting, educational, and empowering connotations in Bodin.

Rousseau, republicanism, and the people

James Harris, University of St Andrews, England

If the state is to be *the people's thing*, then it becomes a question what we mean by 'the people'. In this paper I look for the answer to this question given by Rousseau in one of the key texts of the republican tradition, *Du contrat social*. Peoplehood according to Rousseau is a particular kind of social state. It's a state of equality, of course, but it is also a state of activity. More precisely, it is a state of collective assertion of a general will, and it is not putting it too strongly to say that for Rousseau the people *is* an act of will, a union brought into existence and sustained in existence by a continuous act of self-assertion. The people's essential activity is legislation, but, as Rousseau says, "[l]a loi d'hier n'oblige pas aujourd'hui". Laws have to be continually reaffirmed -- if they are not changed -- by the people when it gathers together in order to vote. A people that gives up on self-legislation and surrenders to someone else's will, Rousseau says, "*se dissout par cet acte, il perd sa qualité de peuple*". This is, then, a highly demanding theory of peoplehood. The upshot of Rousseau's argument would seem to be that in most if not all countries in the modern world, no such thing as 'the people' exists. In *Émile* Rousseau declares that the words '*patrie*' and '*citoyen*' should be "*effacés des langues modernes*". He might have added '*peuple*' to the list.

The synergy between republican liberty and Schumpeterian theory

Andrea Capussela, London School of Economics and Political Science, England

The liberal conception of freedom – non-interference – is a significant and unrecognised obstacle to overcoming the defects of neoliberal economic policies. Despite fairly widespread consensus on the main remedies, in fact, since the 2008 crisis reforms were markedly fewer and less systematic than during the first two decades after the neoliberal turn.

Besides removing that obstacle, the republican conception of freedom can guide efforts to reform western (and other) societies into fairer and more productive ones. For a strong synergy exists between republican theory and Schumpeterian growth theory. The main points of convergence are two. First, both theories fear the political influence of large concentrations of economic power. In the Schumpeterian view, such influence will slow down innovation, and therefore productivity growth, if it allows incumbents to close their markets to more innovative firms. In the republican view, such influence deprives citizen of equal and effective control over public authorities; moreover, in firms facing weak competition workers may suffer (intenser) domination.

Secondly, innovation ultimately stems from talents dispersed randomly across the population.

Empirical research in fact shows that ‘family disparity causes us to lose potential Einsteins’ (Aghion et al., 2021). In Pettit’s (2012) ‘sphere of personal choice’, citizens could better discover and develop their talents; the closer a society moves to that ideal, therefore, the more innovative it is likely to be.

The paper will also discuss tensions between the two theories, and in particular real or apparent trade-offs between the requirements of social justice and incentives for innovation.

16:40-17:55 KEYNOTE SPEECH – Room 1E (plenary)

Freedom, State and Market

Philip Pettit, Professor of Philosophy, Princeton University / Australian National University

We should start in political theory *ex lege*, not *ex nihilo*. Background: *The State* (2023). Law posits a body of decision-takers and a sub-body (we assume) of decision-makers; Let d-takers have some push-back against d-makers, even if they are not inclusive of all. Decision-taker laws will fix what each may do with legal impunity and legal protection, ensuring that d-takers each have rights, however few and sketchy, against one another. Decision-maker laws establish who may rule and with what degree of authority.

Justice and freedom

All law impacts on freedom, as in Rousseau: 'Man is born free but everywhere is in chains'. Thus, if no one and no class should have a ground for complaint against a just regime, justice has to require that the law should enable each to enjoy freedom equally.

What freedom should citizens enjoy vis-à-vis others (incl. organizations)? Focus: the market. And what freedom should they enjoy vis-à-vis decision-makers? Focus: the state.

The questions engage freedom taken either as noninterference or as nondomination.

Let interference involve removing, replacing or misrepresenting an option in a choice.

Is a choice free insofar as it is exercised without the agent enduring another's interference? Or insofar as it is exercised without the agent being exposed to such interference: that is, without being made under another's power of interfering more or less at will.

Assuming equality, the focus must be on freedom in the exercise of choices available to all: i.e. choices such that, compossibly with others, each can exercise and enjoy any.

Note: in line with the *ex lege* assumption, these will have to be specified in law, whether *ex ante* in constitutional or statutory law, public or private, or *ex post* in case law.

