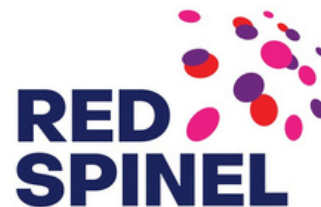



Expert Workshop

Citizen Participation Practices in the 21st-Century Liberal Democracies



 **Tue. 25** JUNE 2024

 10:30 - 17:00



IEE-ULB
39 Avenue Franklin Roosevelt, 1050
Brussels

Attendance is with registration by 19 June 2024 Register at: irthe.de.jong@ulb.be

CONTEXT

Drawing on 'Understanding Dissensus in the Age of Crises: Theoretical Reflexions' by R Coman and N Brack, we highlight how citizen participation operates in a practice of democracy, which presupposes dissensus. Dissensus is different from conflicts. The latter are concretised clashes of interests of specific persons at an identifiable time and place. Dissensus, by contrast, refers to a deeper, more fundamental level of disagreement about ideology and conception of the self and the world. It captures the idea that certain differences, not only of interests but also of conviction and understanding of the world, cannot be deliberated away but subsist and must be given a place for democracy to work. Dissensus can have a negative (disruptive) and a positive (constructive) role in democratic politics.

In this workshop, we aim to trace whether and how citizen participation, both in the EU and in the national context, may embody and express dissenting voices and dissensus. We pay particular attention to citizen participation in correlation with tensions that the expression of dissensus could create between national and EU actors. Our focus is three policy areas, namely climate change; migration and asylum; and LGBTQI+ as areas that are deeply rights-relevant both on an individual and community level, that are subject to a high level of disagreement and public contestation across the EU, and that are continuously but also recently subject to law-making, both in terms of regulation and judicial decisions.

The meeting aims to advance the theoretical and practical aspects of citizen participation as a necessary toolkit of democratic action and which can also address the shortcomings of current institutional representation structures.

We invite participants to engage and reflect on the conceptualisation of dissensus in the context of participation and specifically react to the research proposed by Dana Dolghin (PATRIR/UvA) and Irthe de Jong (UvA/ULB). The event is aimed as a forum for open conversation, brainstorming, and exchange of experiences on the ground. The objective is to help researchers shape and sharpen their research questions, approaches, and methods (agenda setting function). The Programme is structured around three case studies, one in each policy field.

This workshop is part of the Horizon Europe Research project Red Spinel ('Respond to Emerging Dissensus: SuPranational Instruments and Norms of European democracy').

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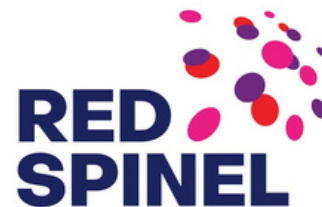


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Expert Workshop

Citizen Participation Practices in the 21st-Century Liberal Democracies



PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 25 June 2024

- 10:30 **Registration and Coffee**
- 10:45 **Introduction of the Workshop by Christina Eckes (UvA)**
- 11:00 **Panel 1: Participation in EU Climate Policy-Making**
Chair: Christina Eckes (UvA)

The climate crisis is increasingly understood as a problem that cannot be solved in a 'simple', technocratic way. Instead, it is a highly complex, uncertain, systemic, and non-linear problem that intersects with other social issues (Gupta 2016, Bogojevic 2013). Climate policies must reconcile numerous considerations, including "global and local needs, [...] nationally determined versus market-driven motivations, urban and rural contexts, universal versus individual approaches, regional variations, developed and developing socio-economic realities, [and] large and small scales" (Arriagada et al 2018). This justifies the need for public participation, not only to improve the quality of climate policies, but also to cater to the political nature of climate decision-making and deal with contradictions and competing interests in a democratic way.

Multiple routes to participation exist in EU climate decision-making - from the general avenue of public consultation to specific participation opportunities. However, not all participation practices are equally fit for purpose. This panel investigates, from multiple perspectives, the competing interests that emerge in public participation in EU climate decision-making, how different public participation mechanisms succeed or fail to channel these conflicts into a constructive debate, and to which extent participation practices can counterbalance unequal power dynamics, such as pre-existing inequality, systemic marginalization, and the power of corporate actors versus citizens and civil society.

Speakers

Irthe de Jong (UvA/ULB)

Ilze Tralmaka (Client Earth Bxl)

Claudia Detsch (FES, Bxl)

12:30-13:30 **Lunch**



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PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 25 June 2024 (continued)

13:30

Panel 2: Participation in policy-making in asylum/migration in the national and EU context

Chair: Linda Ravo (Human Rights Associate - UNHCR Regional Office for Europe)

Migration has underpinned the major political transformations of the EU project over the past decade. As an issue, it has been a point of contention in regard to the strength of the human rights mandate in Europe. It has also raised questions about the available democratic toolkits to be used against emerging radical right movements and other contestations of the “liberal script” (Zurn 2019), such as populism and ‘illiberalism’. More recently, the EU has adopted a comprehensive policy framework that overhauls the asylum system and aims to support EU Member States in managing newcomers to the continent, which is, in itself, a contested policy act. Conversely, migration has given rise to various grassroots efforts to address the fundamental gaps in policies of asylum and integration policies in Europe. In some Member states, migrant councils have been set up by communities as forums for the representation of migrants’ interests, meeting places, and institutionalised channels of participation. In others, grassroots solidarity groups have provided a space for participation where none existed. Strengthening the political rights of migrants by enabling the ownership of local officials and political leaders, addressing forms of discrimination and institutional racism, and strengthening the ownership of migrant representation are three strategies that can strengthen the political participation of migrants in urban governance (Schiller, 2023).

How does the participation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in policy-making work in practice? What are the best practices and success stories of taking part, taking ownership, and influencing substantive outcomes? How do the EU, the national, and the local governance layers interact and how does this affect effective participation?

Speakers

Dana Dolghin (PATRIR/UvA)

Catherine Enoredia Odorige (African Women Association HU)

Davide Gnes (PICUM) – online

Tom Devriendt (Migration advocacy coordinator at Caritas Belgium)

15:00

Coffee break



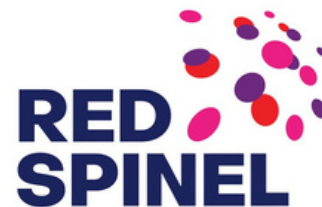
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PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 25 June 2024 (continued)

15:20

Panel 3: Participation in shaping LGBTQI+ issues

Chair: Chiara Armeni (IEE-ULB/CDE)

LGBTQI+ rights have seen a flurry of political action in national and EU fora over the last decade. In particular, this has been linked to the rise of gender conservative and right-wing politics across Europe and globally. In some Member States, explicitly anti-LGBTQI+ policies are being pursued. In a few cases, new attempts are being made to enshrine formal discrimination in law. While these groups continue to face discrimination in their personal lives, employment, housing, and healthcare, as well as in political representation, there has also been increased political action for their participation and rights. Some cases of structural and specific discrimination have made it to the EU legal system, creating tensions between national governments and the EU. In this panel, we inquire about participatory practices and citizen action that address the rights of the LGBTQI community and work to counter gaps in national and EU legislation. What role do citizen organisations play in putting LGBTQI+ rights on the agenda and in mobilizing EU actors to take positions on national policies?

Speakers

Dana Dolghin (PATRIR/UvA)

Emilia Salminen (IEE-ULB/CEVIPOL)

Rodrigo Rodrigues Da Cruz (ULB)

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16:50-17:00

Closing Remarks

17:00

Reception



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