Radical democracy was articulated by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* written in 1985. They argue that social movements which attempt to create social and political change need a strategy which challenges neoliberal and neoconservative concepts of democracy. This strategy is to expand the liberal definition of democracy based on freedom and equality, to include difference.

"Radical democracy" means "the root of democracy." Laclau and Mouffe claim that liberal democracy and deliberative democracy in their attempts to build consensus, oppress differing opinions, races, classes, genders, and worldviews. In the world, in a country, and in a social movement there are many (a plurality of) differences which resist consensus. Radical democracy is not only accepting of difference, dissent and antagonisms, but is dependent on it. Laclau and Mouffe argue based on the assumption that there are oppressive power relations that exist in society and that those oppressive relations should be made visible, re-negotiated and altered. By building democracy around difference and dissent, oppressive power relations existing in societies are able to come to the forefront so that they can be challenged.

In other contexts, radical democracy is a term used to refer to the post-Marxist perspectives of Italian radicalism—especially Paolo Virno.

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### Re-interpretations

Since Laclau and Mouffe argued for a radical democracy, many other theorists and practitioners have adapted and changed the term. For example, bell hooks and Henry Giroux have all written about education for a radical democracy. Paulo Freire's work, although initiated decades before Laclau and Mouffe, can also be read through similar lenses. Theorists such as Paul Chatterton and Richard JF Day have written about the importance of radical democracy within some of the autonomous movements in Latin America (namely the EZLN—Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Mexico, the MST—Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil, and the Piquetero—Unemployed Workers Movement in Argentina). The concept of radical democracy is seen in some circles as colonial in nature due to its reliance on a western notion of democracy. Also, radical democracy challenges consensus decision-making processes which are essential to many indigenous governing practices.

### Challenges

Because of radical democracy’s focus on difference, and challenging oppressive power relations, it has been seen as conducive to post-colonial theory and decolonization. However, the concept of radical democracy is seen in some circles as colonial in nature due to its reliance on a western notion of democracy. Also, radical democracy challenges consensus decision-making processes which are essential to many indigenous governing practices.

### Contemporary mass movements committed to radical democracy

- The EZLN – Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Mexico.
- The MST – Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil
The Piqueteros – Unemployed Workers Movement in Argentina
The Abahlali baseMjondolo – shack dwellers’ movement in South Africa
The Socialist Party USA[9]
JungdemokratInnen/Junge Linke (translated Young Democrats/Young Left, JD/JL) a left-wing political youth organization in Germany and the former youth wing of a liberal party called FDP

### Theorists
- Ernesto Laclau
- Chantal Mouffe
- Murray Bookchin
- Slavoj Zizek
- Raya Dunayevskaya
- Roberto Mangabeira Unger
- Cornel West
- Sheldon S. Wolin
- William E. Connolly

### Sources

[^1]: [http://socialistparty-usa.org/principles.html](http://socialistparty-usa.org/principles.html)


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Conflicts in common(s)?

Theories of radical democracy and the governance of the commons

Martin Deleixhe

Introduction

Recently, theories of radical democracy have attempted to redefine democracy’s political regime beyond its conventional understanding as a competitive system of representatives organized in political parties vying for the votes of their right-endowed citizens. 1 Dissatisfied with the reduction of democracy to an elite-level negotiation between a plurality of interest groups 2, radical democrats have called for both a rethinking of the means to foster popular participation to the decision-making process and a critique of the capitalist relations of production that, in their opinion, underpin this impoverished notion of democracy. 3 Moreover, though they share an egalitarian concern with social democrats, they lay a much greater emphasis on the current diversity of the social struggles that cannot, according to the now canonical exposition of their views by Laclau and Mouffe, be subsumed under the central opposition of labor and capital 4. Last but not least, they assume that democracy can approximate but never achieve those participatory and egalitarian goals and should therefore constantly keep striving for its own democratization. 5 The tradition of radical democracy, writ large, thus combines republican elements with a social critique that draws loosely on the Marxist tradition and an alertness to the demands of diversity.

Given those ideological features, it will not come as a surprise that some prominent radical democrats have lately demonstrated a vivid interest in the commons. Ever since the first publication of the trailblazing work of Elinor Ostrom Governing the Commons in 1990 6 that rebuked on solid empirical and theoretical grounds the assumption (originally stated in a 1968 article from Garret Hardin 7) that commons would be depleted of their resources and eventually destroyed unless they were either privatized or turned into public property, commons have been associated with a self-governing and self-sustaining scheme of

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production in which stakeholders are equally considered as the masters of their own fate, and direct participation to the collective deliberation is the procedural norm. Shed in this light, commons have been burdened with the responsibility of carving out an autonomous social space independent from both the atomism of capitalist markets and the hierarchical structure of the State. Since the commons prove on a small empirical scale that self-governance, far from being an utopian ideal, is and has been for a long time a lived reality, a few authors have attempted to turn them into the conceptual matrix of their own account of radical democracy. But is the obvious parallel revolving around the notion of autonomous governance substantial enough for the commons to provide a new paradigm for democracy? Two couple of authors – Negri and Hardt on one hand, Laval and Dardot on the other – appear to think so and have jointly coined the term “the common” (in the singular) to suggest that the self-governance quintessential to the commons could be turned into a general democratic principle.

Although this theoretical development is exciting, I will contend that it fails to account for an important contradiction between both theoretical frameworks. Whereas the governance of the commons depends on a harmonious cooperation of all the stakeholders that in turn relies on a strong sense of belonging to a shared community, radical democracy is highly suspicious of any attempt to build a totalizing community and constantly emphasizes the decisive role of internal agonistic conflicts in maintaining a vibrant pluralism. I will further contend that the short-sightedness of radical democrats on this issue might be partly explained by the strong emphasis put in the commons literature on a related but different conflict, the one that opposes the commoners to the movement of enclosures. I will argue, however, that this conflict is not of an agonistic nature and does little to preserve the dynamism and the constant self-criticism proper to the radical democrat regime. Consequently, if we want to escape the naïve belief that no form of oppression is to be found in the commons, then instead of assuming that those governance schemes are per se democratic, we need to think how to democratize them, which implies to allow the expression of internal conflict between commoners.

1. From the “commons” to the “common”

   a. Commons are not only common-pool resources but also a set of co-decided social practices and norms

   Elinor Ostrom should be credited for turning conventional wisdom regarding commons upside down. Commons used to be, in medieval times, pastures and woodlands that, by custom, could be

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8 As suggests for instance the following title : Bollier, David and Helfrich, Silke (eds.), The Wealth of the Commons. A World Beyond Market and State, Amherst (Ma.), Levellers Press, 2012
9 Mouffe, Chantal, On the Political, Abingdon, Routledge, 2005, p. 3.
accessed and jointly used by all villagers.\textsuperscript{10} By extension, the term commons came to be used to refer to “a resource to which no single decision-making holds exclusive title”\textsuperscript{11} or, in more technical terms, to “subtractable resources managed under a property regime in which a legally user pool cannot be efficiently excluded from the resource domain.”\textsuperscript{12} Prior to the seminal work of Ostrom, it was widely admitted that the twin features of the commons, namely their open-access and the rivalrous nature of the goods they either contained or produced, would lead to a collective action problem akin to the prisoner’s dilemma.\textsuperscript{13} The commoners, that were assumed to be rational, incommunicative and selfish agents, would be locked into short-term strategies and keep subtracting goods from the commons up until those would be ruined.\textsuperscript{14} As a result, only two distinct policies could be prescribed to ensure that long term interests would prevail over immediate individual gains. The tragic fate of the commons had to be prevented by either privatizing the commons, or putting them under a public authority. Either the invisible hand of the market or the Leviathan State.\textsuperscript{15} For quite some time, the debate regarding the commons has therefore been structured along the lines of this sole alternative.

Elinor Ostrom convincingly showed that the pessimistic ‘metaphoric model’ of the prisoner dilemma was misleading. It rests on a mistaken construal of the commoners that plainly doesn’t match the empirical facts. Through a careful scrutiny of numerous case studies in The Philippines, Switzerland, Japan and Spain, Ostrom argues that commons have existed and have proven to be sustainable over long period of times (centuries in the case of the Andalusian irrigation system).\textsuperscript{16} One of the reason for their long-enduring success is that commoners do not act as \textit{homo economicus}. Commoners are social actors embedded in tight-knit communities that communicate, observe social norms and judge their fellow members on the basis of their reputation.\textsuperscript{17} They are still considered as individualistic agents – Ostrom remains within the theoretical frameworks of both rational choice and game theory, that she seeks to refine and expand but never to radically criticize – but they understand that it is in their own best interest to build institutions that will create incentives for the others to cooperate. Consequently, commoners are capable of collectively making some binding decisions that supply institutions, refrain their individual consumption and preserve their resource domains in the long run. Notably, they design monitoring and conflict-

\textsuperscript{11} Wijkman, Magnus, “Managing the Global Commons”, \textit{International Organization}, vol. 36, n°3, 1982, p. 512. It has been pointed out that this extension is partially abusive and generates a certain amount of confusion in the literature for it conflates the narrowly defined “historical commons” with the more expansive analytical definition of the commons, see De Moor, Tine, “From Common Pastures to Global Commons. A Historical Perspective on Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Commons”, \textit{Natures \& Sciences Sociétés}, vol. 19, n°4, p. 422-31.
\textsuperscript{15} Ostrom, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 8-13.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 58-88.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 15-21.
resolution mechanisms that foster mutual trust by preventing commoners from free-riding. In sum, commoners have proven to be able to self-organize and govern by themselves the commons on which they depend for their subsistence.\(^{18}\)

From the viewpoint of democratic theory, Ostrom’s main contribution still lies elsewhere though, in what one might call her constructivist/institutionalist turn. For she was the first to clearly expose that commons were not just a pool of open-access, rivalrous resources but also relied upon a coordinated governance. The set of collective institutions and social norms created by the commoners are not just instrumental in sustaining the commons. In fact, they are part of the commons themselves. What is noteworthy in her analysis is that it considers commons as a pool of resources that relies upon autonomous and cooperative social practices, semi-independent from both state and market logics, to ensure their sustainability.\(^{19}\) This approach highlighted that commons were not only a natural thing but also partly a social construct. Nevertheless, Ostrom appeared to shy away from her own conclusions. The persisting assumption that goods have to bear certain intrinsic qualities (rivalry and non-excludability) in order to qualify as commons trapped her into a naturalistic framework and prevented her from questioning whether those co-decided cooperative social practices could spread beyond a specific set of collective action dilemmas.\(^{20}\) Instead of sticking to her rationale and consider that anything could become a commons if it was governed as such, Ostrom inconsistently argued that only certain goods, namely the common-pool resources and knowledge commons, were meant to be administrated collectively.\(^{21}\)

b. The common : not just a potential model of economic production but a general democratic principle

This “reification of the commons” in Ostrom’s work is roundly condemned by Dardot and Laval. Firstly because, according to them, it fails to explain why the first movement of enclosures has historically occurred.\(^{22}\) If historical meadows and forests have ceased to be governed as commons and have been privatized in XVIth and XvIIth century England, it is not because landlords noticed all of sudden that their naturally open features could be altered in order to make them exclusive. It is rather due to a shift in the social relations between the gentry and the commoners.\(^{23}\) Similarly, Susan Buck observes that open-

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\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 90-102.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 24-5.


\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) As it has been expertly shown in this detailed historical monograph, Meiksins Wood, Ellen, *The Origin of Capitalism. A Longer View*, London, Verso, 2002.
access goods tend to be regarded as natural or global commons to be governed multilaterally (Antarctica, deep seabed, outer space, etc.) only insofar as there exists no technology that makes their exploitation profitable.

As far as they are concerned, Dardot and Laval happily throw overboard any remnants of naturalism in the commons theory and argue that no good is inherently common, or naturally escapes appropriation. Commons do not denote a relation between a resource and a community but a specific kind of relation between individuals that consider themselves as belonging to a shared and constructed community. In a similar vein, they discard any reference to a common heritage of mankind, for it rests on a theological perspective according to which the custody of the world was given in common to all men by a superior power, which is incompatible with the non-hierarchical governance typical of the commons.

It follows that, if no good is naturally (or theologically) common, they have to be instituted as commons, that is they have to be put in common. Strictly speaking, commons are nothing but the outcome of a continuous process of commoning. Dardot and Laval argue that: “it is only the practical activity of men that can make things common.” In other words, they bring Ostrom’s institutionalist logic one step further. Collective self-governance is not part of the commons, it is constitutive of the commons.

Dardot and Laval subsequently suggest to call this collaborative activity itself the common to radically distinguish it from its reified forms. At first glance, this sets them on a slippery slope. For the common could then easily be turned into a vague principle of altruism. Peter Linebaugh, for instance, states that: “Human solidarity as expressed in the slogan ‘all for one and one for all’ is the foundation of commoning.” The related terms ‘commoning’ and ‘the common’ then run the risk of being used to describe any forms of effective cooperation. This is precisely why Dardot and Laval painstakingly outline its institutional components. According to them, the principle of the common invites us to “introduce everywhere, in the most radical and most systematic fashion, the institutional form of the self-government.” Two things should be said regarding the content of this political principle of the common. First, it contrasts radically with the two classical policy prescriptions, that is the recourse to market or to the State, in that it is not articulated as a property regime. It is not assumed that the political solution to the conundrum of having multiple owners making claims regarding a single pool of goods lays in clarifying who is its rightful owner (be it by distributing private property rights, turning the commons into a public good or even outlining what a common ownership of the good would potentially look like.) Since Dardot and Laval consider that commons are nothing but the institutionalization of the cooperative social practices that surround them, they consistently argue that the commons cannot belong to anyone.

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24 Buck, Susan J., The Global Commons, op. cit., p. ???
26 Ibid., p. 49. The book has not yet been published in English. This translation and all the following from Dardot and Laval are mine.
27 Linebaugh, Peter, Stop, Thief!: The Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance, Oakland, PM Press, 2014.
28 Dardot and Laval, Commun, op. cit., p. 46.
29 Ibid., p. 476-480.
The political principle of the common is even at one point presented as “the negation in act of the right to property”\(^{30}\). For it struggles against any form of definite appropriation and intends to substitute the right of use to any claim to property. Hence, only those that take an active part in the production of the commons are entitled to be co-participants to the decision-making process regarding its use.

Second, the common blurs the distinction between the social and the political. Empirical examples of commons, from region wide irrigation systems to locally organized inshore fisheries and peer-to-peer data transfer, prove at once to be an efficient model of economic production – ensuring that a collective resource not only be preserved but also proliferate in the long run for the greatest benefit of all – and to be instrumental in shaping self-governed communities. The *commoning* process creates autonomous social organizations that escape the classical dichotomy between private and public and reshuffle the boundaries between the social and the political.\(^{31}\) The radical demand of self-governance that underpins the principle of the common is as valid for small production schemes as it is at a the level of the whole political community, where what is at stake is society’s creation of itself.\(^{32}\) Betraying their Marxist theoretical background, Dardot and Laval argue that the social is always intimately intertwined with the political : “the primacy of the common in both spheres [i.e. social and political] is what enables their reciprocal articulation and turns the socio-economic itself as a *daily school in co-decision making*.”\(^{33}\) This is also what enables them to suggest, with a tiny bit of melodramatic eloquence, that the institutionalizing process they call *commoning* should be turned into “a general principle for society’s reorganization.”\(^{34}\)

Hardt and Negri share this insight on the vanishing boundary between the social and the political and follow suit in assimilating modes of production and political regime. However, their analysis proves to be a lot more deterministic and eventually leaves little room to politics. In *Commonwealth*, Hardt and Negri suggest that capitalism would have entered into a new phase they call cognitive capitalism (or, in more philosophical terms, biopolitical production).\(^{35}\) With the advent of new communication technologies, social production is now evermore connected and self-regulating. As a consequence, capital no longer plays an authoritative role. While capital used to be key in disciplining the workers and creating the condition of their cooperation (in the context of the factory for instance), its coordination role now became superfluous since workers organize, network and co-produce autonomously. In Hardt and Negri’s


\(^{33}\) Dardot & Laval, *Commun*, op. cit., p. 466.


terms: “capital is increasingly external to the productive process and the generation of wealth.” For, in cognitive capitalism, what is being produced is mostly immaterial. Affects and knowledge, “the labor of the head and the heart”, are the innovative products of this revamped economy. And in order to produce those, workers need to be dynamic, creative and thought-provoking, which requires them to be emancipated from the tough discipline that existed in the workplace.

Capital’s raison d’être is to reproduce, that is to accumulate even more capital. But, if it no longer controls production, it is deprived of any means to despoil the workers from the surplus value their cooperation produces. Capital’s last resort has therefore been to turn to predatory practices and to expropriate values from the commons. The exploitation, that used to be internal to the production cycle, looks increasingly like the typical primitive accumulation of capital, relying on a violence that is external to the economic cycle. Since capital no longer intervenes in production, it has no choice but to expropriate values from the commons the workers collectively produced. This parasitic intervention of functionless capitalists has been often done over the last three decades with the benediction and/or the active support of the State. Neoliberalism is the ideological expression of this strategic shift in which capital and States cooperate to enable a new wave of enclosures of the commons on a large scale, labelled by David Harvey as an “accumulation by dispossession”. However, in a markedly dialectical fashion, this strategy bears its own contradiction and will eventually lead to a decisive crisis. For the productivity of labor greatly decreases every time the capital encloses and destroys the new immaterial commons on which its cooperative practices rests. In the long run, this strategy can only be self-defeating. Hardt and Negri even go as far as suggesting to give up class struggle, a bold claim to make for two authors that belong to the Marxist tradition. For, in their view, labor will grow ever more autonomous from capital’s control in the future. The point then will no longer be to fight its rule but to escape its reach. Hence, their call for an “exodus of labor.” According to this perspective, there are no longer two classes facing each other in an existential economic struggle (as in the classical Marxist view), but one capitalist class keen on privatizing the commons produced by the cognitive working class that does its best to wrestle it out of its control. Commoners should no longer engage into a fierce struggle to defeat the capitalists, they should simply abandon them to their – presumably miserable – fate.

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36 Ibid., p. 141.
37 Ibid., p. 132.
38 Ibid., p. 140.
41 Hardt & Negri, Commonwealth, op. cit., p. 145.
42 Ibid., p. 152.
What is strikingly similar in the two later approaches (Laval & Dardot, Hardt & Negri) is that they uncritically endorse Ostrom’s claim that commons are harmonious self-governing schemes of cooperation. In doing so, they overlook the fact that Ostrom was facing an uphill battle when she first wrote about the commons. Since the overwhelming consensus in the scientific community back then was that no commonly owned goods could be efficiently administrated and managed, Ostrom had to prove that self-governing cooperation could overcome collective action issues. But, as I will try to show in the following section, using this conclusion to turn the commons into the matrix of radical democracy may come at a cost. It should also be pointed out that Dardot and Laval’s theoretical account of the common retains a dialectic dimension. It stresses the interplay between the political and social, arguing that the latter could be the learning space for a democratic practice in the former, whereas Hardt and Negri show less caution and appear to merely translate the spontaneous cooperation they attribute to cognitive capitalism into the political sphere. Hence, their unflinching optimism and the contestable claim that: “Cognitive labor and affective labor generally produce cooperation autonomously from capitalist command, even in some of the most constrained and exploited circumstances, such as call centers or food services.”

As many commentators have already pointed out, the thesis of a radical shift toward cognitive capitalism overestimates the extent to which capitalism has changed and consequently overlooks the persistence of hierarchies, be it in the international divisions of labor, in new ‘horizontal’ modes of management that hide rather than challenge their implicit hierarchy or in the enduring importance of the first and the second sector of the economy in the global South.

c. The agonistic model of democracy underpinning previous radical democratic theories

We owe a highly idiosyncratic (but also one of the most influential) description of democracy’s singularity to Claude Lefort. Lefort traces its origins back to the French Revolution. What was at stake in the popular uprisings was, according to him, much more than the overthrow of the head of State. For, what the revolutionaries did was not only to get rid of a ruler they disliked, they also dismissed forever the idea that anyone could pretend to embody power. In contrast with the monarchical regime in which the sovereign King is – in his very flesh – the illustration of the body politics and therefore the rightful and uncontested source of all authority, power in democracy is nobody’s attribute. It no longer belongs to anyone but it is temporarily granted to the winner of a ritualized political contest. Power, according to

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43 Ibid., p. 140.
45 Lefort, Claude, L’invention démocratique, Paris, Fayard, 1994, p. 159-76.
46 An insight Claude Lefort owes to the unrivaled historical study by Kantorowicz on the symbolic role played by the King’s body in mediaeval political theology, see Kantorowicz, Ernst, The King’s Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997 (1957).
Lefort’s oft quoted metaphor, has become “an empty place” that no individual, political party or ideology has a legitimate claim to occupy.

With the unitary imaginary of the body gone, the political community has to acknowledge that it rests on a constitutive division. Notably because the society always finds itself at a reasonable distance from the empty place of power, but also due to the presence of several factions that struggle for the right to the temporary exercise of power. Second, this internal division is not a by-product of the new democratic imaginary. It is rather its necessary driving force. Since there is no longer an uncontested source of legitimacy, nobody is in a position to make any definite claim regarding what is just or unjust, true or false, legitimate or illegitimate. Democracy is a fundamentally unstable regime in which “the markers of certainty are dissolved.” Conflict is what ensures that the place of power remains empty, since it prevents anyone ever feeling too comfortable occupying it. Radical democracy welcomes conflict as the best medicine against the ever-present temptation to look at the political community as an organic whole, potentially paving the way for a turn towards an authoritative or even a totalitarian politics.

Laclau and Mouffe reach surprisingly similar conclusions. To them, democracy is the regime in which several hegemonic projects compete without ever getting the best of each other, resulting in an “openness and indeterminacy of the social, which gives a primary and founding character to negativity and antagonism.” Drawing (polemically) on Carl Schmitt’s infamous concept of the political, Chantal Mouffe argues that political oppositions can adopt two forms. In its violent form, political conflict can amount to an existential opposition between friends and enemies whose only logical issue is the attempt to exterminate, or at the very least to get rid of, the group of threatening outsiders. The relation is then one between two agents entirely external to each other locked in a behavior of mutual and relentless aggression. This is what Schmitt calls the political and Mouffe terms antagonism. The milder form of political opposition stays away from those extremes. It is better described as a conflict between adversaries that, in spite of their disagreement, still recognize each other as legitimate interlocutors. Though their worldviews might be radically different, they admit to belonging to a shared political association and therefore to being in need to preserve a minimal degree of cooperation. To avoid any confusion, Mouffe qualifies this conflictual relation as agonistic.

48 Ibid., p. 39.
49 Ibid., p. 19.
53 Ibid., p. 20.
Democracy consequently has a twofold relation with conflict. First, “the task of democracy is to transform antagonism into agonism.” Democracy is burdened with the heavy responsibility to tame antagonism. It has to turn enemies and their ‘make-no-prisoner’ political attitude into adversaries that may fiercely disagree but will nonetheless respect each other’s right to participate in their political community’s democratic debate. But in order to do so, democracy should not repress conflicts as liberalism is very often tempted to do (by reducing it to a rational conversation held on a neutral field while what is at play is the very structuration of the relations of power). Democracy has to embrace its intrinsic agonism and grant it the necessary space to express itself. Otherwise, attempts to repress it could turn healthy agonistic political confrontations into pathological antagonisms. While conflict may need to be channeled to avoid spilling over into antagonism, tumultuous clashes between political views are nevertheless the sign of a well-functioning democracy.