They will constitute the choices traditionally cast as fundamental or basic liberties; beneficent norms may be recruited to help, maleficent norms must be neutralized.

The view from non-interference

Decision-taker laws impose public interference even when they serve to reduce private: in illegalizing an option they replace it with one that carries a threat of punishment.

Thus, public interference should be used only to avert even worse forms of private. Forms of interference will be worse when more or less probable or more or less harmful. Let harming_{df}= removing an option or imposing a relatively unbearable cost or difficulty. The coercive state's interference will be maximally probable but need not be harmful (though it may carry stigmatizing costs, as in court publicity and a criminal record.) It will be justified only in interfering (with all) to stop any from inflicting harm on others.

Lesson for the state

Thus, decision-maker law should limit state interference to interference that is essential: i.e. to public interference that is needed to avert even worse forms of private harm.

This nightwatchman lesson is the only implication of this ideal of freedom for the state.

Paley 1785: 'an absolute form of government <may> be no less free than the purest democracy' Berlin 1969: 'there is no necessary connection between individual liberty and democratic rule'.

Lesson for the market

J.S. Mill: 'the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others'.

The fear test: no one ought to have good reason to fear having to suffer harm from others.

But what is it to act *against another's will*? What is it for another to succumb involuntarily?

Is it to coerce the other to accept: to penalize alternatives, making them relatively unbearable? Or may it also be to exploit the fact that the alternatives are unbearable for distinct reasons? Coercion alone will be relevant on the view that only agential interference takes from freedom. Thus, Nozick 1974: it is irrelevant that 'facts of nature' or history force an agent's choice, so that the 'free' or uncoerced market is beyond reproach under this theory.

Thus, as non-interference gives a limited role to the state, it gives an unlimited to the market.

The view from non-domination

Decision-taker laws may involve interference, but the state need not dominate its subjects. It would dominate if it had a choice here; but it doesn't, if law is historically inescapable. It would dominate if it could pick on some individual or class; but in a rule of law, it won't. It would dominate if it could treat the citizenry, however uniformly, as it wished; but it cannot do this if the citizenry install, uphold or

benefit from suitable constraints. An analogue on all three points with the care home where residents constrain management.

But while decision-taker laws need not themselves perpetrate public domination, they may be required to stop private parties from dominating one another. They will be required first to define and then to defend the basic liberties of each: the domains of choice in which they are secured against exposure to interference. The eyeball test of security: that each can look others in the eye (relate as an equal) without reason for fear or deference, where this also applies to the timid and defiant.

Lesson for the state

Decision-maker law should make it difficult for the state to form or enact an *uncivic* will, and should subject it to *civic* constraints, constitutional, electoral and contestatory.

It should implement democracy in the Greek sense of giving the citizenry considerable power; it should operate under something like the mixed constitution that Polybius saw in Rome. Individuals may balk at the direction taken even by civically disciplined power, but they will have no complaint if they share in that power under an impartial distribution.

The tough-luck test: if the state has to rule, if law is uniform, and if citizens share impartially then each can think that it is just tough luck that a law is unwelcome: no alien will.

Lesson for the market

As decision-taker law leaves less to regret than on the rival theory, so it has more to achieve: it must enable people to pass the eyeball test, not just the fear-of-harm test.

This will have two implications, one positive, the other negative.

The positive implication is that when some are lacking in the ability to enjoy the basic liberties, the law ought to resource them as needed, *if only* to reduce their vulnerability to others.

This will involve welfare law, whether in a redistributive or predistributive or mixed pattern. And it will call for rectifying a situation in which some are circumstantially forced (not coerced), to go along with the exploitative proposals of others: e.g. job offers (even if welcome).

The negative is that the law ought to empower them protectively against potential dominators, in public (criminal) law, and in private: tort and contract, family and employment law etc. Such law can protect people passively or enable them to protect themselves: divorce, strikes, etc.

