

DEMOCRACY REIMAGINED

**ADVANCING
DEMOCRATIC
RESILIENCE
AND RENEWAL**

17-19 November 2025, University of Canberra



**UNIVERSITY OF
CANBERRA**

CENTRE FOR
DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

**Friedrich
Ebert** 
Stiftung



**Australian
National
University**



17-19 November 2025

University of Canberra

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The *Democracy Reimagined: Advancing Democratic Resilience and Renewal* Conference is hosted by the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Australia and New Zealand at the University of Canberra, in collaboration with the Australian National University and the Australian Resilient Democracy Research and Data Network.

As democracies across the globe contend with significant threats, including deepening polarisation, rising extremism, and the proliferation of mis- and disinformation, the urgency of strengthening democratic resilience has never been greater.

This conference brings together an international community of scholars and practitioners to deepen and expand the conversation around democratic resilience. Through engaging theoretical, empirical, and practice-oriented perspectives, we aim to address critical challenges of our times: including falling political trust, rising polarisation and the resurgence of violent extremism, and to examine how formal and informal institutions and actors can help build a more resilient democracy.

We look forward to robust discussion on the assessment and implementation of democratic resilience and renewal across diverse contexts. The conference provides an opportunity to share practical strategies, forge new connections, and collectively re-imagine democracy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people who are the Traditional Custodians of this land on which we are meeting and pay respect to the Elders of the Ngunnawal Nation both past and present.

VENUE

Building 24
The Ann Harding
Conference Centre
University of Canberra



ORGANISING COMMITTEE



Dr Adele Webb



Dr Andreas Radtke



Dr Emily Foley



Dr Friedel Marquardt



Dr Hans Asenbaum



Professor John Dryzek



Dr Jordan McSwiney



Professor Selen Ercan

OPENING SESSION

Monday, 17 November

Opening Remarks: 9:00am-9:30am

Introduction

Professor Selen Ercan

Director, Centre for Deliberative Democracy

Welcome

Professor Uwe Dulleck

Executive Dean School of Business Government and Law, University of Canberra

Mr Michael Meier

Head of International Cooperation, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin

Keynote: 9:30am-10:15am

From Innovation to Resilience:

Reimagining Democracy in Challenging Times

Dr Thamy Pogrebinschi

WZB Berlin Social Science Centre



Thamy Pogrebinschi is a Senior Researcher at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. She coordinated the LATINNO Project, which built the largest database on democratic innovations in Latin America. Her latest book is *Innovating Democracy? The Means and Ends of Citizen Participation in Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

DAY 1

Monday, 17 November

8:30 - 9:00	Registration and Coffee
9:00 - 9:30	Conference Welcome
9:30 - 10:15	Keynote Presentation-Thamy Pogrebinschi (WZB)
10:15 - 10:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
10:30 - 12:00	Panel 1: Defining and Measuring Democratic Resilience
12:00 - 13:00	<i>Lunch</i>
13:00 - 14:30	Panel 2: Practices of Democratic Resilience Across Countries
14:30 - 16:00	Panel 3: Sites and Strategies of Democratic Resilience
16:00 - 16:30	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>
16:30 - 17:30	Democracy Reimagined: The Day in Perspective
19:00-20:30	<u>Public Event ‘Robots in the Room: Should We Include AI in Democracy?’</u>



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

DAY 2

Tuesday, 18 November

8:30 - 9:00	<i>Coffee</i>
9:00 - 10:30	Panel 4: Building Democratic Resilience Online
10:30 - 12:00	Panel 5: Learning Democratic Resilience
12:00 - 13:00	<i>Lunch</i>
13:00 - 14:30	Panel 6: Reimagining Democratic Representation
14:30 - 16:00	Panel 7: Advancing Deliberative Mini-Publics
16:00 - 16:30	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>
16:30 - 17:30	Democracy Reimagined: The Day in Perspective
19:00	<i>Conference Dinner at Old Parliament House. Attendance is by invitation only.</i>



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

DAY 3

Wednesday, 19 November

8:30 - 9:00	<i>Coffee</i>
9:00 - 10:30	Panel 8: Revitalising Political Parties
10:30 - 12:00	Panel 9: Empowering Youth-Led Innovations
12:00 - 13:00	<i>Lunch</i>
13:00 - 14:30	Panel 10: Reimagining Voice and Advocacy
14:30 - 16:00	Democracy Reimagined: The Day in Perspective



PANELS AT A GLANCE

Panel	Title	Chair
Panel 1	Defining and Measuring Democratic Resilience	Adele Webb
Panel 2	Practices of Democratic Resilience Across Countries	Mark Riboldi
Panel 3	Sites and Strategies of Democratic Resilience	Emily Foley
Panel 4	Building Democratic Resilience Online	Jordan McSwiney
Panel 5	Learning Democratic Resilience	Hans Asenbaum
Panel 6	Reimagining Democratic Representation	John Dryzek
Panel 7	Renewing Deliberative Mini-publics	Ron Levy
Panel 8	Revitalising Political Parties	Olive Mendoza
Panel 9	Empowering Youth-led Innovations	Nardine Alnemr
Panel 10	Reimagining Voice and Advocacy	Melisa Ross

DAY



1

Day 1, Monday 10:30am-12:00pm

Panel 1: Defining and Measuring Democratic Resilience

Democratic Resilience: Moving from Theoretical Frameworks to a Practical Measurement Agenda

Alex Fischer, Department of Home Affairs

Global indices and media narratives indicate a decline in democratic institutions, values, and practices. Simultaneously, democratic innovators are experimenting with new ways to strengthen democracy at local and national levels. These both suggest democracies are not static; they evolve as society, technology and the environment change. This presentation summarises a paper that examines democracy as a resilient system, emphasizing the role of applied analysis in shaping effective policy and programs, particularly in Australia. We review current literature on resilient democracies and highlight a critical gap: current measurement efforts focus heavily on composite indices—especially trust—while neglecting dynamic flows and causal drivers. They focus on the descriptive features and identify weaknesses, they do not focus on the diagnostics or evidence to what strengths democracies. This is reflected in the lack of cross-sector networked, living evidence systems to track what works and why across the intersecting dynamics of democratic practices. To address this, we propose a practical agenda centred on three core strengthening flows of democratic resilience: trusted institutions, credible information, and social inclusion.

Democratic Resilience: The Shallow and the Deep

John Dryzek, University of Canberra

Ian O'Flynn, University of Newcastle

Jensen Sass, University of Vienna

The ability of democracies to counter shocks and threats is increasingly captured by the idea of democratic resilience. After surveying treatments that borrow unreflectively from other disciplines, treat resilience as simple survival, or repackage familiar ideas about stability, we articulate a concept of deep democratic resilience that does justice to its uniquely democratic character. This means mobilizing a polity's core integrative norms in a fashion itself democratic. Its achievement requires elite appeal to democratic norms, public discourse about how democracy applies, and consolidation of democratic integrative norms. We show how this applies in response to shocks and threats ranging from autocratization to civil war to violent extremist attacks, while also examining what happens when polities fall short. We deploy positive examples from the United States, New Zealand, and Poland; and more problematic episodes from France, Germany, and the United States. Finland shows it is possible to plan for deep democratic resilience.

Tracking Policy-relevant Narratives of Democratic Resilience at Scale: From Experts and Machines, to AI & the Transformer Revolution

Simon Angus, Monash University

Democratic resilience is as much about the narratives of our nation we affirm, as the institutions that enshrine our values and laws, a fact re-affirmed by scholarship across many branches of social science in recent decades. For policymakers and quantitative social scientists, analysing or tracking public discourse through the lens of narrative and framing has historically involved the annotation of texts by hand, placing severe limitations on the scale and modality of discourse under inquiry. In this study, we consider a variety of tools from the field of computational linguistics, which either automate the standard approach to textual annotation, or introduce entirely new ways of conceptualising 'text as data', opening up new horizons for the tracking of public narratives of democratic resilience. In particular, we assess the regime-shift occurring in natural language processing and artificial intelligence brought about by the advent of the transformer architecture. By undertaking two distinct empirical analysis tasks with recent transformer methods we provide practical demonstrations that these new tools offer, perhaps for the first time, the 'holy grail' of the quantitative social scientist: the ability to identify, accurately, and efficiently, nuanced narratives in text at scale. We conclude by contributing data and research recommendations for public stakeholders who wish to see these opportunities realised.