2. Commons, democracy and conflict

Now conflict is interestingly an ever present feature in the commons literature. For commons, as we have stressed in the first section can be seen as the result of two contradictory trends. We first showed that commons should not be reified and assimilated to collective goods but rather deserved to be qualified as self-governed cooperative practices. There is no such thing as a common good, but simply outcomes of a commoning process. Goods become common because of a collective democratic praxis that governs them as commons. But, much of the commons literature has also documented the persistent risk of enclosure that looms over the commons. The commoning process should indeed never be taken for granted since its self-organized practices are ceaselessly threatened of violent expropriation. The conflict between those that want to spread the principle of the common and those that seek to privatize and/or commodify the commons is therefore a recurrent theme of the commons literature. In what follows, we will show that, albeit there is a constant struggle in the commons to resist this trend toward expropriation, this conflict does little to foster a vibrant democratic life.

a. Primitive accumulation, or the conflict between commoners and capitalists

Marx wanted to dispel Adam Smith’s claim that the original accumulation of capital was merely due to the industrious nature of some gifted individuals that had saved it overtime. His classical analysis of the enclosure movements – in the chapter XXVI of Capital – exposes the violent nature of the initial

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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 30.
accumulation of capital. Taking England and Ireland as case studies, Marx painstakingly demonstrates
that, far from being the end result of generations of hard labor, the accumulation of capital was in fact
realized, throughout the XVI\textsuperscript{th} and XVII\textsuperscript{th} century, through the expropriation of the commoners from the
lands they had maintained and inhabited for decades, or even centuries. As Marx famously stated: “[t]he
new freedmen became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of
production, and of all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements. And the
history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.”

Blood and fire. For this was not a gentle process. Primitive accumulation is distinct from capital
reproduction in the sense that, given the absence of pre-existing capital or of wage relationship, it has to
seize value outside of the production cycle. While exploitation can go relatively unnoticed, because it is
embedded in a production system and in an ideology that justify the worker’s loss of the surplus value he
produced to the capitalist, the primitive accumulation cannot resort to such mean. To be accomplished,
it has to separate the peasants from their means of production through the privatization and the parceling
of their land. And this requires the intervention of a violence external to the economic cycle. The
enclosure movement is better captured as a tumultuous conflict between social classes. When
commoners lost this first battle, that is have lost the right to govern collectively the commons, it
compelled them to sell their work force on the labor market. Commoners had then successfully be turned
into proletarians and commons into capitalistic private property. In other words, the principle of the
common had been temporarily undone.

As Massimo De Angelis warns us, one shouldn’t mistake primitive accumulation for a long gone
social phenomenon, belonging to another historical epoch. Since Marx himself had a linear and stagist
account of economy's development, it would be tempting to look upon primitive accumulation as a thing
of the past, i.e. a shameful and violent intermediary stage between feudalism and capitalism that set the
historical basis for capitalist production. But if we define, as Marx himself did, primitive accumulation as
an extra-economic force that separates the workers from their means of production, we would be

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56 Marx, Karl, \textit{Capital. Volume I}, chapter XXVI.
57 For an historical account of the political ripples generated by this struggle between commoners and capitalists, see
Linebaugh, Peter, \textit{The Magna Carta Manifesto. Liberties and Commons for All}, Berkeley, University of California Press,
2009.
59 De Angelis, Massimo, “Separating the doing and the deed. Capital and the continuous character of enclosures”,
\textit{Historical Materialism}, vol. 12, n\textsuperscript{2}, 2004, p. 57–87. In a similar vein, see also Caffentzis, George, \textit{In Letters of Blood and
60 “It is in fact the divorce between the conditions of labour on the one hand and the producer on the other that
forms the concept of capital, as this arises with primitive accumulation […] subsequently appearing as a constant
\end{flushright}
compelled to acknowledge it as a recurring phenomenon, that doesn’t only precede capitalism but actually litters its history.\textsuperscript{61} For the workers organize, be it in cooperatives, unions or political parties, and develop political strategies that have enabled them to wrestle back some control over their means of production. As De Angelis states : “Objects of primitive accumulation also become any given balance of power among classes that constitute a ‘rigidity’ for furthering the capitalist process of accumulation.”\textsuperscript{62} There is thus an ever present conflict whose object are the commons. And this conflict is framed in terms of an extra-economic struggle between two radically opposed social classes, the capitalists that want to break any self-governance of production set in place by workers and the workers that unite in order to escape the alienation induced by the separation from their means of production.

But since enclosure is the mean by which the capitalists realize primitive accumulation, if primitive accumulation is not a thing of the past, then neither are the enclosures. And one is not surprised to find out that there is a vast literature documenting not a single historical wave of enclosures but indeed a successive waves of enclosures.\textsuperscript{63} As a matter of fact, the recent turn to neoliberalism is often interpreted, for instance by David Harvey, as a renewal of the resort to extra-economic forces to appropriate illegitimately values from the commons created by cooperative practices.\textsuperscript{64} The struggle over the commons is far from being over and rather appears to be an ongoing process.

Is this recurring struggle an instance of the agonism that keeps democracy indeterminate and consequently alive? Should the movement of enclosures, in spite of its rapacious character, be commended paradoxically for its democratic character? In order to respond, we need to assess the quality and the nature of the conflict being played out in the opposition between commoners and capitalists. And my contention is that it in no way qualifies as an agonistic opposition. For at least two reasons. First, because of the scope of this conflict. If we take the commons (in the plural) to constitute the matrix of a democratic principle of self-governance we named earlier the common (in the singular), it logically follows that the inchoate democracy we observe is the one being built amongst commoners. Capitalists are an outside threat to this democratic community in the making, but could not claim to be one of its internal and constitutive division. What is at stake is here is an external opposition between two worlds rather than an internal conflict. And second, because of the intensity of the conflict. Capitalists do not consider

\textsuperscript{61} An early interpretation of the enclosures as having a continuous character can be found in Luxemburg, Rosa, The Accumulation of Capital, Abingdon, Routledge, 2003 (1913).

\textsuperscript{62} De Angelis, Massimo, “Separating the doing and the deed. Capital and the continuous character of enclosures”, loc. cit.


\textsuperscript{64} Harvey, David, A Brief History of Neoliberalism, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.
themselves as sharing a community of fate with the commoners they turn into proletarians, even though they may actually be needing their labor. As highlighted above, the enclosures are a violent process that show very little consideration for the commoners they expropriate. And the resulting social conflict can quickly escalate to extremes forms of violence, bordering on cruelty. Marx had described in the *Communist Manifesto* the opposition between proletarians and capitalists as a civil war, that is the most merciless form of conflict, prone to unravel the community and striving toward the close enemies’ definitive extermination. Civil wars are such bitter and hard-fought conflicts that any form of self-control and self-limitation in the recourse to violence is left behind. Decades later, Marx is sadly convinced to see his prediction come true when he witnesses the annihilation of one of the most radical attempt at building a political common, that is the Parisian commune of 1871. Crushed by the way in which the Parisian revolutionaries had been wiped out by reactionary forces, Marx will famously describe the event as a *Civil War in France*. Afterwards, he will consider that the Commune epitomizes the kind of violent struggle that is to be expected when one attempts to break free of the capitalist mold to build his own common.

For those two motives, I therefore contend that the struggle between capitalists and commoners is too tumultuous to be conducive to any form of agonism and should not be relied upon to sustain a dynamic internal division constitutive of democracy. Given its scope and its intensity, it would be better described as an antagonistic conflict that escapes the democratic realm. As I had said in the introduction, because they mistakenly locate the democratic conflict into this opposition, many authors (chiefly Hardt and Negri or Dardot an Laval with whom I have been most concerned in this article, but the same could be said of David Harvey, Naomi Klein, David Bollier or Peter Linebaugh) end up overlooking the fact that, in their political proposition, conflict is absent from the commons. Conflict is entirely associated with the resistance to the enclosure movements, while commons are assumed to be harmoniously self-governed through spontaneously cooperative practices.

In Hardt and Negri’s case, the assumption that commons are self-creating, self-regulatory and would better function far from any form of centralized control is so strong that it is sometimes difficult to fathom what distinguishes it from the neoliberal utopia according to which all aspects of societies would

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68 Marx, Karl, *The Civil War in France*.
69 This is even more blatant in the alterglobalization discourse that has picked up the theme of the commons as one of its political spearheads, see for instance Klein, Naomi, “Reclaiming the Commons”, *New Left Review*, vol. 9, pp. 81-9 and Harvey, David, “The future of the commons”, *Radical History Review*, vol. 109, 2011, pp. 101–7.
be better off being deregulated and abandoned to unimpeded market mechanisms. Dardot and Laval are more nuanced and repeatedly stress the importance to create political and social institutions in order to foster and support the cooperative praxis that takes place inside the commons. What is nevertheless shared by both approaches is that, from Lefort’s perspective, the image they offer of a community reconciled with itself is nothing less than worrying. For no political community is ever deprived of any form of disagreement and subsequent division, and such a projection can therefore only be interpreted as an attempt to cover up inconvenient truths regarding its less-than-ideal internal organization. Hardt and Negri do nothing to alleviate that fear when they claim that “love is really the living heart of the project we have been developing” and add for good measure that “love is a process of the production of the common”. Although they stress that love should not be identitarian, that is a love of the same, or understood as a process of unification, they nevertheless come to the Spinozian conclusion that love is a passion that “composes singularities, like themes in a musical score”. One would be hard pressed not to see into this last description of love as the driving force behind the constitution of the community of the commoners the suggestion that the latter would demonstrate the harmony of a melodic tune. Here too, Laval and Dardot show more caution than Hardt and Negri. Nevertheless, their plea for the associativist tradition (Proudhon, Mauss, Jaurès) and its practical network of cooperatives to pick up the torch of the socialist movement could be interpreted as a rebuttal, or at least a move away, from the acknowledgement of the presence of perennial economic conflicts. For the cooperativist ideal still relies, to a certain extent, on the utopia of a conflict-free community of workers. In contrast, from a radical democratic viewpoint, one should never assume that commons are per se democratic (or jointly converge to outline a new democratic principle of self-governance of the social called the common) but rather wonder which internal and limited conflict could be the engine of its democratization.

b. The persistent conflict

And once we take a closer look, conflicts do indeed abound in the commons. Since commons are nothing but communities democratically organized around the self-governance of social issues, there is no reason to think that they could avoid giving birth, like any other democratically governed community, to some internal divisions. First, as Elinor Ostrom had herself established strikingly with the case of water management in California, because there is more often an imbalance of power among the different

70 A critique forcefully articulated by Dardot and Laval that recognize candidly the extent of their debt to Hardt and Negri’s first outline of the principle of the common but are nonetheless very keen to distance themselves from their predecessors on several key conceptual points, and notably on the question of commons’ relationship to capital and to social institutions, see Dardot & Laval, op. cit., p. 189-227.
72 Ibid., p. 184.
73 Dardot & Laval, Commun, op. cit., p. 367-403.
protagonists than its opposite (that is a perfect equity). In the classical case of the common-pool resources, the numerous protagonists involved may have stakes that vary to a great degree, leading to socio-political situations in which the odds are rather stacked against an egalitarian procedure of decision-making. This imbalance of power may often be important enough to exclude small stakeholders from exerting any real influence on its eventual outcome and consequently leave them without a say on how to solve collective action dilemmas. To say the very least, it should thus in any event not be taken for granted than any well-functioning and efficient self-governance of the commons is devoid of instances of disregard for more marginal or less powerful social groups.

Second, conflicts about the governance of the commons do not simply arise from inequalities in the distribution of material goods and in the endowments of the protagonists, perceptions also play an important role. Even in an hypothetically egalitarian commons, the democratic co-decision on the governance of social issues would encounter some obstacles and generate heated debates that would divide the community and generate conflicts. For the agents are located differently in the social space, hold distinct worldviews and would therefore have varying epistemic assessments of how to best manage the resources, distribute the labor and its outcomes, organize the procedures of decision-making and so forth. As it has been documented and shown by Adams et al., the very definition of the problems in common-pool resources may lead to some deep disagreements, not to mention the framing and the conception of their solutions.

The two previous issues could be said to apply to any instance democratic decision-making. After all, which participative co-decision could be said to escape the twin problems of inequality amongst its participants and kaleidoscopic perceptions of its shortcomings? But, additionally, overlooking the role of conflict in the governance of the commons would amount to denying (or covering up) some of its structural internal division in a way that would be unacceptable for any committed radical democrat. Silvia Federici has eloquently shown, for instance, that women accomplish a disproportionate amount of the invisible (and therefore unrecognized) labor in the commons. While their work is absolutely necessary to the sustainability of the commons, it is rarely acknowledged as such, for it is mostly executed in the private sphere. If one insists on the dynamic role of agonism in democratic communities, one would then conclude that the unfair division of the labor along gender lines amounts to a division of the community governing the commons that should be challenged and polemically discussed. To democratize the

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74 Ostrom, Elinor, Governing the Commons, op. cit., p. 146-9.
commons (or to enact the principle of the common), women would have to raise their concern towards this unbalanced distribution of work and force men to open up a debate on how to best curb this trend.

Last but not least, commons are sometimes assumed to pacify and subdue the democratic deliberation because they revolve around a shared ecological concern. Their environmental purpose would entail more consensual discussions and prevent conflicts. Once again, for the radical democrat, nothing could be further from the truth. As Razmig Keucheyan has recently expressed in a well-documented book, nature has lately been turned into a political battleground, and with the deepening ecological crisis, conflicts around its governance are likely to get even fiercer. Even amongst like-minded environmentalists, disagreements abound on how to best solve key issues such as global warming, loss of biodiversity or the increase in the natural disasters due to climate change. Any theory of political ecology should take into consideration the divisive dimension of environmental concerns. For natural resources held in common to be democratically governed, conflict has to be an ever-present feature that will be put to use to denounce, condemn and challenge any attempt from any factions to seize indefinitely power over its governance and rule in its own single interest.

**Conclusion**

To sum up, as we briefly sketched above, conflicts are present under many forms in the commons. The list we drew is far from being exhaustive but sufficient to claim that the governance of commons is neither spontaneous, nor harmonious. It is replete with epistemic disagreements, structural imbalances in the distribution of duties, capacities and rewards and far from systematically relying on an egalitarian decision-making process. And yet conflicts amongst commoners fail to play any significant role in the account either Hardt and Negri or Dardot and Laval give of the political principle of the common. Though the contributions of those four authors to both the commons literature and the theories of democracy could not be overestimated, their emphasis on the sole conflict between capitalists and commoners prevent them from grasping one of the key dimensions of the democratic regime according to radical democrats, that is the role played by internal conflict in identifying and denouncing socio-political issues and in creatively attempting to solve them.

Now, this article doesn’t intend to dismiss altogether the idea that commons could constitute the matrix of an egalitarian democracy to come. It rather calls for a twist in its research agenda. If commons do indeed hold some political promises, we should not however jump to conclusions and assume that they are democratic *per se*. Their self-organizing collective practices may share with democracy the centrality of

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the principle of autonomy but it doesn’t prevent them from reproducing illegitimate inequalities or disregarding the voices of small stakeholders. Thus, for this burgeoning socio-political democracy to blossom, it needs to acknowledge that commoners have first their conflicts in common. Commons are not realized utopias in which the community is reconciled with itself and eventually becomes One, they are governance practices. And as such, they raise unevenly distributed concerns, split the group of its members and constantly generates new conflicts. If we want to elaborate further a democratic principle of the common, we should turn our attention to the socio-political dynamism of those internal divisions and investigate whether limited conflicts play a role in sustaining a vibrant democracy in the existing commons.
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Democratic Insurrection, or, what does the alterglobalization movement have in common?

Abstract

This paper develops a framework for understanding new possibilities of radical democracy through the alterglobalization movement. Unlike many theories of radical democracy that seek to either reform liberal-democratic institutions or construct hegemonic identities in civil society, the alterglobalization movement points towards a form of radical democracy beyond the state and hegemony. This form seeks to balance struggles for autonomy with the necessity for large-scale collective action by disaggregating democratic practice into three distinct moments – deliberation, decision and action – each of which occurs on different scales, at different times and within different structures in the movement. Taken together, deliberation in the social forum, decision in the affinity group, and action in the network, offer new possibilities for conceptualizing radical democracy on a global scale, but also suffer from important limitations.

Keywords: radical democracy, alterglobalization, social forum, affinity group, network

Introduction

Protest is when I say I don't like this. Resistance is when I put an end to what I don't like.
Protest is when I refuse to go along with this anymore. Resistance is when I make sure everybody else stops going along too.

-Ulrike Meinhof

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1 Ulrike Meinhof, *Everybody Talks About the Weather . . . We Don't: The Writings of Ulrike Meinhof*, 1st ed. (Seven Stories Press, 2008), 239.
And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes revolution possible...

-Michel Foucault

Alterglobalization is tearing down fences, burning GMO crops and occupying universities. It is indigenous communities struggling for autonomy in the jungles of Chiapas. It is a group of friends linking arms with PVC pipes that read ‘Climate Justice Now!’ It is buses of activists, organizers and community members traveling to social forums to debate alternatives. It is networks of communities joining in simultaneous resistance to domination. The alterglobalization movement is a project for democracy, but a kind of democracy quite alien to those living in what are commonly considered democratic states. For the movement, the perversion of democracy has emptied it of meaning and replaced it with a palatable imperialism, an accepted aristocracy and passive dependence. The alterglobalization movement seeks to overcome this perversion through a project of constructive resistance, a struggle ‘for humanity and against neoliberalism’.

Radical democratic theory has sought to reconceptualize democratic practice and political space as an open site of contestation, and transform it into a coherent political project. The alterglobalization movement challenges many of these theories in both its form and its desire for ‘another world’. These theories are reluctant to accept the irreducible difference of the struggles and subjectivities in the movement, for fear that such difference will restrict the possibilities of collective action. However, the alterglobalization movement exhibits new forms of collective action that enable both the ceaseless becoming of open and flexible relationships and global collective action. To understand these forms and trajectories we will turn to poststructural and anarchist theory, developing a framework for understanding the organizational structures and decision-making processes of the alterglobalization movement.

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4 The *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, or Zapatistas, have held several *encuentros* that they refer to as ‘Intercontinental Encounters for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism’.

5 The slogan for the World Social Forum is “Another World Is Possible!”
As the movement is both a desire for autonomy and large-scale collective action among autonomies, it is important to develop theory that can account for the irreducibility of difference in these autonomous struggles without precluding the possibility of some form of collective action. Here we will build from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s concept of the common – shared material resources and the results of social production and practice – as a medium for fluid forms of collectivity. The form of radical democracy found in the direct action wing of the movement relies on various forms of the common, but is fragmented into three distinct moments – deliberation, decision and action. Each of these moments occurs on different scales, at different times and within different structures in the movement – deliberation in the social forum, decision in the affinity group, and action in the network. Taken as a system this forum-affinity-network structure offers new possibilities for conceptualizing radical democracy on a global scale, but also suffers from important limitations.

Radical Democracy as Collective Autonomy

Since the publication of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s Hegemony & Socialist Strategy in 1985, theorists have continued the search for a radical democratic politics. While this growing literature exhibits a diverse range of perspectives, we will here focus on three salient features that have emerged among the many interpretations: the attempts to reform liberal-democratic institutions, the role of civil society, and the importance of demands for inclusion in the political.

First, in their original formulation, Laclau and Mouffe emphasize both their connection with the liberal tradition, and their roots in a socialist vision of equality. They argue that the task of a radical democratic project ‘cannot be to renounce liberal-democratic ideology, but on the contrary, to deepen and

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expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy.\textsuperscript{8} In her later work, Mouffe re-iterates this intimate connection with the liberal tradition:

The aim is not to create a completely different kind of society, but to use the symbolic resources of the liberal democratic tradition to struggle against relations of subordination not only in the economy but also those linked to gender, race, or sexual orientation, for example.\textsuperscript{9}

For Mouffe, liberal political institutions are necessary to prevent a tyrannical popular sovereignty and to promote the pluralism necessary for a democratic society. Other proponents have framed the radical democracy in similarly relative terms, as more participatory and more deliberative than the existing democratic institutions.\textsuperscript{10} Ultimately, interpretations in this vein seek to improve what is seen as an imperfect system rather than radically transform it.

Second, while many theorists posit a project of reform, the critical site of radical democratic practice is typically not found in political institutions themselves. In their introduction to a recent collection of radical democratic theory, Adrian Little and Moya Lloyd argue that for many, ‘civil society rather than the state is construed as the principal, even exclusive, site of democratic struggle.’\textsuperscript{11} This focus on civil society is important, but ultimately leads back to an intimate, though perhaps antagonistic, relationship with the state. Similarly, in Laclau’s more recent work he posits ‘the people,’ a collective subject emerging from civil society, as necessary for a radical democracy. He argues that it is possible to construct such a subject through establishing ‘chains of equivalence’ between diverse social struggles, each based on various signifiers such as race, class or gender.\textsuperscript{12} For Laclau, a signifier such as ‘the people’ can serve as a site of identification and a means for a hegemonic democratic movement capable of collective action at the state or global level, but also remain open to contestation and redefinition.

\textsuperscript{8} Laclau and Mouffe, \textit{Hegemony & Socialist Strategy}, 176.


\textsuperscript{11} Little and Lloyd, \textit{The Politics of Radical Democracy}, 3.

\textsuperscript{12} Ernesto Laclau, \textit{On Populist Reason} (Verso, 2007); Laclau and Mouffe, \textit{Hegemony & Socialist Strategy}. 
Third, the focus on civil society or ‘the people’ as the key site of radical democratic politics is echoed in theorists such as Jacques Rancière, though he does not discuss the concept of radical democracy itself. Still, in line with radical democratic theory, he argues that a fundamental moment in democratic practice is the demand for inclusion by excluded groups. Recalling Olympe de Gouges’ audacious claim during the French Revolution that if women were ‘entitled’ to go to the scaffold, then they must be entitled to go to the assembly, he emphasizes the need for exposing and contesting the contradiction in principals of inclusion.\(^\text{13}\) For Rancière, each contestation produces a more inclusive, more democratic political space.

What is seen as radical in these conceptions, then, is the re-conceptualization of the *demos* as a more inclusive political subject, albeit one that is a site of continuous conflict and re-composition. Though they may focus on civil society and the *demos*, behind these conceptions lies an assumption of the nation-state as the principal unit of political organization. As Little and Lloyd note, ‘It is clear that the state has a fundamental role to play in radical democratic politics.’\(^\text{14}\) Thus, for many theorists, the goal of radical democracy is to develop a radically democratic state through expanding the influence of civil society. The emphasis on civil society is an attempt to alter the top-down functioning of power. By demanding greater participation and deliberation, and by civil society playing a key role in the political, radical democracy has championed a system in which power flows from the bottom to the top. However, what remains problematic for many in the alterglobalization movement is that there is still a bottom and a top; there is still a political class granted the power to make and enforce decisions. A truly radical democracy must overcome all hierarchy and all forms of hegemony. As we will see, many groups in the alterglobalization movement reject the top-bottom organization for horizontal organizing beyond the state.

In his recent book, *Gramsci is Dead*, Richard J.F. Day takes aim at the hegemonic core of radical democracy. He argues that radical democracy, particularly Laclau & Mouffe’s post-Marxist brand, relies on ‘a logic of representation of interests within a state-regulated system of hegemonic struggles.’\(^\text{15}\) As we

\(^{13}\) Jacques Rancière, “Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 297-310.


have seen, Mouffe insists on the importance of liberal-democratic institutions to regulate these struggles, rejects any sort of truly radical socio-political transformation, and contends that such institutions merely need to be reformed. One cannot but question what is actually radical about such a claim. Similarly, the emphasis on a more inclusive system has been theorized in terms of demand – the impetus lies on excluded groups to make demands on the hegemonic power for inclusion. Directing such demands to those in power serves in the end to legitimize the ruling state or corporate power as legitimate. For many in the alterglobalization movement, these attempts are inadequate. Contrary to Mouffe’s insistence that liberal-democratic institutions can be reformed, they proclaim, ‘Another world is possible!’ Indeed it is possible and necessary to theorize and actualize radical democracy beyond hegemony and the state.

