

DEMOCRACY 2.26

DESIGNING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

INTRODUCING THE 2026 COHORT
HUMBOLDT RESIDENCY PROGRAMME



HUMBOLDT RESIDENCY PROGRAMME

COMMUNICATE SCIENCE. MOVE
SOCIETY. ENRICH POLICY.

Each year, the Humboldt Residency Programme focuses on a global challenge and contributes to knowledge-based approaches for addressing them. During its six-week residency, it forms a temporary, thematically focused think tank that fosters transdisciplinary co-creation, scientific creativity, and innovation. The outcomes feed into socio-political debates and inform decision-makers in politics and society with impulses grounded in rigorous research.

The programme cultivates connections between people, perspectives, disciplines, and world regions. The exchange of diverse professional and cultural backgrounds creates a space for innovative, transdisciplinary dialogue that opens new avenues of thought and challenges existing assumptions. Participants use this environment to explore the annual theme imaginatively and with vision, collaboratively developing approaches that serve democratic societies.

WEBSITE

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
THE PROGRAMME

DEMOCRACY 2.26

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Whilst democracy remains the most widespread and desired form of governance worldwide, it faces a long-term global decline. Populist movements – often challenging core democratic values – continue to gain momentum, fuelled in part by growing distrust in democratic institutions, a sense of underrepresentation, and an increasing distance from democratic processes within certain social groups. Digitisation, whilst opening new spaces for political debate, has also led to an information crisis, fostering polarisation and disinformation. Instances of economic interests and actors influencing democratic systems call into question the concept of representation for all people.

For a healthy democracy, however, it is essential that citizens participate beyond election cycles. To ensure the resilience of contemporary democracies, they need to adapt to regional and socio-cultural demands and increase accessibility and participation for all their members. The Humboldt Residency Programme 2026 is responding to this need by critically examining political participation as a concept, as well as by designing and experimenting with innovative, informal political participation formats – grounded in the belief that democratic values are fundamental to security, cultural diversity, and economic prosperity.

KLAUS NEUMANN (AUSTRALIA) **HONORARY PROFESSOR (HISTORY)** (HOST)

Klaus Neumann researches (post-) colonialism, historical justice, and public and social memory. He received his doctorate from the Australian National University with a dissertation about histories in Papua New Guinea. In 1991, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation awarded him a Feodor Lynen Fellowship, which he spent at the University of Newcastle (Australia). From 1991 to 2018, he worked at various Australian universities, most recently as Professor of History at Deakin University in Melbourne. He remains affiliated with its Centre for Contemporary Histories. Neumann has increasingly focused on migration and asylum policies and has published several award-winning books in that area. He contributes regularly to the online magazine Inside Story and has written radio plays for Australia's public broadcaster. In 2018, the Hamburg Foundation for the Advancement of Research and Culture invited him to write a book about the reception of refugees in Germany, which he completed in 2024. Neumann is an elected member of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.



PUBLICATION

- **Blumen und Brandsätze: Eine deutsche Geschichte 1989–2023**
(Flowers and Incendiary Devices: A German History 1989–2023). Hamburger Edition, 2024.

MATTHIAS FRITSCH (CANADA) PROFESSOR (PHILOSOPHY)

Matthias Fritsch is Professor of Philosophy at Concordia University, Montréal, where he works on environmental philosophy and political theory, especially the intersection of climate change and democracy. He is currently writing a monograph on Antigone and climate disobedience. In his research he poses questions such as what societies owe the dead, if anything, and what are normative relations with future generations, especially in relation to political institutions and the environment. His academic career has taken him to Frankfurt and Berlin (Germany), Kyoto (Japan), and Sydney (Australia). Fritsch received a Humboldt Research Fellowship in 2010 which he spent at Goethe University Frankfurt and the Free University of Berlin. He currently serves as the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's ambassador scientist to Canada. In addition to over fifty journal articles and book chapters, he has published two monographs as sole author (s. publications). Fritsch completed his PhD in the Department of Philosophy at Villanova University in 1999.



PUBLICATIONS

- **“Why Democrats Should be Committed to Future Generations.”** In: Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review, Vol. 62, No. 3, 2024.
- **“Climate Change and Democracy.”** In: Handbook of the Philosophy of Climate Change, Springer, 2023.
- **Taking Turns with the Earth: Phenomenology, Deconstruction, and Intergenerational Justice.** Stanford University Press, 2018.