2

Day 1, Monday 1pm-2:30pm

Panel 2: Practices of Democratic Resilience Across Countries

Everyday Antifascism (online presentation)

Albert Dzur, Bowling Green State University

Supported by an Impulse Fund from the University of Amsterdam, we will embark in October 2025 on a 2-year research project on the role of restorative and other civil society practices in everyday democratic resistance. This research project emerges from the urgent need to understand under-studied forms of democratic resistance in a global climate marked by authoritarianism, populist polarization, and the erosion of trust. As divisive rhetoric, misinformation, and societal fragmentation intensify, the project focuses on the potential of restorative and other civil society practices—such as grassroots dialogues, civic repair efforts, and trust-building initiatives—to act as subtle but powerful counterforces to protect those most at risk of violence and repression as well as those vulnerable to extremist rhetoric and recruitment. Through case studies in the U.S., Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy, and anchored in interdisciplinary scholarship on democratic practice, social practice, and restorative justice, the project asks how these initiatives function as everyday democratic resistance, how they differ from other forms of activism, what makes them effective, and how they might be expanded or sustained. The project ultimately aims to articulate a richer understanding of everyday democratic resistance—and to help build a common language and theoretical framework for those already engaged in it.

Resilience, Democracy, and the Rule of Law: Lessons from the RESILIO Project

York Albrecht, Institut für Europäische Politik

Maria Skóra, Institut für Europäische Politik

Democracy and the rule of law, core pillars of the European Union, are facing mounting pressure. Developments in Hungary and Poland illustrate how autocratic tendencies threaten both the EU's identity as a community of law and the cohesion of the Union itself. At the same time, resistance to democratic backsliding persists across member states, though the preconditions for such resilience are not yet well understood. RESILIO – Resilience Observatory on the Rule of Law in Europe, led by the Institute für Europäische Politik (IEP) and funded by Stiftung Mercator - addresses this gap by investigating not only the structural and institutional, but also societal and cultural factors that foster resilience against democratic erosion. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the project engages legal scholars, political scientists, historians, and civil society actors to identify and comparatively assess the drivers of resilience. It further seeks to develop innovative tools for measuring resilience and translating insights into actionable recommendations for policymakers and administrators in Germany, EU member states, and EU institutions. By combining analytical and practical perspectives, RESILIO aims to strengthen awareness of the risks facing the rule of law, contribute to more constructive and less politicized debates, and advance strategies that safeguard democratic norms across the European Union.

Everyday Democratic Resilience: Insights from Former Youth Climate Activists

Kei Nishiyama, Kaichi International University

The climate crisis is a prominent case through which the idea of democratic resilience is explored. Most discussions to date have focused on collective and institutional efforts towards democratic resilience in the public sphere—such as climate activism and citizens’ assemblies on climate change. In this presentation, however, I propose the idea of *everyday democratic resilience* to highlight how individuals engage in everyday politics to sustain and revitalise democracy. Drawing on insights a four-year ethnographic study of Japanese youth climate activism, I focus in particular on three former climate activists who have withdrawn from frontline of activism and now engage in climate politics in everyday contexts. Mr. Ten now works for an eco-friendly company (Patagonia); Ms. Mey practices natural farming; and Ms. Ai is employed at a renewable energy company (all names are pseudonyms). Based on participant observation and interviews of their post-activist experiences in their workplaces and everyday lifestyles, I examine (a) how previous commitments to democratic resilience in the public sphere (youth activism) continue to shape everyday political practices, and (b) how such everyday practices contribute to operationalising democratic resilience on a personal and social level. This study offers a nuanced, micro and lived dimensions of democratic resilience.

3

Day 1, Monday 2:30pm-4:00pm

Panel 3: Sites and Strategies of Democratic Resilience

Can Deliberative Institutions Survive the Far Right?

Melisa Ross, University of Bremen

In Latin America, the expansion of deliberative institutions has often been associated with the left. Yet, once in power, some far-left governments forfeited democratic norms to consolidate their grasp on power, as in Venezuela and Nicaragua. Since 2016, a ‘conservative turn’ has brought the far-right to power in Brazil and El Salvador, among others. The global rise of political extremes invites the question: What happens to deliberative institutions under the far-right and the far-left? Can they survive authoritarian drifts, and if so, how? The Latin American cases present crucial evidence, considering their long-standing participatory traditions and highly institutionalised deliberative institutions. I analyse primary and secondary evidence in those four countries, accounting for political orientation and institutionalisation of deliberation, to identify four uses by far-right and far-left populists: opposition, co-optation, disregard, and suppression. I then present resistance and resilience strategies adopted by public servants, policy entrepreneurs, and social movements, to protect or support the survival of those institutions. These strategies can be of relevance for comparison within and beyond the region, and offer insights into the essential role of organised civil society in sustaining democratic norms and institutions.

Bouncing Back or Forward? Two Approaches to Democratic Resilience After Extremist Attacks

Jordan McSwiney, University of Canberra

Selen Ercan, University of Canberra

Emily Beausoleil, Victoria University of Wellington

Claire Fitzpatrick, Edith Cowan University

Andrea Felicetti, University of Padua

Violent extremist attacks pose a serious threat to democracy, undermining its institutions, norms and practices. This article examines the disruptive impact of violent extremism on the public sphere and considers the role of political leaders in responding to these challenges. Leaders are widely recognised as the key actors shaping the public discourse after extremist attacks, by either reinforcing or resisting the division intended by these attacks. Yet, their role in building democratic resilience – that is, fostering the public sphere’s ability to respond to extremist attacks without compromising its democratic commitments – remains underexplored. Drawing on a range of case studies, the article examines the spectrum of leaders’ responses to violent extremist attacks and their effects on democratic resilience. It identifies two distinct approaches to democratic resilience: ‘bouncing back’ by maintaining the status quo, or ‘bouncing forward’ by deepening democratic commitments. The article considers the implications of each approach and underscores the necessity of the latter in strengthening the public sphere and its deliberative capacity in the aftermath of extremist attacks.

The Duty to Deliberate Before Armed Conflict

Ron Levy, Australian National University

The ultimate test for democratic resilience may be whether a society is able to avoid or suppress widescale armed conflict. In a forthcoming Oxford University Press book, nearly thirty deliberative democracy and conflict scholars from around the world will explore concepts and innovative methods of Deliberative Peacemaking. These methods range from making mini-publics integral to peace agreements, to developing informal spaces of deliberation in war-ravaged locations such as Lebanon. In this presentation, one of the book’s editors will present the book’s final chapter, which argues for a normative obligation to use deliberative peacemaking methods before, and ideally in lieu of, armed action. This normative argument in turn drives a proposal for a major revision of international law: a binding duty of potential belligerent parties to enter structured deliberations with each other before resorting to armed conflict. Deliberative democratic ‘procedures should be viewed not merely as useful options that belligerent groups can choose to employ, but as normatively obligatory means of scrutinising, in advance, the profound decision to commence a campaign of deadly violence’. The presentation falls squarely within the conference’s ‘innovation’ stream. The chapter’s numerous authors (Ron Levy, Ian O’Flynn, Allison McCullough, Peter Jones, Ignacio Giuffre, Kate Ogg, Cecilia Jacob, William Smith, Baogang He) aim to influence the development of a global duty incorporating deliberative democratic practices into the global regime of armed conflict regulation.

Day 1, Monday 4:30-5:30pm
Democracy Reimagined: The Day in Perspective

Lydia Khalil (Lowy Institute)-Moderator

Thamy Pogrebinschi (WZB)

Alex Fischer (Home Affairs)

DAY





Day 2, Tuesday 9:00am-10:30am

Panel 4: Building Democratic Resilience Online

Designing Civic Infrastructure in the Age of Digital Engagement

Peter Lewis, Essential

We are in a race to rebuild trust and citizen engagement as social, political, and technological forces pull in the opposite direction. Traditional in-person participation is declining, government consultations are often inaccessible, and digital platforms, now central to public life, tend to amplify polarisation rather than foster constructive dialogue. However, examples from Taiwan, Brazil, and Spain show that digital civic spaces can be intentionally designed for inclusion, accountability, and consensus-building. This discussion paper reviews trends in civic participation in Australia, noting declines in volunteering and formal membership alongside rising online engagement. It highlights major gaps in tracking how people use digital platforms for civic purposes beyond news consumption, underscoring the need for better monitoring and understanding of digital versus in-person participation. Drawing on case studies across policy areas such as disability, energy, housing, and local government, the paper identifies emerging innovations but notes the absence of a shared framework to assess the public value of civic infrastructure. It concludes that while technology can connect and empower, intentional design is needed to ensure democratic benefit. Building trustworthy digital civic spaces requires linking participation directly to decision-making, embedding deliberative values, and fostering dynamic, responsive feedback loops.