Many of the grievances raised by the movements for an alternative globalization are concerns shared by such radical democratic theorists as Laclau and Mouffe. As Laclau and Mouffe point to the absence of civil society actors in the political sphere, social movements point to failures of representation that are exacerbated in global politics. States, international rule-making bodies, such as the United Nations, and international financial institutions such as the WTO, IMF and World Bank are seen as grossly unrepresentative, much of their policy generated by unelected officials or disproportionately influenced by corporate and other special interests. But poststructural theory, from which Laclau, Mouffe and many other radical democratic theorists take their cue, as well as the anarchist tradition, question the possibility of reforming these institutions. They take the criticism further, illustrating the impossibility of representation and throwing into question the ‘radical’ democratic demands for more representation.

While Laclau and Mouffe, in alignment with much of the New Social Movement theory generated at the time, seek to de-center the importance of class and economic interest as representative signifiers in socio-political struggle, they merely expand the list of signifiers to include other categories such as race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Though this move does challenge the hegemony of class, they place a series of other potentially hegemonic relations in its place and ultimately champion an

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16 Ibid., 80.
equivalence between these relations to produce one hegemonic identity, such as ‘the people’ that can include all of these, but not be equal to any one of them. These identities and the hegemonic identity of ‘the people’ are representations that smooth over the irreducible differences that poststructuralists have fought to expose, stitching together diverse interests into a majoritarian logic vis-à-vis ‘the people’ or civil society.

For many in the alterglobalization movement, this attempt at a sutured political subject contradicts their desire for autonomy. Simon Tormey seeks to elucidate this desire by drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari. He examines their concept of of ‘becoming-minor’ – an ontology of difference that ceaselessly resists grounding in any particular identity. He contrasts ‘becoming-minor’ to a majoritarian logic of representation. Becoming-minor resists both hegemonic identities such as ‘the people’ and demands for inclusion in the state, moving beyond both. Tormey argues:

An ontology of becoming involves resisting the superior codes and meanings of the social field, rather than allowing them to subordinate difference to the Same, as in the case of analogy and associations. This translates as a continual struggle against ‘territorialising’ attempts to envelop within the categories and codes that underpin sociality, and in particular against being subsumed within logics of representation.

Representation always requires ‘territorialization’ or grounding through the subordination of difference, while becoming-minor resists the signifiers of class, race, gender and the people, refusing to be grounded or essentialized by any of them. Even these ‘marginalized’ signifiers can serve to limit the possibilities of difference and the expressibility of multiple, intersecting forms of oppression – what some have analyzed in terms of the intersectionality of numerous identity categories. Deleuze and Guattari, and more

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recently, Hardt and Negri have championed the concept of singularity, to understand the unique multiplicity of individual subjectivity and counter the representational logic of hegemony. They define a singularity as ‘a social subject whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different.’ The subjectivity of every individual is defined by a unique set of values, desires and experiences, a unique identity. Similar to theories of intersectionality, an individual cannot be reduced to a single defining characteristic, such as class.

Resistance to hegemony and representation through singularity or becoming-minor is, more practically, a project of autonomy. However, taken to their limit, singularity and becoming-minor can lead to a totalization of the particular, which would preclude any possibility of political action; there would be no possibility for congruence or communication between the desires of individuals. Each individual would be isolated in their particularity, their individuality, their total autonomy. But autonomy need not be conceptualized or actualized in terms of individual autonomy. Indeed, for many social movements, autonomy is a collective project vis-à-vis the state, capital and other forms of domination and hierarchy. It involves, ‘a group working together in common to construct alternative ways of living, rather than simply an individual seeking to assert their subjective autonomy against a dominating group.’

Thus, theorizing the political through radical democracy challenges the hegemony of class, promotes a more robust civil society and makes demands on the state for greater inclusion, but merely de-centers class in lieu of ‘the people’ and perpetuates the indispensability of the state as the site of demands. Radical democratic theory has sacrificed a truly radicalized conception of difference for a political strategy though hegemony. Singularity and becoming-minor offer alternative concepts through

21 Hardt & Negri trace the evolution of the concept of singularity back to the philosophy of Duns Scotus, but emphasize their affinity to the Deleuze’s interpretation of its use in Spinoza. See: Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 381, 52f.
22 Ibid., 99.
24 Steffen Böhm, Ana C. Dinerstein, and André Spicer. ‘(Im)possibilities of Autonomy: Social Movements in and beyond Capital, the State and Development.’ *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 1 (January 2010): 19.
which to understand the struggles for autonomy that continue to proliferate in struggles for an alternative globalization. But for effective action against global problems such as economic exploitation and ecological destruction, again, autonomy must be understood as a project of collective resistance.

To address this problem of collectivity and autonomy and theorize a possibility of collective autonomy, Hardt and Negri redefine the concept of the common. Though the concept traditionally refers to shared material resources, they write, ‘We consider the common also and more significantly those results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth.’ Linking this concept back to singularities, they claim, ‘Singularities interact and communicate socially on the basis of the common, and their social communication in turn produces the common.’ A fundamental example of the common is language, which is not merely the medium in which social practice exists, but is continually redefined through its use. As the result of social production and social practice produced in every social interaction, it follows that the common is not uniformly distributed through all social relations, but is as varied as these interactions. Social practice produces the common, or develops existing forms of the common, that vary in strength, scale and permanence. This variation has a direct impact on the possibility of radically democratic relations – the more robust the common, the greater the possibility for such a practice.

As sociologist Donatella della Porta illustrates the problem in terms of the alterglobalization movement, ‘The challenge for contemporary movements is, then, to develop a model of internal democracy able to bring all the subjectivities together by valuing the role of individuals rather than sacrifice for the collective.’ Little and Lloyd provide the beginnings of an alternative along these lines, pointing to another thread in radical democratic theory, ‘That democracy is not a form of government or set of institutions but rather a moment marking the practice of politics itself.’ Democracy is practice that cannot be captured in the apparatus of political institutions. If this conception of democracy as a moment is expanded to allow for the possibility of democratic practice to expand over several moments or be

26 Ibid., 184.
divided into multiple moments, the beginnings of a new conception of radical democracy appear. Within the alterglobalization movement three distinct moments of radical democracy can be found – deliberation, decision and action. Democracy (deliberation, decision and action) need not occur in one moment or even a smooth succession of moments. The alterglobalization movement demonstrates that the moments of democratic practice can be fragmented across time and space. Deliberation may occur in Brazil, decision in London and action globally – all as part of the expanded practice of radical democracy. This fragmentation of democratic practice allows for a range of organizational forms, demonstrating the possibilities for fluid and flexible collectivities that do not rely on hegemony, but are still capable of large-scale action. As we see here, the challenge in theorizing, or indeed practicing, this form of political relationship lies in the delicate balance between collectivity and autonomy, unity and diversity. Avoiding the ‘chains’ of hegemony requires conceptualizing alternative relations between autonomous individuals, communities and identities.

Three moments of the common

While the alterglobalization movement demonstrates a range of organizational structures, our main focus will be on the direct action wing of the movement. These activists, unlike those of the NGO advocacy networks in the movement, participate in the movements in three forms that vary in scale, structure and purpose: the inclusive, open spaces of movement-wide social fora; small, ‘friend-like’ affinity groups; and finally, the networks that produce large-scale protest events and Global Days of Action. Each of these forms most clearly demonstrates a particular moment of the common – deliberation, decision and action – and is limited in the others. Social fora function most centrally and most effectively as spaces for deliberation, affinity groups for decision, and networks for action.

Spaces of Deliberation

We have critiqued Laclau and Mouffe’s dependence on liberal-democratic institutions, but the liberal tradition does provide important contributions to a radical democracy conceived beyond the state. In his essay, ‘Deliberation and Political Legitimacy,’ liberal political philosopher Joshua Cohen examines the core principles of democracy. He argues, ‘When properly conducted, then, democratic politics involves public deliberation focused on the common good, requires some form of manifest equality among citizens, and shapes the identity and interests of citizens in ways that contribute to the formation of a public conception of common good.’

Given our discussion of singularity and becoming-minor, it would be inconsistent to accept that there can ever be a common good; however, deliberation does play a key role in the production of the more open concept of the common and is essential for thinking a radical politics beyond both the state and hegemonic relations in civil society. In her book Freedom Is an Endless Meeting, sociologist Francesca Polletta provides an ethnographic account of what she refers to as ‘deliberative talk’ within social movements:

They expected each other to provide legitimate reasons for preferring one option to another. They strove to recognize the merits of each other’s reasons for favoring a particular option even though they did not rank those reasons in the same order. The point was to make each person’s reasoning understandable: the goal was not unanimity, so much as discourse. But it was a particular kind of discourse, governed by norms of openness and mutual respect.

Discourse, which as we noted earlier is a key form of the common, figures centrally in Polletta’s description, but she does not paint a picture of isolated, talking heads. Deliberation is a process in which each strives to recognize the merit in another’s argument, to understand the reasoning behind their preference, and in this understanding, opinions and indeed subjectivities are transformed; the common is

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produced and strengthened through the production of shared meaning, goals and values. But for this to be possible the common must already be at work in the ‘norms of openness and respect.’

Within the alterglobalization movement, deliberation has taken a unique form in what Donatella della Porta has argued is ‘perhaps the movement’s most significant cultural innovation’ – the social forum.\(^{32}\) In 2001, the World Social Forum (WSF) was established in Porto Alegre, Brazil as a counter-summit to the World Economic Forum, which occurred simultaneously in Davos, Switzerland. But the forum was founded to be more than a counter-summit voicing criticism of the World Economic Forum or the neoliberal policies produced by the WTO, IMF, World Bank or G8. It was founded in response to post-Seattle criticisms that the movement was a movement of negation, criticisms that the movement was anti-globalization without offering any alternatives. Thus, the forum was conceived as a space for civil society groups and individuals to gather to develop alternatives under the motto, ‘Another world is possible.’ Since its inception the form has expanded to include multiple regional and thematic fora around the world, a single forum drawing as many as 100,000 participants from over 100 countries.\(^{33}\)

What is most unique about the forum is that it is conceived of as an ‘open and inclusive public space.’\(^{34}\) This conception of the forum is formalized in the WSF Charter of Principles. The first Principle states, ‘The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action...’\(^{35}\) The designation of the forum as a space or ‘meeting place,’ is a critical distinction that has also been a constant source of tension since the founding of the WSF. Some argue that the WSF should function as an agent, making demands, issuing statements and proposing alternatives as a unified body. Others contend that the forum ought only serve as a space where groups are free to make demands, issue statements or present proposals as individuals, groups or coalitions, but that such actions should not be taken in the name of the WSF as a whole. Principle six of the Charter explicitly states, ‘The meetings of

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\(^{35}\) Reitan, \textit{Global Activism}, 259.
the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body.\textsuperscript{36} It is not that deliberation is not a key feature of the forum, but that the forum itself is not a body such as a legislature or a political party.

Chico Whitaker, one of the founders of the forum and authors of the Charter of Principles, has weighed in heavily on this debate with a public letter that was later published as ‘The World Social Forum as Open Space.’ In it he describes the rationale for this concept:

If we maintain it as a space, it will not prevent nor hinder the formation and the development of movements – to the contrary it will ensure and enable this process. But if we opt for transforming it into a movement, it will inescapably fail to be a space, and all the potentialities inherent to spaces will then be lost. Furthermore, if we do transform the Forum into a movement, we will be – without any help at all from those we are fighting against – throwing away a powerful instrument of struggle that we have been able to create by drawing on the most important recent political discovery, of the power of open, free horizontal structures.\textsuperscript{37}

According to Whitaker, the space is essential as an incubator for a plurality of movements, groups, new organizational structures and decision-making processes. If the forum were to unify and form a single, collective subject, that potential would be lost. For Whitaker the forum is a space where the common can emerge through deliberation, but if the forum is made to speak and act as one unified voice, dissenting voices will doubtless be silenced. The WSF Charter of Principles makes clear that the forum’s central function is to serve as a place where individuals, groups and movements can deliberate. This process of deliberation is open, in the sense that it is not exclusive, all are free to participate, but the process is also open in the sense that it is not conclusive. The deliberation that is at the core of the forum does not necessarily lead to decision. Certainly, there is nothing to preclude certain groups from deciding to take decisive action while at the forum, but the central function is open-ended deliberation on alternatives.

From the outset, some activists have felt the exclusively deliberative form of the forum to be unsatisfactory, even disempowering. The initial 2001 forum saw the birth of the Social Movements

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 260. Emphasis added.

Assembly, now called the People’s Movement Assembly, a space external to the forum that does make final decisions. Typically, the Assembly has only met after the conclusion of the Forum, but at the 2010 US Social Forum, Assembly organizers claim that it will take place before, after and during the forum.\(^\text{38}\)

Though this debate continues, this could mark an important transformation in the structure of the forum.

While della Porta’s claim that the forum represents a ‘significant cultural innovation’ may be accurate, there are important limitations on the forum’s ability to achieve its stated purpose. Some activists have complained that important meetings are often held late in the evenings limiting the participation of some, that discussions are controlled by a small elite of long-time activists, that discussions often spiral into useless repetition of established ideas or that the forum’s promotion of ‘star’ activists and intellectuals through primetime speaking engagements creates inequalities in the space.\(^\text{39}\)

Participation in the forum at the most basic level of attendance is also limited. Local groups and activists are always disproportionately represented, and there is a distinct North-South divide in participation as well. Those who can afford to attend are disproportionately Northern activists and intellectuals.\(^\text{40}\)

However, the establishment of regional fora has allowed for wider participation and the forum has also established various financial assistance programs to assist in the travel funds for individuals who may otherwise be unable to attend. These strategies have improved the inclusiveness of the forum, but have not overcome these challenges entirely.

Deliberation more generally, faces its own limits. The quality of the deliberation depends upon the quality of the discourse and the unevenness of discursive skills can work to limit equal access to deliberation or equal power in the deliberative process. As Cohen notes, ‘Deliberative democracy requires attention to encouraging deliberative capacities, which is, *inter alia*, a matter of education, information, and organization.’\(^\text{41}\)

In a society of growing inequality, the prospects of such education being equitably distributed are dim and thus power within deliberation is skewed to those with access to education, information and organization. These limitations are important and the forum must continually be

\textit{Notes:}

\(^{38}\) These plans were revealed at a recent organizational meeting for the Peoples’ Movement Assembly in San Francisco.

\(^{39}\) Della Porta, ‘Making the New Polis.’


\(^{41}\) Cohen, ‘Reflections on Deliberative Democracy,’ 249.
scrutinized and improved upon to live up to the principles set out in the Charter. The innovation is significant, but it must be continually innovated.

Given these important limitations, truly radical democracy cannot be practiced on the scale of the social forum as a whole, but the forum does provide a space where smaller groups can form such relations and the deliberative process of the forum works to construct the common that can serve as the basis for such relations. The global nature of the forum presents an opportunity for the production of the common that is not as heavily constrained by space, but the temporal constraints, the fora typically last a few days or a week, may limit the possibility for the sustained social practice necessary to produce the common in a highly robust form. Still these links extend the common rhizomatically, albeit in a weak form, laying the groundwork for future interaction. As participation of individuals in the alterglobalization movements is marked by a ‘density of multiple and plural associational membership[s],’ the forum may play a critical role in facilitating the rhizomatic network structure necessary for radical democracy on a global scale.

_In Decision through Affinity_

Decision is the most demanding moment in the practice of radical democracy. It requires the strongest form of the common and it follows that the scale of the group must be the most limited for a decision to be reached. Decision, in radical democracy, is also the most difficult to separate from the other moments, particularly deliberation. As we saw above, deliberation can exist without decision; decision, on the other hand, cannot be reached without deliberation. When decision is the end goal of deliberation, the process becomes exponentially more complex. A collective decision must value the preferences of all members equally and be a decision to which all members can agree. In other words, a decision in truly radical democratic practice is reached through an arduous process of deliberation or consensus-building.

Consensus in this sense is not seen as merely a state of agreement, but a process for constructing and developing the common. Jacques Rancière, among others, is critical of the notion of

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consensus, instead promoting *dissensus*, continuous contestation, as the ideal form of the political.\(^{43}\) Similarly, Chantal Mouffe promotes the idea of *agonism*, in which conflict between enemies is transformed into democratic relations between adversaries. These concepts, in fact, share much with the form of consensus practiced in the affinity groups of contemporary social movements. Here consensus is not seen as passive acceptance to the status quo, but refers instead as the institutionalization of conflict and its management for cooperation rather than competition. According to formal consensus model theory, all members of the group are expected and encouraged to participate in the process of consensus-building. Generally, the decisions being made are those that will directly affect the participants, as in the case of direct actions during which individuals will be participants in the action itself.

Similar to the open deliberation indicative of the social forum, proposals presented to the group are discussed and amended according to reasonable arguments. Proponents of deliberative democracy have also stressed the importance of this stage, though often not accepting the principle of consensus itself. Cohen writes, ‘The *point* of deliberative democracy is not for people to reflect on their preferences, but to decide, in light of reasons, what to do. Deciding what to do in light of reasons requires a willingness to change one’s mind…’\(^{44}\) The deliberative process is not merely a process through which each member makes concessions from their list of demands until a proposal is so reduced that all can accept it, if begrudgingly. Rather, deliberation is a positive process of construction through reasoning, by which the interests and perspectives of those involved are transformed. As noted above, through deliberation, the common is produced; the actual interests and values of individuals may be transformed through the deliberative process. Thus, consensus ‘building’ is just that, an initial proposal is deliberated upon until a new or amended proposal is constructed.

Finally, in consensus decision-making all decisions are collective. Not only have all participated in the deliberation process, each must also give their final approval. Proponents of consensus decision-making argue that collectivity ensures the equality of each group member. A process may emphasize equality in participation and deliberation, but resort to a majority vote for the final decision. Instead of a vote, consensus decision-making provides all participants with the power of veto; all participants may

\(^{43}\) Ranciere, *Disagreement*.

\(^{44}\) Cohen, ‘Reflections on Deliberative Democracy,’ 251.
‘block’ a proposal, preventing it from ratification. This negative measure serves to ensure that all have had the opportunity to participate and that the proposal has been deliberated adequately. The ‘block’ is ultimately a final check on these earlier phases of the process, ensuring the collectivity of the decision.

Within the alterglobalization movement, collective decisions are reached most democratically within small affinity groups, ‘the elementary particles of voluntary association,’\textsuperscript{45} which are ‘formed out of a shared desire to accomplish a specific task…and oriented to achieving maximum effectiveness with a minimum of bureaucracy, infighting and exposure to infiltration.’\textsuperscript{46} Such tasks generally center on protest events or direct actions and may include anything from blockading intersections to guerrilla theater in fields of genetically modified crops to serving food at a rally.

Unlike the forum, affinity groups are not unique to the alterglobalization movement, but trace their roots back to the Spanish anarchist confederation (FAI) of the 1920s and the consciousness-raising circles of the US feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s.\textsuperscript{47} These groups, generally composed of 5-20 individuals, are founded on ‘friend-like relationships.’\textsuperscript{48} Indeed they are often actually formed of friends. The nature of these relationships makes the complex process of consensus-building a manageable task, as there are typically a common set of values and experiences that such a process requires. The affinity group serves as an ideal type for the consensus-based decision-making necessary for radical democracy. The common exists here in its most robust and permanent form, through shared values, goals, histories, vocabularies, processes and, importantly, obligations.

However, the claim to idealism is only relative. Affinity groups and the process of consensus decision-making are by no means entirely free of domination and hierarchy, as these have been internalized through socialization. An affinity group may have no formal hierarchy, but this does not preclude the existence of informal hierarchies that shape the decisions of the group. Formal consensus process is designed to minimize this problem, but this power imbalance is difficult to eradicate. For

\textsuperscript{45} David Graeber, \textit{Direct Action: An Ethnography} (AK Press, 2009), 288.

\textsuperscript{46} Day, \textit{Gramsci is Dead}, 25.

\textsuperscript{47} Francis Dupuis-Déri, ‘Anarchism and the politics of affinity groups,’ forthcoming, 4-7.

instance, a racially diverse consensus-based group may aim for full participation, but if it is only the white, heterosexual males are that are actually participating in the deliberation process, the equality for which the structure aims has missed its mark. Such formal structure often contains certain roles that must be filled, such as facilitator and note taker, and the assignment of these roles can reinforce social hierarchies. As women have historically been relegated to clerical work, it is easy for such biases to carry-over into this setting, relegating females to note takers and males subtly guiding deliberation as facilitators.

Jo Freeman examines this danger in her seminal essay, ‘The Tyranny of Structurelessness,’\textsuperscript{49} stressing the importance of the formal diffusion of power through a series of mechanisms. Many activists are acutely aware of these dangers and even use Freeman’s essay in training sessions.\textsuperscript{50} In his ethnography \textit{Direct Action}, anthropologist David Graeber examines the New York-based Direct Action Network (DAN) during the early 2000s.\textsuperscript{51} DAN’s consensus process required two facilitators, one male and one female and alternated speaking among participants to strive for gender parity. While such a structure does aim for gender equality, it does little for the other forms of internalized domination based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, or even age. Regardless, it provides a model for how such forms of informal hierarchy and domination can be addressed through structural means.

The criticisms of consensus issued by theorists such as Rancière and Mouffe, stem largely from their privileging of difference in the political and the fear that consensus limits its possibility. The formal consensus process, given its necessarily small scale may not only limit difference, but can also be exclusionary. Typically, only those with a certain level of shared values form affinity groups and thus those that are not already tied to the group in some way may find it difficult to gain access. However, friendship or a strong set of shared values is certainly not always the chief motivating in the formation of affinity groups. Often groups form out of motivations other than friendship, such as availability, chance, level of militancy or even a desire to work with the activist-celebrities involved in the action. While these


\textsuperscript{51} Graeber, \textit{Direct Action}. 
groups may not be founded on true friendship, in each of these cases the bonds of affinity could be described as ‘friend-like’ in the sense that in undertaking a role in the group they became stronger through the acquired obligations.

Despite these limitations, consensus-based decision making within an affinity group most closely fulfills the rigorous demands of radical democracy, requiring and producing the common in its strongest form, but on the smallest scale. Yet while formed of ‘friend-like relationships,’ many affinity groups are transient. They are formed to accomplish a specific task or project and often cease to exist immediately after, whether the task is completed successfully or unsuccessfully. Such affinity groups may reunite for future tasks, perhaps in a modified form, but on each occasion the actual existence of the collective is relatively brief. Other affinity groups may survive for much longer periods. However, the attendant forms of the common prove more permanent and can be reproduced or resuscitated in future meetings. In affinity groups, all members of the group participate directly in the process of deliberation, make a collective decision, and ultimately act upon this decision. This is a transformative process in common, as the values and interests shift through the collective decision-making process. Though the group may disband upon the completion of the task, this transformation and the production of the common may long outlast the group itself.

*Action in Common*

Action within the alterglobalization movement happens at numerous levels. Affinity groups do not merely make decisions and call it a day. They act on these decisions. Similarly, the deliberation that happens within the open space of the social forum can also lead to action, though not in the name of the forum. However, action in common does not require deliberation or collective decision-making amongst the entire community. Nor does it require any explicit consensus-building process. This sort of action is

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52 McDonald, ‘From Solidarity to fluidarity,’ 115.
53 Dupuis-Déri discusses such groups in his ‘Anarchism and the politics of affinity groups,’ and I have personally worked with a number of groups that have managed to sustain themselves for years.
similar to ‘swarm intelligence’ by which groups of insects such as bees or ants act without an actual command issued from a central authority. Neurobiologists have shown that the brain functions similarly, producing action through a complex neural network without a central command, without a true decision. The development of free software parallels this process as well, as programs are developed through the common labor of countless programmers.\textsuperscript{54} In none of these cases is there a central command making strategic decisions, nor is there a collective decision made by the entire body, as is the case within an affinity group. However, in each case there are certain elements that guide the process and possibility of collective action. Swarms of insects require a complex of instincts through which to interpret pheromones, the brain requires shared neural pathways, and computer programmers require protocols, which make the programming commands communicable. Action occurs without decision, but through the common.

