

# Toward Democratic Inclusion?



## Ideas of Public Deliberation and their Application to Contemporary Policy and Practice

A multidisciplinary international conference  
**7 – 8 November, 2013**

**Západočeská univerzita v Plzni  
University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic**

In contemporary debates about the quality of our existing democracies, the need for a greater democratic inclusiveness is among the most resonant issues. Analyses of the exclusionary mechanisms of Western liberal democracies, originally introduced in critical theory, have found powerful, mainstream expressions in the ever-growing literature on **deliberative theory – and specifically, the role of the critical public and civil society in democratic deliberation**. To many, the deliberative model offers a cure for the weakened legitimacy of Western democratic systems. Hopes are high that by restoring critical public arenas and spaces for rational deliberation, citizens will reclaim their control of political decision-making – and ultimately make democracy stronger, more trustworthy, and stable in the eyes of whole society.

Yet such accounts raise pressing questions and practical challenges related to the **political, institutional, legal, and social implications of the deliberative model, in particular vis-à-vis potentially marginalized individuals or groups**.

This inter-disciplinary conference will explore both **the resources deliberative theory may provide, and its potential weaknesses when faced with the reality of politics and the complexity of contemporary societies**, their plurality (in values, ethnicity and culture), their socio-economic inequalities, and the other forms of social division, stratification and disadvantage we find in them.

A key focus will be on the possibilities and barriers surrounding the democratic inclusion of **individuals and groups marginalized** on basis of culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, economic inequality, or other forms of structural disadvantage.

- *The deliberative model of democracy and the practicalities of political process*
- *The function and place of deliberative mechanisms in the political process*
- *Appropriate venues for deliberation on different levels of decision-making*
- *What institutional transformations does introducing deliberative processes require?*
- *Ethics and the deliberative process*
- *What should be the rules of public deliberation?*
- *Do some such rules inhibit the equal inclusion of all individuals?*
- *Impacts of the rules of deliberation on potentially marginalized groups*
- *How, and to what extent, should diverse identities and value-systems be included?*
- *What constitutes the basis for legitimate group representation in public deliberation?*

Keynote speaker: **Gideon Calder (University of South Wales)**

Papers are welcomed from academics and other researchers working on relevant themes. The conference is open to interested journalists, civil servants, NGO workers, and students.

Conference language: English  
Deadlines: For paper proposals (400-500 words): 19 May 2013  
For completed papers, to be pre-circulated: 30 September 2013

There is no conference (registration) fee.  
Participants are expected to cover their travel and accommodation costs.

For further information, or to submit a proposal, please contact the organizer:

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