

## *Understanding developments in participatory governance*

by Adrian Bua and Sonia Bussu

*De Montfort University*

*Manchester Metropolitan University*

Online seminar – open to all

5 March 2021 from 18:00 to 20:00 Lisbon time

Zoom link:

<https://videoconf-colibri.zoom.us/j/88669355570?pwd=cW5ManVFTytlN3ZQanZ4a21sTy81UT09>

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### **Abstract**

The past decade has seen increasing experimentation with different designs of participatory and deliberative processes. Participatory innovations such as citizen assemblies of randomly-selected lay citizens, or minipublics, are increasingly advocated as a vital tool in battling against political polarisation and declining citizen confidence and engagement in democracy. Participatory governance, however, goes far beyond the occasional citizen assembly and increasingly scholars and practitioners look at complex governance mechanisms that couple different designs with representative institutions with the aim to strengthen epistemic, democratic and ethical functions of democratic systems. In this talk, Adrian Bua and Sonia Bussu look at the democratising capacity of participatory governance and classify different participatory designs in terms of their contribution to functional and normative criteria underpinning democracy: reflexivity and responsiveness. Whilst much focus has been placed on the quality and the design of the process (input) there has been much less attention to impact on policies (output), and social justice has increasingly being sidelined within the participatory agenda. This is also a result of the top-down, elite-led approach, which tends to pay attention to functional criteria and privileges reflexivity over responsiveness, as the goal is generally to respond to the bureaucratic demands of the commissioner of the participatory process – i.e. public agencies.

In a recent paper (Bua and Bussu, 2020) the authors examine recent social movements-led efforts at reclaiming participatory governance and moving beyond the functionalist and elitist approach to institutional design, to advance radical projects of political change. They differentiate between functionalist and radical forms of participatory governance, whilst also noting that, far from being dichotomous, these interact in dynamic fashion. At the heart of this dynamism lie (a) the processes through which top-down “closed” spaces can create opportunities for rupture and democratic challenges and (b) vice-versa, the mechanisms through which bottom-up, open spaces can be co-opted. The authors examine this dynamic interaction between different forms of participatory governance through an analysis of changes in the public administration in Barcelona.

## Adrian Bua | Biography

Adrian Bua is Lecturer in Urban Politics at De Montfort University. Having completed his PhD on participatory democracy and democratic innovation in 2015, Adrian's research interests have since focussed on critical political economy, state theory and urban governance and hopes to bring these perspectives into conversation with the field of democratic innovation in future work. Working with colleagues at the Centre for Urban Research on Austerity and international partners, Adrian recently took part in an 8 case international comparison of the development of collaborative governance under austerity, co-authoring a monograph (forthcoming in 2021) "New Developments in Urban Governance: Rethinking Collaboration in the Age of Austerity". Adrian has also published in journals such as Public Administration, Urban Affairs, Policy Design and Practice and with co-presenter Dr. Sonia Bussu, in the European Journal of Political Research.

## Sonia Bussu | Biography

Sonia Bussu is a public policy scholar and her main research interests are participatory governance and participatory action research. Over the years, she has led research and published on participatory and deliberative processes, community engagement, and coproduction of health services, with a focus on the role of facilitative leadership in participatory processes. After her PhD at the LSE, she worked for the third sector, where she designed and evaluated innovative participatory processes and community development programmes, before returning to academia as a research associate at UCL. She is currently Senior Lecturer (Associate professor) in Politics and Public Administration at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Event hosted by Roberto Falanga, ICS-ULisboa