In the alterglobalization movement we have seen the various ways in which this common is produced. Similar to the social forum, the most remarkable forms of action within the alterglobalization movement are those that happen on a large scale. Affinity groups are of course capable of collective action, but in the face of the global challenges to which the movement is aimed, the actions of an isolated affinity group are likely to amount to little more than the sting of a single worker bee, a mere pest to the honey-hungry grizzly. As a swarm of affinity groups, acting in common, however, the hive is a formidable opponent.

The alterglobalization movement, particularly the direct action wing, largely expresses itself through insurrection, large-scale acts of resistance, such as ‘summit crashing’ and Global Days of Action. At these actions, activists and organizations from around the world converge on a single point or act simultaneously in multiple locations. As interventions, these actions seek to ‘disrupt or even destroy established patterns, policies, relationships or institutions,’\textsuperscript{55} such as the functioning of WTO. They may also serve to demonstrate public opinion, such as the 2003 Global Day of Action against the US invasion of Iraq, which included millions of protesters worldwide.\textsuperscript{56} All of this is accomplished without a central

\textsuperscript{54} Hardt and Negri, \textit{Multitude}, 336-340.


\textsuperscript{56} Peter Gelderloos, \textit{How Nonviolence Protects the State} (South End Press, 2007), 16.
leader or decision-making body. In these actions, groups with very different organizational structures participate, some highly centralized, such as the Socialist Worker’s Party or NGOs. This diversity is to the advantage of the movement for the simple fact of scale, but these types of organizations generally do not seek to actualize radical democratic relations as the direct action wing of the movement does. Such vertically organized groups may also participate in the swarm tactics of the action at large, but are themselves internally centralized.

All of this is not to say that there is no organization in a massive protest action of the alterglobalization movement, quite the contrary. Planning and organization may take months, but the nature of this planning process is such that there are few if any centralized decisions. When the affinity groups do gather prior to the event, they may do so in the form of a consulta or spokescouncil. In the former case, groups share their plans for action. Perhaps one group has decided to blockade a particular intersection, another group has decided to use a certain level of militant tactics such as tearing down a fence at a particular location. These various plans are coordinated in such meetings. There is no committee that decides which actions should or should not take place, but organization is essentially facilitation to ensure that all are informed and that coordination can occur where necessary and effective. The process of these actions generally begins with a ‘call to action’ by a certain group, coalition or network of groups. Some groups then convene for a planning meeting, while others participate independently.

In the case of a spokescouncil, there is more actual collective decision-making, but only at the most general level. Each affinity group elects a proxy to serve as their spoke and these spokes agree on a set of basic principles governing action in the most general way, often while the other members of the affinity group are present. This may include limiting the level of militancy, but increasingly activists promote a ‘diversity of tactics’ and reject restrictions on action, further limiting the amount of decision-making that occurs outside of the affinity group.

The nature of the common at either of these types of planning meetings is necessarily weak. Though the meetings may be many hours long, the format limits a great deal of free interaction. But more importantly, individuals and groups often do not know each other and are guarded in their interaction at such meetings for practical reasons. Given that the actions that they will be undertaking are typically
illegal and that the meetings are for the most part public, the openness of individuals and groups is limited for fear of police informants or infiltration. Actions are described only in their most basic form, allowing for some level of coordination, but decisions on the actual actions that an affinity group plans to take are impossible due to these limits on openness. At the 2009 G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, the only individuals admitted to the spokescouncil meeting were members of pre-organized groups. Those wishing to take part were required to provide two others willing to verify that they were in fact members of a group. This process certainly does not preclude the infiltration of the meeting by unfriendly elements, but illustrates the limits to these forms of organizing in the face of repression.

Further the actions themselves are limited. The central goal for many of these large-scale actions, beginning with Seattle, has been ‘Shut them down!’ but this has only occurred on a few occasions. Even when this goal has been achieved, the tangible effects amount to little more than a more secluded and secure summit next time. The WTO has moved meetings to high-security, inaccessible locations such as Doha, Qatar, essentially eliminating any threat protests could have on its running.

Still action on this scale and the coordination of affinity groups is an important moment in the radical democratic project. Given the nature of the enemy – capitalism, the state and all forms of domination or hierarchy – action must be taken on a large scale. But the scale is also important as a prefigurative practice, revealing the potential large-scale coordination of radically democratic groups. This action may not stem directly from a collective decision, but does rest on the development of the common at other moments in the process. Deliberation at the forum and decision within the affinity group, produce the common necessary for action in the network.

Possibilities and Pitfalls of the Forum-Affinity-Network

We have focused here on three key moments in the alterglobalization movement – deliberation in the open space of the forum, decision within the friend-like affinity group, and action through a network of weak links. These are practices of resistance to the domination of capital and of hierarchy in all forms. In this sense they are a negation of the dominant paradigm, but they are also attempts to actualize new forms of the political. In many ways, alterglobalization produces the common that is the necessary
foundation for a radical democracy. As we noted earlier, radical democracy has been conceived largely either as a reformist project of a more participatory and more deliberative nation-state or through hegemonic identities such as ‘the people’. The radical democracy project of the alterglobalization movement challenges these conceptions, breaking from current forms of political organization and taking participation, deliberation, difference and autonomy as fundamental principles.

Each of the three moments of radical democracy – deliberation, decision, and action – is best suited to a particular scale and organizational form. Taken individually each of these forms has their limitations. The forum is well-suited as a space for open discussion and deliberation, but the scale is far too large for a consensus process that guarantees the equitable participation of all members. The affinity group, on the other hand, based on ‘friend-like relationships’ carries with it the shared values and obligations necessary for the arduous process of consensus-building, but alone can accomplish little in the face of global problems. Finally, the network is capable of global action, but lacks the ability for deliberation or decision-making.

The forum, affinity group and network each fills a particular role in the alterglobalization movement, but within the alterglobalization none of these structures is entirely isolated from the others. As such, we must also consider these elements as a system: forum-affinity-network. Such a system avoids the hegemonic tendencies of Laclau’s notion of ‘the people,’ as well as the reformist forms of radical democracy that limit the difference and autonomy of various individuals, communities and struggles. Within this system, radically democratic practice is possible at a range of scales, complexities and intensities. To conceptualize radical democracy as limited to a single plane or the state as the principal site of interaction with a radically democratic civil society limits the potential for radical democracy to exist in its formal multiplicity. Some tasks are better accomplished through global action, some through local. The forum-affinity-network system allows for this possibility.

Our discussion of these moments began with the World Social Forum as a response to criticisms of empty negation and our conclusion with action as protest has returned us to this point of departure. This return reveals the difficulties of producing alternatives on a large scale through radical democracy and the limitations of such forms of insurrection as a Global Day of Action. Radical social transformation will require more than a day of action, though such actions can prove useful in the sense of motivation
through the ‘propaganda of the deed.’ Still, these brief moments of insurrection are ultimately incapable of bringing about the social transformation that the movement demands.

Indeed, the model has important limitations at which we have thus far only hinted. First, and foremost, while this model illustrates the possibility for radically democratic organization within the alterglobalization movement, it does not provide the means for movement building or organizing beyond the movement itself. This structure serves as a means to organize those already involved in the movement. In his powerful critique of the US anarchist movement, Joel Olson argues that the movement is largely focused around infoshops and insurrections.57 That is, anarchists are able to create autonomous zones such as infoshops that function as spaces for the exchange of ideas and political work, spaces that roughly parallel the social forum, though on a smaller scale. And they engage in acts of insurrection, such as the networked summit crashing, Global Days of Action or the more militant uprisings in Greece in 2008. However, Olson contends, ‘Radical change may be initiated by spontaneous revolts that are supported by subterranean free spaces, but these revolts are almost always the product of prior movement building.’58 In the alterglobalization movement more broadly, movement-building must play a central role; the forum-affinity-network structure and the typical insurrectionary acts of the movement are limited in their capacity to accomplish this.

Further, as we saw in both the forum and affinity group, systemic inequality leads to multiple obstacles for radical democracy, the forum-affinity-network structure and the alterglobalization movement. We have already mentioned a number of these issues. A formal consensus process can serve to mitigate some level of inequality within the group, but again, this process does nothing to bring people to the table. In fact, as Graeber shows in his ethnography with New York DAN, such a process can serve to alienate newcomers or those with differing cultural backgrounds or produce exclusionary groups of relatively homogenous activists.59 Similarly, a lack of equitable participation has plagued the social fora. Local organizations and individuals, as well as those with the time and resources to travel, typically white

57 Joel Olson, “The problem with infoshops and insurrection,” Randall Amster et al., Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2009), 35-45.
58 Ibid., 40.
activists from the Global North, are disproportionately represented.\textsuperscript{60} Finally, at the level of networks, access to networks requires communication technology resources, which are still unavailable to large parts of the world, as well as the time and resources to travel to insurrectionary events.

A new conception of insurrection is necessary to overcome these limits. Hardt & Negri have written, ‘The insurrectional event…must be consolidated in an institutional process of transformation that develops the multitude’s capacity for democratic decision-making. Making the multitude is thus a project of democratic organizing aimed at democracy.’\textsuperscript{61} Their use of ‘institutional’ here does not refer to the ossified political institutions that structure modern democratic forms, but instead the codification of radical democratic practices to facilitate their reproduction. Taken as a whole, the movement does make important steps towards this project of democratic development. Through their concept of the common we are able to focus on what is necessary to produce the conditions for radically democratic social relations, but movement-building is necessary to expand the reach of the common rather than waiting for excluded populations to demand inclusion.

Finally, these democratic practices must be aimed at more than discussion and protest, or even social relations. The common as the results of social production must not eclipse the importance of common material resources and the results of material production. Rather, it can be used to reinterpret those and reveal the social nature of their production. The production of the common in the social must lead to radically democratic decisions on the production of life. Alternatives must include more than spaces for open deliberation; they must include alternatives for the production of food, the distribution of resources, the actual material for survival in common. This must be a central goal of any radical project.

In a recent lecture Michael Hardt has argued for the importance of ‘putting the common back into communism.’\textsuperscript{62} Our discussion on the moments of the common revealed that radical democracy is only able to function in a complete form when the common is at its most robust, on a relatively small scale. This fact coupled with the importance of material resources leads to the conclusion that putting the common in communism may only be possible on the scale of the commune. In their recent, controversial

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\item Smith and Karides, \textit{Global Democracy and the World Social Forums (International Studies Intensives)}, 49-60.
\item Hardt and Negri, \textit{Commonwealth}, 363.
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pamphlet, *The Coming Insurrection*, the Invisible Committee has sought to redefine insurrection in just these terms. They write, ‘The commune is the basic unit of partisan reality. An insurrectional surge may be nothing more than the multiplication of communes, their coming into contact and forming ties.’ This is precisely the project for radical democracy that we put forth at the opening of this discussion. Individuals participating in multiplicity of radically democratic relations could work to extend the form rhizomatically, establishing a dense network of radically democratic relations. Indeed, if radical democracy is at all possible on a global scale it is through this network form. The codification of social fora, affinity groups and networked direct actions as points of resistance in the common is an important first step in this project of democratic insurrection.

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63 The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (Semiotext, 1st ed. (Semiotext(e), 2009), 117.


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From Identity Politics to Radical Democracy: The Future of Feminism

Consider the following passage from Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*. Reflecting at the end of the book on the difficulties of basing feminism on the identity “woman,” she writes:

> If identities were no longer fixed as the premise of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old (149).

In her work after *Gender Trouble*, most notably in *Bodies that Matter*, *Excitable Speech* and *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, Butler has given some attention to clarifying and elaborating on this passage and its implications for feminism. For her, a new configuration of feminist politics must involve a turn away from a feminism which relies on the identity “woman” as its unproblematic subject and source of unity and stability and a turn towards a feminism which looks to the questioning of its key terms and claims, and the critical debate that this questioning produces, as the source of its vitality/energy. This turn represents a shift from identity politics (the old) to radical democracy (new). But, what would this new configuration of politics look like and what are the implications of this shift for feminism? Moreover, what kind of shift is it, that is, what is the resulting relationship between identity politics and radical democracy? And, what happens to identity in this shift?

In my dissertation project, entitled “What Happens After Identity Politics? Radical Democracy and the Future of Feminism,” I take up these questions by exploring the possibilities for a feminist radical democracy and tracing the various shifts that occur within feminism when feminism as identity politics is replaced by feminism as radical democracy. Although my project is not limited to Butler’s work or her particular (and sometimes limited) vision of feminism, her passage at the end of *Gender Trouble* on the future of feminism does play a central role in my
thinking about and critical exploration of the viability of feminist radical democracy. It seems fitting then, to focus this presentation on an examination of Butler’s words in *Gender Trouble* and their meaning for feminism. In doing this, I am not so much concerned with drawing any conclusions about Butler’s project, as I am with trying to make sense of her words in order to be clear about her project and its implications for feminism.

1. The problem with identity politics

In order to understand better Butler’s words in *Gender Trouble*, we need to understand what is being critiqued, that is, what is this politics of the old? What is feminist identity politics? In her essay, “Who’s Afraid of Identity Politics,” Linda Alcoff defines it as a politics in which “one’s identity is taken (and defined) [1] as a political point of departure, [2] as a motivation for action and [3] as a delineation of one’s politics” (347-348). For her, all three of these aspects reflect “a belief in the relevance of identity to politics” (313); identity serves as a starting point from which to act, as a reason for acting and as a way in which to organize those acts into a movement. Central to the practice of identity politics is a desire for recognition—to be recognized as “inherently valuable” (65)—and a need for autonomy—to not be subsumed under or co-opted by other movements, but to be to able to express one’s own unique political voice. More often than not, this is a voice as opposed to voices. An identity politics is based on a singular identity that all members of the group share. Not only does this identity motivate and determine the politics of a group, it creates and shapes that group.

Within different politics of identity, the idea that identity matters for politics is crucial. But, how it is understood and how it is practiced differs widely. In their own various critiques of identity politics, radically democratic feminists are not rejecting the practice altogether nor are
they condemning all identity claims. Instead, they are responding to a dangerous tendency within identity politics, a tendency for uncritically accepting and asserting the identity “woman/women” as the foundation and organizing principle of feminism and failing to see the complex and politicized nature of the identity process.

First, this failure to see the complexity of identity claims results in the fixing of women into very rigid and narrow definitions of woman, definitions that do not account for the dynamic, unpredictable or sometimes harmful ways in which identities gain meaning within cultural and political discourses. According to Butler, feminist identity politics is frequently based on the assumption that identities are given and uncomplicated terms that feminists can simply take up to describe themselves. But, as Butler and others point out, identities are not merely willed into existence by feminist subjects who claim them. These identities have their own history of meanings apart from us, a history that suggests that we can “never fully own” the identities that we claim and that we can never fully predict the effects that a certain claim will have on our political and theoretical projects. And, because identity is situated within an historical process, one that is constantly taking on new meanings, identity is never fixed or fully complete, it is always in process. In this way, identity can never completely capture the complexity of women’s lives or exhaust the possibilities for news ways of configuring identity claims on behalf of or by women.

Second, the inability to understand the politicized nature of identity results in the failure of many feminists to explore and interrogate the regulatory practices that dictate which types of individuals are recognized and represented under the identity woman and which individuals are denied that recognition and representation. This inability also results in the failure of feminists to
understand how their uncritical approach to identity politics and the assertion of identity claims could result in the reproduction of some of the very structures that they wish to dismantle. Feminists who practice identity politics have frequently left many important questions unasked. Questions such as: Who is and who is not included as a woman in feminist claims for representation and who makes that determination? Or what types of regulatory practices are concealed under the representation of certain identities, like woman, as given?

III. The Shift from Identity Politics to Radical Democracy

Now that we have a working definition of identity politics and its problems, let us return to Butler’s passage in *Gender Trouble*.

If identities were no longer fixed as the premise of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old (149).

A close reading of this passage provides us with some clues on what the move from identity politics to radical democracy entails for feminism. I see this passage as broken up into two parts with each part indicating a different set of shifts. The first part—“If identities were no longer fixed as the premise of a political syllogism…”—points to a shift in the key practices of feminist politics and theory.

1. “If identities were no longer fixed as the premise of a political syllogism…” then feminism would no longer rely on the identity “woman” as its unproblematic subject and source of unity and stability. Instead, it would look to the questioning of its key terms, and the critical debate that this questioning produces, as the source of its vitality. Feminism “proceeds precisely,” Butler argues, “by bringing critical attention to bear on its premises in an effort to become more clear about what it means, and to begin to negotiate the conflicting
interpretations [and] irrepressible democratic cacophony of its identity” (Butler 415). This process of negotiation, which Butler labels a “difficult labor of translation” and which Wendy Brown describes as a form of debate taking place in public, democratic spaces, replaces identity as the focus and becomes the (groundless) ground of feminism.

2. “If identities were no longer fixed as the premise of a political syllogism…” then feminism would not work to reconcile and contain its multiple differences in order to promote itself as having a unified front and being clearly distinguishable from other social movements. Instead, it would recognize and embrace the complexity of differences present within relationships between feminists and between feminism and other social movements. According to Janet Jakobsen in Working Alliances and the Politics of Difference, feminism (as identity politics) has frequently had a “simple commitment to diversity,” that is, a commitment that only recognizes diversity as involved in “relatively autonomous axes of differentiation” such as “gender,” “race,” “class” (5). This simple commitment fails to consider the extent to which differences complicate feminism and its relationships. Nancy Fraser echoes this critique in her book, Justice Interruptus, arguing that this failure “tends to balkanize culture, setting groups apart from one another [women of color vs. white women, middle-class vs. lower class women, heterosexual women vs. lesbians], ignoring the ways they cut across one another, and inhibiting cross-group interaction and identification” (Fraser 185). For many radically democratic feminists, what is needed is a new type of feminism that works to “map out the interrelationships that connect, without simplistically uniting, a variety of dynamic and relational positionalities [that is, identities or experiences] within the political field” (114-115).
3. If identities were no longer fixed as the premise of a political syllogism…” then feminism would no longer rely on a coherent, stable definition as the necessary starting point for its political and theoretical practices. Instead, it would look to the practice of negotiating between conflicting identities and conflicting understandings of feminism as the way in which to develop a vital and effective movement. Feminists who promote identity politics have devoted a considerable amount of attention to uncovering or developing a definition of the identity “woman/women” that is substantial enough to serve as the unifying force and subject of feminism. In their search for this definition, these feminists are willing to explore a wide range of different (and seemingly conflicting) understandings of woman, but only up to a certain point. Before engaging in the actual practice of feminism, these feminists believe that the theorizing about women and her differences must stop and a unified definition of woman/women has to be put forth as the identity of feminism. For many feminists, without a unified identity, feminism is unable to effectively act. In contrast, feminists who promote radical democracy are committed to “maintain[ing] a political culture of contestation” (CHU 161) in which no claims, ideas or identities are taken for granted and in which critical thinking and theorizing is never divorced from political action.

b. Shift Two

Now let us turn to the second part of the passage: If “politics [were] no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects…”. This passage indicates a shift in feminism’s understanding of subjectivity, community and political goals.
1. If “politics [were] no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects…” then the feminist subject would no longer be seen as existing prior to (and outside) of politics. Instead it would be recognized that this subject is shaped, in both helpful and harmful ways, through her participation in the process of feminist politics. Radically democratic feminists caution against the promotion of a coherent, stable and unproblematic self that is fully confident in her actions and completely self-assured in her claims for identity. Butler writes, “the insistence on coherent identity as a point of departure presumes that what a “subject” is is already known, already fixed, and that the ready-made subject might enter the world to negotiate its place” (115). But, Butler and other radically democratic feminists wonder, at what cost is this coherence promoted? And, what complexity (that is, complexity of subject positions, relationship to power, participation in system one is critiquing) is it covering over? The feminist radically democratic subject is still able to participate in politics and make identity claims, but she does not believe that her actions are completely under her control, that she has full knowledge of who she is and what she wants or that she can easily take up subject positions/identities and use them to locate herself within discourse. The feminist radically democratic subject recognizes her own vulnerability and the limits of her knowledge and chooses to act anyway.

2. If “politics [were] no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects…” then feminist communities would no longer assume that connections among women must exist prior to these women coming together nor would they assume that a “we” of community exists prior to the development of that community. Instead, they would recognize that the “we” of community is something
to be created through the process and hard work of developing that community. Just as radically democratic feminists reject the notion of a ready-made subject—an “I”, they reject the notion of a ready-made set of subjects—a “we”. They believe that the creation of a “we” is possible, but it is always contingent, part of an ongoing project in which members of a community work to “constitute the term ‘we,’ while simultaneously questioning it and pushing its limits” (Jakobsen, 2). While feminists who practice identity politics frequently have understood community to be based on commonality and shared experiences of oppression and/or social location, feminists who practice radical democracy understand community to be created through the process of taking difference seriously—of negotiating among differences without containing them—and of embracing difference as an important part of any vital movement.

3. If “politics [were] no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects…” then feminist politics would no longer be working for a limited set of goals based on the desire for recognition and the need to have a voice. Instead, feminist politics would expand its scope beyond identity and identity claims to include other political goals, goals that are not concerned with developing and asserting an identity (an “I am”) but with working towards the development of a collective good (a “what I want for us”). Radically democratic feminists are not rejecting the value of identity claims and recognition, but arguing that the promotion of recognition as the end goal of a movement leaves many important questions unasked and many important projects unfinished. In an interview done in 2000, Judith Butler contends:

The assertion of identity can never become the end of politics itself. This is a terrible American conceit—the idea that if you accomplish your identity, you are there; that you’ve achieved recognition, status, legitimation; and that that’s the end of your struggle, as if becoming visible, becoming sayable is the end of
That’s not the case because what that perspective fails to do is ask, “What are the conditions of sayability, of speakability, of visibility? Does one want a place within them? Does one want to be assimilated to them? Or does one want to ask some more profound questions about how political structures work to delimit what visibility will be and what sayability will be” (337)?

IV. Final Thoughts

This examination of Butler’s words at the end of *Gender Trouble* has provided us with some clues about what a shift from identity politics to radical democracy would entail for feminism. It seems as if feminist radical democracy is not a rejection of identity politics or of identity claims, but a call to think critically about what these claims mean for individual subjects and feminist communities and how these claims are made. But, these clues do not offer a complete picture of what feminist radically democracy is and, instead, leave important questions unasked and unanswered. In the interest of time, I will only mention two:

1. The feminist radical democracy of Judith Butler is critical of a certain dangerous tendency within feminist identity politics for failing to consider the fully complexity of the politicized process of identity. Are there other forms of identity politics that do not fall into this trap? (I am thinking of the Combahee River Collective and their 1977 “Black Feminist Statement” and Paula Moya and her work on Cherie Moraga and her realist politics of identity.) If so, how do these practices fit with feminist radical democracy?

2. In her discussions of feminist radical democracy, Butler seems, more often than not, to present identity negatively and as a necessary error. What other roles does identity play within feminism? Does feminist radical democracy allow for a more complex assessment
of identity as being both negative and positive, perhaps simultaneously? Can identity politics allow for this complexity?
The 2011 movements of the squares, the ‘aganaktismenoi’ and ‘indignados’ as they came to be known in Greece and Spain respectively, brought to the forefront old and unresolved debates on the Left. During the crisis it became evident that the traditional Left failed to capture the popular imagination. As part of parliamentary politics, and together with the rest of the political establishment, the left had itself lost legitimacy, at least among a large part of society, and non-representational alternatives started to be entertained. The debates emerging from the movements were a response to the failure of the existing economic paradigm and an alternative economic vision challenging neo-liberal capitalism took front stage. Yet, at the heart of the movements was the realization that, without a political alternative compensating for the democratic deficit in the respective countries, such an alternative would be impossible. Resistance to the economic programmes of the troika (the IMF, the EU and the ECB) had to come from the ‘people’, the political actor who had been excluded from the decision-making process. Although the crisis was identified as economic, there was a sense in which the crisis concerned politics as well – indeed the crisis was of a general character to the extent that it could not be limited to a particular part of society.