The Role of Disinformation in the Dearth of Democracy in Africa's Sahel

Zainab Oyiza Sanni, Media Inno Tech

Mohammed Muideen Olakunle, Media Inno Tech

Since 2021, Africa's Sahel region has experienced democratic decline with successive military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger republic. The overthrow in these nations was aided by weakened institutions, insurgency, erosion of public trust and incessant foreign interference, though not all factors applied uniformly across the region. This paper will examine how disinformation—spread domestically and transnationally through digital media—has limited democratic resilience by fuelling authoritarian resurgence and deepened civic disengagement. Drawing on case studies from these Sahel states, it analyses how digital platforms have become conduits for false narratives that delegitimize electoral processes, inflame ethnic tensions, and justify military takeovers as “corrective” governance. The paper critically uses the Information Disorder framework to explain the mechanics of mis-, dis-, and malinformation, and paired it with a resilience governance lens that emphasises institutional and civic adaptability, which situates the Sahel's crisis within broader debates on democratic renewal. It argues that a resilience-oriented response that prioritizes regionally coordinated digital governance can enhance the circulation of accurate, accessible information on governance and leadership, whether democratic or military. Such an approach is essential to restoring civic trust, strengthening informed political participation, and advancing a more resilient democratic future for the Sahel.

A Quantitative Analysis of Polarisation in Discourse of the 2025 Australian Election on Reddit

Timothy Millar, University of Canberra

This project provides a quantitative analysis of polarisation as a threat to democratic resilience. While it's understood that anti-democratic actors exploit social cleavages to undermine trust, a gap remains in our ability to measure these fragmentation tactics during critical democratic events. This study addresses this gap by presenting a replicable framework to identify and measure induced polarisation within a large online community—the r/australia subreddit—during the 2025 Australian federal election. Grounded in Social Identity Theory, our methodology operationalises in-group/out-group dynamics through a multi-modal analysis. We combine network science to measure structural polarisation (modularity of the user-reply network) with computational linguistics to measure affective polarisation (sentiment, topic and language analysis). We anticipate our findings will demonstrate a measurable increase in both network fragmentation and inter-community hostility over the election period. Furthermore, the analysis will identify the specific narrative themes most correlated with these polarising effects. By offering a robust methodology to diagnose these vulnerabilities in the digital public square, this research contributes a useful tool for developing practical strategies to enhance democratic resilience against the threat of strategic fragmentation.

Technology Governance as an Experiment in Democratic Renewal: Insights from Citizen Deliberation on AI

Nardine Alnemr, Murdoch University

Of the many challenges to democratic renewal, new technologies simultaneously hold considerable promise and are the subject of concern. On the one hand, some scholars see the potential for new technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), to increase the capacity for large-scale, multilingual and intensive forums for democratic deliberation. On the other hand, the governance of these technologies is undemocratic. This shortcoming motivates a call for participatory and deliberative approaches to technology governance. I focus on this direction. The appeal of forums based on deliberative democracy is in the design factor: creating ideal conditions for informed, inclusive and consequential discussions. Reviewing cases of citizen deliberation on AI commissioned by actors such as civil society organisations, Big Tech companies and the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2024), I highlight their design in relation to democratic renewal. These forums are uniquely positioned to reveal how we can interrogate the simultaneous promise and concern about technology and democracy. Therefore, I propose to see these cases as an experiment in democratic renewal to draw lessons pertaining to the questions of scale, institutional linkages, political will, and recursion that face innovations in democratic renewal.

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Day 2, Tuesday 10:30am-12:00pm
Panel 5: Learning Democratic Resilience

Higher Education and its Role in Strengthening and Weakening Democracy in Australia

Nicholas Biddle, Australian National University

One of the cleavages in political views that has emerged in Australia is differences in support for, and belief in democracy by higher education participation and completion. Like in other established democracies, those that have completed a degree are more likely than those that have not to be satisfied with democracy and more likely to trust in key institutions. Not unrelated to this, many Australians see universities as not meeting their social licence and being one of the contributors towards a flawed economic and social model. The aim of this paper and presentation is to dig into a nationally representative survey of university students and the general population to ask: How and why do university students and graduates differ so substantively in their political views from the rest of the population? How has trust and confidence in universities changed through time, and how do views on universities relate to aspects of democratic resilience? To what extent do Australians think universities should be strengthening democracy, and what are the mechanisms for universities to do so?

Critical Education Challenges Facing Democracy through the Lens of Print Media in Australia from 2013 to 2023: What Matters in a Changing World.

Jorge Knijnik, Western Sydney University

Jane Hunter, University of Technology Sydney

This paper presents a study of education and democracy over an eleven-year period from 2013 to 2023 through the lens of four Australian daily newspapers. The research analysed more than 1,000 articles using systematic search terms like 'democratic education', 'Indigenous youth', 'citizenship education' and 'curriculum change'. Findings detailed in "Education and Democracy in the Australian Media: A Decadal Report" (Knijnik, Hunter & Paterson, 2025) expose three dominant themes: i) the political agenda of democratic education (including school funding), ii) the politico-social factors impacting democratic education and curriculum (plus race, class, capitalism, national reporting benchmarks such as NAPLAN, and the recent global pandemic), and iii) the pre-occupations of democratic education and curriculum (involving civics education, values and moral education, liberalism, drug education, consent education, indigenous perspectives, language and literacy). This study highlights the public political tug-of-war over democratic ideals in Australian schooling and its curriculum. The struggle shapes how young people are not necessarily well equipped with the essential foundations for informed citizenship; underscoring the significant impact of political and social forces on educational content and therefore emphasizing the urgent need for democratic pedagogies that promote diversity of thought with the goal of fostering active, resilient and informed participation in democracy.

Democracy on the Offensive: From Recovery to Openness and Effective Counter-Messaging

Mathieu O'Neil, University of Canberra

Resilience refers to the capacity to recover from shocks. Applied to democratic societies, it suggests a defensive posture: 'how to survive exposure to misinformation, polarisation, extremism, etc.' Citizens in democracies must indeed be properly equipped to deal with information pollution. Drawing on results from three iterations of an information literacy program implemented in ACT educational institutions (2024-2025), I will show how we imparted to students, in the context of near-infinite amounts of potentially relevant but weakly authoritative information, effective and cognitively viable information processing skills. These skills improved students' discernment (their ability to assess whether a claim may be misleading) and verification skills (their ability to fact-check). After briefly outlining the structural and cultural obstacles hindering the nation-wide implementation of effective information processing skills in schools, I will present two examples of how democratic resilience can adopt a more offensive posture. First, we must recognise that citizen distrust in institutions will remain high as long as government integrity and transparency do not improve: Open Government Partnership initiatives may help in this regard. Second, by operationalising the mechanisms animating propaganda in autocracies (Carter & Carter 2023), we can map, expose and – if appropriate – denounce and/or ridicule its manifestations in democratic spaces, as well as craft and disseminate effective counter-messages. Carter, E. B., & Carter, B. L. (2023). *Propaganda in autocracies: Institutions, information, and the politics of belief*. Cambridge University Press.



