

Conference Program

EDDA – Center of Excellence

THURSDAY 10 MAY 2012

Askja Building, Room 132, University of Iceland

09:30–10:00: Conference Opening

Welcome: **Irma Erlingsdóttir**, Director, EDDA – Center of Excellence
Valur Ingimundarson, Professor of Contemporary History, University of Iceland

Opening: **Ögmundur Jónasson**, Minister of the Interior:
Democracy: A Question of Pragmatism or Rights?

10:00–12:00

PANEL 1: The Icelandic Constituent Assembly/Council: Assessments and Comparisons

Constitutional rewriting in Iceland can be seen as a transitional mechanism or a way of introducing new political and democratic processes. The election and subsequent appointment of a Constitutional Council/ Assembly, the appointment of a Special State Prosecutor and a Special Investigation Commission as well as criminal proceedings against a former Icelandic Prime Minister—who became the first Western political leader to be tried in relation to the global financial crisis—reflect attempts to come to terms with the consequences of the financial collapse. The Constitutional Council has put forward a new constitutional reform bill, with provisions for a new electoral system, public ownership of natural resources, different mechanisms for the appointment of public officials, and the independence of state agencies. The panel examines this experiment from different, political, judicial, and historical angles.

Chair: **Jón Ólafsson**, Professor of Philosophy and Provost, Bifröst University

Icelandic Constitution-Making in a Comparative Perspective

Jon Elster, The Robert K. Merton Professor of Social Sciences, Columbia University, and Professeur Titulaire, Collège de France

Constitutional Reform Processes and the Case of Iceland: The Meaning of the Constituent Power of the People

Björg Thorarensen, Professor of Law, University of Iceland, and **Pasquale Pasquino**, Distinguished Professor of Law and Politics, New York University, and Senior Researcher, CNRS

Constitutional Reform and Democracy

Salvör Nordal, Director of the Centre for Ethics, University of Iceland, and Chair of the Icelandic Constituent Council

Scandinavian Experiences with Democratic Audit: Is it of any Relevance for Iceland Today?
Yohann Aucante, Researcher, EHESS

12:00–13:15: Lunch

13:15–15:45

PANEL 2: Transitional Justice: Historical and Contemporary Cases

Transitional justice has become a normative vehicle for addressing issues of responsibility and culpability for societal breakdowns and for “coming to terms” with the past. Prosecutions, trials, truth commissions, lustrations and purges have been used to deal with a troubled and/or violent past as well as condemnation and reconciliation between warring parties. It has been argued that judicial channels—even if playing an important role in the narrative—can never be fully adequate for political stabilization or for creating a path towards reconciliation. The purpose of the panel is to explore various representations of transitional justice and the politics of memory in several different countries—such as South Africa, Spain and Iceland—as a result of political and societal ruptures.

Chair: **Guðmundur Hálfðanarson**, Professor of History, University of Iceland

Transitional Justice Genealogy

Ruti Teitel, Ernst C. Stiefel Professor of Comparative Law, New York Law School

Political Accountability and Criminal Proceedings

Bernard Manin, Professor of Political Science, EHESS and New York University

Restorative Justice, Retributive Justice, and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Lucy Allais, Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex and the University of the Witwatersrand.

Creating a Usable Past and Future: The Politics of Justice and Memory in Iceland

Valur Ingimundarson, Professor of Contemporary History, University of Iceland

The Spanish Transition: Remembrance or Forgetting in the 21st Century?

Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, University of Iceland

15:45–16:15: Coffee and tea

16:15–18:15

PANEL 3: Gender, Well-being, and Poverty

In recent years, an increased awareness of the importance of broadening the prevailing understanding of well-being of populations has gained momentum. It signifies an attempt to move away from the narrow economic focus on GDP and related indicators. The welfare state as an institutional feature of modern societies has also been under strain and subject to revisions for some time, not least due to changes in the political environment. That trend is likely to be furthered by the growing crisis-related emphasis on various austerity measures, many of which can erode welfare state provisions and resources. Recent scholarship indicates that this restructuring of public expenditure under the rhetoric of austerity is resulting in unevenly gendered social and economic effects. These developments can, therefore, risk equality and welfare achievements from previous decades. At the same time, the living conditions and risks have changed with the new global environment and other changes, making older institutional structures perhaps outmoded.

Chair: **Annadís G. Rúðolfsdóttir**, Studies Director of the GEST Programme, University of Iceland

In What Way a Transition? Examining Political Responses to the Financial Crisis Using a Gender Lens

Sylvia Walby, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Lancaster University

Well-being of Nations: Patterns and Explanations

Stefán Ólafsson, Professor of Sociology, University of Iceland

Welfare State Interests and Welfare State Ideologies: Public Attitudes toward Government Role in Providing Services across 38 Countries

Sigrún Ólafsdóttir, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Boston University

The Contours of Social Welfare Transfers, Poverty and Public Opinion

Dave Brady, Associate Professor of Sociology, Duke University

FRIDAY 11 MAY 2012

Askja Building, Room 132, University of Iceland

09:00–12:00

PANEL 4: Consulting Crowds I: Deliberative Ways of Improving Policy- and Decision-Making

In the last two decades, experiments in democracy, which aim at using deliberative and participatory methods of public decision-making, have brought notable results. Participatory budgeting has shown that even complicated decisions can be made outside of traditional parliamentary or assembly structures, and deliberative polling suggests that, under the right circumstances, discussion and increased knowledge can have a considerable effect on public opinion. This panel explores democratic experiments and the ways in which disappearing trust in traditional political methods can be answered by increasingly relying on different kinds of crowd-sourcing.