Despite the fact that the cornerstone of Leftist discourse is the challenge of the economic capitalist model, the movements of the squares rejected the parties of the Left and the trade unions as part of the system in crisis or, at least, as unrepresentative. The protesting crowds in the squares demanded their ‘voice’ to be heard and started to entertain the idea of a different form of political organization outside formal political institutions. Within this discourse, ‘autonomy’ and ‘direct democracy’ were used as a counterpoint to parliamentary politics as we know it. It is also telling that the traditional left was the most severe critic of the movements. The newspaper of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), for example, argued that the movement did not represent any danger to the establishment, had no alternative political suggestions beyond the immediate rejection of the government and the austerity measures, and for this reason it was ‘palatable’ to the mainstream media and some political centres alike. Effectively, it represented the protesters as in need of ‘enlightenment’ and guidance.

The mutual suspicion between the Greek Communist Party and the movement of the squares opens an old debate within a new, contemporary framework: How will emancipation come about? How will a new economic and social order emerge? Will it only come about through a hegemonic agent? If so, who will that agent be: the Party, a particular class or the people? Conversely, is emancipation only possible though a more autonomous form of organization -decentralized, spontaneous and without representational hierarchies?

It is our contention that a dialogue between hegemony and autonomy is necessary in order to properly grasp the movements of the squares and to think about radical politics for the future. We reject viewing the mutual suspicion between the two trajectories of hegemony and autonomy as a matter of either/or. That mutual suspicion has a long history, and it was exemplified in the events of May 68. When the workers’ and students’ movements exceeded any strict class identification, rejected all forms of authoritarianism and put forth a much more political and radical agenda than that proposed by the unions and the Communist Party, the latter perceived the rebellion as either misguided or in need of a Communist leadership which would contain and direct the events. From May 68 new
trajectories have emerged: not only a widespread criticism of the authoritarianism and the inability of the Left to be part of more diverse and spontaneous movements in action, but also, in theoretical terms, a critique of the inability of Marxist theory to account for events that place politics from below at the centre of any future initiative.

Although May 68 made visible the gap between the two positions of hegemony and autonomy, long before that, Leninism was clear about the theoretical incompatibility of the two positions. For Lenin, the spontaneous movement of workers and the theoretical consciousness of the movement could not coincide. Without the leadership of the party, a workers’ movement would remain in thrall to bourgeois ideology if it did not submit to the socialist party: ‘We have said that there could not have been social-democratic consciousness among workers. It would have had to be brought to them from without’[1].

This sharp distinction between the masses and the party, between those who act and those who think, remains problematic throughout the history of Marxism even if later theorizations have tried to compensate by focusing on the organized leadership of ‘the people’. For instance, Gramsci placed the role of the workers’ councils at the central stage, challenging thus the Party as the true representative and embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Having said that, Gramsci did not offer a fully developed theory of the relationship between the spontaneous movement from below and the Party. The anarchist theoretical tradition has been vocally against the division and the appetite for centralized power endemic to Marxism. Bakunin sees in the professional revolutionaries of the Party only another dictatorship and he himself favours the spontaneous activity from below[2]. According to Todd May, this anarchist commitment rests on two further arguments: first, that, if given the choice, people will naturally and spontaneously act towards justice; and, second, that creating equality can only come about when acting on the presumption of equality[3]. In this respect, it is only through organization from below that emancipation is possible.

This quick sketch points to a fundamental debate within political theory and practice today. For one part of the Left, political action, revolution or resistance will come about when the ‘multitude’ or ‘the people’ submit themselves to a hegemonic force. The diametrically opposite view is that the ‘multitude’ or ‘the people’ will constitute themselves as a force and will act spontaneously in order to bring about emancipation. Between these two extreme positions, the key question today revolves around the possibility of hegemony without a vanguard on the one hand and a self-organization that is not immediate and spontaneous on the other. To put it differently, the question is what form hegemony after Gramsci and multiplicity after anarchism will take.

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Dr Marina Prentoulis teaches Media and Politics at the University of East Anglia. She completed her PhD in Ideologies and Discourse Analysis at the Department of Government, University of Essex. She has lectured in a number of universities including City University, Open University and University of Middlesex.

Dr Lasse Thomassen teaches Political Theory at Queen Mary, University of London. He holds a PhD in Ideology and Discourse Analysis from the University of Essex. He was a García Pelayo Fellow at the Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales in Madrid from 2008 to 2011.

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the Euro Crisis in the Press blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

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Agonistic pragmatism and the formation of affected interests

Clive Barnett*

and

Gary Bridge**

Annals of the Association of American Geographers

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* Faculty of Social Science, The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK.

** School of Policy Studies, University of Bristol, UK.
Abstract

There is significant interest in democracy in contemporary human geography. Theoretically, this interest has been most strongly influenced by poststructuralist theories of radical democracy, and associated ontologies of relational spatiality. These emphasise a priori understandings of the spaces of democratic politics, ones which focus on marginal spaces and the de-stabilization of established patterns. This article develops an alternative account of the spaces of democratic politics, one which seeks to move beyond the stylised contrast of poststructuralist agonism and liberal consensualism. This alternative draws into focus the spatial dimensions of philosophical pragmatism, and the relevance of this tradition for thinking about the geographies of democracy. In particular, the geographical relevance of pragmatism lies in the distinctive inflection of the all-affected principle and of the rationalities of problem-solving. Drawing on John Dewey’s work, a conceptualisation of transactional space is developed to reconfigure understandings of the agonistics of participation as well as the experimental institutionalisation of democratic will. The difference that a pragmatist approach makes to understandings of the geographies of democracy is explored in relation to transnational and urban politics.

Keywords; affected interests; Chicago; democracy; pragmatism; transactional space
Geographies of radical democracy: Agonistic pragmatism and the formation of affected interests

There is growing interest in democracy in human geography, as a focus of empirical research and a framework of normative evaluation (e.g. Barnett and Low 2004; Stokke 2009). This reflects real-world processes of ‘democratization’ (e.g. Bell and Staeheli 2001; O’Loughlin 2004; Slater 2009; Springer 2009), and the worldly relevance of electoral geographies to the exercise of power across the globe (e.g. Johnston and Glasmeier 2007; Cupples 2009). It is also a reflection of shifts in the normative paradigms which underwrite self-consciously ‘critical’ human geography. Democracy now provides the rallying call of even the most radical of geographical analyses of neoliberalizing accumulation by dispossession (e.g. Harvey 2005; Purcell 2008). The absence of robust democratic politics is recognised as a key factor in the reproduction of social injustice and inequality, and the exposure of vulnerable or marginalised groups to serious harm (e.g. Ettlinger 2007). And place-making is presented as a crucial dimension in cultivating and sustaining a pluralistic ethos of democratic culture (e.g. Entrikin 1999; 2002b).

Research on democracy in geography can be divided into two approaches (Barnett and Low 2009). One focuses on the efficacy of institutionalised norms of democratic politics; the other focuses on the potential for transforming and extending these norms. In the first approach, research in electoral geography investigates how the mechanisms of liberal representative democracy are spatially organised (Agnew 1996; Johnston 2002; Morrill, Knopp and Brown 2007). In the second area, research in critical human geography explores the potential for the emergence of more radical democratic practices, a potential which is assumed to lie in the fractures and margins
of liberal-representative polities. From this perspective, democracy is not simply a set of procedures for legitimizing the decisions of bureaucracies or holding elected representatives accountable.

A broadly shared model of democracy as a ‘contestatory’ regime (Pettit 1999) informs research in geography on radical democracy. This is illustrated by the prevalence of post-structuralist theories of radical democracy in geography. These theories redefine ‘the political’ as a realm in which new identities are formed and new agendas are generated, and through which the stabilized procedures, institutions, and identifications of official politics are contested and potentially transformed (e.g. Massey 1995; Spaces of Democracy and Democracy of Space Network 2009). The spatialized ontologies that geographers have pioneered have drawn the discipline into debates informed by a distinctive strand of contemporary political theory that focuses on the agonistic, dissensual aspects of democracy (e.g. Massey 2005; Featherstone 2008; Swyngedouw 2009). The ascendancy of post-structuralist theories of radical democracy has in part been justified by reference to the overly consensual vision of politics attributed to theories of communicative and deliberative democracy, not least as these have been translated into practices of urban planning (e.g. Pugh 2005; Purcell 2008). At the same time, post-structuralist theories of radical democracy support the view that a pivotal aspect of emancipatory political action is the de-naturalization of everyday understandings of space, place and nature.

We aim in this article to broaden the frame of reference in which the idea of ‘radical democracy’ is understood in geography. We aim to do so not least by restoring to view the institutional imagination of theories of radical democracy indebted to the heritage of American philosophical pragmatism. We elaborate the distinctive geographical concerns which inform this tradition. Pragmatism is a living tradition of
thought (Bernstein 2010; Talisse and Aiken 2011), which exceeds the classical canon of Dewey, James, and Pierce (see Wood and Smith 2008). Pragmatism is an important source of current debates in political theory about transnational democratization (e.g. Bohman 2007), urban politics (e.g. Fung 2006), and alternative forms of economy and governance (e.g. Unger 2007a). It has become an important reference point for key thinkers from what is often thought of as a distinct ‘Continental’ tradition. For example, pragmatism is an important reference for the reconstruction of critical theory as a theory of deliberative democracy (Aboulafia, Bookman and Kemp 2002; Rehg 2001). In turn, the revivification of pragmatist philosophy inspired by Richard Rorty and continued in the neo-Analytical pragmatism of Robert Brandom has informed the democratic theory of Habermas (2000). In a different register, Bruno Latour’s (2004a, 2005) reflections on the type of political analysis implied by actor-network theory is indebted to a Deweyian understanding of the formation of democratic publics (see Russill 2005; Marres 2007).

In widening the scope of intellectual reference through which the geographies of democracy might be theorised, we aim to move beyond the stylized contrast between ‘consensual’ theories of democracy, often ascribed to John Rawls or Jürgen Habermas, and ‘conflictual’ theories championed by writers such as Chantal Mouffe, Jacques Ranciere, or William Connolly. The prevalent strains of radical democratic theory in human geography have drawn on post-structuralist understandings of hegemonic politics, autonomous movements, and democracy-to-come, informed by ontologies of antagonism, abundance, and lack (see Tonder and Thomassen 2005). This post-structuralist strand of thought has tended to dominate theoretical discussions of democracy and democratic justice in human geography, lending itself well to arguments in which politics is understood primarily as a matter of transforming the
political ordering of space (e.g. Dikeç 2007, Soja 2010). Rawlsian and in particular Habermasian strands of thought have tended to be critically applied in more practically oriented fields of geographical research, such as development studies, urban and regional planning, or environmental decision-making.

In large part, then, debates in geography about how best to conceptualise democracy replay the stand-offs evident in political theory (see Karagiannis and Wagner 2008, 328; see also Karagiannis and Wagner 2005). Over-emphasising agonism, conflict, and dissensus detracts from thinking through problems of coordination, institutional design, and justification of the common good which any normatively persuasive and empirically grounded critical theory of democracy needs also to address (see Wright 2010). This over-emphasis becomes all the more serious when we acknowledge that the value of democratic politics is often most at stake in contexts where politics is shaped by intense, even violent divisions (Mann 2004). The challenge of thinking about democratic politics in deeply divided societies militates against the general applicability of post-structuralist agonism to all situations of democratic contestation (see Dryzek 2005; Schaap 2006).

The emphasis on contestation and the de-bunking of ideologically loaded understandings of space has produced a blockage in human geography when it comes to thinking about alternative institutional designs which might flesh out radical egalitarian democratic ideals. The definition of radical democracy as a generalised mode of contestation and disruption lends itself well to the prevalence in human geography of narratives of all-encompassing neoliberal hegemony (e.g. Brenner and Theodore 2002; Harvey 2005). As Ferguson (2010) has recently argued, however, there is an significant political difference at stake in seemingly arcane differences between conceptualisations of neoliberalism as a hegemonic project of class-power,
informed by Marxist theory (Harvey 2010), and conceptualising neoliberalization as a contingent assemblage of varied ‘arts of government’, informed by governmentality theory (Ong 2006). The latter approach presumes that there is an imperative on critical analysis to think through the possibilities of alternative ‘arts of government’, rather than restricting analysis to mapping counter-hegemonic contestation and disruption. It is here that we situate our argument for taking more seriously the pragmatist strains in radical democratic theory. Pragmatism interrupts the shared terrain of current debates on the geographies of democracy by bringing an ‘institutional imagination’ to these debates (see Kioupliolis 2010).

Drawing into focus the pragmatist influences shaping critical theories of democracy helps us restore to view the degree to which ‘deliberation’ in this strand of democratic theory is not necessarily understood as a medium of rational consensus formation, the view often attributed to Habermas. Rather, a broad range of communicative practices are presented as the spaces for agonistic encounters with others and exposures to power-charged difference (e.g. Young 1993; Dryzek 2000). It is this sense of deliberation as an ongoing transformative practice that underwrites John Dewey’s expansive participatory conception of radical democracy as a process of debate, discussion, and persuasion in public and oriented to concerted, collective action (Langsdorf 2002). By focussing on the pragmatist investments of recent democratic theory, we seek to locate the agonistic dynamics of democratic politics in the negotiation of competing rationalities generated by situations which demand concerted public action. In contrast to a view which identifies democracy narrowly with practices of disruption of established orders (see Staeheli 2009), pragmatism accords considerable importance to experimental practices through which alternative institutional designs are developed (e.g. Anderson 2006; Goodin and Dryzek 2006;
Fung 2006; Unger 2007b). This experimental emphasis in pragmatist approaches to theorising democracy opens up an alternative approach to conceptualising the relationship between space and democratic politics. We develop this approach below by reconstructing the principle of ‘all-affected interests’, and then relate this to a distinctively pragmatist concept of transactional space.

**Problematising the geographies of democratic participation**

The concern in pragmatism with thinking through the practical limitations and possibilities of enacting inclusive norms of democratic participation overlaps with a broader tradition of self-consciously radical egalitarian democratic theory that emphasises the instrumental and intrinsic value of *participation* as the central normative feature of democratic politics (Dahl 1970, Pateman 1970). This broad tradition of radical democracy shares is a conviction that democratic politics amounts to more than formal procedures for the aggregation of individualised voter preferences.

We suggested above that pragmatist understandings of democracy are characterised by a two related commitments: first, to a norm of expansive communicative practices as spaces of agonistic encounter; and second to experimenting with institutional designs. Taken together, these two features simultaneously affirm and problematize the value of participation as a fundamental democratic principle. The emphasis on experimentation is indicative of an acknowledgment that participation in complex, differentiated, unequal, spatially and temporally distanced social formations is necessarily mediated, partial, and reflexive.

It is the commitment to the norm of participation that distinguishes theories of radical democracy from liberal approaches. But radical approaches are themselves
differentiated by divisions over how best to understand practices of participation. We want here to draw into focus the place in which geography becomes an issue in radical democratic conceptions of participation. Once attention is focussed on participation, then inclusion emerges as the central norm of democratic politics. For example, Iris Marion Young’s (2000) influential account of communicative democracy, which has been influential in human geography and related fields such as urban studies over the last two decades, is guided by a norm of inclusion: “The normative legitimacy of a democratic definition depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision-making process and have had the opportunity to influence the outcomes” (Young 2000, 5-6). The emphasis in Young’s work on inclusion is what most immediately appeals to spatial theorists, since it identifies a distinctive form of harm that is easily translated in a geographical idiom: – exclusion based on the maintenance of sedimented boundaries and limits (e.g. Staeheli and Mitchell 2004; Staeheli, Mitchell, Nagel 2009). However, we want to emphasise the prior aspect of Young’s principle, which is on being affected by decisions. The norm of inclusion implies a commitment to a more fundamental principle according to which “what affects all must be agreed to by all” (Tully 2008, 74). The principle of “all-affected interests” is a basic rule of democratic legitimacy from which contemporary democratic theories of various stripes depart in different ways, including Rawlsian, Habermasian, and ecological approaches (ibid.).

Thinking of radical democracy in terms of participation, around a norm of inclusion, therefore draws into focus the need to re-think the geographies of the all-affected principle. Without being spelt out, the idea of all-affected interests is an animating principle in claims by geographers and urban theorists that globalisation calls for the need to rethink the political geographies of democracy. For example, Amin, Thrift
and Massey (2005) argue that there is a need to respatialize the democratic imagination to match the scope and complexity of globalized interactions. They claim that current practices of representative democracy exclude some affected actors from decision-making, in so far as these practices are still imagined and institutionalised as territorialised at the scale of the nation-state. Likewise, the all-affected principle is implicit in the attempt to connect arguments about the neoliberalized restructuring of urban and regional governance to the specifically democratic problem of who should be included in decision-making processes (e.g. Swyngedouw 2000; 2009). Political-economic analyses of neoliberalism explain how certain key decision-making processes (particularly over welfare provision, labour market regulation, and capital investment) are being re-located to urban and regional governance structures which effectively exclude those subject to these processes.

A feature of arguments by geographers in favour of re-spatializing democratic theory is an unstated assumption that social science, appropriately attuned to relational ontologies and theories of the production of space, can effectively track the causal chains of contemporary affectedness, and might therefore inform the “re-districting” of democratic practices in more inclusive ways. In the next section, Rethinking the geographies of affectedness, by restoring to view the pragmatist inheritance of avowedly communicative understandings of democratic politics, we challenge the sense that the all-affected principle is “geographical” in the straightforwardly causal, explanatory sense that is often assumed in political theory and human geography alike. We then move on in the section on Transactional spaces of public action to develop an alternative view of how spatial questions might matter to how we theorise democracy, a view related to a conceptualisation of transactional space indebted to philosophical pragmatism. And in the final section of the article,
Spaces of democratic experimentation, we work through this pragmatist conceptualisation of the contingent enactment of inclusive democratic spaces in relation to debates around two distinct “scales” of democratic innovation. We articulate recent discussions of transnational politics, developed by critical theorists working a Habermasian vein of deliberative and post-deliberative democratic theory, with pragmatist arguments about the distinctive role of urban politics as a scene of democratic experimentation.

Rethinking the geographies of affectedness

As we have already established, the question of how to determine who has the right to participate in public life is a fundamental problem for democratic theory. Conventionally, participation in a democratic polity is based on membership as a citizen of a territorially defined polity (see Dahl 1989; 1999). Geographers have become highly astute in deconstructing this sort of assumption, on the basis that territories are far from natural entities, and that criteria of membership can be arbitrary and exclusionary (e.g. Low 1997; Sparke 2005; Zierhofer 2007). A spatialized understanding of exclusion underwrites the most influential conceptualisation of democracy in human geography, the poststructuralist account of radical democracy developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Mouffe 1995; cf. Abizadeh 2005; Barnett 2004).

The same suspicion of territorialized geographies of political inclusion underwrites the revival of interest in the all-affected principle in theories of global democracy (Held 1995) and of global egalitarian justice (Pogge 2001). In these debates, globalization is understood as an exogenous event impacting on places (Sassen 2007), an understanding which informs conceptual manoeuvres through which key concepts
of democratic theory have been analytically “disaggregated” (Cohen 1999). A
preconstructed understanding of globalization is used to establish that territorially
defined citizenship is exclusionary, effectively disenfranchising affected parties from
involvement in decisions that affect them. The all-affected principle is presented as an
alternative criterion of democratic inclusion, one equal to the challenges of
globalization, and preferable to the arbitrary exclusions of membership based on
shared identity and inherited boundaries. The notion of a “community of affected” or
“affected interest” offers an alternative criterion of participation, which shifts
attention away from the question of “Who is a Member?” onto to questions of “Who
is Affected?” (Shapiro 2003, 223). And in this move, there is a tendency to present the
all-affected idea as a causally based principle: “The right to participate comes from
one’s having an interest that can be expected to be affected by the particular collective
action in question” (Shapiro 1999, 38).

The all-affected principle therefore seems particularly well attuned to the concerns
of human geographers. The relational ontologies of spatiality that geographers have
perfected lead almost automatically to a sense that territorially-defined criteria of
membership in a democratic polity are a priori suspect, on two grounds. First, they
are exclusionary of residents or denizens of a territory who do not meet specific
identity-based criteria of citizenship. And second, they are exclusionary of those
located outside a given territory who might have good grounds to claim a legitimate
interest is affected by collective actions decided upon ‘democratically’ within that
territory. The causal understanding has also been used to argue for a thorough-going
overhaul of the shapes and scales through which democratic politics should be
imagined.
However, the primacy of the causal interpretation of the all-affected principle is not quite as straightforward as it seems. It is actually rather difficult to disentangle simple relations of cause and effect, actions and consequences, when dealing with complex social, economic, or cultural processes (see Dahl 1970; Bohman 2007). Attempts to establish the identity of affected parties cannot avoid the problem of arbitrariness that also stalks the membership-based criterion. Shapiro (1999, 39) suggests that tort law provides a model for practically implementing the causally based model all-affected interests. But this proposal only underscores the impression that what is at stake is a rather complex process of attribution, involving empirical understandings of causal processes, conceptual understandings of effective agency, and moral ascriptions of responsibility. Indeed, understood as a causal principle, the idea of all-affected interests might turn out to be incoherent. It seems to lead inevitably either to an unlimited expansion of the franchise or an increasing restriction of the power of any demos (Goodin 2007).

Two things underwrite this pessimistic interpretation. First, it arises from a literalist interpretation of the idea that only those affected by a decision should have a say in shaping it. And second, the apparent incoherence of the all-affected principle arises from focusing on this idea as a criterion for establishing the contours of the demos in advance of politics. In short, arguments both for or against applying the all-affected principle as a criterion are intimately related to the idea that social science and political philosophy should be able to determine the scope of democratic participation by a combination of causal analysis and normative reasoning.

It is here that the appeal of pragmatist-inflected theories of democratic justice exerts itself. One feature of this strand of democratic theory is a dialogical mode of theoretical reasoning (e.g. Benhabib 2004, 110-114; Fraser 2008, 67-68). From this
perspective, the all-affected principle emerges less as an abstract causal criterion, and more like an animating political intuition, providing reasons to act by implicitly drawing on values of equal moral worth. On this understanding, the all-affected principle should be thought of not as an adjudicating principle, but as a worldly normative force generating political claims and counter-claims. Nancy Fraser’s account of the democratic potentials of various ‘post-Westphalian’ configurations of power, solidarity, and organization most clearly articulates this dialogical way of thinking about affected interests. Fraser argues that even the most participatory and inclusive models of democratic legitimacy conflate two analytically distinct issues: membership and affectedness. And she claims that “globalization is driving a widening wedge between affectedness and political membership” (2008, 95).

Fraser’s argument is that the activism of global social justice movements, which seeks to reframe justice claims contained at one level by articulating them with more extensive, distant networks of solidarity and accountability, deploy the registers of affected interest as rhetorical strategies to challenge the containment of political contention within territorial limits. She argues that membership is a poor surrogate for affectedness, and increasingly so. According to her account, transnational activists themselves apply the all-affected principle directly to the framing of justice claims “without going through the detour of state-territoriality” (2008, 25). They do so by engaging in a contestatory politics of representation which seeks to re-frame the geographical scales at which the subjects, objects and agents of justice-claims are articulated together. This argument about affectedness as a register of claims-making returns the all-affected principle to the more pragmatic interpretation provided by Robert Dahl, for whom the affected interest idea is not likely to settle the question of
the scope and identity of the demos, but who suggests that it is nevertheless “not such a bad principle to start with” (Dahl 1970, 66).

