**Title:** **A Democracy of Loud Voices? Exploring alternative models of organising group discussion**

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## Session Learning Outcomes

- Understand different methods of researching, mapping and conceptualising conversational flow;
- Experiment with alternative models of organising debate;
- Develop effective 'rules of engagement' for group discussion within teams.

## Session Outline

This discussion paper explores techniques for improving the equity of group discussions. It will report the findings of a small-scale research project at the Royal College of Art that used structured observation techniques to record patterns of turn taking, summarise key findings from contemporary research and demonstrates alternative forms of group discourse. This will include Lois Weaver's (2017) Long Table etiquette, which uses the conventions of a dinner table conversation to explore mechanisms of democratic exchange between participants.

This session relates to the conference theme of supporting and developing the work of teams through the use of reflective practice. It builds on previous analyses of conventions in turn-taking undertaken by Sacks, Schlegloff and Jefferson (1974), and more recently explored by Tannen (2012). It will use data visualisation techniques to map conversational flow and reveal the implicit rules of engagement that govern conversation. This will be used to foster discussion on the impact of status, gender and language on individual participation and develop recommendations for good practice in sustaining effective team communication.

## Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- Introduction (5 minutes)
- Presentation of research findings (10 minutes)
- Summary of key research (5 minutes)
- Long Table exercise (10 minutes)
- Disembodied voices exercise (10 minutes)
- Questions (5 minutes)

Sample questions:

- What are the rules of engagement for group discussion?

- What is the role of silence in group discussion?
- How important are resolutions in group discussion?
- How do you negotiate conventions of turn-taking in group discussion?

**References**

Weaver, L. 2017. Long Table. [Online] Available at: http://publicaddresssystems.org/projects/long-table/ [Accessed 10/05/2017]

Sacks, H. Schegloff, E. & Jefferson, G. 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50, 696-735.

Tannen, D. (2012) Turn-Taking and Intercultural Discourse and Communication, in The Handbook of Intercultural Discourse and Communication (eds Paulston, C. B., Kiesling, S. F. and Rangel E. S.), John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, Chichester, UK.