

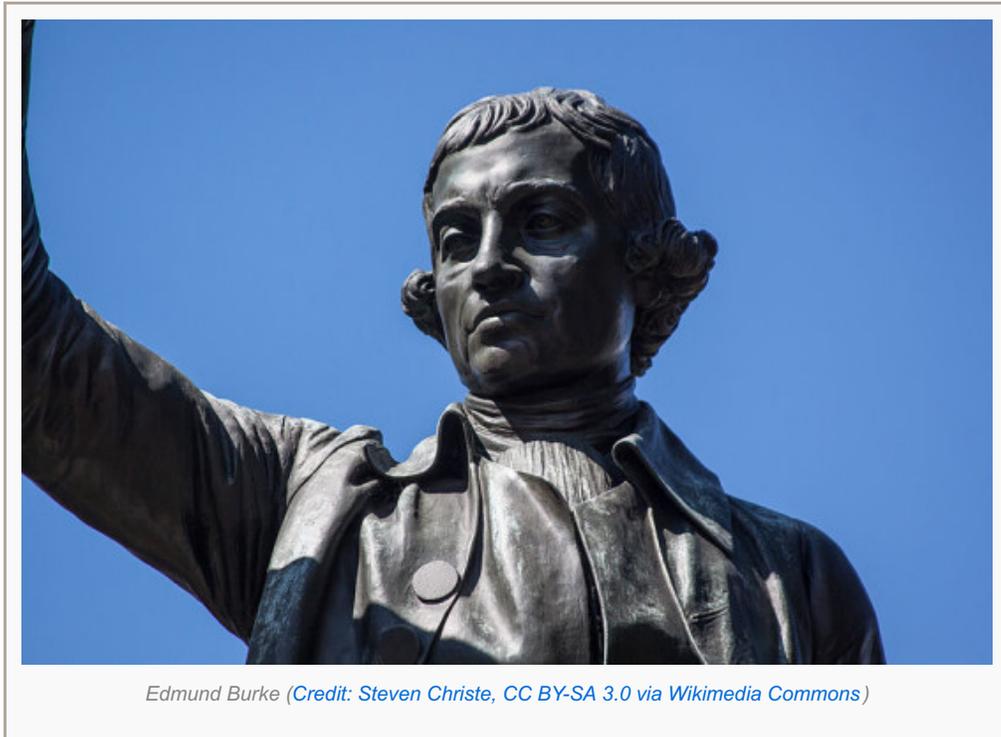
# Deliberation's domain extends well beyond Parliament

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By Democratic Audit UK

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*Involve, a think tank and charity which specialises in public participation, recently [published a report](#) by Simon Burall on democracy as a deliberative system, inspired by the work of the political scientist **John Dryzek** who responds to Burall's work [here](#).*



Over two centuries ago Edmund Burke in his “Speech to the Electors of Bristol” famously described Parliament as properly a “deliberative assembly”. Burke was right to highlight deliberation, but wrong to suppose that its main (and perhaps even exclusive) home should be Parliament. So in retrospect the electors of Bristol did the nation a service by eventually sending Burke packing.

Deliberation's domain extends well beyond Parliament, and in our day new spaces and possibilities open up for public deliberation, and so for the invigoration of a deeper democracy than is possible if we confine it to the election of representatives. Irrespective of time and place, any democratic system should in large measure be seen as a deliberative system joining multiple locations to good effect, and that applies to the United Kingdom no less than anywhere else.

These locations can include old and new media, social movements, associations of various sorts, designed citizen forums, courts, and everyday talk amongst citizens in informal settings, as well as councils and parliaments. Any attempts at democratic reform that ignore the multiplicity of sites of democratic activity and – crucially – their interconnectedness are likely to misfire.

Intelligent reform just has to contemplate the (sometimes counter-intuitive) consequences of seemingly piecemeal interventions in particular sites for the deliberative and democratic health of the system as a whole. That health will benefit from more effective articulation, representation and consideration of the variety of viewpoints that can be found among the citizenry.

In this light, Simon Burall's new thinkpiece [Room for a View](#) provides a novel and refreshing perspective on

democratic reform in the UK. His contribution is timely as well as urgent, given that potentially far-reaching constitutional change is on the agenda. At worst, politicians may stumble into such change for the sake of short term political gain, with disastrous long term consequences; at best well-meaning constitutional changes may prove to have negative systemic consequences. We can and must do better, and there is no better place to start than with the principles set out in Simon Burall's lucid, accessible, and thought-provoking treatment.

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*This blog was written in response to the launch of the report [Room for a View](#) by Involve's director Simon Burall. Read the [full report](#) and follow Involve on [Twitter](#).*

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