Abstract: Jennifer LEES-MARSHMENT

**Partners not protesters? Managing contests to traditional democracy through expanded public input into political decision making**

**Keynote speech**

We often think of countries like the UK and US as being established liberal democracies, where the vote has been free and equal for some time, and no more needs to be done. However the reality is that not only are there challenges through public protests, more subtle changes in our democratic systems are occurring almost without anyone noticing. The old system whereby voters simply voted on politicians’ promises at election time and then judged their performance in power at the next election is now over. It may not be official, but voters get to have input all the time.

Political elites now use an increasingly varied range of public input mechanisms (consultation, deliberation or market research) to obtain feedback after they are elected to inform their final decision. Contests for power need not only result in riots; they can also stimulate evolution. Democracy is maturing. Political leaders talk of working in partnership with the public instead of politicians being the font of all wisdom, requiring new conceptual models of democracy.

This presentation will firstly explore practical examples of how democracy is changing through the diversification of public input. It will discuss changing attitudes amongst political leaders and how they have talked more about partnership; then the results of interviews with government and public practitioners/staff about this change and how they have seen movement towards a partnership between citizens and government. Then it will discuss the expansion of public input at the top levels of government, noting examples such as The White house e-government initiative (Obama, US); Australia 20-20 summit (Rudd, OZ); Citizen Juries (Brown, UK); Tax Forum (Gillard OZ) and Big Society (Cameron, UK).

Secondly it will discuss theoretical concepts of what this means for how democracy is changing. It will collate the different ideas in academic literature across range of sub fields in political science about this change in governance; before present a new theory of a Partnership democracy.
In a partnership democracy, people are part of government and work on the idea of ‘yes we can’. The public take more responsibility and participate, there is room for politicians to say no and be leaders but explain why, and elites and masses work together to create solutions. Deliberative market analysis holds the potential to connect political and public.

In conclusion the presentation will note the new questions this raises, as well as the potential benefit expanded public input offers politicians, before arguing that there is a big opportunity for academics from different fields, and practitioners from different areas, to come together to explore this evolution in democracy and forge a new path in thinking - and practice. It is hoped that the audience will then contribute new comments and suggestions as to how we might take this forward will be welcome.

Jennifer Lees-Marshal (University of Auckland, New Zealand) is a leading researcher in political marketing. Jennifer is author/editor of ten books including Political Marketing and British political parties (MUP 2001), Political Marketing: principles and applications (Routledge 2009), Global Political Marketing (Routledge 2010), The Political Marketing Game (Palgrave Macmillan 2011), The Routledge Handbook of Political Marketing (Routledge 2012) and Political Marketing in Canada (UBC, 2012). She is currently working on a new book Integrating Public Input into Political Leadership (Palgrave Macmillan).

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