Despite the appearance given by her use of vocabulary of ‘scales of justice’, the most fundamental contribution of Fraser’s dialogical re-formulation of the all-affected principle is not just to extend the scope of democratic legitimacy beyond the confines of the nation-state (cf. Israel 2010). Rather, it is to re-locate issues of legitimacy from one different geographical register, one of the geographies of causality, to another, one of spaces of communicative action. Drawing into view the communicative dimensions of affectedness suggests that the all-affected interest principle needs to be understood as more than a straightforwardly causal principle whose dimensions can be literally ‘mapped’.

The communicative formation of democratic publics

The pragmatist understanding we are developing in this article emphasises the communicative dimensions of affectedness. This makes the idea of all-affected interest central to a geographical conceptualisation of democratic politics, and this in turn requires an understanding of the imaginary constitution of the democratic polity. To develop such an understanding, it is fruitful to consider the account of the relation between affectedness and the formation of democratic publics provided by John Dewey. Dewey defined a public as consisting of “all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for” (Dewey 1927, 16-17). While this might, at first, look like an affirmation of the causal principle of affected interest, Dewey’s primary emphasis is upon the modes of perception and recognition of people’s indirect implication in spatially and temporally extensive processes. For
Dewey, a public is primarily an imaginative entity, which is not composed only of all those directly affected by consequences, but emerges only when “the perception of consequences are projected in important ways beyond the persons and associations directly concerned in them” (Dewey, 1927, 39).

Dewey’s account of public formation therefore involves a double displacement of the causal interpretation of the all-affected interest principle. First, it emphasises that the recognition of being affected requires the exercise of imagination, not just cognition. And second, it emphasises that it is indirect consequences that enrol people into larger publics, not just an immediate stake or interest in an issue.

In the wake of this double displacement, the causal dimension of affectedness certainly remains an irreducible aspect in understanding the generation of matters of public concern. This aspect helps to account for the potentiality of publics to form around shared concerns to ‘take care of’ extensive systems of action and their indirect consequences. The actual emergence of a public as a subject of collective action, however, is not simply based on the rational apprehension of chains of cause and effect. To illustrate the difference this double displacement of the causal aspects of affectedness makes to a pragmatist account of democratic public formation, it is worth considering the place of the pragmatist understanding of all-affected interest in James Bohman’s (2007) recent account of transnational democracy.

Bohman provides a distinctively pragmatist inflection of the all-affected principle in terms of *indefinite effects* rather than clear causal relations. Bohman holds that globalisation is characterized not so much by its spatial and temporal scope, but rather by its indefinite qualities: “global activities do not necessarily affect everyone, or even the majority of people, in the same way. Rather, the sort of social activities in
question affect an *indefinite* number of people” (2007, 24). Two points follow from Bohman’s elaboration of Dewey’s emphasis on indirect consequences.

First, as Marres (2005) argues, being affected by some process in a causal way, more or less directly, is not enough in itself to account for the emergence of an issue of shared concern into the public realm. These conditions of affectedness need to be *made* into issues. In this respect, Dewey reminds us that the extension of consequences and interests over space and time is simultaneously also the medium through which people learn to abstract themselves from their own perspectives, as the condition of recognising themselves as participants in a wider public. Likewise, in Bohman’s account, the pragmatist insight most at work is the idea that the indefinite extension of communication generates an expanded potential for concerted, cooperative activity.

The second point which follows from contemporary pragmatist thinking, as exemplified by Bohman, is that on its own this vision of expanded communicative potential for the making of public issues runs the risk of reproducing a long-standing worry that pragmatism underestimates issues of power (see Allen 2008). Bohman’s identification of the indefinite character of global activities recognises that different actors are differentially affected by global activities. This implies that different actors are differentially empowered to engage with issues (see Young 2007). But more specifically, on Bohman’s view, since being affected is indefinite, then some actors are implicated in the activities of others *without having consented to be included*. Even more explicitly than Fraser, who ends up preferring the idea of “all subjected” to that of all-affected as a principle of democratic inclusion, Bohman emphasises *domination* as the primary vector of power around which democratic contestation emerges (see Pettit 2001).
These two points combine to underwrite the distinctive pragmatist sense of all-affectedness as an emergent quality of agonistic, contestatory communicative practices. The pragmatist understanding of the spatial and temporal extension of relations of *indirect consequences* and *indefinite effects* leads to a dual emphasis: on the expanded scope of communicative action through which issue-formation can develop; and on the sense that these processes of making issues public are shaped by power-infused dynamics of recognising and articulating the differential responsibility and accountability of actors for generating and responding to problems of shared concern.

Dewey’s formulation of multiple aspects of affectedness in the formation of democratic publics (of being affected causally as well as affectively identifying one’s implication in communities of shared interest) helps us see how the all-affected principle is re-configured when it is translated from a narrowly causal principle into an expansively communicative one. This translation is the characteristic move of a broad range of so-called deliberative theories of democracy, informed by critical elaborations of Habermasian discourse ethics. These build on an earlier participatory turn in democratic theory by identifying participatory parity in deliberative practices as a key aspect in the deepening of democracy as a means of promoting justice. But these theories also develop the pragmatist heritage of understanding social practice in terms of plural rationalities of communicative action (Langsdorf 2002; Russill 2005). The articulation of norms of participation with pragmatist inflected understandings of communicative action is a key feature of the radical-democratic tradition (Cohen and Fung 2004). This pragmatist strand of radical democratic theory develops a strongly egalitarian model of democratic justice and political legitimacy as both a critical diagnostic tool and a normatively compelling account of institutional alternatives. In
the pragmatist tradition, the all-affected interest principle is understood as both an instrumental value, in so far as including all interests improves the quality of problem solving in democratic decision-making; and an intrinsic value, as far as participation in deliberative practices enhances democratic virtues, promotes autonomy, and ensures accountability and legitimacy.

We have suggested that there is a tendency to think of the all-affected principle as a causal criterion of evaluation, and that this is related to a particular view of the authoritative role of social science in demarcating the geographies of legitimate democratic inclusion. We have argued that both aspects of this relationship are challenged by bringing into view the pragmatist interpretation of affectedness as a communicative register rather than causal criterion. In the next section, we elaborate on how this communicative idea of all-affected interest provides for a different understanding of how issues of space and spatiality are relevant to conceptualising radical democratic politics. We do so by developing John Dewey’s notion of transactional relationships between organisms and environments. We argue that a pragmatist understanding of space leads to a shift in focus when conceptualising radical democracy towards a concern with experimental institutional imaginations as a mode of agonistic problem-solving.

**Transactional spaces of public action**

In the previous section, we argued that critical theories of democracy transform the notion of affectedness in the all-affected interests principle into an expansively communicative concept, involving interactions between causal processes, processes of identification, learning, and caring, and the exercise of concerted, collective agency. We have also emphasised the pragmatist dimensions of this understanding, because
this assists in avoiding some of the pitfalls inherent in the communicative account. Pragmatist-inflected understandings of the all-affected interests idea in terms of ‘communicative accountability’ (Mason 2001) and public involvement in issue-formation (Marres 2005) challenge strongly ‘objectivist’ understandings of the problems around which publics form. On such an objectivist understanding, most clearly articulated by Lippmann’s (1925) *The Phantom Public*, it is the role of government to manage conflicts of interest arising from externally generated problems which exceed the epistemological competencies of populations. Public opinion is reduced to the function of lending assent to proposed solutions. There is a risk in countering this image of public action by simply asserting the co-constitutive relation of public communication and issue-formation; a risk of lapsing into a nominalist-style of constructivism in which problems emerge as simply contingent discursive articulations.

Dewey provides a route to developing a more robust account of the relationships between generative causal processes and communicative practices of problematization. Dewey’s (1927) account of democratic publics explicitly challenges Lippmann’s account of the external relationships between problem-generation, public formation, and concerted action (Russill 2008; see also Rabinow 2011). It does so by developing a “problem-responsive” account of action in which the agonism of competing interests is drawn explicitly into processes of public formation, rather than managed externally by government. Recognising this distinctively pragmatist understanding of action as problem-responsive is a central feature of attempts to re-materialise public formation (e.g. Latour 2004b; Latour and Weibel 2005; Marres 2007). As Honneth (2007, 220) observes, the emphasis on the rationalities of problem-solving in Dewey’s understanding of action, communication, and democracy
distinguishes it from more assertively communicative accounts of the public sphere. It helps to restore a sense of contestation, conflict and struggle to the process of public formation. In this Section, we draw out the understanding of spatiality upon which this understanding of problem-responsive rationalities of action is based. We do so in order to indicate the distinctive geographical conceptualisation of public formation and democracy that Dewey’s work supports. This concept of spatiality is articulated in Dewey’s transactional account of perception and action.

As we saw in the previous section, Dewey (1927) defines democratic publicity in terms of the perception or recognition of the indirect effects of activities that must be taken care of in various ways. Activities whose consequences remain circumscribed amongst those directly involved in them are private. But this definition immediately generates a theoretical challenge. It seems to require an account of how people drawn indirectly into the orbit of activities come to recognise their implication in matters of shared, public concern. This is the challenge which Latour (2004a) has dubbed “learning to be affected”. This refers to the widening sensitivity to human and non-human in imagining the scope of political community. For Latour, learning to be affected is a normative clarion call to be open to an expansive, pluralist field of impulses and obligations. However, as Russill (2005) argues, understanding processes of learning to be affected in the dynamics of public formation might benefit from greater consideration of Dewey’s understanding of the relationship between perception, action and enquiry, and the centrality of problem-solving to the mediation of this relationship. In Dewey’s terms, learning to be affected means body-minds learning to being put into motion by a diversity of impulses, out of which a dynamic form of rationality emerges in the process of public formation (see Bridge 2005). And key to Dewey’s thinking on this process is the notion of transaction.
In Dewey’s naturalistic philosophy (1922; 1958), the focus is upon the relations between human organisms and their environment. This naturalism casts humans as organisms in process, having myriad ongoing transactions with their environment. Transaction refers to the various levels of communication (physical through to discursive) between human organisms and their environment. No one organism is complete or rounded out; organisms are understood as always in-process, constituted by the multiplicity of their relations with the environment. In later work, Dewey (Dewey and Bentley 1991) contrasts the idea of transaction to interaction (see Bridge 2005, 22-24; Cutchin 2008). Interaction suggests communication between persons or subjectivities that are complete and then communicate with each other. In the idea of transaction however, communication is understood holistically, as part of the constitution of the communicators themselves along relations with the affordances of environments, objects and processes:

“The environment/place/world with which persons transact is not limited to physical forms; it includes, for instance, social, cultural, and political aspects as well. A transactional view is inclusive of the full range of experience, and transactional relations may be, for instance, those of a person and a discourse or other cultural form. A transactional view also includes the ‘durational-extensional’ set of relations that make up our evolving contexts of action. Said another way, a view of transactional relations should include their temporal and spatial dimensions—how those relations extend through time and space.” (Cutchin 2008, 1563).

The idea of transaction can be understood as suggesting that organisms live as much “in processes across and 'through' skins as in processes ‘within' skins” (Dewey and Bentley 1991, 119). The idea of transaction indicates “the dynamic, constitutive
relationship of organisms and their environments” (Sullivan 2001, 1), a relationship characterised by “a stability that is not stagnation but is rhythmic and developing” (Dewey 1958, 25).

The spaces of transaction are not limited to the relationship between functional causality and discursive elaboration, but are more pluralised, including fluid, uncertain and temporary spaces of emotional engagement and cognitive response. On a pragmatist view of problem-solving and enquiry, transactional action is cumulative, in the sense that it generates new dispositions to be imaginatively open to indirect or unanticipated consequences. The cumulative nature of transactions has a qualitative aspect, in so far as transactions can thicken or become richer communicatively, taking in aesthetic aspects that are able to communicate in ways that envelope all the senses.

The transactional constitution of public action

The notion of transaction is important for further developing two aspects of the non-causal account of affectedness which is central to reconfiguring conceptualisations of the geographies of radical democratic politics. The first aspect is the need to better understand processes of learning to be affected. And the second aspect is the need to better understand the potential of communicatively formed publics to act as effective agents of change.

With respect to the first aspect, the notion of transaction helps us understand how Dewey’s understanding of enquiry integrates objectivist and more communicative aspects of problem-formation. We should not start from the assumption that publics are simply formed causally out of instrumentally generated concerns (see Calhoun 2002). These causal processes can certainly be understood as assembling relevant networks of material connection and functional interdependence. But the formation of
these into public issues requires, as we have already indicated, a process of imaginative identification. What we are calling the imaginative aspect of learning to be affected is informed by Dewey’s elaboration of Williams James’ (1950) radical empiricism into a logic of enquiry. Enquiry, for Dewey, involved a dynamic give-and-take between causal processes and a pluralised sense of engaged, embodied, responsive capacities to apprehend these processes in their myriad implications. The notion of transaction is related to this pragmatist emphasis on enquiry. Rather than being based on the passive perception and reflection on the world, apperception is transactional in that the objects of enquiry act back on human senses just as those perceptions project onto the world and help shape its processual “substances”. The logic of enquiry is thus an ongoing engagement with the world (Dewey 1958, 257-263).

There is one further feature of this transactional understanding of problem-responsive action which is relevant to the conceptualisation of democratic public formation in terms of learning to be affected. An important aspect of Dewey’s pluralism is the conviction that competing habits generate better rationalities. Agonism is therefore an integral aspect of problem-solving from this perspective, for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons, binding the resources of what Mead termed mutual perspective-taking into processes of issue-formation and problem-solving (Mead 1934). The agonism of problem-responsive action is not opposed to rationality; it is generative of rationalities geared to contextual situations. Coordination to take care of the indirect consequences of other actions might be fuelled by emotion, affect and discussion and the experience of diversity. The coordination of competing interests and perspectives on a given problem involves abstraction away from the direct functionality of that problem, in a reflexive process of giving and receiving of

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reasons. By making problem-solving central to the understanding of action, this transactional perspective means that rational accommodation and coordination between actors is not thought of in terms of strongly validated, discursively coordinated agreements. Rather, it is understood in terms of ongoing transactional rationality (Bridge 2005), one which coordinates various forms of “embodied intelligence in everyday practices” (Bernstein 2010, 85).

The idea that the agonism of interests, opinions and perspectives is instrumental to the generation of coordinating rationalities has implications for how we think of the shape and location of transactional public spaces. The normative impetus of Dewey’s understanding of affectedness in terms of indirect consequences appears to support a spatially extensive image of the public realm, expanding outwards from discrete locations through networks of communicative engagement. However, we also need to keep in view the emphasis on the embodied capacities of transactional action, and in particular the sense of transaction as not merely being a medium of communicative action but a cumulative, dispositional competence in its own right. Effective spaces of public formation therefore might well be better thought of as clustered in concentrated environments where conflicting consequences and cooperative impulses are drawn into close proximity – as spaces of spaces of heightened transactional intensity.

For Dewey, the sheer complexity of everyday life means that people have difficulty in recognising common interests and mobilising beyond their immediate concerns. Rather than supposing that the logical response to this problem is to conceptualise an expanded scale of global public of some sort or other, it might be more useful to reconsider the role of situated locations as effective spaces for public formation over issues which extend beyond the local scale. It follows from Dewey’s notion of transactional rationality that the most conducive environments to effective
problematization and problem-solving are those which provide for prolonged and ongoing exposure to conflicting consequences, diverse interests, and plural perspectives. The instrumental understanding of public formation as an engaged, embodied process of plural communicative transactions suggests that spaces in which different problems, different consequences, and different responses intersect might be thought of as having particular qualities of “publicness”, in the sense of providing opportunities and imperatives for agonistic engagement with diverse effects and consequences.

The city has often been defined as an exemplary public space, in the sense of being an environment where diverse consequences concatenate with plural registers of engagement (e.g. Sennett 1974; Young 1990; Bridge 2005). Urban spaces might certainly be thought of as spaces of relatively high transactional ‘thickness’ or ‘intensity’, in which discursive and non-discursive communication orientates certain dispositions to questions of collective coordination. The identification of the democratic qualities of urban public space still often relies, however, on the idea of urbanism as a cultural, communicative domain. It is a view easily aligned with stronger arguments in favour for thinking of the ‘the city’ as a model for a non-sovereign concept of the political (e.g. Magnusson 2002; Isin 2007). But this view leaves in abeyance the second aspect of the Deweyian understanding of affectedness we identified above. This is the focus upon effective concerted action; or upon democratic will-formation as well as opinion-formation. We need, then, to attend also to the second aspect of affectedness that the transactional understanding of problem-responsiveness throws new light upon. This is the issue of the potential of communicatively formed publics to act as effective agents of change.
In contrast to a Habermasian image of the public sphere as wholly distinct from the state, acting as either “sluice” or “siege” against encroachments into communicative lifeworlds, Dewey envisages a greater continuum between the strongly communicative aspects of the public as a domain of opinion-formation and institutions of will-formation (Barnett 2008). From his perspective, the institutionalisation of public functions, through elected or appointed agents and representatives, is considered quite integral to a democratic public. Representative institutions are not, then, considered a secondary, lesser form of democratic action, but as one medium for institutionalising broad-based participation. For Dewey, different publics can demonstrate different “traits of a state”. This idea refers to the different sorts of delegated agency that emerge to systematically take care of indirect consequences (see Cochran 2002). Dewey understood the emergence of the nation-state form of democracy as a response to contingent, pragmatic circumstances, rather than the expression of singular democratic ideal of territorial integrity and unity. The notion of different traits of state therefore acknowledges the open-ended aspects of democracy, as new forms of democratic agency and accountability emerge in relation to new problematizations.

The pragmatist understanding of the transactional dynamics of public formation is, then, well suited to the analysis of the emergent qualities of democratic politics, since it is not beholden to an idealized model of spatial or organisational configurations which best express democratic norms. For example, Davidson and Entrikin (2005) argue that even a city like Los Angeles, often characterised as the anti-city on the grounds that it is decentred, predominantly residential and replete with privatised public spaces, has a space of democratic engagement that constitutes a deliberative public realm. Their example is Los Angeles coastline, around which is gathered
institutionalized forms of democracy (in the form of legislation pertaining to coastal protection and public access), but which is also the site of everyday engagements and contestations between beachgoers and beachside homeowners over rights of access. Invoking a pragmatist concept of public formation, they argue that what makes these encounters “Deweyan” in form “is that they are waged occasionally through the agents of the state but more often through the formation of issue-specific, ephemeral coalitions and communal organisations” (Davidson and Entrikin 2005, 580).

**Approaching democratic judgement pragmatically**

The pragmatist account of the transactional dynamics of public formation supports a pluralist understanding of the generation of democratic spaces. These are understood to be contingently enacted through practices of responsive, reflexive problem-formation; practices of public communication; and through institutionalised forms of concerted action, across the state/civil society boundary. This pragmatist understanding of space does not decide in advance, through a process of ontological deduction, the ideal spatial form for democratic politics, whether this is territorialised, relational, or topological (cf. Lussault and Stock 2010). It focuses on the situations and problems out of which democratic energies arise, and then attends closely to the spaces and spatialities which are performed in ongoing processes of democratization.

We have elaborated Dewey’s understanding of transactional, problem-responsive action in order to refine the non-causal, non-functional understanding of the all-affected principle that was introduced earlier in the article. This understanding corrects for the elision of the ‘materiality’ of issues in the strongest communicative versions of deliberative, dialogic, or discursive democracy. It does so by bringing in to view the role played by contentious problems in generating occasions for publics to
form and coalesce. It also provides a more focussed understanding of what is at stake in focussing on processes of learning to be affected in the formation of publics.

The focus on transactional space also suggests a distinctive way of theorising about the spatialities of democratic politics, one which is consistently pragmatist. In debates on global democracy and cosmopolitanism, it is a default assumption that the extension of consequences beyond the boundaries of nation-states necessarily requires a scaling-up of democratic governance to map onto the same ‘global’ level. In debates on the spatialities of radical democracy, it is assumed that democratic politics properly inhabits interstitial spaces of relationality, evading capture by the logics of territorialization. In both set of debates, it is presumed in advance that democratic spaces must have a specific spatial configuration – territorial congruence between the scale of problems and the scale of the polity in once case; or fleeting habitation in fugitive, de-territorialised and relational spaces in the other. A transactional understanding of space allows us to suspend any a priori determination of the proper spatial forms of democratic politics – whether this takes the form of assertions of the continued importance of the territorial national state, or assertions of the importance of relational networks and topologies.

In contrast, the pragmatist understanding of transactional space we have developed suggests a distinctive agenda for examining the geographies of democratic politics. First, the pragmatist emphasis leads to an open, empirically-minded attention to the particular spatialities enacted through transactional problematization in particular cases. It does not presume in advance that democracy has a proper space or spatiality, whether bounded or open, local or global.

Second, this attention to the contingent spatialities of democratic politics is guided by a concern with understanding the differentiations and combinations of
transactional practices of varying intensities. Different spatial forms might be understood in these terms. For example, as we have suggested, the city is one figure for transactional space, gathering together a complexity and diversity of interests and effects which fuel imaginative capacities into heightened zones of communicative experience and engagement. Territorialised nation-states are more dispersed transactional spaces, with more scope for distanced engagements, but also for integrating a far greater range of issues and actors. Transactional networks, in turn, might be characterised by a relatively narrow range of issues, while maintaining high levels of communicative intensity, but perhaps amongst a smaller and more predictable range of participants. The qualities of transactional spaces of public action are therefore differentiated by the contingent combination of concentration, dispersal, and distribution.

The pragmatist understanding of transactional space directs attention, in short, to the task of developing pragmatic audits of democratic practices of different shapes and scales, with a focus on understanding these practices as enacting their own spatialities in the transactional give-and-take of problematization, issue-formation, and concerted action. Across this range of democratic practices, the different aspects of public action will be combined in distinctive combinations in specific cases: from ‘weak’ publics raising issues and generating dissent, through regulatory and monitoring functions, to authoritative decision-making and sanction-enforcing practices. The pragmatist approach emphasises the embeddedness of experimentation in a transactional idea of human life, communication and enquiry. Following Dewey, experimentation does not just relate to the ethos of democracy enacted through diverse forms of participation, but also to experiments in the implementation of democratic will through institutional designs. In the next section, we flesh out this transactional understanding of the
spaces of democratic politics, emphasising the problematizing dimensions of the pragmatist approach we have developed in the previous two sections. We focus on discussions of both transnational and urban spaces of radical democracy, emphasising how these two spaces might both be thought of as enacting practices of institutional experimentation.

**Spaces of democratic experimentation**

As we have already indicated, appeal to the all-affected principle is central to the break out of concern with geographical issues in democratic theory, expressed in debates about global justice and cosmopolitanism (see Brock 2009). Pragmatist understandings of public formation inform the arguments of theorists of transnational democracy and justice such as James Bohman, Nancy Fraser, and John Dryzek. These thinkers all develop contestatory variations of deliberative democracy, departing from the strongly epistemic-consensual inflection Habermas continues to invest in communicative rationality, in favour of more pluralistic understandings of the modes and purposes of communicative transactions. These theorists of transnational democracy, as distinct from theorists of global or cosmopolitan democracy, also develop flexible views of the geographies of democratic politics. This reflects in part the pragmatist inflections of writers such as Bohman and Dryzek (Bohman 2004; Dryzek 2004), reflected in a concern with problematic situations which generate contentious issues (Cochran 2002; Bray 2009).

