

Abstracts and bios:

Federico Tarragoni: *Fighting for democracy. A sociology of Nuit debout activists*

In this lecture, we will present the results of an ongoing longitudinal study on the trajectories of participants in the Nuit debout movement in Paris. This movement, which developed between March and July 2016 following a demonstration against labour reform in France, had the objective of fighting neoliberalism and "its world" in order to build a new democratic utopia. The results of the survey are threefold: the individualisation of the commitment goes hand in hand with the invention of a new political collective, the 'square', synonymous with the demos; the entry into the movement was experienced as a biographical and political event, often re-elaborated afterwards; the failure, far from constituting a factor of depoliticisation, was a reason for the melancholic re-engagement of the democratic utopia, in new fights and new struggles.

Federico Tarragoni is a sociologist of politics and a senior lecturer at the Université Paris Cité, where he founded the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Politics (CRIPOLIS). Former Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences of the University, he co-led the Laboratory of Social and Political Change (EA 7335), and was appointed Chair "Democracy" by the European University Alliance Circle U. He has published numerous books, including *L'Énigme révolutionnaire* (Les Prairies ordinaires, 2015), *Sociologies de l'individu* (La Découverte, 2018), *L'Esprit démocratique du populisme* (La Découverte, 2019), *Émancipation* (Anamosa, 2021) and *Sociologie du conflit* (Armand Colin, 2021). Author of reference works on populism, his research has been awarded the Schneider Aguirre Basualdo prize by the Chancellerie des Universités de Paris and the Young Sociologist prize by the French-speaking International Sociology Association. He is currently engaged in a long-term investigation on the participants of the Nuit debout movement.

Cristina Flesher Fominaya: *Addressing Democratic Challenges: Some insights from social movements*

In this talk I discuss how social movements can impact democracy in a positive way, drawing on my research into social mobilizations following two global crises: The global financial crisis of 2008 and the Coronavirus pandemic. I draw on specific examples to illustrate movements' contributions to democracy through imaginaries, innovation, and concrete action.

Cristina Flesher Fominaya is Professor of Global Studies at Aarhus University, where she heads up the Deminova Lab for democratic innovation and social movements. She is Editor in Chief of the journal [Social Movement Studies](#), and co-founder of the open access social movements journal [Interface](#). Her three most recent books are [Democracy Reloaded: Inside Spain's Political Laboratory from 15-M to Podemos](#) (2020); [Social Movements in a Globalized World 2nd Edition](#) (2020) and [The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary European Social Movements: Protest in Turbulent Times](#) (2020). She has published widely on social movements, politics, and democracy: [Google Scholar Profile](#)

Jan Løhmann Stephensen: *Chat Democracy and Deliberative Auxiliaries*

With the recent rapid advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially Large Language Models (LLMs) models like Google's *Bard*, Open AI's GPT, and the much discussed/hyped ChatGPT, it seems almost inevitably that these technologies soon will also be interwoven with the processes of cultural meaning-making, argumentation, and civic deliberation in the democratic public sphere. As these technologies become fully integrated into various other (seemingly) non-AI-related interfaces and stand-alone apps and software services, they are bound to impact our democratic lives and societies profoundly. The present research — which at present is mostly on the level of a research proposal — will investigate the future role of AI in such processes and the implications for democratic participation and representation such entanglements might have, especially regarding civic participation in the democratic public sphere. Is the grim reality, like recently suggested by Hannes Bajohr, that "whoever controls language models controls politics", potentially leading to a

“democratic disaster” (2023), or could there perhaps also be some silver linings to these dark clouds? And if so: what would *that* take (both in terms of research, and training)?

Jan Løhmann Stephensen is associate professor at Aesthetics & Culture, Aarhus University, Denmark. His research interests are cultures and practices of participation, democracy and the public sphere, creativity and its diffusion into non-art related spheres like work life, economics, policy-making, university research agendas and new media technologies (which in recent years mostly has been in relation to AI). He has also written on transmedia phenomena such as adaptation and novelization. He is co-editor and co-founder of *Conjunctions: Transdisciplinary Journal of Cultural Participation* (albeit, as the other members of the board will note, not a very active member of this). Email: jloehmanns@cc.au.dk.

Pascal Gielen: *Towards a politics of vulnerability: Art, urban intimacies and the aesthetics of democracies*

Over the past two decades, crises such as financial crises, energy crises, terrorism, wars, pandemics, and ecocides have occurred at a rapid pace. Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci once referred to this situation as an "organic crisis." It is a period of governmental vacuum in which the old political system no longer offers solutions, but a new political model has not yet been designed to thoroughly address the accumulating problems. For Gramsci, the interwar period was such a time, and according to Pascal Gielen, we are experiencing such an episode in history again today. Gramsci saw two ways out in his time: either "caesarism" (fascism) or communism. Gielen also sees two ways out today: either repressive liberalism or "commonism" (not with a "u" this time, but with an "o"). In his lecture he will think through commonism speculatively. In his eyes commonism is not a power politics, but a politics that starts from recognizing each other's vulnerability, of people and things, of culture and nature. It is also not a politics of distrust, but of trust. In his lecture, he outlines how such a politics of vulnerability can be built on the basis of intimacy and aesthetics.