Day 2, Tuesday 1:00pm-2:30pm

Panel 6: Reimagining Democratic Representation

Prospects for Deliberative Policy Agenda Setting in Aotearoa NZ

Anne Bardsley and Kristiann Allen, Complex Conversations Lab

Waipapa Taumata Rau, The University of Auckland

Historically a place of considerable democratic innovation, Aotearoa NZ changed to a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system in 1994, a move meant to ensure proportional representation in which each party's share of the seats in Parliament would be close to its share of the overall vote, and therefore more representative of the peoples' preferences. Now this MMP system is criticised for post-election coalition agreements lacking public scrutiny, and an outsized influence of minor parties pushing an agenda falsely claimed as a 'mandate.' While deliberative agenda setting has been trialled elsewhere, in Aotearoa few meaningful opportunities exist for public input into policy agenda setting beyond pollsters and pressure groups. Still fewer address obligations of Māori partnership under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. A growing collection of practical cases using citizens' assemblies and online engagement in Aotearoa, together with our current work to co-design next generation Pol.is applications, suggest their potential for use in large scale policy-agenda setting. We discuss these opportunities and how they are being adapted to the unique cultural and political context of Aotearoa. This work addresses problems of legitimate and large-scale representation as well as transparent policy agenda setting.

Representative Capacity Making: the Work to Develop and Demonstrate Capacities for Political Representation

Carolyn M. Hendriks, Australian National University

Michael Saward, Warwick University

The work of being an elected representative today is increasingly demanding as they seek to perform representation amid declining trust in political institutions and intensifying battles for political attention. In response, elected officials and their teams invest heavily in ways to develop and showcase their capacities to represent. They construct compelling representative personas, curate online and in-person spaces to connect with constituents, and generate evidence and visuals for audiences. This paper develops conceptual resources to better understand this overlooked aspect of modern representative work. Drawing on the representative claim making framework, the concept of representative capacity making is developed. The work that underpins four key representative capacities in contemporary politics is considered using contemporary examples from the UK and Australia. The discussion reveals the hidden work and workforce that support aspects of modern political representation. Reflections point to the potentially negative impacts of representative capacity making on political equality, diversity and substantive representation.



Day 2, Tuesday 2:30pm- Panel 7: Advancing Deliberative Mini-publics

The World's First Indigenous-Led Climate Assembly - Key Insights and Interventions

Emily Beausoleil, Victoria University of Wellington

Climate assemblies are occurring around the world as a response to two entangled challenges: impending devastation to people and planet by climate change, and 'democratic decline' regarding trust and engagement in formal politics as well as increasing polarisation in civil society. Yet as much as climate assemblies are being held and studied more frequently in the global south, often both funding and design remains firmly based in the global north. This research examines the world's first Indigenous-led climate assembly, convened by the Māori iwi Ngāti Toa for the city of Porirua in Aotearoa New Zealand from Feb-April 2025, offering key insights and lessons learned through the experience on what deliberation that upholds Indigenous political authority looks like, and what impacts this has on both design, experience, and evaluation of deliberation.

Do Australians Support Deliberative Citizen Engagement and Does Information Exposure Matter?

Adele Webb, University of Canberra

Max Grömping, Griffith University

Emily Foley, University of Canberra

Political support is widely understood as essential to democratic resilience and ongoing legitimacy. Yet across advanced democracies, including Australia, trust in institutions and satisfaction with democracy are eroding. Deliberative citizen engagement is often championed as a response to this legitimacy crisis, but we know little about whether citizens actually support such innovations, especially from the Australian context. This paper addresses two key questions: To what extent do Australians support deliberative forms of citizen engagement, and does providing information about how deliberation operates increase that support? We address these questions using original evidence from a representative survey of 4,200 Australians, including a vignette experiment. Our design allows us to map the correlates of diffuse support for deliberation, while also testing whether exposure to information about a deliberative mini public in a parliamentary committee shifts specific support. The contributions of the article are threefold. First, we conceptualise support for deliberative engagement along an Eastonian spectrum from diffuse to specific. Second, we test theories of information updating and perceptual fluency that predict that increasing citizens' familiarity with deliberation will induce more positive attitudes. Third, we provide the first systematic evidence from Australia, with implications for comparative debates on democratic innovation and the future of representative institutions.

Citizen-Led Deliberation for Inclusive Development: Toward Scalable Participatory Policymaking in Nepal

Rabindra Kumar Karki, iDE Nepal

Pramod KC, Habitat for Humanity

This study explored whether citizen-led deliberative processes can enhance inclusiveness, responsiveness, and democratic legitimacy in Nepal's development policymaking. It aimed to align local policies more closely with rural citizens' needs and aspirations while validating the deliberative model through expert consultation. The study is among the first in Nepal to implement structured deliberative models specifically "mini-publics" in policy engagement. It moves beyond tokenistic consultation by deploying a two-stage model: citizen deliberation across agroecological zones, followed by expert validation. Over 600 rural citizens participated in facilitated deliberations using simplified policy briefs and animated videos on key agricultural topics. Pre and post deliberation surveys measured changes in knowledge and preferences. An expert mini-public composed of officials, researchers, and practitioners reviewed citizen inputs and assessed policy relevance. Citizen preferences shifted from short-term subsidies toward longer-term investments in training, infrastructure, and research. Key demands included greater agricultural budget allocation (33%) and enhanced training and research (31%). Experts validated citizen priorities but raised concerns about municipal capacity, methodological rigor, and GESI integration. Four recommendations emerged: localize and inclusively design policies with strong GESI integration; strengthen institutional capacity and coordination; reform agricultural access for marginalized groups; and develop market systems via infrastructure and regulatory improvements.

Day 2, Tuesday 4:30-5:30pm

Democracy Reimagined: The Day in Perspective

Emanuela Savini (University of Canberra)-Moderator

York Albrecht (RESILIO Project)

Emily Beausoleil (Victoria University of Wellington)

Anne Bardsley (University of Auckland)

DAY

5



Day 3, Wednesday 9:00am-10:30am Panel 8: Revitalising Political Parties

Policy Aggregation, Fiscal Constraints, and Democratic Resilience in the 2020s

Peter Sloman, Cambridge University

The period since the 2008 financial crisis has seen growing disillusionment with democratic politics in many western states. Peter Mair's influential analysis in *Ruling the Void* (2013) placed much of the blame on mainstream parties' withdrawal from civil society, 'prioritizing their role as governing (rather than representative) agencies', which created openings for challenger parties on right and left to build support through populist appeals. However, the role of public finance in this process requires closer scrutiny. This paper will examine how fiscal constraints shape parties' ability to articulate and aggregate policy demands in the way discussed by Mair, and will reflect on the challenges this poses for democratic resilience. Party strategies built on policy-based mobilization are critically dependent on identifying new revenue streams or loosening fiscal policy in order to pay for new initiatives. In the difficult macroeconomic context of the 2020s, the inability of mainstream parties to match the promises made by their populist challengers risks exacerbating fragmentation and disengagement. If governments are to regain trust in an era of slow growth and persistent budgetary pressures, there is an urgent need to raise the standard of public debate around economic constraints and policy trade-offs.

Democratic Renewal by Community Independents

John Hawkins, University of Canberra

Unlike in some other countries, disillusionment with the cartelisation of traditional parties in Australia, and their neglect of some important issues, has not led to much growth in extreme parties. Rather there has been the emergence of centrist, moderate, independent members of the House of Representatives (some known as 'Teals') with a greater connection to local communities. While sharing some policy views, these members are not a party. One reason for this difference is Australia's compulsory voting and preferential voting system. High turnouts reduce the influence of extreme parties and encourage major parties to aim at attracting the 'median voter'. Preferential voting reduces the hesitancy that voting for someone not from a major party could be a 'wasted vote'. These independents arose from grassroots initiatives and 'Kitchen Table Conversations'. They tend to make greater use of 'town hall meetings' to keep in touch with community views and represent a form of 'deliberative democracy'.

Canberra in Your Inbox: Australian MPs' E-Newsletters and Styles of Representation

Daniel Casey, Australian Catholic University

Pandanus Petter, Australian National University

A resilient and responsive democracy requires two-way communication between the public and their representatives. In the absence of meaningful communication between parties, leaders, individual MPs on one hand, and everyday people on the other, our democratic system is rendered hollow, or at best becomes rule by disconnected elites. Much media commentary and political communication research focuses on the 'supply' of representation by parties or party leaders. However, individual legislators also have a potentially important role to play in bridging the divide between the system and their constituents through their communication tools. In this paper therefore shed light on the ways MPs use online newsletters to understand, influence and hopefully serve the public. We do so by qualitatively and quantitatively analysing the volume and style of representative functions which Australian MPs of different parties, positions and constituency types emphasised in the period 2024-2025. We find variation in how heavily MPs emphasise their identities as policy advocates, service providers, partisans or trustworthy 'locals' over time and in the context of election campaigns. Our findings have broad relevance for the capacity of everyday representatives to rebuild trust in democracy by aligning their representative outputs with the public's expectations.



