



The Poverties of Modern Liberal Democracy

Navigating the Future Waters of Public Administration

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In this paper we address the internal tensions that modern liberal democracy presents between its strict framing, built around a triplet of democratic arrangements, free markets and liberal philosophy, and the concept of highly fluid and innovative individual behavior that underpins global flows. In particular, we are interested in explaining how liberal democracy and global modernity have managed the shifts that occurred in the social, economic and political realms and what this means for the future of democratic institutions.

We argue that, within the last three decades three ‘poverties’ have become evident in modern liberal democracies: a poverty of time, a poverty of security and a poverty of information, which marginalize broad sections of society and pose critical questions about the future of democratic institutions. Within the dynamics of modern liberal democracy time has increasingly been tied to new models of labour affecting the individual’s use of that time. In the global system less and less economic and social security are available to citizens, for example rendering comparisons between the current middle class and that of the 1960s very difficult. Finally, the intense globalization of information production and distribution resulted in a situation where individuals are exposed to a flood of data and speculation, which reduces the percentage of available critically developed information. This results in a poverty of information that affects the basic functioning of democratic institutions.