



Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Specialist Group

**CONFERENCE: 12-14 September 2012**

## ***DEEPENING DEMOCRACY: PARTICIPATION, DELIBERATION OR BOTH?***

*An encounter between two fields of thinking beyond representative democracy*

University of Bradford

International Centre for Participation Studies, Department of Peace Studies

### **Call for Panels and Papers**

As political theorists, democratic activists and practitioners have sought to think beyond representative democracy as we know it, two broad fields have emerged. Deliberative democracy focuses on the quality of the process of weighing up public policy issues in order to make political decisions. Thus, deliberative democracy can complement representational democracy, though it may not be exclusive to it. Participatory democracy widens the discussion around the qualitative changes required to make representative democracy more inclusive. Participatory democrats envision spheres of public action and decision-making outside representative democracy. These might include deliberation, but within transformed institutions which embody participatory practice and citizen inclusion. Radical participatory democrats would take participation even further, as a political form with the potential for supplanting representative democracy.

This conference explores the connections and tensions between participatory and deliberative theory and practice, including what deliberative theory adds to the agenda of participatory democracy and vice versa. Themes include (but are not limited to):

- Scale of democracy: arguably participatory and deliberative processes are effective at different sizes of polity. What are the associated costs and benefits of different scale processes in terms of trust, legitimacy and effectiveness? What does the assumed tension between numbers of participants and the quality of deliberation tell us about the ideal scale of our democratic structures for effective and inclusive decision making?
- The experience of citizens within different processes: how do participatory and deliberative processes help (or hinder) citizens in experiencing democracy as meaningful, including those who do not actively participate?
- What might a participatory *and* deliberative process look like in practice? Issues include appropriate kinds of behaviour and 'talk', the role of emotions and personal narrative, who should participate, and how they are chosen.

Given the empirical turn in both participation and deliberative studies (and building on the IESA conference *Methodological Challenges in Participation Research*, held in Cordoba in November 2011), the conference will also explore the methodological

debates underlying research in the two fields, including the relationship between the former's emphasis on qualitative and ethnographic methods and the latter's interest in quantitative methods.

We invite papers which facilitate a conversation between the two fields, in particular those which include a focus on how we move towards improved democracy (as individuals and/or as a wider society), rather than describing an ideal.

If you have any questions, or would like to talk about any ideas for your involvement, please get in touch with Jenny Pearce: [j.v.pearce@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:j.v.pearce@bradford.ac.uk). We welcome contributions from practitioners and democratic activists, as well as academics. We strongly welcome reflections on democratic practice and alternative ways of exploring these ideas, alongside traditional academic papers. Democratic practice has always developed through the insights of theorists, practitioners and activists, and we hope this conference will benefit from all these traditions.

To suggest a paper, please send your name, institutional affiliation, email address, title of paper and an abstract of 200-300 words to Heather Blakey: [h.blakey2@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:h.blakey2@bradford.ac.uk). If you would like to suggest a contribution other than an academic paper (for example a practitioner presentation), please outline the theme of your suggested contribution in 200-300 words. If you are proposing a panel, this should include 3 papers (or equivalent contributions). Please provide details for each contribution to the panel, along with a title for the panel.

**Please Note: the organisers are exploring the possibility that a selection of papers from the conference will form the basis of a special edition of an appropriate journal. Details regarding this possibility will be made available in due course'.**

The deadline for abstracts is 5pm, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2012.