Day 3, Wednesday 10:30am-12:00pm

Panel 9: Empowering Youth-led Innovations

Te Huripari (The Storm): Exploring Taiohi/Young People's Experience of a Tiriti/Treaty Based Climate Assembly in Porirua, Aotearoa New Zealand

Conor Twyford, University of Canterbury Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha

Children and young people (taiohi) occupy a "unique positionality" in climate change. By 2100, children aged ten or under in 2020 are projected to experience a five-fold increase in extreme events under 3°C of global warming. The rights of Indigenous, poor, migrant, disabled, and displaced children are most heavily impacted, entrenching existing inequities. Yet to date, taiohi have largely been excluded from climate change decision-making, including in Aotearoa New Zealand. Recent waves of climate protest have helped catalyse interest in climate assemblies as opportunities to engage children's voice and agency. My research follows the first Tiriti (Treaty) based climate assembly in Aotearoa, in the city of Porirua - also the first to involve young people under 18. I explore how their involvement in the Porirua Assembly might advance their climate rights. For practitioners seeking to decolonise deliberative processes and build inclusivity, this study generates important insights around connection, creativity, culture and continuity. In terms of democratic resilience, the emergence of a Te Ao Māori-led climate youth movement, Future Unity, turns the crisis framing of climate change on its head, laying down a challenge to approach these critical issues in a more strengths-based way.

Giving a Shit: Relational Publics, Affective Politics, and Feminist Democratic Theory in Digital Newsfluencing

Claire Fitzpatrick and Raphaela Raaber, Edith Cowan University

This paper examines Aotearoa-based newsfluencers @ShitYouShouldCareAbout to explore how feminist democratic theory can reimagine political engagement and challenge affective polarisation among young audiences. It investigates how youth-centric platforms such as Instagram and Substack are leveraged by newsfluencers to foster relational publics, cultivate parasocial relationships, and nurture a sense of authenticity, inclusivity, and belonging through an ethic of care. By employing everyday discourse, vibrant aesthetics, mundane polls, and emotionally resonant storytelling, these platforms promote transformative justice with the aim of re-engaging politically fatigued youth. Using a multimodal discourse analysis of posts alongside semi-structured interviews with the platform's content creators, this study examines how practices such as content curation, boundary work, and attentive listening shape @ShitYouShouldCareAbout's distinctive approach to deliberation and dialogue. Drawing on feminist democratic theory, the paper critiques the dominance of autonomous, rational and dispassionate discourse in traditional democratic models, advocating instead for embodied and situated knowledge. However, these relational dynamics are constrained by platform affordances, including visibility settings, closed comment features, and algorithmic recommendation systems. Ultimately, the findings suggest that feminist-informed deliberative strategies can strengthen democracy by centering emotion, affect, and everyday lived experiences, helping young people, in their own words: "give a shit."

Performances of Oppositional Politics: Youth Engagement in a Strongman's Heartland

Athena Charanne Presto, ANU

James Lloyd Guittap, Mariano Marcos State University

Nicole Curato, University of Birmingham

This article examines how young people perform oppositional politics within an environment that actively celebrates a strongman's legacy. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork with focus groups and interviews in Ilocos Norte, the heartland of former Filipino dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr., we show that youth develop adaptive, audience-sensitive forms of dissent in performing oppositional politics. Conceptually, the study contributes to rethinking youth engagement in building and sustaining democratic resilience by foregrounding everyday acts as legitimate forms of political engagement in electoral democracies with authoritarian tendencies. Empirically, it offers a grounded account of how young people negotiate their political subjectivities under conditions of normalised loyalty towards strongman legacy, nuancing the complex trade-offs and judgments that underpin seemingly mundane acts of dissent. Democratic resilience, we argue, is forged and fortified in these micropolitical spaces, particularly at a time when the scope for contestatory action is increasingly constrained and demands creative, care-based, yet self-aware strategies. Overall, the small and relational acts these youth perform sustain spaces of contestation and affirm that resistance persists, even when it must be improvised in quiet and provisional ways.

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Day 3, Wednesday 1:00pm-2:30pm
Panel 10: Reimagining Voice and Advocacy

The Sound of Silence: How Deliberate Silence Makes a Loud Statement

Friedel Marquardt, University of Canberra

In 2023, Australia held a referendum to establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament. The referendum was ultimately voted down, not without intense and at times harmful public discourse directed towards First Nations people, highlighting the persistent exclusivity of the public sphere. After the Voice, First Nations leaders called for a Week of Silence to reflect on the outcome and a way forward. In today's content hungry environment, to stop, reflect and not discuss the outcome of a key event like this seems unnatural. It seems counterintuitive when many seek to increase democratic participation for marginalised groups; something the Voice also aimed to do. However, this Week of Silence reveals a profound act of agency that begs the question: how do you reimagine democracy to respond to silence? For a democracy to be resilient in the face of social change and inclusive of those it seeks to make change for, it needs to integrate and respond to alternate forms of engagement. Through a decolonial lens and drawing on the Voice as a case study, this paper posits that silence is a powerful act of agency in public discourse that must be acknowledged for inclusive deliberation.

Democratic Resilience and Affective Justice

Olivia S. Mendoza- University of Canberra

This paper explores the normative position that democratic resilience entails affective justice. Any resilient democratic institution ought to have an account of an emotionally healthy and critical democratic agent at the individual level, and an account of affective solidarity at the collective level. First, I introduce affective injustice to deliberative scholarship, framing questions of discursive participation as questions of emotional capacity. I draw from the emotions literature in socio-political philosophy, where affective injustice is defined as injustice that people suffer in their capacity as emotional beings, such as emotional distress and emotional manipulation (Gallegos 2023). Second, I show how deliberative spaces such as deliberative forums have the potential to foster affective well-being and solidarity. Third, I sketch a normative position according to which democratic resilience entails affective justice, not only epistemic and expressive epistemic justice. I conclude by reflecting on the implications of such an account of democratic resilience to democratic innovations.

Collaboration Engines – How the Justice and Equity Centre Approaches Systemic Advocacy

Mark Riboldi, UTS

Mich de Waal, UTS and Rivkah Nissim (Justice and Equity Centre)

Civil society organisations (CSOs) can play an important democratic role, mediating and negotiating connections between communities and governments. Whether individual CSOs do this successfully or not is a different question entirely, and speaks to questions around organisational structure, CSO behaviour, as well as the professionalisation of the sector over time. This paper explores aspects of these questions through the lens of the Justice and Equity Centre (JEC), an Australian community legal centre that works across a broad range of issues, including disability rights, discrimination, homelessness and First Nations justice. The research, co-designed between JEC and researchers from the University of Technology Sydney, explores the ways that the JEC holds spaces and coordinates networks within multi-party collaborations aiming to achieve forms of systemic change. In particular, the research highlights the importance of negotiated power and relationships within collaborative ‘engines’, which form the basis for more targeted interventions and advocacy activities. The findings suggest a series of principles for CSOs which can form the basis for collaboration, deliberation and generally working in coalition.

Day 3, Wednesday 2:30-4pm

Democracy Reimagined: The Day in Perspective

Hans Asenbaum (University of Canberra)-Moderator

Peter Sloman (Cambridge University)

Lydia Khalil (Lowy Institute)

SPEAKER BIOS



Adele Webb

Adele Webb is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy, University of Canberra. Her research explores democratic theory and practice, with a focus on complex political attitudes, the role of subjectivities in political behaviour, and opportunities for democratic innovation. She has particular expertise in Philippine politics and the legacies of US colonialism. Her first book, *Chasing Freedom: The Philippines' Long Journey to Democratic Ambivalence* (2022), examines enduring postcolonial tensions in the country's contemporary democratic life. At the Centre, Adele leads the Connecting to Parliament project, which translates research into actionable strategies for strengthening representative democracy in Australia. She also contributed to the design of International IDEA's global survey on Perceptions of Democracy and has consulted for the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Before completing her PhD at the University of Sydney in 2019, she spent nearly a decade working in international development.