Pascal Gielen (1970) is writer and full professor of sociology of culture and politics at the Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts (Antwerp University - Belgium) where he leads the Culture Commons Quest Office (CCQO). Gielen is editor of the international book series *Antennae - Arts in Society* (Valiz). In 2016 he became laureate of the Odysseus grant for excellent international scientific research of the Fund for Scientific Research-Flanders in Belgium. In 2022 he was appointed by the Flemish Government as curator of the Culture Talks conference. Gielen has published many books which are translated in Chinese, English, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish and Ukrainian. His research focuses on creative labour, the common, urban and cultural politics. Gielen works and lives in Antwerp, Belgium.

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Louise Ejgod Hansen & Christiane Oved Særkjær: Children as cultural citizens

In the presentation we will discuss the way in which children are and are given the opportunity to act as cultural citizens. This will be done in relation to the research project *Børns møde med den nationale kulturarv* (2023-2026, funded by Augustinus Fonden), in which we examine children's right to and experiences of our national cultural heritage in collaboration with the Royal Danish Theatre, the National Gallery of Denmark and the National Museum of Denmark. The project raises a lot of interesting questions regarding democracy, including:

1. How are children, who are not formally citizens with the right to participate in the formal democratic processes, given a voice and agency as cultural citizens in national cultural policy and in the strategies of the institutions?
2. What kind of democratic rights for children are central in cultural policy and the institutional practices?

3. How is the balance between giving children access to culture and right to perform and express their own culture(s) seen from an institutional perspective?
4. How is the balance between children as becomings (future citizens) and beings (present citizens) in the institutions and in cultural policy?

Louise Ejgod Hansen, Associate Professor, Dramaturgy. Her main research areas are cultural policy, cultural institutions and participation. She has been involved in several research projects and evaluations including DELTAG and rethinkIMPACTS 2017. She is editor of Nordic Journal of Cultural Policy.

Christiane Oved Særkjær, Postdoctoral researcher in the research project Children's meeting with the national cultural heritage. Her main research interests are within the field of cultural institutions (mainly museums), mediation and participation. She holds a PhD in Museology and has worked at Centre for Cultural Evaluation, Aarhus University.

Julie Krog: *A new role for public libraries in democracy?*

Since their establishment in the 1920s, public libraries in Denmark have had a strong democratic core. However, profound changes in political parties, the media, and civil society have shifted the way our democracy unfolds and is practiced. Since 2020, Aarhus Public Libraries have therefore focused on investigating and testing the functions, roles, and potentials of libraries in strengthening democracy. In my presentation, I will talk about the understanding of democracy that underlies the libraries democracy work, the democratic challenges they aim to solve, and how it is done in practice.

Julie Krog Vistisen works with democracy development at Aarhus Public Libraries. Since her master's degree in media studies and analytical journalism in 2014 she has worked in the field of 'live journalism', which unfolds in the meeting between people. Hence moderation of live conversations, talks, debates etc. is her practical expertise.

Beatriz Gonzalez: *Creating spaces with agency to act – The youth voice matter project*

The youth voice matter project is a public art mobile Installation made in collaboration with Ungdomsbureauet at Ungdommens Folkemøde that unfolded 8th-9th September 2021 in Copenhagen, with the aim to create a space where youth voices can resonate and be heard by both citizens and policy makers. The talk will present the artistic idea behind the installation based on interconnectivity between two spaces, display the challenges that the installation responds to, and discuss some of the testimonies collected during the installation.

Beatriz Gonzalez is a social artist, curator and activist. I founded the artist collective Useful art for communities (UAC), based in Aarhus, Institut for (X) since 2017. I am also the owner of a startup called Beatriz GR studio, where our mission is to help organizations to create a sense of belonging, inclusion and engagement among their members through artistic projects rooted in co-creation.

Birgit Eriksson: *Can democracy be knitted? Making things and people matter*

Across Europe, cultural institutions (are asked to) engage citizens as active participants. More or less explicitly, their task is to contribute to solve the current deficits of democracy and social cohesion, not only within the institutions but also in society at large. At Trapholt Museum of Modern Art and Design, one answer is to involve large numbers of people in the creation of craft-based collaborative artworks. In the current project, *Things Matter* (2023), several hundred people have knitted public sculptures and monuments from their local area to be included in an artwork and exhibited at the museum. The participants have chosen one sculpture each, knitted it and modified it according to their choice, and shared their thoughts and experiences on/offline.

Based on a study of a rich empirical material with the participants' voices, writings and knitworks, Birgit will explore the bridging/bonding, material/social, and horizontal/vertical aspects of participation in *Things Matter* and discuss the role of these dimensions for doing democracy. The presentation builds upon research done together with Postdoc Tina Louise Hove Sørensen, AU.

Birgit Eriksson, is Professor in cultural theory and analysis at Aesthetics and Culture, AU. Her ongoing research projects include *CraftWorks: Creative, institutional and social potentials of new participatory forms at art museums* (2021-24) and *Participate. On participatory cultures in Denmark* (2019-23). Recent online publications include "Bonding and bridging: Social cohesion in collaborative cultural practices in shared local spaces" (2023), "Changing Gellerup Park: Political interventions and aesthetic engagement in an exposed social housing area in Denmark" (2022) <https://doi.org/10.7146/nja.v31i64.134221>, "When Borders Matter: Crafting Borders in a Participatory Artistic Project at Trapholt Museum" (2022) <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2022.2101138>, and *Kunst i almene boligområder: Mellem udsathed, inddragelse og forandring* (2022). <http://au.dk/aekbe@hum>.