

Call for Paper Conference

Interdisciplinary Conference on Social and Political Change

Political solitude
Between participation, marginalization, and indifference

25-26 January 2018

University of Florence, Political and Social Sciences Department

Call publication: June 5, 2017. Abstract deadline: July 15, 2017

In the time of disintermediation and the declared end of mass movements, it seems to appear in the political, social and media field the “specter” of solitude. The phenomenon –all but inedited- seems to derive in many and contradictory shapes. Not limited to Europe, as the Marxian specter, solitude seems to currently adopt a pervasive and –paradoxically- collective dimension; becoming a kind of *fil rouge* among unattended participation instances, ever so high ivory towers, and isolated mobilization strategies.

The purpose of this call is to set the premises for an interdisciplinary exchange regarding the topic of political solitude. In front of its apparent diffusion and (to say the least) a compound character, the need to identify the predominant shapes it adopts seems imperative. However, a definition of this phenomenon reveals a preliminary task to this purpose, which is often overlooked or intuited in common speech. A scientific adoption of this term requires -above all- a process of conceptual clarification that allows a prospective definition and distinguishes this category from others that may be semantically adjacent as is, for example, the term individualism.

In order to achieve this operation, it is indispensable to understand the notion in its historical background, to readdress solitude into the vast contemporary political processes. A research of this nature would allow to reconstruct the genesis of the phenomenon –as well as to potentially discuss its alleged postmodern character.

Additionally, it is appropriate to consider if solitude takes on such a demeanor as to have repercussions in the public sphere and the political body; as well as to question whether there are traits that make the present displays of solitude unique -or to the very least, peculiar- in relation to its past declinations.

Younger generations, now increasingly connected to new technologies, seem to paradoxically represent the most obvious evidence of the spread of loneliness in the 21st century. While social media seems to condemn to an isolated political participation, consisting of tweets and likes, it has elsewhere represented a fundamental tool of political mobilization: the so-called Arab Springs have shown that essentially individualistic instruments and protest

strategies can could become (un)organized protest. Moreover, those attempts of re-signifying public space challenge the conception of a growing individualization in politics.

Finally, we believe that it is possible to address the subject of political solitude in its biographical and firsthand dimension. We are referring, for example, to the increase of self-isolated communities in search of homogeneous identities, the solitude found at the margins of urban centers, or how new forms of poverty, even at a relational level, and the impersonality of many everyday interactions impact the different articulations of political activism and party militancy.

Starting from the plurality of these considerations, this interdisciplinary conference is born guided by the aim to build possible connections between multiple disciplinary "islands".

The participation in the Conference is open and free of charge. It is with this open spirit that we seek to encourage contributions from anyone who wants to take part in the initiative with his or her own paper. That is, regardless of their position at any university's structure. The proposals will all be equally evaluated by the same scientific committee, which will be established for this purpose and instituted with the collaboration of the departments involved.

We will particularly welcome contributions from the areas of sociology, political philosophy, political science and international relations. The list is, clearly, not exhaustive and proposals from other disciplines will also be taken into consideration.

Below we propose some possible declarations of the subject:

1. Solitude in power? Political participation from the party to participation in the net;
2. The solitude of the leader and distancing from the institutions: "plaza" and "palace" ever so connected, ever so distant. The increase of distrust and loss of representativity;
3. Policies of solitude: the citizen as a client of social intervention;
4. Anatomy of the political body: the experience of solitude, between individual atomization and the indistinction of the masses;
5. *Solitudo in societate*: representation and diagnosis of contemporary public space;
6. Youth and politics: solitude as a generational experience? Between impotence and movement possibilities;
7. "Employed by: myself"- from TV-working to "mini-jobs" in bicycles. Their effects in the market and lives;
8. Solitude as an exit strategy: escaping the world as a checkmate to politics?;
9. An isolated act: individual strategies of violence and protest (from the burning monk to the lonely wolf);
10. Islands of freedom. Collective experiments and political practices against solitude.

Calendar:

Publication call: June 5, 2017

Deadline of the abstract: July 15, 2017

Publication of selected abstracts: August 4, 2018

First Draft Paper Deadline: December 22, 2017

Conference: January 25 and 26, 2018

Paper for publication deadline: March 15, 2018.

Modes of participation and selection:

An abstract (max. 700 words, bibliography excluded) and a brief bibliography (max 250 words) should be sent by July 15, 2017. Participations in English and Italian will be accepted.

The people whose abstract is selected must send a first draft paper with a maximum length of 4000 words (bibliography excluded) by December 22, 2017.

The draft papers will be subjected to an additional anonymous review for publication: candidates selected for publication will have to send final papers (max 8,000, including bibliography) by March 15, 2018.

For submitting and more information: conferenza.solitudine@gmail.com

For updates: <https://convegnosolitudinepolitica.wordpress.com/>

Conference dates: January 25 and 26 gennaio 2018. University of Florence, Political and Social Sciences Department. Via delle Pandette 21, 50127, Florence.

Language of the Conference: Italian and English

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