Political deliberation, understood as a public debate aimed at forming political opinions and deciding what course of action to take, has traditionally been seen as a prime venue for public reasoning and argument. Aristotle considered political deliberation – next to forensic dispute and public oratory – as one of the three main genres of rhetoric. Today, different modes of political deliberation – from formal institutional procedures in parliaments, to public hearing, to citizens’ conferences, to televised debates, to informal online discussions among “ordinary citizens” – are at the centre of interest in argumentation theory, deliberative theory of democracy, and communication and media studies alike.

The goal of this colloquium is to bring together scholars from these interrelated disciplines to examine the role, shape and quality of argumentation in political deliberation. A theoretical and empirical focus of the presentations and discussions will be on the practices of argumentation. The questions addressed include: How can we best theorize, analyze and evaluate argumentation in the context of political deliberation? What is the impact of the contextual conditions in different deliberative activities on the shape and quality of public argument? What are the typical forms of deliberative argument and counterargument? To what extent is the “virtual public sphere” transforming the way we engage in public argument? Does it allow for inclusive participation and genuine argumentative debate between advocates of various political views? By addressing these questions, the colloquium hopes to provide a focused account of the multifaceted argumentative practices in political deliberation.

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International Colloquium “Argumentation in Political Deliberation”

ArgLab - IFL
Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas
Universidade Nova de Lisboa

2 September 2011

Morning session
Argumentation in formal and semi-formal deliberative institutions

9.30-10.30
Opening speech:
Strategic maneuvering in argumentative discourse in political deliberation
Frans van Eemeren
University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

10.30 -11.15
Strategic maneuvering in the European Parliament
Bart Garssen
University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Commentary:
Fabrizio Macagno
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

11.15 -11.30
Coffee break

11.30 -12.15
Pursuing multiple aims in European Parliamentary debates: Debating EU immigration policies as a case in point
Dima Mohammed
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal
Commentary:
Scott Wright
University of East Anglia, UK

12.15 -13.00
Dealing with counterarguments in the public deliberations on the future promised by nanotechnologies
Marianne Doury and Assimakis Tseronis
Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), Paris, France
Commentary (t.b.c.):
Giovanni Damele
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

13.00 -14.30
Lunch break
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Afternoon session
Argumentation in (informal) online deliberation

14.30 -15.30
Opening speech:
Deliberation digitized: Governing argument in mediated society
Mark Aakhus
Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA

15.30 -16.15
The development of online echo-chambers: The inclusion and exclusion of dissenting voices on online forums about public issues
Arthur Edwards
Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Commentary:
Gabriele de Angelis
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

16.15 -16.30
Coffee break

16.30 -17.15
"Super participation" in online "Third Spaces"
Scott Wright and Todd Graham
University of East Anglia, UK * University of Groningen, The Netherlands
Commentary:
Marcin Lewinski
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

17.15 -18.00
Debating multiple positions in multi-party online deliberation
Marcin Lewinski
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal
Commentary:
Marianne Doury
Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), Paris, France