Albert Dzur (online)

Albert Dzur is a democratic theorist interested in citizen participation and power-sharing in criminal justice, public administration, and education. His most recent book, co-authored with Carolyn Hendriks, is *Democracy in Action: Collective Problem Solving in Citizens' Governance Spaces* (Oxford, 2025). Other publications include *Democracy Inside: Participatory Innovation in Unlikely Places* (Oxford, 2019); *Rebuilding Public Institutions Together: Professionals and Citizens in a Participatory Democracy* (Cornell, 2017); *Punishment, Participatory Democracy, and the Jury* (Oxford, 2012); *Democratic Professionalism: Citizen Participation and the Reconstruction of Professional Ethics, Identity, and Practice* (Penn State, 2008); and, co-edited with Ian Loader and Richard Sparks, *Democratic Theory and Mass Incarceration* (Oxford, 2016). His interviews with innovative professionals appear in *Boston Review*, *The Good Society*, *International Journal of Restorative Justice*, where he is an associate editor, and *National Civic Review*, where he is a contributing editor. He also serves on the editorial boards of the *Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, and *Democratic Theory*. He is a Distinguished Research Professor in political science and philosophy at Bowling Green State University and an Associate of the Centre for Deliberative Democracy Governance at the University of Canberra.



Alex Fischer

Dr. Alex Fischer is co-chair of the Australian Resilient Democracy Research and Data Network. He works at the intersection of research, policy and social innovation, helping bridge ideas into practical change. His career has taken him from the Earth Institute at Columbia University, where he established programs on environmental security and drive global policy focus on the data revolution for sustainable development, to helping establish SafePani, a social enterprise improving access to safe drinking water in Bangladesh. In Australia, he has contributed to the federal Strengthening Democracy Taskforce and is a member of the Dusseldorp Forum. He holds honorary and adjunct academic appointments with ANU's School of Cybernetics, Monash Sustainable Development Institute, and UTS's Human Technology Institute, and has published widely on governance, human-environmental wellbeing, and institutional design.



Andreas Radtke

Andreas Radtke is Executive Director of the Canberra office of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) since its establishment in February 2025, covering the foundation's activities in Australia and New Zealand. Andreas has worked with the German Federal Foreign Service from June 2001, with postings to the German Embassies in Kuala Lumpur/Malaysia (2005-2008), Jakarta/Indonesia (2013-2015) and Canberra/Australia (2010-13 and 2019-2023). He has also worked at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin as well as for the EU Institutions in Brussels on issues ranging from the Middle East peace process (2002-2005), European Affairs (2008-10), and South Asia (2015-16) to foreign service corporate organization (2017-19). Andreas holds a Master Degree (1998) in Arabic and Media studies from Free University Berlin, and a PhD (2001) specializing in early Islamic history and law.



Anne Bardsley

Anne Bardsley has a background in science and expertise in evidence synthesis and knowledge brokerage at the science-policy interface. Her work applies systems thinking to complex and long-term societal issues, and looks at how better collective decisions can be made to enhance societal resilience and wellbeing, using tools of deliberative democracy. She has been involved in researching, designing and facilitating citizens' assemblies and online engagements in Aotearoa New Zealand, and is currently working with The Computational Democracy Project to test a geo-located, AI enhanced version of Pol.is for nationwide agenda setting in NZ. She was recognised in the 2020 New Year Honours as a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for her contributions to science and the State.



Athena Charanne Presto

Athena Charanne Presto is a doctoral researcher at the Australian National University's School of Sociology. Her research interests include sociology of gender, political sociology, and social policy.



Carolyn M. Hendriks

Carolyn M. Hendriks is a Professor at the Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University. She undertakes social research on democratic aspects of contemporary governance, including public engagement, community organising, listening and representation. Carolyn is the author of four books, the latest of which examines citizen-led efforts to solve practical governance problems (*Democracy in Action*, co-authored with Albert Dzur, published by Oxford University Press, 2025).



Claire Fitzpatrick

Dr Claire Fitzpatrick is a Communications Lecturer at Edith Cowan University. She specialises in Political Communications and has extensive experience deploying mixed methods to understand how social media networks enable and constrain political behaviour, with a particular emphasis on how deliberative democracy enables the pursuit of individual, activist and regulatory goals. Her dialogic approach to teaching draws on her own interdisciplinary research at the intersections of politics and media, gender and race, and social movements in civil society.



Conor Twyford

Born in Ōtepoti/Dunedin, Aotearoa, Conor is Pākehā / European of Scots, English and Irish heritage. She has worked in campaigns and communications roles in the union movement, undertaken research and community development work in the Pacific, and before starting her Masters, led a sexual violence survivors' support agency in Wellington. Her Masters thesis (2022) explored education union member leaders' perspectives on how they centre te tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) of tamariki Māori (Māori children) in their climate action. She is currently undertaking PhD research via the University of Canterbury Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha, exploring children and young people's experience of a local, Tiriti (Treaty) based citizen's climate assembly which took place recently in the urban centre of Porirua, in the lower North Island/Te Ika a Māui.



Daniel Casey

Dr Daniel Casey is a lecturer in politics and international relations at the Australian Catholic University and visiting fellow at the Australian National University (ANU). He completed his PhD in August 2024 at ANU. His PhD examines letters from members of the public to Australian Prime Minister Howard - who writes; why they write; and the impact of the letters on public policy and the political agenda.



Emily Beausoleil

Emily Beausoleil is Associate Professor of Politics at Victoria University of Wellington, co-Editor-in-Chief of Democratic Theory journal, Associate Investigator for the current Australian Research Council grant 'Democratic Resilience: The Public Sphere and Extremist Attacks', and 2024 recipient of the American Political Science Association Distinguished Award for Civic and Community Engagement. Her first book is *Staging Democracy: The Political Work of Live Performance* (De Gruyter, 2023). She has been the independent researcher of the Porirua Assembly on Climate since 2021.



Emanuela Savini

Emanuela works at the intersection of democratic theory and practice, examining how citizen-led action and participatory governance can transform public policymaking. Her research explores how government organisations operationalise democratic innovations and build institutional capacity for participatory public management, with particular focus on the conditions that enable genuine co-creation and power-sharing between state and civic actors. As Director of the Public Value Studio, she designs civic participation processes and community-led initiatives that shift power and build social capital. Her work includes the Democracy Lab, an award-winning initiative for advancing social cohesion. Emanuela's approach centres on moving beyond consultation to create spaces where communities exercise genuine authority in shaping the decisions that affect their lives through participatory action research models.



Emily Foley

Emily Foley is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy at the University of Canberra. She is currently working on the Australian Research Council-funded Discovery Project Democratic Resilience: The Public Sphere and Extremist Attacks (2021–25). She is also a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Flinders University. She is also a co-convenor of the Australian Political Studies Association Political Organisation and Participation (POP) caucus. Emily Foley researches social democratic and centre-left parties, focusing on party politics, political organisation, and participation in Australia. Her work also explores immigration policy-making and labour rights, with an interest in the intersection of democratic governance and social justice.



Friedel Marquardt

Dr Friedel Marquardt is a research assistant at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Centre for Environmental Governance, and sessional academic in the Faculty of Business, Government and Law at the University of Canberra. She recently completed her PhD which explored the viability of social media for marginalised groups to share their narratives in the public sphere, focusing on First Nations in Australia. Her research interests lie in participatory governance, political communication and how new understandings of ourselves and society lead to enhanced democratic engagement. Friedel has also taught and convened many politics units at the University of Canberra, mainly focusing on public policy and Australian government.



Hans Asenbaum

Dr Hans Asenbaum is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy, University of Canberra. His research interests include radical democracy, queer and gender studies, new materialism, digital politics, and participatory research methods. In 2022 he received the ECPR Rising Star Award. Hans is the author of *The Politics of Becoming: Anonymity and Democracy in the Digital Age* (Oxford University Press, 2023) and co-editor of *Research Methods in Deliberative Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2022) as well as co-editor of the *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*. His work has been published in the *American Political Science Review*, *New Media & Society*, *Politics & Gender*, and the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.