WEBSITE

GUY BEAUDRY JENGU JENGU

(CAMEROON)

POLICY RESEARCHER (NKAFU POLICY INSTITUTE)

Guy Beaudry Jengu Jengu is a political analyst and governance specialist based in Yaoundé, currently working in the governance and democracy division at Nkafu Policy Institute, where he collaborates with regional think tanks to promote evidence-based policymaking. His work focuses on transforming policy spaces into inclusive arenas for democratic innovation and citizen co-creation. In doing so, he focuses on democratic governance, citizen participation, and public policy processes in Central Africa. With over eight years of experience in applied research and policy analysis, he has coordinated multi-country research initiatives and produced policy briefs and analytical reports on governance and democratic reform. Previously, Jengu Jengu led projects focused on promoting inclusion where he facilitated dialogue on democratic participation and inclusive governance. He holds a Master's degree in Political Science from the University of Yaoundé II.



PUBLICATIONS

- **"The Feminist Public Financing Ecosystem in Central Africa: Status, Challenges and Prospects.** Feminist Forum for the Future, 2025." (with Aboudi, Vanessa and Mveng, Caroline)
- **"The Role of Civil Society During Elections in Cameroon."** On Policy, 2024.
- **"Incremental Demasculinisation of the Political Field in Cameroon and the Formation of an Oligarchy** (Démasculinisation incrémentale du champ politique au Cameroun et constitution d'une oligarchie)." In: Polis, 2021. (with Aboudi, Vanessa)

LINKEDIN

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
GUY BEAUDRY JENGU JENGU

XIANAN JIN (UNITED KINGDOM) LECTURER (AFRICAN AND GENDER POLITICS)

Xianan Jin is a feminist researcher in Politics at the University of Exeter, where she teaches African Politics and Gender Theory, and serves as Co-Director of the Exeter Centre of Research on Africa. Her research examines gendered struggles and forms of resistance in contexts where democracy is curtailed. As a scholar-activist, Xianan is active in the Chinese feminist diaspora community in the UK, organising art-making workshops, theatre performances, and collective study spaces centred on race, gender, and sexuality. Before joining Exeter, she studied politics and practised feminism in Beijing, Bologna, London, and Kigali, experiences that continue to shape her transnational approach to political participation. Her forthcoming book explores how material conditions shape distinct political agencies among women from diverse class backgrounds in post-genocide Rwanda. Drawing on ten months of ethnographic fieldwork in Kigali, the project foregrounds everyday political practices often overlooked in accounts of representation. Xianan received her PhD in Gender Studies from SOAS, University of London in 2022.



PUBLICATIONS

- **“Land Dispossession as Continuum of Violence: Women’s Political Agency in Post-Genocide Rwanda.”**
In: Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 52, Issue 4, 2024.
- **“Intersectionality and Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations.”** In: International Affairs, Vol. 100, Issue 6, 2024. (with Sapiano, Jenna and Heathcote, Gina)
- **“Outsider Within: Young Chinese Feminist Activism in the Age of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom.”**
In: Made in China Journal, 2021. (with Leiyun, Ni)

LINKEDIN

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
XIANAN JIN

SAMIK KHAREL (NEPAL) JOURNALIST AND RESEARCHER

Samik Kharel is a journalist and researcher from Nepal, whose work explores the intersection of technology, democracy and digital rights, investigating how artificial intelligence, social media and digital platforms are reshaping political participation and democratic governance. His reporting for Al Jazeera, Tech Policy Press and other international publications has documented Nepal's Gen-Z digital uprising, digital governance and emerging forms of algorithmic politics. He was awarded with the Fetisov Journalism Award for his work on Human Rights in 2023. Further, Samik serves as a researcher on responsible AI practices in Nepal, evaluating national and regional commitments to rights-based AI development and accountability. Through journalism and interdisciplinary collaboration, he seeks to contribute grounded perspectives on the future of democracy in an increasingly platform-mediated world. He holds a Master's degree in Media, Arts and Cultures from Aalborg University, Denmark.



PUBLICATIONS

- **"'More Egalitarian': How Nepal's Gen Z Used Gaming App Discord to Pick PM."** In: Al Jazeera, 2025.
- **"Online Against an Offline State: The Forty-Eight Hours That Changed Nepal."** In: Green European Journal, 2026.
- **"Lessons from Nepal on the High Cost of Controlling Online Expression."** In: Tech Policy Press, 2025.

LINKEDIN

FIND OUT MORE
ABOUT SAMIK KHAREL

DARYNA KHARUK (POLAND) DOCTORAL CANDIDATE (POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION)

Daryna Kharuk is currently pursuing her PhD in Politics and Administration at the University of Opole. Her research examines the role of civil society in wartime Ukraine, particularly how NGOs, volunteer networks, and grassroots initiatives cooperate with government institutions during the ongoing Russian aggression. Her doctoral project focuses on how civic mobilisation contributes to democratic resilience, public trust, and citizen participation in times of crisis. Through her work, she explores how informal civic engagement can complement formal democratic institutions and help represent voices that may otherwise remain marginalised. She previously worked as Vice-Chair at the Ukraine based NGO “New Wings”, coordinating international youth initiatives. Kharuk received the Dr Jan Kulczyk Scholarship for Academic Excellence in 2018 and 2019 and holds a Master’s degree in English, American Literature and Culture from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.