SUNDAY 28 JUNE

9:30-10:45 PANELS 16-17

PANEL 16 – Room 1E Cooperative and Socialist Republicanism

On Liberty and Virtue: John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor's Democratic Transformations to Republicanism
John Ayshford, University of Manchester, England

Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner rely upon the thought of John Stuart Mill in many of their seminal works to throw the republican conception of liberty into relief. They contrast him as antithetical to republicanism: the archetypal liberal who championed freedom as non-interference. This positioning of Mill obscures his real relationship with republicanism however. Indeed, even Pettit and Skinner have acknowledged the presence of republican language in his *The Subjection of Women*. In this paper, I demonstrate how a close reading of the ideas of Mill and his wife, Harriet Taylor, on cooperative socialism and the family actually reveals how they innovated core republican notions and thereby contributed to the democratic transformation of republicanism in the nineteenth century. I firstly show how Mill and Taylor transposed the republican conception of freedom onto the workplace to imagine how labourers could escape dependence upon the uncontrolled will of capitalists. Perceiving the historic republican ideal of the yeoman as excluding women from independence and as outdated for an industrial era, they instead envisaged workers of both sexes enjoying economic autarky as well as

democratic autonomy over the direction of their work in self-governing cooperatives. I then outline how the couple also “socialised” republican virtue through formulating how labourers could form and maintain these “industrial republics” by practising various forms of solidarity. Finally, I argue that their vision of cooperation was contingent upon the reconstitution of the family from a site of domination and corruption into an equal association which would train individuals in the virtue required to uphold industrial freedom.

Governing the Shared: Housing Committees and the Material Foundations of Republican Participation, 1917–1922
Konstantin Tarasov, University of Nottingham, England

This paper examines *res publica* as a sphere of things and concerns held in common through the case of housing committees in Russian cities during 1917–1922. It treats these committees as institutions that brought residents together around shared material infrastructures requiring joint decision-making. By foregrounding practices of participatory governance, the paper situates these experiences within broader debates on the crisis of democracy and the material foundations of collective agency.

Housing committees emerged after the fall of autocracy in 1917 as improvised organs of house-wide self-government. Elected by all residents of a building, they organised the distribution of food and fuel, inspected vacant apartments, mediated conflicts between tenants and landlords, and coordinated basic security. They operated at the intersection of collapsing imperial administrative routines and the improvised practices of everyday survival, responding to political fragmentation and the dangers of renewed concentration of power.

The everyday tasks of housing committees transformed residential buildings into sites where inhabitants confronted the necessity of governing shared resources. These resources were, in Roman terms, closer to *res* than to abstract rights: objects over which residents collectively exercised use, allocation, and rule-making. Such practices linked the defense of the commons and public space to protection against arbitrary power and to their function as a safeguard of liberty. They fostered civic solidarity and drew even politically indifferent residents into participation by necessity rather than ideology.

By reconstructing how housing committees deliberated over everyday matters and stabilised fragile urban infrastructures, the paper demonstrates how republican participation can emerge from the governance of shared material life, reframing the pursuit of the common good as a practical achievement of everyday self-government rather than the outcome of formal institutions alone.

Why Socialists should be Republicans?

Bruno Leipold and Tom O'Shea, The London School of Economics and Political Science, England

The recent rise of socialist republicanism has been met by an even more recent set of responses sceptical of the value republicanism has for socialists (Cordelli 2025; Kandiyali 2022; MacRae 2024). This chapter articulates three core reasons why the socialism most worth fighting for is a republican socialism. First, the republican conception of *domination* offers a unifying analysis of a range of oppressions which incorporate class subordination but are not reducible to it, thereby providing grounds for a genuinely common struggle for liberation. Second, republican *freedom* offers an attractive basis for envisioning what a society free from capitalism should be like: one where everyone has the material and social resources for living on their own terms, without the threat of arbitrary control by others. Third, republican *political institutions* provide the most plausible means by which socialism can be brought about, and the tradition's vast range of institutional proposals form an indispensable toolbox for putting an anti-oligarchic politics into practice. We conclude with a discussion of how these three contributions could inform a successful socialist politics in the 21st century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cordelli, Chiara (2025). What Is the Wrong of Capitalism? *American Political Science Review*

Kandiyali, Jan (2022). Should socialists be republicans? *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 27(7), 1032–1049

PANEL 17 – Room 1G - Contemporary Republican Discourses

Freedom, Power and Democracy in Iceland, 1990–2008: A Civic Republican Critique

Emma Björg Eyjólfsdóttir, Háskóli Íslands – University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland

This paper offers a civic republican critique of Icelandic political debates on freedom in the years leading up to the 2008 financial crash. Using critical discourse analysis of parliamentary speeches, I argue that a narrow conception of freedom as non-interference became the dominant, largely uncontested understanding of freedom in Icelandic politics. Freedom was consistently articulated as deregulation, market openness and individual choice, while questions of power, dependency and structural domination were marginalised or dismissed as illiberal constraints.

