

**French Political Science Association Congress
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Thematic Section 37

Participation or deliberation? Towards a historical sociology of citizens inclusion in democracy

Convenors :

Paula Cossart (Centre de Recherche 'Individus, Épreuves, Sociétés', CeRIES)

Julien Talpin (Centre de Recherches Sociologiques et Politiques de Paris, CRESPPA)

Call for papers

The last two decades have been marked by the proliferation of political and scientific discourses on the virtues of deliberative and participatory democracy. In parallel, procedures and devices sharing the ambition to intensify or enlarge the participation of the citizenry in the collective discussion of public issues have spread and been institutionalized. They are often seen as a remedy to the crisis representative government is undergoing. While not coined participatory or deliberative democracy at the time, we can find in the past discourses and experiences praising public and reasoned exchanges of arguments among citizens aiming at building a consensus on the common good. This workshop is devoted to these discourses and experiences. Who promoted them? What did they become? Our aim is to track down the common grounds between the questions raised by the deliberative arenas of the past and present times.

While some deliberative devices are hardly participative, and some participatory institutions little deliberative, the democratic forms developing nowadays share to some extent these two features. Was it already the case in the past? The aim of this workshop is to question, from an historical perspective, the growing tension between two ways of engaging the public (Mutz 2006). On the one hand, participatory democracy's supporters stress the need to include the greatest number of people in the administration of public affairs; thus emphasizing the importance of the link to the decision-making process and of the number of participants, rather than the quality of the discussion. On the other hand, deliberative democracy's advocates underscore the virtues of collective discussion to enlighten public decisions, implying that a limited number of participants foster the quality of deliberation. Our goal is therefore to historicize the controversies and experiences at the core of this distinction between participation and deliberation.

Approaches open to diachronic perspectives and to geographical comparisons between countries are welcome. The aim will be to understand whether past practices are similar in different historical and national contexts, in order to shed light on the "less cultural attachment to the virtues of deliberation" (Blondiaux 2008) that seems to characterize France – among others – in comparison to the US or Northern Europe.

Deadline for sending paper proposals: October 15th 2010

Proposals should be sent to:

Paula Cossart cossart.paula@free.fr

Julien Talpin, julien.talpin@eui.eu