

## **DELIBERATION, PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY: KEY ISSUES OF DEMOCRACY**

This panel focuses on the concept of democracy from two different directions and asks two correlated questions: What are the necessary conditions of democracy? – What practices legitimize democracy? The discussion brings us to three fundamental concerns of democratic practice: Deliberation, participation and accountability.

The idea of deliberative democracy has transformed democratic theory in the last three to four decades. In deliberative democracy the quality and transparency of democratic authority depends on its deliberative qualities where the engagement of citizens in monitoring and discussing policy- and decision-making is of primary importance. Civic participation has become a prominent topic of democratic theory more recently which to some extent reflects dwindling trust in democratic institutions, doubts about democratic representation and a demand for greater civic control of public decision-making.

Participation however raises questions about accountability. Participation does not guarantee inclusion and even where robust participatory processes are in place minorities and marginal groups may still not enjoy full political access. Participatory practices also do not ensure the respect for individual differences and may we lapse into a constant need for “redescription”.

Speakers explore how deliberation, participation and accountability figure in both outlining necessary conditions of democracy and ensuring democratic legitimacy. Deliberation e.g., does not provide safeguards against special interest or guarantee the quality of decisions. Participatory processes may undermine democratic accountability and lead to doubts about the legitimacy of decisions-making.

## **Challenges of Accountability: Victim-Survivors as “the Scene of the Crime”**

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On March 8, 2022 the Icelandic Minister of Justice was handed the signatures of over twelve thousand people challenging him to improve the judicial status of victim-survivors of sexual violence. The prevalent legal arrangement extends limited information and procedural rights to the survivors, giving them the legal status of witnesses in their own legal case. The petition campaign titled “the Scene of the Crime” was launched by the Counseling and Education Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence (Stígamót), and foregrounded the stories and experiences of five survivors, who leveraged their identities, voices, and trauma in order to call for accountability and access justice. The petition follows an earlier cluster of legal cases against the Icelandic state that nine women brought before the European Court of Human Rights. These legal cases and the advocacy campaign that followed raise important questions about accountability, and its complex landscapes. Through the involvement of survivors, civil society organizations, and general public as seekers of accountability, and the targeting of duty bearers (police, persecutors, judges, and legislators), we are prompted to examine the accountability forums this case has created and energized, and look critically at the contemporary understandings of the concept of accountability and its extensions. In the last few decades, the concept has evolved along different conceptual lines, and morphed from a relatively narrow meaning of “being called to account for one’s actions” by those with authority, to a deeply social concept involving openness, responsiveness, inclusion, and

dialogue, in which multiple agents can simultaneously function as seekers and targets of accountability. This presentation will use Stígamót's advocacy campaign as a point of departure, to examine some key points related to contemporary cultures of accountability, and the social and conceptual shifts they are undergoing. By so doing, we will also examine the dialogue between the state and social movements as a site of meaningful engagement that creates the conditions for accountability.