

Call for papers

## **Innovation in Political Participation and Social Movement Research – Challenging Theoretical and Methodological Boundaries**

Date: October 14-15, 2016

Venue: Department of Political Science, University of Vienna

People engage in politics in diverse ways, mainly by voting, signing petitions, forming political parties, protesting in the streets or occupying public space. So far, social scientists have conceptualised these forms of citizens' engagement as two distinct phenomena leading to a peculiar split between research on formal or institutional political participation and social movements. Even though both deal with overlapping empirical phenomena there is only a limited exchange between these two research perspectives in terms of theoretical concepts and methodological techniques. Currently, scholars of the two approaches use primarily distinct methods like (quantitative) data analysis on the one hand and qualitative methods on the other, such as interviews, frame, discourse or content analysis. Combining insights from both can generate a better understanding of why, how and to which ends citizens engage in politics and can foster theoretical and methodological innovations.

This international conference aims at discussing social movements and political participation research jointly and combining the two fruitfully. It pursues two goals: First, deepening the understanding of citizens' engagement in politics and second expanding methodological and theoretical considerations concerning the field. By bringing the two approaches together both new insights regarding content and innovation in methods and theory will be generated.

The conference will start with a round table discussion, fostering dialog between social movements and political participation research with the following invited speakers:

**Sigrid Baringhorst**, Professor at the University of Siegen, Germany

**Dan Mercea**, Lecturer at City University London, UK

The second day consists of three consecutive panels covering the following issues and a concluding session where the overall results are discussed.

### **1. Institutional settings and their impact**

Institutions have an impact on various forms of citizens' engagement in politics as institutional design might inhibit or encourage civil and political action. Also the configuration of the institutional setting itself is addressed by social movements and forms of political participation and hence part of the struggle for more participation.

### **2. Democratic and Anti-democratic contents and attitudes**

There is an implicit normative connotation that citizens' engagement is positive for democracies. However, this rational approach of "the more, the better" needs to be reconsidered as social movements and the use of participatory institutions increasingly aim at anti-pluralistic ends (e.g. homophobic, nationalist, racist). The dark side of both, social movements and political participation has to be reconsidered.

### **3. Social Media and Citizens' Engagement**

Social media has become an essential tool for citizens to get, organise and distribute information in order to affect politics. It is likely to have changed communication and organisation within groups and society at large. However, usage of social media is not limited to already active citizens. It is increasingly popular among other actors such as politicians in order to get in touch with their constituencies and followers through Twitter, Facebook, etc. Thus, the impact of social media on different levels of social movements/political participation in general and vice versa needs to be discussed.

We invite case studies and comparative papers that analyse participatory acts and/or social movements. In particular, innovative papers in terms of theory and methods are encouraged to apply.

We cannot provide financial support for the travel arrangements, thus we will try to provide private (free) accommodation if wished.

Please send your proposal (max. 250 words) to the following e-mail address **until August 8, 2016**: [participation.innovation@gmail.com](mailto:participation.innovation@gmail.com)

The deadline for accepted full papers is October 01, 2016 (preferably 6000 words).

Contact:

Dr. Tina Olteanu  
Department of Political Science  
University of Vienna  
Universitätsstr. 7  
1010 Vienna  
Austria

E-Mail: [tina.olteanu@univie.ac.at](mailto:tina.olteanu@univie.ac.at)