Chair: **Salvör Nordal**, Director of the Centre for Ethics, University of Iceland, and Chair of the Icelandic Constituent Council

Making Deliberative Democracy Practical: Reflections on Deliberative Polling

James S. Fishkin, Professor of Communication and Political Science, Stanford University

Participatory Research vs. Deception in Randomized Field Experiments

Paolo Spada, Postdoctoral Researcher, Harvard University

Filtering Dreams Together: Reflections on Participatory Budgeting Experiences where a “Learning by Doing Environment” makes the Difference

Giovanni Allegretti, Senior Researcher, Center for Social Studies, University of Coimbra

12:00–13:15: Lunch

13:15–16:00

PANEL 5: Consulting Crowds II: Challenges to Collective Decision-Making

It is often argued that a deliberation, at least if done in a proper fashion, improves democratic decision-making, moving it closer to a standard of correctness, when the goal is to reach solutions that actually promote the common good. Deliberative democracy, however, does not automatically or obviously lead to such a result. Even if deliberation seems to effect changes in views, attitudes and opinions, it does not follow that such changes are for the better. The panel.7 explores the strengths and shortcomings of deliberative, participatory and epistemic approaches to democracy.

Chair: **Lucy Allais**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex and the University of the Witwatersrand

Deliberation, Cognitive Diversity, and Democratic Inclusiveness: An Epistemic Argument for the Random Selection of Representatives

Helene Landemore, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Yale University

Constituent Politics: An Impasse?

Jón Ólafsson, Professor of Philosophy and Provost, Bifröst University

From Consultation to Collaboration: A Call for Civic Capacity Building

Alison Kadlec, Senior Vice President, Public Agenda, New York

16:00–16:30: Coffee and tea

16:30–18:00

PANEL 6: Political Participation, Popular Mobilization, and Protest Movements

Social theorists have long shown interest in studying the societal circumstances triggering mass protests, revolutions and paradigm changes. Some suggest that widespread subjective deprivation caused by abrupt social changes, including economic crises, often produces such events. Others emphasize that mass mobilization reflects ongoing conflict between social groups or ideological viewpoints and propose focusing on how sudden changes provide opportunities and resources for some groups to mobilize. In the debate, the term civil society has played a key functional role in generating social trust among citizens, which is seen as being necessary for civic engagement and vibrant democratic institutions. This panel concentrates on mass protests triggered by the recent global economic crisis, including a discussion of the capability of different movements of civil society to act strategically as a counterpart to the old system in processes of societal and political change.

Chair: **Sylvia Walby**, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Lancaster University

Who Participated in the Mass Protest in Reykjavík in January 2009?

Jón Gunnar Bernburg, Professor of Sociology, University of Iceland

Shock and Disillusionment: Why People Participated in the Pots and Pans Revolution

Magnús Sveinn Helgason, Ph.D. Student of History, University of Minnesota

The Economic and Political Breakdown in Iceland: The Democratic Consequences of Patronizing Politics

Rósa Erlingsdóttir, Ph.D. Student of Political Science, University of Iceland

SATURDAY 12 MAY 2012

Askja Building, Room 132, University of Iceland

10:00–12:00

PANEL 7: National Narratives and Political Cultures

Political and economic crises often spur debates over collective identities, social reckoning and cultural and ethical values. It can also involve both the rethinking of social conflicts in light of transnational and multicultural encounters as well as the entrenchment of the national in the face of external and internal adversity. This panel explores, critically, Icelandic attempts to frame national and cultural narratives in response to the financial crash.

Chair: **Philippe Urfalino**, Director, CESPRI, Professor, EHESS and Senior Researcher, CNRS

Nothing Ventured: Tales Concerning the Economic Crisis of 2008

Guðni Elisson, Professor of Comparative Literature, University of Iceland

Crises and Transitions of Creativity: (Trans)national Cultural Politics and Labour

Tinna Grétarsdóttir, Postdoctoral Researcher, EDDA – Center of Excellence

Vikings to Victims: Narrating the Rise and Collapse of a Nation

Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, Professor of History, University of Iceland

“Something in the Air”: Performing the North in a “Post-Crash” Norden

Kristinn Schram, Postdoctoral Researcher, EDDA – Center of Excellence, and **Katla Kjartansdóttir**, Researcher, EDDA – Center of Excellence

12:00–13:15: Lunch

13:15–15:15

PANEL DISCUSSION: Democratic Opportunities: Is More Democracy the Proper Response to Crisis?

Participants: **Jón Gnarr**, **Alison Kadlec**, **James Fishkin**, **Kristinn Már Ársælsson**, **Helene Landemore**. Moderator: **Jón Ólafsson**.