

CSD lecture announcement:

**Who participates? How participatory democracy reduces equality in representation**

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*18 April, 16.15-17.15*

*VIP Room, Ravelijn Building*

Most western democracies face declining turnout and growing mistrust in political actors and institutions. As a consequence, many scholars have discussed democratic deficits and argued for a transformation of democracies in recent years. The long list of possible reforms include an expansion of the electoral marketplace, increase citizens participation in electoral races as well as to expand access to decision making to new forms such referenda, popular assemblies or other forms citizens involvement. Such suggestions are supposed to increase the inclusiveness of citizens in decision making processes and hence make political elites more responsive.

While those reforms usually have good intentions to make democratic processes more inclusive and make elites more responsive, we argue that the opposite could be true. Crucial to the evaluation of such forms is the question who participates. Political involvement requires resources and we know that not all interests can be organized equally. Therefore new forms of participatory democracy can just as well lead to less inclusiveness, greater inequality and worse representation and make elites responsive to special and loudly expressed interest rather than to the entire population.

We explore the relationship between equality, representation and participatory democracy using data from the European Social Survey. We can confirm findings from other studies that the lower the participation rate in various form of participation, the higher inequality in income, education and gender. We can also show, that if politicians become responsive to participatory democracy they risk to get biased towards more extremist and more leftist views, since participatory democracy is used over-proportionally by citizens which position themselves on the right and even more on the left while moderate, centrist citizens are clearly under-represented. Those findings question the value of democratic expansion in practice.

More information on future events:

<http://www.utwente.nl/mb/csd/events/>