PUBLICATIONS

- **“Building Civil Society in Wartime: Opportunities and Challenges.”** In: Faces of War, Łódź University Press (forthcoming).
- **“The Influence of Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity on the Creation of New Media in Ukraine.”** In: UR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 3, Issue 20, 2021.
- **“Revolution of Dignity: A Teen Girl’s Experience.”** In: Mare Integrans: Studia nad dziejami Morza Bałtyckiego, Vol. 14, 2018.

KAMILA KOŁODZIEJCZYK (CANADA) DOCTORAL CANDIDATE (POLITICAL SCIENCE)

Kamila Kołodziejczyk is pursuing her PhD in Political Science at the Konrad Adenauer Research Chair in Empirical Democracy Studies at the University of Ottawa. She is interested in political representation, studying the impact of youth representation on youth political behaviours and attitudes. Next to her research, Kołodziejczyk teaches research methodologies at the University of Ottawa and serves as a research assistant at her institute. Previously, she held positions as a writer for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada as well as a Negotiations Assistant for Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs. She has published extensively in her field, and holds a Master's degree in political science from the University of Ottawa.



PUBLICATIONS

- **“Compulsory Voting and Youth Representation in Parliaments.”**
In: Journal of Elections, Parties and Public Opinion, 2025 (forthcoming).
(with Stockemer, Daniel, Chalmers, Alexander, Garcia, Luis, and Mather, Sarah)
- **Breaking the Cycle of Political Alienation: The Impact of Youth Representation on Democratic Engagement.** Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025.
- **Democracy under Scrutiny, Unpacking the Causes and Consequences of Democratic Dissatisfaction.** Springer Nature, 2025 (ed).
(with Stockemer, Daniel and Abou-El-Kheir, Engi)

LINKEDIN

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
KAMILA KOŁODZIEJCZYK

AKOS KOPPER (HUNGARY) PROFESSOR (POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES)

Akos Kopper works as an Associate Professor at ELTE University in Budapest, covering topics relating to foreign policy, populism, citizens' (in)action, diplomacy, and the use of visuals in politics. His ongoing major research project focuses on the role of humour and vulgarity in politics, particularly the way these are used and exploited by populist actors. Kopper is one of the chief editors of PARISS (Political Anthropology Research on International Social Sciences), a multidisciplinary journal focusing on rethinking the international and promoting diverse voices, and was previously editor-in-chief of the Journal of International Relations and Development. Previous career steps took him to the University of Oxford, the Graduate Institute in Geneva, and the Central European University. Kopper received a Humboldt Research Fellowship, which he spent at the Centre for East European and International Studies in Berlin. He received his PhD in Political Science from Constructor University in Bremen in 2009.



PUBLICATIONS

- **“Non-Complying Citizens and Dilemmas of Governance at Times of Emergency: The Power of Passivity and (In)action.”** In: Journal of Political Power, Vol. 18, Issue 3, 2025.
- **“Ruptures in Depiction – Recognition and Political Cartoons of Putin: From a Strategic Mastermind to the Object of Contempt and Mockery.”** In: Global Studies Quarterly, Vol. 4, Issue 3, 2024.
- **“The ‘Insecurity Toolbox’ of the Il-liberal Regime – Rule by Law and Rule by Exclusion.”** In: PARISS – Political Anthropological Research on International Social Sciences, 2020. (with Körtvélyesi, Zsolt, Majtényi, Balázs, and Szalai, András)

MARCELLA NERY (BRAZIL) PROGRAMME DIRECTOR (DELIBERA BRASIL)

Marcella Nery is a deliberative democracy researcher and practitioner. She is currently Programme Director at Delibera Brasil, a non-profit organisation dedicated to strengthening democracy through citizen deliberation. In 2023, she and her team co-created a methodology to include marginalised forest communities in the Citizens' Climate Assemblies in Pará, Brazil, ahead of COP30. She is currently part of a critical analysis of Mozambique's Citizens' Assemblies with a focus on inclusion. Nery believes that sortition assemblies are a powerful instrument for bringing historically excluded people into political life. Having received an Alexander von Humboldt Foundation German Chancellor Fellowship, she conducted research at the Berlin School of Economics and Law on the inclusion of migration background categories in participant selection for sortition assemblies in Germany. Nery holds a Master's degrees in public administration and government and sociology.



