

WORKSHOP 5

5. Professionalization and Individualized Collective Action: Analyzing New 'Participatory' Dimensions in Civil Society

Directors:

Jan Van Deth (*University of Mannheim*)

Tel: +49 621 181 2098; **Fax:** +49 621 181 2099

Email: jvdeth@uni-mannheim.de

William Maloney (*University of Newcastle*)

Tel: +44 191 222 5289; **Fax:** +44 191 222 5069

Email: william.maloney@ncl.ac.uk

Advanced democracies are 'plagued' by the complex problem of basing political decisions on the active engagement of citizens and citizens' organisations. While concurrently groups around citizens prefer to be passive spectators, or use the market and other seemingly private or nonpolitical arenas as venues for action. The conventional activist – a regular citizen engaged in voluntary associations and collective decision-making – seems to have been replaced by *ephemeral* or *episodic democratic monitors*. Although the benefits of an active citizenry appear great, the reality is that most citizens don't find political involvement attractive and very willing and positively embrace a marginal role in organised politics. Instead, citizens increasingly leave the floor to professional associations and opt for individualized modes of collective action. This workshop aims to address several issues at the core of this development: the rise of checkbox participation, the growing attractiveness of individualized forms of participation, the increasing relevance of professional expertise, and the economics of interest groups activities. The workshop is open to all scholars with an interest in assessing the changing political involvements of citizens and the changing contribution of civil society organizations to democracy (*i.e.*, those working in the fields of participation, social capital, interest groups, social movements, professionalization, or democratic theory).