Jane Hunter

Jane Hunter is a former English teacher and head teacher in government schools in NSW, the ACT, and the UK; she has worked in education policy in government, and in senior positions within the NSW Department of Education. She is an Associate Professor in teacher education at UTS where her research, teaching and publications focus on pedagogy, teacher professional learning, technology enhanced learning and curriculum in K-12 schools.



John Dryzek

John Dryzek is Distinguished Professor and former Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow in the Centre for Deliberative Democracy at the University of Canberra. Before moving to UC, he was Distinguished Professor of Political Science and ARC Federation Fellow at the Australian National University. He is former Head of the Political Science Departments at the University of Oregon and University of Melbourne, and of the Social and Political Theory Program at ANU. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy, and former editor of the *Australian Journal of Political Science*. Working in both political theory and empirical social science, he is best known for his contributions in the areas of democratic theory and practice and environmental politics. One of the instigators of the 'deliberative turn' in thinking about democracy, he has published eight books in this area with Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Polity Press. His work in environmental politics and climate governance has yielded seven books with Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Basil Blackwell. He has also worked on comparative studies of democratization, critical public policy analysis, and the history and philosophy of social science. His current research emphasizes global justice, governance in the Anthropocene, and confronting contemporary challenges to democracy.



John Hawkins

Dr John Hawkins is Head of the Canberra School of Government at the University of Canberra. He holds an MSc from the London School of Economics and a PhD in political science from the Australian National University. He was formerly secretary of the Senate Economics Committee. He is writing the chapter on the crossbenches for *The First Albanese Government 2022-2025*, the latest volume in UC's long-running Australian Commonwealth Administration series, with Tom King.



Jordan McSwiney

Jordan McSwiney is a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Deliberative Democracy at the University of Canberra. He researches the far right, with a focus on the organisation and communication of far-right parties and movements. He is the author of *Far-Right Political Parties in Australia: Disorganisation and Electoral Failure* (Routledge).



Jorge Knijnik

Jorge Knijnik is an Associate Professor at Western Sydney University (NSW, Australia), where he is a lecturer in the School of Education and a senior researcher in the Institute for Culture & Society. Jorge works in the intersection between curriculum, democratic schooling and youth political education in the Global South. His latest books include *Tales of South American Football: passion, revolution and glory* (Fair Play Publishing) and *A Critical History of Health, Sport, and Physical Education: The Three-legged Curriculum in Australia* (with Michelle Gorzanelli, Springer).



Kei Nishiyama

Dr. Kei Nishiyama is a Lecturer in Education and Politics at Kaichi International University, Japan. He received his Ph.D. from the Centre for Deliberative Democracy at the University of Canberra. He studies the intersection of political science, political philosophy and pedagogy, with a specific focus on children and young people's deliberative participation, theories of deliberative democracy, and democratic education both in and beyond school settings. His recent book, *Children, Democracy and Education: A Deliberative Reconsideration*, was published by SUNY Press in 2025.



Lydia Khalil

Lydia Khalil is Program Director of the Transnational Challenges Program at the Lowy Institute. Lydia has spent her career focusing on the intersection between governance, technology and security. She has a broad range of policy, research and private sector experience and has a professional background in international relations, national security and strategic intelligence analysis, with a particular focus on democracy and political violence. She leads the Digital Threats to Democracy and Democratic Erosion Systems Mapping projects at the Institute. Lydia is also a Senior Research Fellow at Deakin University's Alfred Deakin Institute. She serves as an editorial board member of the academic journal *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Additionally, she serves on the research advisory council for the Toda Peace Institute. Lydia is a frequent media commentator and has published widely in both popular and academic publications on her areas of expertise. She holds a BA in International Relations from Boston College and a master's in International Security from Georgetown University. She is the author of *Rise of the Extreme Right: The New Global Extremism and the Threat to Democracy* (Penguin, 2022).



Maria Skóra

Dr Maria Skóra is a Research Fellow at the Institut für Europäische Politik in Berlin and Visiting Researcher at the SWPS University in Warsaw, serving also as an expert and consultant at the Federal Agency for Civic Education in Germany (BpB). Her expertise focuses on populism, autocratisation and (re)democratisation, and elections in a comparative perspective. She offers advice on Germany, Poland, chosen EU policies, and transatlantic relations.



Mark Riboldi

Dr Mark Riboldi is a Lecturer in Social Impact with UTS Business School at the University of Technology Sydney. Mark studies the role of civil society within democracy and has published in *The Conversation*, *ABC Religion & Ethics* as well as the academic journals *Interest Groups & Advocacy*, *Geographical Research* and the *Australian Journal of Political Science*. Mark's research includes how Australian not-for-profits responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, the democratic relationships between organisations and communities, and the rise of independents and minor parties in Australian politics.



Mathieu O'Neil

Mathieu O'Neil is Professor of Communication in the University of Canberra's News and Media Research Centre, Faculty of Arts and Design, and Honorary Associate Professor of Sociology at the Australian National University. Mathieu co-founded the ANU's Virtual Observatory for the Study of Online Networks, a world leader in computational social science. Most recently, he is developing heuristics to detect online echo chambers (*Bots Building Bridges (3B): Theoretical, empirical, and technological foundations for systems that monitor and support political deliberation online*, Volkswagen Foundation, 2021-2025). At UC, Mathieu initiated a collaboration with the Faculty of Education to co-design information literacy resources for schools (*Co-developing a new approach to media literacy in the attention economy*, ACT Education Directorate-UC ASRP, 2021-2022; *Building information resilience: A collaborative project* with ACT teacher-librarians, ACT Education Directorate-UC ASRP, 2024-2026). Mathieu founded and edited the peer-reviewed *Journal of Peer Production* (2011-2021), edited the *Handbook of Peer Production* (Wiley-Blackwell Handbooks in Communication and Media, 2021), and founded an international think tank, the Digital Commons Policy Council, in 2021. He leads an international team researching the sustainability of free, libre and open source software (*Mapping the co-production of digital infrastructure by peer projects and firms*, Sloan and Ford Foundations, Critical Digital Infrastructure Fund, 2019-2021; *DCPC: Pilot research and operational costs*, Ford Foundation, 2022-2025). Mathieu's research has been published in *Social Networks; Information, Communication & Society; Réseaux; New Media and Society*; the *International Journal of Communication*; and *Organization Studies*, amongst others.



Melisa Ross

Melisa Ross is Postdoctoral researcher at the University of Bremen, Co-Lead of the Global Citizens' Assemblies Network (GloCAN), and Co-Chair of ECPR's Standing Group on Democratic Innovations. She received her PhD from Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany in 2022. She was a researcher at the LATINNO project (Democracy and Democratization Department, WZB Berlin Social Science Center, 2017-2021) and the Healthier Democracies project (Public Agenda, New York, USA, 2021-2022). Her interests span contemporary politics, citizen participation, deliberation, and democratic innovations, especially at the regional and transnational level in Europe and Latin America.



Mich de Waal

Mich de Waal is a sessional academic and research assistant in the Management Department of UTS Business School with extensive policy and advocacy experience.



Mohammed Muideen
Olakunle

Mohammed is a researcher and development policy expert whose work spans open governance, digital misinformation, and social inequality. He has led and contributed to projects exploring how data, technology, and policy intersect to shape democratic processes, particularly in Nigeria and across Africa. His professional experience includes roles in media reform, fact-checking, and civic technology, where he has developed tools and strategies to enhance transparency and public engagement, he currently leads Operations and Research at Media Inno Tech. Muideen's research on open data and governance has been published in Data & Policy Journal, reflecting his commitment to evidence-driven solutions. He holds advanced academic training in Political Science and International Development, and is about to start his PhD in Global Development. He is passionate about inclusive governance and continues to work at the intersection of media, governance and technology to develop innovative approaches for strengthening democratic accountability and empower marginalized communities through data access, digital literacy, and participatory policy design.



Nardine Alnemr

Dr. Nardine Alnemr is a lecturer in politics and policy in the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) and fellow of the Indo-Pacific Research Centre (IPRC) at Murdoch University. Nardine's work is at the intersection of democracy, participation and technology. Before joining Murdoch, Nardine completed her PhD at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy, the University of Canberra on algorithms in deliberative democracy and was a research fellow in tech policy at the University of Western Australia. Nardine's research is published in Democratization, European Political Science Review, Contemporary Political Theory, and Contemporary Politics.