What is most distinctive about the geographical imagination of this pragmatist strain of democratic theory is a sense that there is no *a priori* model of the spaces or scales at which democratic politics should be institutionalised. Rather, the geographies of democratic public action emerge from this strain of work as practical
accomplishments. The principle of all-affected interests is not a criterion of adjudication, but is better understood as providing a register of claims-making in worldly politics of social movement mobilisation and representation. Translated into a communicative principle in Habermasian discourse ethics, and inflected by the pragmatism of Mead, universalization is now understood as a process of situated perspective-taking (Bridge 2000), so that democratic legitimacy emerges as a norm according to which “what is in each case good for all parties [is] contingent on reciprocal perspective taking” (Habermas 2006, 35; see Benhabib 1992). Following Habermas’s (2001) own account of “the post-national constellation”, critical theorists of transnational democracy free-up the all-affected interests principle from its tight enclosure around territorial and scalar models of space and time. This conceptual move is most fully developed in Bohman’s (2007) account of transnational democracy, with its sense of the untidy geographies of globalization, contrasting to the neatly hierarchical-scalar imaginations of undifferentiated and/or multi-levelled global space in accounts of global cosmopolitan democracy. Bohman’s image of decentred, “multiple démois” and “distributive publics” supports a view in which public communication enacts a democratic function primarily through seeking to influence authority rather than exercise authority (see Cohen and Fung 2004; Scheuermann 2006; Fung 2010).

There is a further pragmatist inflection required here, however, to fully cash-out the potential of pragmatist-informed accounts of transnational democracy. The communicative translation of the all-affected principle should not be interpreted as a straightforward warrant for a type of “methodological globalism” that presumes that the emplaced contexts of social integration – cities, nations, places - have lost their significance as containers of democratizing energies. There are grounds internal to
this strand of theorising for reconsidering the intrinsically democratic value of less-extensive, more localised spaces for enabling the sorts of expansive democratic imaginations that these theorists of transnational democracy promote. The communicative translation of all-affectedness in post-Habermasian theory is related to a downplaying of the epistemological inflection that is retained by Habermas, in favour of a more expansive sense of the communicative conditions of experience (Young 200; O’Neill 2002). It follows that any adequate critical theory of democracy must give due weight to the situated geographies through which imaginative capacities to care at a distance, learn to be affected, and engage with strangers are worked up and sustained (Entrikin 2002a). If one takes seriously the strongly pragmatist inflection of post-Habermasian theories of transnational democracy, then we must acknowledge the importance that theorists within this same broad tradition ascribe to national cultural and institutional formations (e.g. Benhabib 1992; Calhoun 1997) or urban environments (e.g. Bridge 2005; Fung 2004) as vital infrastructures in which expansive democratic political imaginations are learned.

The communicative translation of the all-affected principle, in short, means taking seriously not only the de-territorializing effects of globalised chains of cause and consequence, but also the spaces in and through which capacities to acknowledge the claims of others are worked up and learned. This leads us back towards a consideration of the urban as a distinctive communicative field shaping the dimensions of public life (e.g. Ivesen 2007; Bridge 2009; Rodgers, Barnett and Cochrane 2009; McFarlane 2011). In developing this argument, we are assuming that asserting the relevance of contexts of learning such as national cultures or urban environments is not to be confused with a communitarian reassertion of the local or context as bounded or contained. Rather than presuming that expansive imaginaries
need to be squared with bounded imaginaries, we are assuming a line of thinking about places as scenes of openness rather than closure. On this understanding, the city in particular is understood as a figure for practices of learning to live together with difference through ordinary exposure to alterity (e.g. Watson 2006; Amin 2007). The methodological globalism characteristic of debates about cosmopolitan democracy presents globalisation as a process of spatial extension and assumes that the intensity of transactions is thinned as it is stretched. By contrast, we argue that the maintenance of transactional thickness over space is conditioned by relations embedded in places that have histories or ongoing momentum. To elaborate on this argument, we turn to one strand of pragmatist social thought that conceptualises the urban as a transactional space of democratic institutional experimentation.

There are long established lines of thought claiming a special relationship between democracy and the city, whether in terms of the city as a communicative utopia, as a model of non-sovereign politics, or a more accountable and inclusive scale of governance. We want to present here an alternative view, in which cities are understood as experimental spaces or laboratories of democratic innovation, a view that follows from pragmatist ideas of democracy as mode of agonistic, participatory problem-solving (Briggs 2008). This alternative, experimental view of urban democracy enables the relationship between urban processes and democratic politics to be specified without over-estimating the political efficacy of the urban as a scale of governance or effective citizenship rights (cf. Low 2004; Purcell 2006).

Learning from Chicago, again

To elaborate the pragmatist, experimental view of urban democracy, we focus here on the work of Archon Fung (2007, 2004), which centres on questions of democratic
participation and institutional innovation, and is part of a broader intellectual project concerned with re-animating practical democratic alternatives (e.g. Fung and Wright 2003; Wright 2010). Questions of participation and institutional innovation are at the heart of Fung’s exploration of experiments in urban democracy as “empowered participation”. His analysis is based on a case study of neighbourhoods in the African-American ghetto off the south side of Chicago, neighbourhoods that are testaments to systematic inequality and discrimination, and are amongst the least empowered of any urban districts in cities of the Global North.

Chicago is of course the city in which the first theoretical fusion of pragmatism and urban studies took place through the intellectual orientations of the Chicago School of urban ecology (Park 1926; 1936; Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925). Chicago was the scene for the overlapping intellectual and political initiatives that pioneered empirical enquiry into everyday urban practices (Wirth 1938), as well as participatory social welfare programmes associated with Jane Addams and the Hull House project (Addams 1968). Dewey himself was an active participant in these initiatives, as an influence on the Chicago School and a board member at Hull House (Martin 2002). As Gross (2009) argues Addams saw cooperative experimentation with the residents of certain Chicago neighbourhoods as a superior form of experimentation to that of the laboratory: a form of social experiment beyond the laboratory. The improvement of social conditions was obtained by combining of different skills and knowledge and was worked through everyday experience. This also involved rapid transpositions of spatial register: from bodies to institutional politics; and between public and private, for example in practices of civic housekeeping in which the dirty curtains of the lodgings of a factory worker’s family became the basis of a campaign to limit pollutants from the factory itself (Addams 1968; Jackson 2001).
For the Chicago School of urban ecology, then, the city oscillated between a field site of discovered authenticity and a laboratory of controlled conditions with wider generalisability (Gieryn 2006). Just as this tradition of research continued to develop against a background of machine-politics and political radicalism, then so Chicago continues to serve as a reference point for contemporary understandings of democratic participation in contemporary global city-regions (Simpson and Kelly 2008). This history of institutional and intellectual experimentation forms the background to Fung’s use of contemporary Chicago as a case study of empowered participation.

Fung’s analysis of urban democratic experiment returns to this scene of exemplary urban-democratic enquiry, to investigate the potentials of what he calls ‘empowered participation’ (2004). He explores two cases of grassroots mobilisation and participation in deprived neighbourhood in the South Side of Chicago: a case where local residents turned around a poorly performing local school, Africanising the curriculum and instilling a greater degree of pride and self-confidence in the students; and a case of resident participation in neighbourhood policing, where through neighbourhood liaison and representation on the local police board, hitherto hostile styles of policing were transformed into more co-operative and effective forms.

Fung’s case studies point to two spatial dimensions of democratic experimentation: first, the relations between the site of the experiment itself and wider fields; and second, the processes of deliberative evaluation and application through which experimental forms are translated. These two spatial dimensions both combine aspects of democratic engagement and contestation with aspects of democratic institutionalization. These two dimensions indicate two distinct lessons that Fung draws from his case studies.
The first lesson is the importance of the relationship between local initiative and the wider polity. In both these cases, grassroots deliberation was from the start institutionally connected to the political centre in a form of what Fung calls “accountable autonomy”. Fung contrasts accountable autonomy with neoliberal market-based and new managerialist forms of coordination. It represents, he argues, a form of civic engagement with pragmatism. The autonomy-side of accountable autonomy allowed for local initiative and experimentation, while the accountable side meant that lessons learned were communicated to the centre and then disseminated into other settings. Crucially, there was also political and financial support from central agencies that gave the initiatives more traction and brought them closer to source of power.

Fung’s second lesson is that deliberation and participation should not just be about debating and making political decisions but should include the whole political process, including implementation of policy and its evaluation. This broader view of deliberation also relates to lessons learned and distributed via central mechanisms in connecting up initiatives. The particular content of what is being discussed will affect the institutional process, and there needs to be institutional sensitivity to the substantive content of initiatives. Furthermore institutional mechanisms may even be necessary to encourage participation in the first place. Fung presents these lessons as the basis for a distinctive normative procedure for assessing the democratic credentials of institutional arrangements, which he calls “pragmatic equilibrium”. Pragmatic equilibrium is the pragmatist equivalent of Rawls’s (1972) norm of reflective equilibrium, but rather than arriving at consistent moral beliefs by a process of reflective reconciliation between conflicting judgements, this consistency is arrived at practically through ongoing experimental action.
In Fung’s analysis of urban democracy, the city emerges as a pluralized actor in processes of issue-formation, expressions of opinions, articulations of collective action, and institutional building. The city is not a scale but more like a site for various types of experimentation, that arise from diversely overlapping networks that provide feedback (Jackson 2001) both in terms of practice and institutional design. On this understanding, “the urban” emerges as a plural object or actor in political processes.

First, the urban represents a complex of issues, problems and objects which generate contention, gathering together myriad indirect consequences which are both locally generated and generated from afar.

Second, the urban is a field where the diversity and interconnectedness of effects operates as a seedbed for issue recognition. The recursiveness of urban life is also important in the formation of signs and symbols that can represent purposes and help anticipate consequences. These objects of recognition and intervention are also the medium out of which political subjectivities can be enhanced and people can learn to be affected.

Third, the urban remains the site of institutional architectures that might be useful in the development of further democratizing impulses, either through challenge and alternative institutions or further democratisation of institutions that already exist.

We have outlined a transactional understanding of the plural actions of the urban in generating, recognising and institutionalising public issues. This helps us see how the myriad connections and purposes that we think of as being “urban” help sustain transactional intensity out of which the objects of political concern, practices of learning to be affected, and the institutionalisation of will are all tested and refined. The urban stands as one example of situated transactional space that operates as a
focal point for recognising, accounting for and representing democratic political purposes. Other situated spaces of transactional intensity might be the school, the nation-state, or churches (Barnett 2008). As we indicated above, from the pragmatist perspective we have been outlining, if the city has a distinctive place in democratic politics, this follows less from its spatial form per se, and more from the diverse qualities of publicness that are gathered together in urban areas.

**Conclusion**

Our aim in this article has been to pluralize the reference points for thinking through the geographies of radical democracy, beyond a canon of poststructuralist ideas. We have done so by drawing into focus the influence of pragmatist philosophy and social theory in the refashioning of Critical Theory in terms of deliberative theories of democracy (Delanty 2009). We have emphasised the distinctive theoretical imagination that pragmatism brings to these debates, including specific understandings of communication, problem-solving, and rationalities of action. And we have suggested the pragmatist influence in democratic theory is most heavily felt in reconceptualizations of the normative principle of all-affected interest. It is here that the contribution of pragmatist philosophies to the development of a distinctive geographical approach to the analysis of democratic politics lies. Dewey’s naturalistic understanding of action and his understanding of the formation of democratic publics informs a view of the spaces of democracy as transactionally contingent and enacted in relation to problematic situations. This conceptualisation of the relationship between spatiality and democratic politics is made evident in the working through of pragmatist themes in recent debates about transnational and urban democracy, where the ‘re-scaling’ of democratic politics is understood primarily in terms of practices of
democratic experimentation and innovation, whether of transnational or urban varieties.

In closing, we want to reiterate the specific value that the pragmatist tradition brings to debates about the geographies of democracy. Electoral geography focuses attention on the mechanisms of institutionalised liberal democracy, accepting as given the norms of representation and fairness embedded in them, and examining their efficacy in different contexts. Alternatively, work on radical democracy in geography reserves the normative energies of democratic politics for disruptive practices of contestation. In their different varieties, the prevalent versions of radical democracy deployed in human geography share a deep wariness of drawing too close to issues of institutional design or programmatic reflection.

It is between the emphasis on institution and disruption that pragmatism interrupts current debates on democracy in geography. It is a tradition that brings an institutional imagination to debates about radical democracy, while also bringing an experimental sensibility to the analysis of established institutional formations of democratic politics. Whereas post-structuralist radical democratic theory dismisses Habermasian deliberative democracy as excessively consensual and rationalistic, we have argued that bringing into view the productive relationship between pragmatism and theories of communicative action enables us to see the emphasis on legitimate will-formation as one aspect of a commitment to experimenting with alternative mechanisms of institutional design. The commitment to thinking experimentally about democracy is related to the commitment to the inclusive norm of all-affected interests which deliberative and pragmatist approaches to democracy share with other traditions of radical democratic theory. Reconceptualising this principle in a non-causal way
challenges both territorial-scalar as well as relational conceptualisations of the spatiality of democracy.

The reconceptualization of the all-affected principle informs a programme of research which presumes that no singular model of spatial form should be privileged in advance as best suited to sustaining democratic energies. The idea of all-affectedness developed in this article is informed by a transactional understanding of the spatialities of public action. This combination underlines the claim that the spatial forms of democracy are contingent on the experimental practices of democratic politics as they are enacted in the world, where democratic politics is understood as a mode of collective action which emerges around situated problems generated by indirect consequences and indefinite effects.

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This essay is both about public education in ruins and the creation of a radical democratic alternative. Under neo-liberalism, education in England (and beyond) is withdrawing from a contracting public sphere and moving into an expanding market sphere. The dominant relationship in this emergent education is between autonomous parents and autonomous schools, with the state governing at a distance through systems of surveillance and audit. The dominant images are the child as knowledge reproducer, the parent as consumer, the teacher as technician, and the school as business competing in the market place through the application of human technologies to the attainment of predetermined and standardised outcomes. The dominant purpose is the production of autonomous subjects for an inescapable neoliberal world: the calculating and risk-bearing consumer, the flexible and lifelong-learning worker, *homo economicus* incarnate, equipped for a life of perpetual competition and instant responsiveness to the flickering of market signals.
The ruination of public education and its replacement by markets and governing at a distance is catastrophic. It removes the idea that education is a subject of civic interest and a responsibility of all citizens - the public in public education. It drains education of overt political content, recasting it as a predominantly technical exercise, consigned to experts, technicians and businesses whose task it is to define, assess and improve standards of performance. The emphasis on standardisation and technical practice impedes education’s ability to work with new and important understandings of children, knowledge and learning, which emphasise diversity and complexity. Last, it removes one vital public resource for addressing the multiple crisis threatening our species and environment. When, more than ever before, we need to act collaboratively and with a strong sense of the public good, we are creating an education system incapable of meeting this need; indeed a system that, like its neoliberal progenitor, makes matters worse, not better.

What then might we offer as an alternative? How might a public education be renewed and re-constructed? How might we develop a radical education with democracy as a fundamental value and the common school as a basic public institution in a truly democratic society? We understand democracy as a multi-dimensional concept, with many different forms and practices; formal and procedural democracy, democratic governance, is important, but so too is democracy as a way of thinking, being and acting, of relating and living together, as a quality of personal life and relationships. We understand the common school as a public space for all citizens living in its local catchment area: a truly ‘comprehensive school’ contesting the fragmenting, competitive and selective drive of neoliberal education, with its proliferation of selective schools - academies, charter schools, faith schools. The common school is age integrated and multi-generational; human scale; a place of depth and connectedness over width of coverage, interdisciplinary, inquiry-based, experiential; project based, both in its pedagogical approach and in its relationship with its community; and organised around team working by educators with diverse perspectives and interests. It is a ‘multi-purpose’ institution providing education-in-its-broadest-sense and serving as a social and democratic resource to its local community.

For full enactment, radical democratic education must be practiced through and in many institutions and settings. National and state governments need to espouse democracy, proclaiming it a fundamental value in education, practicing it in their approach to education, and supporting its practice in other institutions and settings. Democratically elected and accountable local bodies – such as local authorities or school boards – need to (re)assume public responsibility for education in their area and, like higher levels of government,
proclaim and practice democracy in their approach to education and support its practice throughout the public education system.

But schools are at the heart of our utopian project, vital sites of radical democratic education. We identify and briefly elaborate ten key design features of a school in which democracy is enacted as participation, 'a mode of associated living' and a lived everyday experience, following Lawrence Kohlberg's maxim that “the only way school can help graduating students become persons who can make society a just community is to let them try experimentally to make the school themselves”. These features are:

- A proclaimed democratic vitality;
- Radical structures and spaces;
- Radical roles and images;
- Radical relationships;
- Personal and communal narrative;
- Radical curriculum, radical pedagogy and enabling assessment;
- Insistent affirmation of possibility;
- Engaging the local;
- Accountability as shared responsibility;
- The common school.

Erik Olin Wright proposes three criteria to be applied to any consideration of institutional alternatives: desirability, viability and achievability. We focus on viability, “a scientifically grounded conception of viable alternative institutions”. But we end by introducing three further concepts:

- **democratic experimentalism**, Roberto Unger’s concept, an essential element of what he terms ‘high energy democracy’, releasing the creative powers of ordinary people by eradicating the distortions and subjugations of class, hierarchy and the myopic presumptions of prescribed role.

- **prefigurative practice**, the anticipation of future modes of being through processes and relations, not just structures, that exemplify and embody the viability and desirability of radical alternatives. Because this concept can too easily be laid claim to, letting in the merely different rather than the genuinely transformative, we propose criteria with which to develop and evaluate a prefigurative practice that strives to enact a new way of being in the world.
Sustainability, to confront the chastening history of much radical education, so many examples of which have collapsed after a few years. One lesson from more long-lived examples is the importance of regional, national and global solidarities.

These three concepts are important to the process of transformative change, complementing Wright’s three criteria and his view of transformational change as a cumulative, step-by-step process. We need to construct, both from theoretical models and case studies, a better understanding not only of how transformative change can be set in motion - but of how to create the capacity to continue to experiment and to future build.

(991 words)

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Radical Democratic Education
Michael Fielding and Peter Moss

Institute of Education, University of London, UK

1. Public education in ruins

This essay is about a public education in ruins and how a new public education might be re-constructed, on the basis of democracy and the common school. It draws mainly on experience from England, though this may resonate in other English-speaking contexts, such as the United States. Moreover, many elements of what we see as the ruin of public education can today be found seeping into other countries. In speaking of public education in ruins, we are not wishing to restore the ruins. Nonetheless, there are important principles and experiences from the past that can contribute to the construction of a new public education. We need to combine these with new materials that speak to our contemporary conditions, needs and desires. In this, as in all other matters that contribute to the kind of emancipatory undertaking to which Real Utopian projects aspire, it is important to learn from the successes and failures within radical democratic traditions in order to advance more radical forms of schooling within a renewed public education.

Under neo-liberalism and the alliance it has formed with neo-conservatism and certain fractions of the managerial and professional middle classes (Apple, 2004), education is withdrawing from a contracting public sphere – defined by David Marquand as “a space, protected from the adjacent market and private domains, where strangers encounter each other as equal partners in the common life of society” (Biesta, 2010, pp.98-9) – and moving into an expanding market sphere with its growing presence of private providers and contractors. The dominant relationship in this emergent education is between autonomous parents and autonomous schools, with the state governing at a distance through systems of surveillance and audit – what Biesta refers to as “the odd combination of marketized individualism and central control” (p.56). The dominant images, or social constructions, are the child as knowledge reproducer, the parent as consumer, the teacher as technician, and the school as business competing in the market place through the application of human technologies to the attainment of predetermined outcomes. The dominant values are cognition (above all other facets of human being), competition (between children, teachers, schools), calculation (of best returns on investment), commodification (in which everything can be costed, calculated and contracted), choice (of the individual consumer variety), and
inequality (to fuel competition). The dominant rationality is instrumental performativity, leaving no room for uncertainty, provisionality, surprise or wonder, and expressed through technical questions enunciated and pursued through distortingly reductive approaches to research and practice (e.g. what works?). The dominant purpose is the production of autonomous subjects for a predetermined and inescapable neoliberal world: the calculating and risk-bearing consumer, the flexible and lifelong-learning worker, *homo economicus* incarnate, equipped for a life of perpetual competition and instant responsiveness to the flickering of market signals. Underpinning everything are totalising systems of thought: positivism with its conflation of natural and social science, its belief in a knowable world and its assumption of one right answer to every question, and neoliberalism with its blind self-confidence that it can always provide that answer.

The ruination of public education and its replacement by markets and governing at a distance is catastrophic, for a number of reasons. First, because it removes the public in public education, the idea that education is a subject of civic interest and a responsibility of all citizens. What should be a political relationship between all citizens (not only parents), schools, and democratically accountable bodies becomes an economic relationship between consumers, providers and funders.

Second, because the “the sphere of the political itself has been eroded” (Biesta, 2010, p. 54). Education has been drained of overt political content and re-cast as a predominantly technical exercise, consigned to a coterie of experts, technicians and businesses whose main task is to define, improve and assess correct standards of performance. Of course, the whole neoliberal project is saturated with politics. But its status as a dominant discourse means that its values, assumptions and beliefs are rendered invisible, naturalised and neutralised, the taken-for-granted currency of everyday education. What has been lost, when most needed, is vigorous and agonistic public debate about political questions. We return to these political questions shortly.

Third, because the emphasis on standardisation and technical practice obstructs our ability to work with new and important understandings of children, knowledge and learning. The more we seem to know about the complexity of learning, children’s diverse strategies and multiple theories of knowledge, “the more we seek to impose learning strategies and curriculum goals that reduce the complexities of this learning and knowing” and “policy makers look for general structures and one-dimensional standards for practices” (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Faced by the potentialities of complexity, diversity and perspectivism, the dominant approach holds fast to a representational view of knowledge, understanding
knowledge to be an objective, stable and accurate representation of a pre-existing reality; and to a pedagogy of transmission and reproduction that believes in the possibility of transferring knowledge of a real and stable world from one mind (the teacher) to another (the pupil) in a process that “is unambiguous and unmediated and results in unproblematic transference with full conservation of intent” (Roy, 2004, p.297).

Last, and in many ways most disturbing, because the ruination of public education and its privatised and marketised replacement removes one vital public resource for addressing the crisis facing our species and environment - or rather “this complex inter-solidarity of problems, antagonisms, crises, uncontrolled processes, and the general crisis of the planet that constitutes the number one vital problem” (Morin, 1999, p.74). We refer to an economic system that is unsustainable and inimical to human flourishing (Jackson, 2009); growing inequality and other injustices in a ‘winner-takes-all’ system; nuclear proliferation; and the cumulative ‘perfect storm’ of biodiversity loss, resource depletion, environmental degradation and global warming. At a time when, more than ever before, we need to act collaboratively and with a strong sense of the public good, we are creating an education system incapable of meeting this need; indeed a system that, like its neoliberal progenitor, makes the ‘one vital problem’ worse, not better.

Rather than viewing education’s role as fitting the young for an inevitable and predetermined future of more of the same, a future not only inimical to human flourishing but implausible, a public education is needed that provides “a powerful democratic resource and public space that allows its young people and communities to contest the visions of the future that they are being presented with, and to work together through the spaces of traditional and emergent democratic practice, to fight for viable futures for all” (Facer, 2011, p.15). Not a ‘future proofing’ education, but a ‘future building’ education.

2. Democracy as a fundamental educational value

It is in this context that the two of us have been working on an alternative educational proposal. Not ‘the’ but ‘an’ alternative, since the first stage in re-building a public education is to create a vibrant democratic politics of education, which values diverse perspectives and alternatives, and which places political questions back at the centre of education. Our starting point, the foundation for our real utopia proposal, is such political questions: “not mere technical issues to be solved by experts... [but questions that] always involve decisions which require us to make a choice between conflicting alternatives” (Mouffe, 2007, np).
Some are ontological. What is our understanding, or image, of the child, the educator, the pre-school? How do we understand education? Some are epistemological. What is knowledge? How do we learn? Some are philosophical. What are the purposes of education? What should be its fundamental values? What ethics? And, perhaps most important of all, what kind of society do we want to build? What do we want for our children, here and now and in the future?

