
Democratic Innovations: Responding to Great Challenges

ECPR 2019 General Conference

Submit your panel proposal by November 14th, 2018

This section is endorsed by the Standing Group on Democratic Innovations

Section Chairs: Edana Beauvais, McGill University & Matt Ryan, University of Southampton

Even though democratic innovations provide good news stories for advocates of political reform, political systems are still straining to provide basic democratic goods. Globalisation and the pluralisation of societies have complicated questions of inclusion. Changing communication and information technologies have created opportunities to spread fake news, fuelling opinion polarisation, populist frustrations, and anti-democratic sentiments. This section welcomes a range of theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions that explain whether and how democratic innovations can respond to the most pressing problems of democracy. Are democratic innovations a solution or a distraction from existing democracies' greatest ills? How can innovation in democratic systems provide for empowered participation that develops personal preferences into enriched collective opinions and clever collective decisions? What kinds of democratic innovations are required to enhance the democratic capacities of political systems?

The 2018 ECPR Conference Democratic Innovations Section Proposal is structured around three themes: innovating inclusions, enriching public-opinion through innovation, and innovating democratic decision-making. We also welcome panel proposals on democratic innovations that speak beyond these themes, and particularly welcome proposals that take an innovative approach to the section and its delivery.

Innovating Inclusions

Democracy begins with inclusion: People must be empowered to participate in and influence collective outcomes that affect them. However, growing global and intranational interdependence complicate the question of who is affected by collective outcomes and so who should be included in democratic processes (and how they can be). Do democratic innovations help address these challenges? The growing pluralisation of societies and intersections of identities and inequalities also complicate the question of who should be included in democratic processes. How should questions of diversity and intersectionality be addressed in the institutional design of democratic innovations? How do different institutional designs of democratic innovations distribute inclusions and exclusions?

Enriching Public-Opinion through Democratic Innovation

Collective rule requires that people combine their personal preferences into collective opinions and agendas. How can democratic innovations harness the potential of new technologies for sharing useful information and making connections? What are the connections between democratic innovations and social movements? Can democratic innovations organise disagreement in ways that support deliberation over deep moral conflicts? Despite the democratic potential of new information and communication technologies, online media platforms also create op-

opportunities for spreading fake news and fuelling polarisation. Can democratic innovations address the problems of misinformation and polarisation?

Innovating Democratic Decision-Making

Democracies must also get things done: collectives must be able to make binding decisions for themselves that are perceived as legitimate. Growing global interdependencies dampen democracies' decision-making capacities, contributing to political gridlock and fuelling anti-democratic sentiments. Polarisation is also fuelling a legitimacy crisis, where opposing sides question the legitimacy of decisions they do not support. How can democratic innovations support the decision-making capacities of democratic systems? Can democratic innovations supplement the democratic legitimacy of existing sites of democratic decision-making?

About the Section Chairs

Dr. Edana Beauvais is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship, McGill University. Her research considers how democratic innovations can be designed to neutralize inequalities and promote more inclusive deliberation and policy-making. She is a collaborator on the Participedia Project and a member of Equal Voice Canada. Her recent publications appear in the *European Journal of Political Research*, the *Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, and *PS: Political Science and Politics*.

Dr. Matt Ryan is Lecturer in Governance and Public Policy at the University of Southampton. His research focuses on democratic innovation and participation in politics, the policymaking process, and social science research methods. He chairs the research committee of the Participedia Project, a global network of scholars and practitioners dedicated to understanding participatory democratic innovations. His most recent publications appear in the *European Journal of Political Research*, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, and *Local Government Studies*.

We welcome panel proposals on/ before November 14th, 2018.

Please email your proposals to Edana Beauvais at edana.beauvais@mail.mcgill.ca and Matt Ryan m.g.ryan@soton.ac.uk.