Nicholas Biddle

Professor Nicholas Biddle is Head of the School of Politics and International Relations. Prior to this, he was Deputy Director of the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, and head of the methods, survey, and evaluation programs in the centre. He has a Bachelor of Economics (Hons.) from the University of Sydney and a Master of Education from Monash University. He also has a PhD in Public Policy from the ANU where he wrote his thesis on the benefits of and participation in education of Indigenous Australians. He previously held a Senior Research Officer and Assistant Director position in the Methodology Division of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. He is currently a Fellow of the Tax and Transfer Policy Institute. Professor Biddle is a member of the Behavioural Economics Team for Australia (BETA) Academic Advisory Panel, (Prime Minister and Cabinet) and the Australian Statistics Advisory Council (Australian Bureau of Statistics).



Olivia Mendoza

Olivia Mendoza is a migrant Filipina PhD candidate at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy, working on emotions and deliberation from a feminist and deliberative democratic lens. She has published with Routledge, Educational Philosophy and Theory, and Social Science Teaching, Research and Practice.



Pandanus Petter

Pandanus Petter is a Research Fellow at the School of Politics and International Relations at Australian National University. His research interests include Australian politics and values, as well as democratic representation, public opinion and housing policy.



Peter Lewis

Peter is an owner and director of Essential, a fellow at the independent thinktank Per Capita and the founder of Civility, a collaborative engagement platform for advocacy campaigns. For more than two decades he has worked with progressive organisations including unions, not-for-profits and responsible businesses to deliver social change. Peter is a regular columnist with the Guardian Australia, host of the Burning Platforms podcast, and the author of five books including Webtopia and The Public Square Project.



Peter Sloman

Peter Sloman is Professor of British Politics at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Churchill College. His research focusses on political ideas, public policy, and electoral politics in modern Britain, and he is currently working on the politics of tax and spending in the UK and other Westminster democracies. Peter has written two books – *The Liberal Party and the Economy, 1929-1964* (Oxford, 2015) and *Transfer State: The Idea of a Guaranteed Income and the Politics of Redistribution in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2019) – as well as a number of articles in history and political science journals, and has co-edited a volume on *Universal Basic Income in Historical Perspective* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) with Daniel Zamora Vargas and Pedro Ramos Pinto. He is also part of the editorial team at *The Political Quarterly*.



Pramod KC

Dr. Pramod is a seasoned public policy scholar with a PhD from Yonsei University, South Korea, and a postdoctoral fellowship from the University of Sheffield, UK. His research spans public policy analysis, comparative public policy, and institutional theory, with a focus on e-governance and federalization in Nepal. He has led major projects such as GRAPE and the Study and Expert Fund supported by GIZ Nepal, contributing to municipal strategy development and policy think tank promotion. Currently, he serves as Senior Specialist (Policy and Governance) at Habitat for Humanity Nepal, advancing evidence-based, participatory, and action-oriented policy research. He is also affiliated with Kathmandu University as Assistant Professor.



Rabindra Kumar Karki

Rabindra Kumar Karki is a development professional with over 12 years of experience working in rural Nepal, particularly in the water and agriculture sectors. He currently serves as a Project Manager at iDE Nepal, where he leads initiatives focused on agricultural innovation and climate-resilient farming systems. Rabindra holds a degree in Agricultural Engineering and a Master's in Interdisciplinary Water Resources Management. At iDE, he has been at the forefront of promoting and scaling innovative technologies for smallholder farmers. His work emphasizes testing, piloting, and evaluating inclusive approaches that enhance productivity, improve water use efficiency, and build resilience among farming communities. With deep field experience and a passion for practical innovation, Rabindra is committed to driving sustainable impact through scalable, farmer-centered solutions.



Raphaela Raaber

Raphaela Raaber is engaged in youth-led digital innovations that support political engagement, as well as climate change and youth mental health research. She is coordinating the development of the Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit, including climate-conscious media, and supports policy impact at Edith Cowan University's Centre for People, Place, and Planet. She is interested in using Eco-Feminist Participatory Action Research to understand how digital information ecosystems create paradoxical spaces that simultaneously enable truth-telling and the perpetuation of oppressive ideologies, fundamentally impacting climate action, justice, human rights and democracy.



Rivkah Nissim

Rivkah has 25 years' experience in policy, advocacy and evaluation in not-for-profits, government and consulting. She joined the Justice and Equity Centre as Impact Manager in 2022.



Ron Levy

Ron Levy, College of Law, Governance and Regulation, ANU. Prof Levy's work adapts the political theory of deliberative democracy to understand how contentious constitutional problems can be better managed. For example, it explores deliberative democratic approaches to polarising human rights cases, constitutional design in divided societies, and armed conflict. Levy is currently co-leading the Deliberative Peacemaking collaborative project, which draws on more than 25 contributors from 14 countries. Past books include *Deliberative Peace Referendums* (Oxford University Press, 2021, with Ian O'Flynn and Hoi Kong); *The Law of Deliberative Democracy* (Routledge, 2016, with Graeme Orr) and *The Cambridge Handbook of Deliberative Constitutionalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2018, with Hoi Kong, Graeme Orr and Jeff King eds).



Selen Ercan

Selen Ercan is Professor of Political Science and Director of the Centre for Deliberative Democracy at the University of Canberra, Australia. Her research examines how deliberative engagement can address the crisis of democracy and foster democratic resilience. She has published three books and over fifty journal articles and book chapters on the theory and practice of deliberative democracy, examining its application across a wide range of settings, from structured forums to the wider public sphere.



Simon Angus

Professor Simon Angus is a computational and complexity scientist in Monash University's Department of Economics, and co-founder of SoDa Laboratories and the Monash IP Observatory. He uses computational methods like data science, machine learning, and agent-based modelling to tackle challenges across social, biological, and physical sciences, often blending fields such as social science, policy, and AI. Simon leads projects including Astro, a natural language research search tool that he created; AssistantGPT, an advanced AI assistant; and the Monash IP Observatory, a global internet measurement platform used by organisations such as the United Nations, the US FCC and the Washington Post.



Thamy Pogrebinschi

Thamy Pogrebinschi is a Senior Researcher at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. She coordinated the LATINNO Project, which built the largest database on democratic innovations in Latin America. Her latest book is *Innovating Democracy? The Means and Ends of Citizen Participation in Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).



Timothy Millar

Timothy Millar is a PhD Candidate at the University of Canberra whose research looks into node-based modelling of cognitive warfare and misinformation. Tim's current research is looking at a comparative study looking at the differences in doctrine between Chinese and Russian misinformation campaigns and how techniques and tactics have evolved over the past ten years to best achieve influence effects within target communities during key global crises and events.



York Albrecht

York Albrecht is a Research Associate at Institut für Europäische Politik e.V. He holds a M.A. in Political Science from Freie Universität Berlin. His research focuses on democracy, the rule of law and their resilience in the EU and EU accession candidates. He is particularly interested in interactions between regression of the rule of law and the European Single Market. York Albrecht is a member of the Team EUROPE DIRECT Speakers Pool of the European Commission in Germany and a re:constitution fellow 2025/2026.



Zainab Oyiza Sanni

Zainab Oyiza Sanni is a researcher and fact-checker, leading the development of products and tools to bridge access gaps in combating information disorders at Media Inno Tech. Her work sits at the critical intersection of media technology and democratic participation, developing solutions that strengthen civic engagement in an era of widespread disinformation. She is currently completing a postgraduate degree in Media, Communications and Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science, focusing on the impact of fossil-fuel disinformation on communities affected by oil pollution. Her research interest extends to community-centered approaches to media innovation and examining the impact of information disorders on underserved communities. Through her work with News Verifier Africa and projects like Facts inclusive, she is at the forefront of pushing for information technology towards improving democratic participation while addressing information asymmetries that disadvantage marginalized communities in civic processes. Zainab's commitment to media excellence and democratic empowerment has earned recognition from World Merit, the International Centre for Journalists, and the Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism. Her track record includes winning the broadcast category of the International Organisation of Migration Reporting Competition, Nigeria (2022) and receiving the top prize at GIFSEP's Nigeria Climate Media Awards (2024).

