In recent years Iceland has been at the forefront of democratic innovation. In 2009, 1,200 randomly selected citizens were assembled to discuss the county’s future. In 2010, Iceland held a ‘national assembly’ to initiate the development of a new constitution with 1,000 randomly selected participants assembled to participate. In both cases, a ‘discursive’ visioning process was employed. These assemblies are unique case studies with enormous significance for the study of participatory democracy. We are therefore organising a one day workshop at the University of the West of Scotland on the Icelandic assemblies. Bjarni S. Jónsson, (http://www.archive-ilr.com/archives-2010/2010-01/2010-01-notes-jonsson.php), one of the organisers of the assembly, will present on the assembly process and his subsequent research. A representative from ‘So Say Scotland’ (http://www.sosayscotland.org/), a network aiming to promote democratic innovation in Scotland, will also present on the ‘Thinking Together’ Assembly they are organising to discuss the future of Scotland, the format of which takes inspiration from the Icelandic assemblies.

Attendance is free, but places are limited. To register for this seminar please e-mail Dr Stephen Elstub: Stephen.elstub@uws.ac.uk

Directions to the Paisley campus and a campus map can be found here.
Programme: Wednesday 27th February

12-12.15: Arrival and registration

12.15-1.00: Lunch

1-2.30: Is there any merit in large scale citizen dialogue as a contribution to conscious social evolution? Large scale citizen assemblies in Iceland

Bjarni S. Jónsson

Iceland suffered severe consequences as a result of the international financial crisis of 2008, with anger and frustration resulting in protests and riots. A group of people decided to organize a visioning assembly for the Icelandic Nation as an attempt to turn negative energy into a constructive force. In November 2009 about 1000 people randomly sampled from voters was summoned for a one day event exploring the desired state for the Icelandic society. A year later, a similar assembly was called for by the Parliament of Iceland to set the agenda for a revised constitution for Iceland. The basic form for the meeting has since been widely used by corporations, communities and associations. Bjarni S. Jónsson, one of the developers and organisers of both of the national assemblies, will discuss the experience and offer perspectives on the implications so far.

2.30-3.00: Coffee break

3.00-4.00: Thinking together: a visioning assembly on the future of Scotland

So Say Scotland Representative

Inspired by the Icelandic Assemblies, So Say Scotland has organised a discursive visioning assembly with nearly 200 stratified sampled citizens to discuss the future of Scotland. A representative from the SSS network will detail the process being employed, reflecting on the tensions and trade-offs that need to be made when trying to organise a democratic assembly in practice.

4.00: Depart