PUBLICATIONS

- **Migration Background as a Selection Criterion in German Citizens' Assemblies.** German Chancellor Fellowship final article (forthcoming).
- **Amazonian Climate Deliberation: Insights from Three Citizen Assemblies on Climate Finance Held Ahead of COP30.** International IDEA, 2024. (with de Soysa, Anoukh)
- **“Traditional Knowledge and Democratic Innovation** (Traditionelles Wissen und Demokratische Innovation).“ In: Beteiligen! Online-Magazin, Issue 2, 2025.

LINKEDIN

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
MARCELLA NERY

KATY RUBIN (UNITED KINGDOM/UNITED STATES) LEGISLATIVE THEATRE PRACTITIONER

Katy Rubin is a Legislative Theatre practitioner and strategist based in the UK and founder of The People Act, a hub for creative civic practice. She works in partnership with local and national governments and community groups to co-create equitable and innovative public policy and advocates for a participatory democracy that is joyful, creative, and inclusive. She currently collaborates with cities around Europe to design policy initiatives on housing, health care, social welfare, the climate crisis, and urban planning, alongside training new practitioners. Rubin is also a Senior Fellow with People Powered: Global Hub for Participatory Democracy, a Senior Atlantic Fellow at the LSE, and former executive director of Theatre of the Oppressed NYC. Her Legislative Theatre work with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority was awarded the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy's 2022 award for Best Practice in Citizen Participation. Rubin holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting from Boston University School of Theatre.



PROJECTS

- **The People Act: A Hub for Legislative Theatre and Creative Civic Practice.** The People Act.

PUBLICATIONS

- **Shaping How We Live Well Together.** A Greater Manchester Participation Playbook, 2025.
- **“Rehearsing for the Revolution: Theatre as a Tool for Democratic Imagination.”** In: Nonprofit Quarterly, 2025. (with Morgan, Liz)

WEBSITE

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
KATY RUBIN

MARGARITA VALDOVINOS (MEXICO) PROFESSOR (PHILOLOGICAL RESEARCH)

Margarita Valdovinos is a professor at the Institute for Philological Research (Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas) at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Her work focuses on the cultural and linguistic practices of Indigenous peoples in Mexico, as well as the critical analysis of the academic settings through which they have been studied. In recent years, she has expanded her research to examine women's participation in academia, promoting internationalisation strategies to address the structural stagnation of their careers. Her perspective brings together anthropology, gender studies, and university governance in the framework of participatory democracy. Valdovinos received a Humboldt Research Award which she spent at the Ethnographic Museum in Berlin and the Ibero-American Institute. She is the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's ambassador scientist in Mexico. She received her PhD in ethnology in 2008 and afterwards completed postdoctoral stays in anthropological and descriptive linguistics as well as in the history of anthropology.



PUBLICATIONS

- **Songs of the Náayeri Mitote: A Discursive Practice within Ritual Action** (Los cantos del mitote náayeri. Una práctica discursiva en el seno de la acción ritual). 2 vols. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México – Secretaría General, 2024.
- **The Nayarit Expedition: Record of Texts and Observations among the Indigenous Peoples of Mexico – The Religion of the Cora through Their Texts** (La expedición al Nayarit. Registro de textos y observaciones entre los indígenas de México: la religión de los coras a través de sus textos). 3 vols. Siglo XXI Editores – UNAM – INAH – Secretaría de Cultura – Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 2021. (with Preuss, Konrad Theodor)

LINKEDIN

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
MARGARITA VALDOVINOS

ALETHEA WONG (MALAYSIA) POLICY ADVISOR

Alethea Wong is a policy professional working across government institutions and civil society organisations to advance governance reform, legislative development, and regional co-operation. She is committed to advancing progressive policies, strengthening democratic governance, and fostering regional cooperation across Southeast Asia with a focus on the inclusion and representation of youth in politics. Her career in public service has been marked by significant contributions at the highest levels of Malaysia's democratic institutions, including the offices of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Leader of the Opposition, the Parliamentary Select Committee on International Relations and Trade, and the Deputy Prime Minister. Beyond her public service roles, Wong has served on multiple government-appointed councils, advising the government on youth development and civic engagement. She is a member of the 2026 Indo-Pacific Young Leaders Programme and holds a Master of Public Policy from the University of Oxford.



PROJECTS

- **Undi18 – Leading Youth Democratic Empowerment in Malaysia.**
- **The 111 Initiative – Advocating for Equal and Fair Representation of Women in Parliament and Politics.**

LINKEDIN

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
ALETHEA WONG

CONTACT INFORMATION:

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE
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AND EVENTS, PLEASE REACH OUT TO:**
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YOU CAN CONTACT:**
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