From a civic republican perspective, I argue that this thin understanding of liberty narrowed the space for ideological contestation. I further suggest that it made way for an unprecedented rise in unchecked financial and oligarchic power, as institutions responsible for democratic oversight were eroded in the name of freedom. On a republican view of liberty as non-domination, however, these developments represented a profound loss of freedom for citizens, as their basic interests became vulnerable to arbitrary financial and political power, with forms of democratic participation beyond regular voting increasingly labelled illiberal.

The paper's contribution is twofold. First, it reconstructs Iceland's pre-crash discourse of freedom as a paradigmatic case of how liberal conceptions of liberty can legitimise oligarchic domination in small states. Second, it sketches a thicker republican alternative in which democratic participation, institutional contestation and effective public oversight are understood as conditions of freedom rather than its limitation. Such a view, I contend, would have supported a more robust defence of democratic oversight and participation in Iceland prior to 2008.

A Republican King? Republican Themes in the Speeches of Felipe VI

Francisco Beltran, IE University, Spain

This paper proposes a republican-theory analysis of the public speeches of King Felipe VI of Spain, focusing on the articulation and deployment of core republican values such as freedom as non-domination, equality before the law, civic responsibility, institutional impartiality, and equality of opportunity.

While republicanism is conventionally associated with the rejection of monarchy, the Spanish constitutional framework presents a paradox: a liberal parliamentary monarchy whose head frequently invokes norms central to contemporary republican theory. The paper begins by situating this paradox within modern political thought, arguing that the compatibility between republican values and monarchical institutions is contingent not on the form of the state, but on its aims and functions, and on the constraints governing political power.

Through the analysis of selected speeches delivered between 2014 and the present, the paper examines how Felipe VI frames freedom primarily in institutional and relational terms rather than as mere non-interference. Special attention is given to his recurrent emphasis on the rule of law, legal equality, and the subjection of all public power to constitutional norms, including the Crown itself. These themes are interpreted through the lens of classical and republican theorists.

The paper argues that Felipe VI's rhetoric constructs the monarchy as a stabilizing, non-arbitrary institution whose legitimacy depends on restraint, transparency, and service to the common good. This demonstrates how republican ideals can be rhetorically and institutionally embodied within a liberal constitutional monarchy, thereby complicating standard dichotomies between republican and monarchical political forms.

What Republic? Ordinary Understandings of Republicanism in Contemporary French «Cahiers de doléances»
Magali Della Sudda and Manon Pengam, CNRS – Centre Émile Durkheim, Bordeaux and CY Cergy
Paris Université, France

In political philosophy, the notion of republicanism is associated with "political liberty" in both its positive and negative conceptions. It raises numerous contemporary debates that our paper seeks to illuminate through an unprecedented corpus: the *Cahiers de doléances* (Books of grievances) written by the Gilets jaunes (Yellow Vests) from November 2018 onwards, and by citizens during the Grand débat national in January and February 2019.

Our paper examines, through a perspective combining linguistics and political science, the discursive construction of Republic and republicanism in this citizen corpus. In France, the cahiers de doléances have their roots in the Ancien Régime, where delegates from the three estates conveyed the wishes and grievances of the country. More than two centuries after absolute monarchy, how does the idea of the Republic appear in contemporary cahiers de doléances? The 225,000 contributions collected cannot yet be analyzed qualitatively in their entirety. We have therefore selected two territorially marginal departments: Creuse, a deep-rural area, and Alpes- Maritimes, a contrasted and unequal territory. While our preliminary observations indicate relatively limited recourse to the lemmas [république] and [républicain], the republican conception of the people, principles of government, and democracy bear the imprint of the French Revolution. Our mixed-methods research allows us to clarify ordinary categories of understanding the Republic and illuminate contemporary debates on power, populism and oligarchy. Indeed, we observed that the themes structuring the grievances relate to the political organization of society (political representation and participation, particularly the demand for a Citizen-Initiated Referendum), social equality (demands for greater social justice), and people's sovereignty. This leads us to consider the books of grievances as a proficuous empirical insight on contemporary republicanism.