KEYNOTE LECTURES

Nick Couldry

The Expanding Domain of Political Contention:
A Triple Problem

This lecture will consider the multiple problems posed for analysis of the expansion in the nature and sites of political contention. It will identify three distinct problems. First, there is an *ideological* problem, which requires looking past the various ideological framings of 'where' politics now is, and which 'social' entity is represented in such politics (drawing on the author's previous arguments about 'The Myth of Us'): the self-serving rhetoric of social media platforms needs in particular to be resisted, and instead we need an account of politics on social media that is based in a deeper reading of social contexts. Second, there is an *ontological* problem, which overlaps with the ideological problem, but goes deeper: this stems from the fact that today's 'space of appearances' (Arendt) is constructed in advance through processes of data collection and data processing. This poses challenges for understanding what sort of 'social' is appearing to us, and will be discussed by reference to recent literatures on data and categorization. Third, there is a *topological* problem: for reasons nothing to do with social media platforms, but more to do with the changing nature of political risk and political power, the 'topology' of public deliberation has shifted irrevocably from a mainly national setting to a more complex configuration that is, in part, distributed across borders, although the nation-state remains very important. This challenge will be discussed in relation to the recent debates on the public sphere, particularly Nancy Fraser's discussion on 'transnationalizing the public sphere'.

Nick Couldry is a sociologist of media and culture. He is currently Professor of Media Communications and Social Theory, and Head of the Department of Media and Communications, at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is the author or editor of eleven books including most recently Ethics of Media (2013 Palgrave, coedited with Mirca Madianou and Amit Pinchevski), Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice (Polity 2012) and Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics After Neoliberalism (Sage 2010).

Mark E. Warren

Can We Revitalize Democratic Public Spheres Through Institutional Innovation?

A democracy is a political system in which the people collectively self-rule. The people can rule only to the extent that their interests and perspectives are formed in public opinion that prioritizes agendas for collective action. Democracies need robust public spheres. Yet that even in the highest functioning democracies, public spheres are not as democratic as they should be. Public spheres are *democratic* if they accomplish three broad functions. They should empower inclusions, so that people have voice. They should be deliberative, in the sense that voice should take the form of informed public opinion. And they should produce actionable agendas that can be taken up by decision-making institutions. But voice too often reflects organization, wealth, and media access. Public discourse is often destructively polarized, angry, and misinformed. And the agendas that emerge from public discourse are too often a poor fit with decision-making institutions. To a large extent, these deficits reflect the opportunities and incentives generated by electoral democracy. Can we design institutions that would speak to public sphere deficits by altering the ways voice is enabled and structured? We can. In this talk, I discuss and assess deliberative minipublics as a one kind of institutional innovation. Minipublics cannot alone address public sphere deficits. But they do possess some unique democratic features that could nudge public spheres in democratic directions.

Mark E. Warren holds the Harold and Dorrie Merilees Chair for the Study of Democracy at the University of British Columbia. He is especially interested in democratic innovations, civil society and democratic governance, and political corruption. Warren is author of *Democracy and Association* (Princeton University Press, 2001), which won the Elaine and David Spitz Book Prize awarded by the Conference for the Study of Political Thought, as well as the 2003 Outstanding Book Award from the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. He is editor of *Democracy and Trust* (Cambridge University Press 1999), and co-editor of *Designing Deliberative Democracy: The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly* (Cambridge University Press 2008). Warren's work has appeared in journals such as the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Politics,* and *Political Theory.* He is currently working with an international team on a project entitled *Participedia* (www.participedia.net), which uses a web-based platform to collect data about democratic innovation and participatory governance around the world. *Participedia* will enable data-driven comparative research into this rapidly developing area of governance, as well as serve as a resource for governments, democracy practitioners and advocates.

Donatella Della Porta

Subversive practices in the squares: The construction of public spheres by social movements

In 2011, within a few months a form of protest, the acampada, spread across three continents: from Tahrir to Sol and Syntagma, as well as Zuccotti Park. Its relevance in the very identity building of these mobilization pushed indeed activists and scholars alike to speak of 'square movements'. This form of constitution of public spheres spread also in the years that followed-with Gezi Park as one of the most visible example. Looking at the organizational dynamics within social movements, the paper addresses the search for a prefigurative politics that characterized the most visible moments of the anti-austerity protest, the acampadas (as long lasting protest camps in public spaces), comparing them with the most innovative organizational form of the global justice movement, the forum.

Donatella Della Porta is professor of sociology at the European University Institute, where she directs the Center on Social Movement Studies (Cosmos). She directs a major ERC project Mobilizing for Democracy, on civil society participation in democratization processes in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. Among her very recent publications are*: Sociaol Movements in Times of Austerity* (Polity 2014), *Methodological practices in social movement research* (Oxford University Press, 2014); *Spreading Protest (*ECPR Press 2014, with Alice Mattoni), *Participatory Democracy in Southern Europe (Rowman and Littlefield, 2014*, with Joan Font and Yves Sintomer); *Mobilizing for Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2014); *Can Democracy be Saved?,* Polity Press, 2013; *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge University Press, 2013 (with D. Snow, B. Klandermans and D. McAdam (eds.). *Blackwell Encyclopedia on Social and Political Movements*, Blackwell. 2013; *Mobilizing on the Extreme Right* (with M. Caiani and C. Wagemann), Oxford University Press, 2012; *Meeting Democracy* (ed. With D. Rucht), Cambridge University Press, 2012; *The Hidden Order of Corruption* (with A. Vannucci), Ashgate 2012. In 2011, she was the recipient of the Mattei Dogan Prize for distinguished achievements in the field of political sociology and PhD honoris causa from the universities of Lausanne and Bucharest.

Stephen Duncombe

Affect and Effect: Artful Activism and Political Impact in Contemporary Protest

Every era engenders the form of protest appropriate to its hegemonic power. Neo-liberalism is dependent upon world-wide flows of people, products and, critically, information and images. From the square occupations of 2011 to street protests of the present, global activists have become increasingly adept at creating and disseminating images of dissent, revelations of injustice, and performances of alternatives, utilizing aesthetic approaches once thought to be the province of the artist. This talk will explore the dynamics of such artful activism, pointing out how aspects of contemporary protest that can seem unproductive when considered substantially make sense when considered symbolically: tactics designed to generate emotional *affect* as well as material *effect*. Yet, a protest is not just an art-piece: its function is to challenge and transform power and, in this respect, the spectacular protests of the past decade have a mixed record. Is this the result of a constitutive flaw, a mismatch between the form of contemporary political protest and necessities of political organization and sustained mobilization? Or are these protests aiming at something larger: the organizational realization of the aesthetic form prefigured within spectacular protests and, thus, the catching up of reality to the imaginary?

Stephen Duncombe is Professor of Media and Culture at New York University. He is the author and editor of six books, including *Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy* and the *Cultural Resistance Reader*, and is the creator of the TheOpenUtopia.org, an open-access, open-source, web-based edition of Thomas More's *Utopia* and co-creator of Actipedia.org, a user-generated digital database of creative activism. Duncombe is a life-long political activist and the co-founder and director of the Center for Artistic Activism, a research and teaching institute that trains activists to think more like artists and artists to think more like activists. He is currently working on a book on the art of propaganda in the United States during the New Deal.