

Evaluation of *Participation Now* at Wortley Hall, 28-30 November 2014

We had over 80% written response evaluations.

Summary of comments under the six headings: (Each quote after semi-colon from a different participant)

Value of this experience for the education and learning process

'As always, excellent and stimulating. The various speakers were well chosen'; '...as a peer learning exercise we have shaken up understandings and jolted ideas...'; 'The relaxed atmosphere was helpful to opening my mind to newer approaches'; 'A wonderful stimulating and inspiring weekend... great discussions...'; 'Food for thought – content and process...but feel bleak about prospects .. due to circular discussions...'; 'Valuable for both'; 'Invaluable. I always change my mind or resolve a dilemma over the weekend'; 'I have learned so much and have been presented with much more to take away to consider further'; 'Very valuable, as it always is'; 'Up to usual standard, learning as much from fellow students as the lecturers'; 'The dialectical process was valuable and enjoyable'; 'Excellent overall – apart from the 'Education' workshop which was poorly thought out...'; 'I enjoyed the mixture of political debate and poetry...'; 'The usual undeniable effect... imparting/learning...'; 'This format is fun and interesting'; '...my first experience of the RW 'technique'. I enjoyed it – began to really understand what it's all about...'; 'A very good format for this experience'; 'Good, as always'; 'A privilege to hear and meet...old friends and newcomers. Stimulating discussions and skilled facilitators who guide the arguments without inflicting their own opinions...'; '...opens our eyes and minds to new ways of seeing and thinking... but leaves us frustrated that we change so little'; 'Exchanging ideas with others is always stimulating particularly when they are so lively'; '100 out of 100%! Far, far better than I expected... what I learned/assimilated unconsciously will change the whole book I am writing... superb evening entertainment too.'; 'On-going development of collaborative group work and relationships'; 'Outstanding – both for teacher/student interactions and for student/student interactions in discussion circles'; 'An excellent mixture of specialist in-puts and facilitator-led discussion. Stimulating and intellectually refreshing. A special experience'; 'An invaluable discursive learning experience'; '...stimulating discussions with strong minded people from a wide range of backgrounds'; And finally, this from one of our lecturers: '...brilliant weekend. I can't remember when I last enjoyed anything like the RWF conference and talked and debated with such fantastic, stimulating people'.

Comment on the programme: well balanced with lectures/discussion sessions? Particular strengths? Weaknesses?

'Generally well balanced. Possibly more direction needed as to location of the various groups'; 'Lectures good for grounding the group... I like the process of discussion groupings but their success depends on the skill of the facilitator...'; 'Good balance between talks and small groups'; '... well balanced... lectures, discussion... & sing-song sessions! One weakness - some people talking whilst lecturer was speaking...'; 'Good facilitators, interesting topics ... but not a clear idea about what I'm taking away...'; 'Well balanced...smaller discussion groups better'; 'Interesting... enjoyed the programme. Maybe more culture and less big'P' politics.'; 'Three excellent speakers – made me think a lot'; 'Good mix of lectures and group discussions'; 'Perhaps too wide spread but... stimulating'; 'Group discussions excellent – but some, after speaker presentations (well done) became dialogues between audience and speaker'; 'Very well balanced! Workshops a particular strength'; 'The balance... worked well'; 'Good balance...quite relaxed... One problem...in plenary sessions - 'interlopers' who speak without indicating they want to speak...'; 'Lectures interesting...discussions very effective but many 'questions' after the lectures were far too long, as were often the Lectures'; 'A good mix...'; 'Good to have fresh, younger, presenters...'; 'Good to have an afternoon break... Saturday an exhausting day with much thought provoking material...'; 'Did not think the Tutors were up to usual standard'; 'Perhaps...overall theme didn't provide sufficient focus'; 'All the talks resonated with my personal experience: 'Crony Capitalism'; 'Precariat Estates' and 'Volunteering' particularly relevant and interesting.'; 'Two lectures are enough, three too many... self-directed and organised group work, a process with emphasis on inclusion ... an antidote to top-heavy, hierarchical approaches...'; 'Well balanced – all lectures very interesting'; 'Good lectures - I prefer to be able to jump in with a question or comment rather than joining a queue of 'hands up.'; 'Well balanced – academic specialists were involved in relevant real-life issues';

Advance Preparation

'A good idea...'; 'Very good indeed'; 'Useful to have notes to print off'; 'I tried to read stuff..'; 'Helpful' (several said this); 'Good!'; 'Able to do a little...'; 'received provisional programme and notes late'; 'Plead guilty – none done'; 'I couldn't find the advance notes on the internet – but hand-outs were freely available'; 'Could we have tutors' papers in advance?'; 'I did a great deal of work in preparation'; 'The online materials which I printed out and brought with me were a big help to a 'newbie' to these RWF residential'; 'I read the notes'; 'Reading from notes on website'; 'read most of the material on website'; 'Reading online papers, selection of suitable poems'; 'Good briefing notes... better if available earlier'; 'Yes, I read all the notes';

Comment on the venue and the value of the residential experience

'Good... comfy and welcoming'; 'Well-loved building...'; 'Excellent, Good food.drink... High level of affinity with venue and RWF values and principles'; 'Excellent'; 'Accommodation comfortable although noise from wedding parties until 02.00 a problem'; 'Ideal centre for learning with good facilities and space to unwind in the grounds of the *Workers' Home*.' 'Excellent venue... mix of people for a period beneficial to the learning process'; 'Excellent'; 'The venue is special... staff very friendly and efficient. Food good and rooms fine'; 'Querky and adequate. Food good. Quite a disorganised place...'; '...mind-blowing for me – never been in the habit of staying in stately homes... a very comfortable experience'; 'Good venue with enough rooms of several discussion groups'; 'Cannot be faulted...'; 'Excellent on all counts'; 'Always very pleased with this'; 'Great venue... room 50 near staff room – kept me awake until 12.30...'; 'Lovely as always... but at times felt very crowded with 2 weddings...'; 'Venue and experience both outstanding'; 'A little old fashioned... bar very expensive'; 'Inspiring venue given its history... pressure from wedding parties but good to see popularity of the place'; 'residential element with plenty of opportunity for discussion – a rare opportunity'; 'residentials – one of the best forums possible';

Comments on fees and subsidy issues

'..greatly appreciated'; 'subsidy welcome'; 'good value for money!'; 'keeping fees down encourages far more participation'; 'good price'; 'About right, thanks...'; 'affordable'; 'very reasonable'; 'seriously helpful to food effect'; 'very generous'; '...very grateful'; 'low fee is helpful plus availability of grants'; 'many students say it makes it possible for them'; 'wouldn't manage to get if not subsidised'; 'fantastic'; 'marvellously good value'; 'subsidy may bring in more young people'; 'About right'; 'a sensible and fair policy – affordable without being free'; 'All OK, thankyou RWF';

Future ... suggestions

'Green/environmental politics, Issues of changing class stuctures'; 'Inter-generational alliances to confront unequal power'; 'involve more young people'; 'social media, language of 'class' and 'age'; 'If we are the 99% what is the importance/relevance of class?'; 'more clarity on discussion sessions'; 'Islam'; 'Power'; 'more of same..'; 'better technology'; 'the American political system'; 'short single subject weekends'; 'Iconic figures eg Tony Benn'; 'Where does the power lie - electors vote once every 5 years?'; 'always have a specific group on women's interests';

DT December 2014