In our book – *Radical Education and the Common School: a Democratic Alternative* (Fielding and Moss, 2011) – we build our alternative, our concept of a new public education, on answers offered to these questions. Space precludes that here. Our focus will be the question of fundamental values and on one value in particular, which we consider to be at the heart of our concept of a new public education: democracy. In doing so, we follow the footsteps of important pioneers: the progressive education tradition; Alex Bloom and his work in St. George’s-in-the-East school in post-war London; Loris Malaguzzi and his fellow educators in the municipal schools of Reggio Emilia; the philosopher of education John Dewey; and many more.

So central is democracy to our thinking that we label our alternative public education ‘radical democratic education’. We say ‘radical’ to indicate that our alternative education is transformational, but not what Foucault terms ‘superficial transformation’: “transformation that remains within the same mode of thought, a transformation that is only a way of adjusting the same thought more closely to the reality of things”. Real transformation for us, like Foucault, is when “one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them”; or, as Roberto Unger (1998) describes, changing the basic arrangements, both the formative structures of institutions and enacted beliefs.

As we shall attempt to show, democratic education of the kind we propose is transformational in the sense Foucault and Unger understand the term. It is ‘radical’ change that forms part of a real utopian project. But before we turn to consider the design of a radical education project, we must first say what we mean by democracy. For like Alasdair McIntyre (McIntyre 1973) and Steven Lukes (Lukes 1974) we are much persuaded by the elegant and incisive work of W.B. Gallie (Gallie 1956) who argues that democracy is an essentially contested concept, that is to say, contestation about its meaning is part of the process of its conceptualisation and enactment.

Democracy is a multi-dimensional concept, with different forms and practices linked to each dimension. A recent attempt to ground some of the key issues can be found in Skidmore and
Bound’s ‘Everyday Democracy Index’ (2008) that covers six dimensions, ranging from ‘electoral and procedural democracy’ through ‘activism and civic participation’ and ‘aspiration and deliberation’ to democracy in the family, the workplace and public services. They argue that modern democracies must “be rooted in a culture in which democratic values and practices shape not just the formal sphere of politics, but the informal spheres of everyday life: families, communities, workplaces, and schools and other public services” (Skidmore and Bound, 2008, p.9). So while formal and procedural democracy, democratic governance, is vitally important, democracy has a more pervasive presence: as a way of thinking, being and acting, of relating and living together, as a quality of personal life and relationships.

This is democracy, in the words of John Dewey, as “a mode of associated living embedded in the culture and social relationships of everyday life” and as “a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature…[and] faith in the capacity of human beings for intelligent judgement and action if proper conditions are furnished” (Dewey, 1939). This is democracy, as Hannah Arendt sees it, as a form of subjectivity expressed as a quality of human interaction (Biesta, 2007). This is democracy as a relational ethic that can and should pervade all aspects of everyday life, a way of “thinking of oneself in relation to others and the world” (Rinaldi, 2006, p.156), a relationship of solidarity and mutual affection and care for one another, of democratic fellowship. A relationship, too, that recognises and welcomes plurality of values and perspectives, respecting the alterity of others, not trying to grasp it to make the Other into the Same. A democracy, in sum, of what John Gray (2009) calls *modus vivendi*, inscribed with value pluralism, in contrast to a democracy of rational consensus, which presumes one right answer to any question.

We can also say what we don't understand democracy to be. It is not a process of aggregating individual preferences and the ensuing competition between different private interests, epitomised in systems of parental school choice. Democracy is certainly agonistic, recognising a “dimension of antagonism inherent in human relations” (Mouffe, 2000: 101). But it involves “public deliberation and contestation about the common good” (Biesta, 2010, p.54) and “the translation of private troubles into collective issues” (p.100). Nor is democratic education primarily about teaching courses on citizenship. Rather, it is about experiencing and living democracy in schools that are democratic; as Dewey believed, individuals “learn to understand themselves as democratic individuals by becoming members of a community in which the problems of communal life are resolved through collective deliberation and a shared concern for the common good” (Carr and Hartnett, 1996, p.63).
We would make two further points about our understanding of democracy. It is intimately related to justice and equality. It is harder for democracy to take root and flourish in unjust and unequal societies. Lawrence Kohlberg, the neglected pioneer of moral education, insisted that “education for justice requires making schools more just and encouraging students to take an active role in making schools more just...a complete approach to moral education means full student participation in a school in which justice is a living matter” (Kohlberg, 1971, p.82). Michael Sandel, in his 2009 BBC Reith lectures, stated the same relationship in more general terms:

[Democracy] is about much more than maximising GDP, or satisfying consumer preferences. It’s also about seeking distributive justice; promoting the health of democratic institutions; and cultivating the solidarity, and sense of community that democracy requires. Market-mimicking governance – at its best – can satisfy us as consumers. But it can do nothing to make us democratic citizens (2009, p.4).

The issue is about putting markets in their place, drawing a line between what is the market sphere and what is the public sphere and ensuring markets do not become so dominant they erode the public sphere and undermine democracy. From our perspective, education is clearly in the public sphere, with democracy at its heart. We agree with Carr and Hartnett when they write that “[a]ny vision of education that takes democracy seriously cannot but be at odds with educational reforms which espouse the language and values of market forces and treat education as a commodity to be purchased and consumed (1996, p.192).

Lastly, we must acknowledge that democracy is in a sickly state. Representative democracy – the electoral and procedural – is sclerotic and corrupted, increasingly in thrall to powerful vested interests, struggling to respond to the contemporary challenges of a complex and threatened world and to retain the engagement of citizens. Participatory democracy is eroded by consumerism, individualism and time poverty. Occupy and other social movements offer some hope that the democratic spirit can be renewed, yet they too struggle to develop broad programmes for radical change and convert them to doable politics and are, as in the case of Spain, easy prey to right-wing opportunism. Democracy, as Dewey said, needs to be reborn in each generation and education is its midwife; the need for renewal and for education’s active role in that process has never been more pressing.
3. Designing a radical democratic education

For full enactment, radical democratic education needs to be practiced through and in many institutions and settings. Democratically elected and accountable national and state governments need to espouse democracy, proclaiming it a fundamental value in education, practicing it in their approach to education, and supporting its practice in other institutions and settings. Democratically elected and accountable local bodies – whether local authorities or school boards – need to (re)assume public responsibility for education in their area, representing the responsibility of all citizens for the education of children, and like higher levels of government, proclaim and practice democracy in their approach to education and support its practice elsewhere. The city of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy provides a vivid example of the democratic ‘educative commune’ (Moss, 2011), both in its active support for democratic education in its network of municipal schools and in its strong public statement of responsibility and purpose:

Education is the right of all, of all children, and as such is a responsibility of the community. Education is an opportunity for the growth and emancipation of the individual and the collective; it is a resource for gaining knowledge and for learning to live together; it is a meeting place where freedom, democracy and solidarity are practiced and where the value of peace is promoted. Within the plurality of cultural, ideological, political, and religious conceptions, education lives by listening, dialogue, and participation; it is based on mutual respect, valuing the diversity of identities, competencies, and knowledge held by each individual and is therefore qualified as secular, open to exchange and cooperation (Regolamento Scuole e Nidi d’Infanzia del Comune di Reggio Emilia, 2009).

Elected local authorities can further their commitment to a democratic education by the creation of public spaces for the practice of a democratic politics of education, such as Richard Hatcher’s proposal for Local Education Forums: “a body open to all with an interest in education...to discuss and take positions on all key policy issues...and developing, perhaps in a two-year cycle, an Education Plan for the local system of schools and colleges”. Hatcher further proposes Neighbourhood Education Forums, at a very local level, which “could bring local concerns to bear on the schools and ideally become a vehicle for participative governance” (Hatcher forthcoming, 2012).

But at the heart of a radical democratic education is the school, in which we include institutions for young people below compulsory school age, of compulsory school age and
prior to higher education. In saying this, we recognise that some question the case for a continuing role for the school, given the growing potential for distanced and networked learning, suggesting “that the school itself should simply be dissolved into the learning landscape and replaced by personalized learning environments” (Facer, 2011, p.27). We also recognise, and share, concerns about the potential destructive power of the school through its ability to govern, discipline and normalise child and teacher alike. For us, however, the school has a vital role to play not only in education, but especially in a radical democratic education, agreeing with Keri Facer when she argues for continuing investment in the school as a physical space and a local organization, ...because I believe that it may be one of the most important institutions we have to help us build a democratic conversation about the future. A physical, local school where community members are encouraged to encounter each other and learn from each other is one of the last public spaces in which we can begin to build the intergenerational solidarity, respect for diversity and democratic capability needed to ensure fairness in the context of sociotechnical change. Moreover, the public educational institution may be the only resource we have to counter the inequalities and injustice of the informal learning landscape outside school... It is therefore the time both to defend the idea of a school as a public resource and to radically re-imagine how it might evolve if it is to equip communities to respond to and shape the socio-technical changes of the next few years (ibid., pp.28-29).

So schools retain our allegiance as a pivotal public institution, not in their often divisive and repressive unreconstructed form, but as sites of radical democratic education. Meaning what in practice? We identify and briefly elaborate ten key design features of a radical democratic school, in which democracy is enacted as participation, ‘a mode of associated living’ and a lived everyday experience, following Lawrence Kohlberg’s maxim that “the only way school can help graduating young people become persons who can make society a just community is to let them try experimentally to make the school themselves” (1980, p.35).

1  Proclaimed democratic vitality
A school for radical democratic education will wish to foreground its interdependent commitments to (a) education as the most important rationale for schooling, and (b) democracy as both end and means, the purpose and the practice, of education. The key point here is that education in and for deep or ‘high-energy’ democracy has to be not just the starting point, but what Elsa Wasserman, in her reflections on the work of Lawrence
Kohlberg and the Just Community School movement in the USA, calls the “central educational goal” (Wasserman, 1980, p.268) of the school for which we are arguing. There has to be a proclaimed, not just an intended, democratic vitality, albeit one that bears in mind the vicissitudes of context and circumstance.

What this actually means will, of course, be something that those working in the school will need and wish to exemplify and share with their internal and external communities. But the narratives and exchanges that develop will be energised by a declared commitment to democracy that calls for profound change in how we live and work now as a bridge to more just and more creative futures. Witness, for example, Alex Bloom, the great, radical pioneer London secondary school head teacher, and his stated intention to create on 1st October 1945 “(a) consciously democratic community...without regimentation, without corporal punishment, without competition" (Bloom, 1948, p.121).

2 Radical structures and spaces
Our next three indicators comprise complementary aspects of the interpersonal and structural integrity of democratic living. They demonstrate the unity of means and ends, not only in matters of organisational structure, but also in the relational dimensions of daily engagement, which underscore the importance of care, respect and creative encounter as the foundational dispositions of democracy and social justice.

Structurally the radical democratic school will be mindful of what might be called ‘positional restlessness’, that is to say, a libertarian and egalitarian insistence on the openness of opportunity, and the need to unsettle patterns and dispositions of presumption and to open up much wider and more generous vistas of possibility for all members of a school community. Such a school will pursue a range of organisational articulations of participatory democracy at the heart of which lies an insistence on a permanent and proper provisionality. At both adult and young person levels this will include a permanent unease with hierarchy and a strong desire to create transparent structures that encourage ways of working that transcend boundaries and invite new combinations and possibilities. We need to look again at power, purpose and possibility, too often deceptively embellished with mercurial fashions of involvement and empowerment, full of sound and fury, signifying little of worth and nothing that changes the underlying presumptions and intentions of their host societies.

On the one hand, this will entail revisiting the few examples we have within publicly funded systems of education in which principals have effectively renounced or profoundly rearticulated their pyramidal positions and developed flatter organisational structures or
more fluid conduits of power and structural forms that privilege communal responsibility and collective endeavour. Here, as elsewhere in the struggle for change, the importance of radical democratic traditions becomes apparent: in societies dominated by "the dictatorship of no alternative" (Unger, 2005a), the power of enacted, documented alternatives acquires an increasing rather than a decreasing significance. On the other hand, it will involve the continuing development of the small but growing corpus of literature that attends to these matters with genuinely emancipatory intent e.g. the recent work of scholars like John Smyth (Smyth 2006, 2009) and Philip Woods (Woods, 2005, 2011) on democratic leadership.

In addition to substantial engagement with past and present models of democratic leadership there will also be substantial emphasis on the spatiality of democracy, on interpersonal and architectural spaces that encourage a multiplicity of different forms of formal and informal engagement with a multiplicity of persons. These will include ‘subaltern spaces’ or spaces in which minority, marginalised or emergent groups can develop the confidence, capacity and dispositions that enable them to explore and name what is important to them and also gain the confidence and desire to engage with larger, different groups of people within and beyond the school community. Pre-eminent amongst these larger spaces is the General Meeting (see, e.g. Fielding 2010), the communal space within which the whole school community reflects on its shared life, achievements and aspirations. Here, young people and adults make meaning of their work together, returning tenaciously and regularly to the imperatives of purpose, not merely to the mechanics of accomplishment.

Lastly, the kinds of roles and relationships we see as central to a radical democratic project privilege organisational arrangements that enable encounters that transcend traditional role boundaries and develop more holistic, emergent forms of encounter. We thus argue either for small schools or for larger schools that are broken down into smaller interdependent units, variously termed sub-schools, mini-schools, or schools-within-schools.

3 Radical roles and images

Just as the structures and spaces within a common school practise a radical democratic education open up new possibilities, so too do the roles of those who work within them. But before considering some of these possibilities, it is necessary to remind ourselves that, whilst essential, roles tend to acquire a life of their own, exhibiting a propensity to imprison and diminish human capacities and capabilities in the interest of those in power. Thus, in developing our account of radical democratic education, and remembering our previous call for ‘positional restlessness’, we follow Roberto Unger in valorising the need for
a cultural-revolutionary attack on rigid roles...a practice of role-defiance and role jumbling ... a loosened sense of what it means to occupy a role...(that) helps to disrupt frozen connections among social stations, life experiences, and stereotyped forms of insight and sensibility (Unger, 2004, pp.563, 564).

In addition to renewed interest in democratic forms of the leadership role, which entail the re-imagining and re-articulation of what it means to be a principal, there will also be a commensurate range of alternative roles and practices amongst staff. The radical democratic school will encourage this kind of fluidity and exploration, not only amongst adults, but also between staff and young people. It will include, amongst other things, a delight and belief in radical collegiality (Fielding, 1999) and intergenerational reciprocity that reflects deep-seated faith in the encounter between adults and young people as a potential source of mutual learning, not just in an instrumental, technical sense, but eventually in a wider existential and more fully educational sense.

Some possible roles for young people are set out in a ‘Patterns of Partnership' typology, inspired in part by the pioneering work of Roger Hart (Hart 1992) and Harry Shier (Shier 2001) in the wider field of youth participation. Each suggests a qualitatively different way of young people and teachers working together. This six-fold pattern is thus a prompt to possibility grounded in the realities of different approaches to daily work, which often co-exist within institutions, and in which Mode 6 is an aspirational approach to living and learning together, with the other five modes as staging posts in journeys in and for democracy.

In mode 1, young people as data source, staff utilise information about the progress and well-being of young people. Here, there is a real teacher commitment to pay attention to the voices of young people speaking through the practical realities of work done and targets agreed. It acknowledges that for teaching and learning to improve there is a need to take more explicit account of relevant data about individual and group or class achievement.

In mode 2, young people as active respondents, staff invite dialogue and discussion to deepen learning / professional decisions. Staff move beyond the accumulation of passive data and, in order to deepen the learning of young people and enrich staff professional decisions, they feel a need to hear what young people have to say about their own experience in lessons or their active engagement in its development via, for example, assessment for learning approaches. Young people are discussants rather than recipients of current approaches and thereby contribute to the development of teaching and learning in their school.
In mode 3, *young people as co-enquirers*, staff take the lead role with high-profile, active support from young people. Here, we see an increase in the involvement of both young people and teachers and a greater degree of partnership than modes 1 and 2. Whilst the roles of young people and teachers are not equal, they are shifting strongly in an egalitarian direction. Young people move from being discussants to being co-enquirers into matters of agreed significance and importance. While teachers define the focus and boundaries of exploration, the commitment and agreement of young people is essential.

In mode 4, *young people as knowledge creators*, young people take the lead role with active staff support. This deepens and extends the egalitarian thrust of the co-enquiry approach. Partnership and dialogue remain the dominant ways of working, but now the voice of the young person comes to the fore in a leadership or initiating, not just a responsive, role. It is young people who identify the issues to be researched and young people who undertake the enquiry with the support of staff.

In mode 5, *young people as joint authors*, young people and staff decide on a joint course of action together. The joint enquiry model involves a genuinely shared, fully collaborative partnership between young people and staff. Leadership, planning and conduct of research and the subsequent commitment to responsive action are embraced as both a mutual responsibility and energising adventure.

Lastly, in mode 6, *intergenerational learning as participatory democracy*, the explicit commitment to participatory democracy extends the shared and collaborative partnership between young people and staff in ways which (a) emphasise a joint commitment to the common good, and (b) include occasions and opportunities for an equal sharing of power and responsibility.

Two final points. First, we recognise that ‘partnership’ can be and often is co-opted for neo-liberal purposes; we thus argue for the development of democratic fellowship as a presumptive nexus of values and intentions that gives very different readings and enacted realities to the calculus of consumption and acquisition that emerges from market driven approaches. Second, underpinning and indeed preceding roles is the social construction or image of the participants in the radical democratic school; radical roles emerge from how young people and adults are conceptualised. Thus 50 years of democratic experimentation in the municipal schools of Reggio Emilia is grounded in a political question – what is our
image of the child? – and the answer that has been collectively forged. As Loris Malaguzzi, the first head of Reggio’s schools, insisted:

One of the strong points [of our schools] has always been that of starting from a very open, explicit declaration of our image of the child, where image is understood as a strong and optimistic interpretation of the child. A child born with many resources and extraordinary potentials that have never ceased to amaze us, with an autonomous capacity for constructing thoughts, ideas, questions and attempts at answers.

4 Radical relationships
When teachers and young people begin to work in these new ways, suggested by the egalitarian mutuality of the more complex modes in the Patterns of Partnership typology, they are not just redrawing the boundaries of what is permissible and extending a sense of what is possible. They are also giving each other the desire and the strength to do so through their regard and care for each other. Just as the roles are more fluid and more diverse, so, within radical democratic education, the relationships between young people and between adults and young people are not only less bounded and more exploratory, but also more openly informed by the dispositions and dynamics of care.

Such relationships enable us to ‘re-see’ each other as persons rather than as role occupants, and in so doing nurture not only a new understanding, sense of possibility and felt respect between adults and young people, but also a joy in each other’s being and a greater sense of shared delight and responsibility. An ethics and enactment of care are also more often than not dialogic in both form and intention and thus profoundly affect developments like giving voice to young people. Arguably, a dialogic approach in this case – a pedagogy of listening - implies a five-fold, multifaceted engagement between adults and young people: firstly, a genuine openness towards each other, a reciprocity that is interested and attentive, rather than a cursory and incurious consultation; secondly, what we have elsewhere called a ‘permanent provisionality’, an understanding that we are not talking about a one-off event with little or no feedback or future engagement, but rather a pattern of continuing dialogue in which understandings and meanings are always open to new perspectives and interpretations and “where you lose absolutely the possibility of controlling the final result” (Rinaldi, 2006, p.184); thirdly, a willingness to be surprised, to welcome the unanticipated as a mark of the partnership’s potential to honour and deal with difference in ways that resist the silencing, homogenising tendencies of position and power; fourthly, a pervasive rather than a compartmentalised approach, in which all young people in the school have many opportunities during the day for the kinds of encounters we have mentioned
above; lastly, whilst a dialogic approach to listening to young people is, as much as any other, concerned about getting things done and tackling real issues of current concern, its concrete accomplishments are achieved within a wider, more holistic frame of reference. It is also about how we make meaning together, how we understand the significance of our current work and our future aspirations.

These five elements of a dialogic approach all connect with a number of assumptions about education, including education being a relational field in which care, respect for and knowledge of persons are centrally important. Their pervasive reciprocity also nudge us away from the individualistic preoccupations of personalisation and high performance schooling towards a person-centred approach that sees individual flourishing as intimately bound up with relations with others, not as a relational lubricant for a smoother running organisation; and towards a more communal orientation that sees democratic fellowship as both the means and the end of a broadly conceived, tenaciously intended radical education.

5 Personal and communal narrative

The notion of narrative is central to radical education in the democratic common school for at least two reasons. Firstly, it is important both personally and communally because it connects in a fundamental way with one of the core processes of education, namely with the making of meaning. Narrative learning is mindful of the fragility of human endeavour, the need for recognition and significance, not in any flashy or self-aggrandising sense, but rather in terms of the moral and educational legitimacy of one’s endeavours. It is precisely because narrative is about making meaning that the needs it expresses and the aspirations it voices lie at the heart of anything that can properly be called an educational undertaking.

Education is firstly and finally about how we learn to lead good lives together, lives that enable us individually and collectively to survive and flourish. Without some means of recreating a constant link to those profound matters of purpose education becomes impossible and we have to make do with the thin and dispiriting substitutes of competitive schooling. As one secondary school principal remarked to us recently, in the context of ever-increasing pressures to boost school performance, “personal histories are tremendously important – giving yourself permission to have conversations with yourself. Keeping a handle on the past and what is right”.

Within the radical democratic school there will be multiple spaces and opportunities for individuals, both young people and adults, to make meaning of their work, at a personal and a communal level. Indeed the two are connected. The anthropology of the self presumed by
The most radical traditions of education is communal rather than atomistic. The anthropology of an inclusive notion of community to which we are committed is one that honours difference and presumes the sanctity of the individual person. Moreover, these multiple spaces and opportunities will recognise and support narrative as meaning making, using the full range of ‘the hundred languages of childhood’ (Rinaldi, 2006).

The second reason narrative is important has to do with the necessary connection with the radical traditions of education within which the work of the democratic school is located. Not only does history have much to teach its contemporary inheritors in a cautionary sense, it also provides many examples of counter-hegemonic significance and power that remind us not only of what has been, but also that, in Terry Wrigley’s resonant phrase, ‘Another school is possible’ (2006). One of the most corrosive accomplishments of neo-liberalism, particularly within the field of education and schooling, is the near-abandonment of historical scholarship and sensibilities as significant voices in contemporary debate and teacher education. We cannot help but share E.P. Thompson’s disquiet about ‘the enormous condescension of posterity’ (1968: 13) and Russell Jacoby’s still pertinent judgement that our ‘society has lost its memory, and with it, its mind. The inability or refusal to think back takes its toll in the inability to think’ (Jacoby 1997, 3-4).

Notwithstanding these important cautionary caveats our resolve remains, in part because, as William Morris reminds us, we must remember

How men (sic) fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name (Morris, 1968 [1886/87]: 53)

6 Radical curriculum, radical pedagogy and enabling assessment

At the heart of radical education’s approach to the formal and informal curriculum must lie four imperatives. The first is a focus on the purposes of education, what John White and others would term an ‘aims-based’ rather than a ‘subjects-based’ curriculum. For us this means organising the curriculum around that which is required for a sustainable, flourishing and democratic way of life. For example, the manifesto produced by Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat (2005), a Catalan teachers organisation, in their 2005 manifesto For a New Public Education, argues that the curriculum must be organised “on the basis of that which is absolutely necessary in order for a person to exercise their citizenship”, that its content
“must be taught in a way that brings with it emancipation”, and for this very reason “it must not be presented as eternal and immutable, but as a construction of humanity in its process of emancipation, of construction of one’s own personality”. Developing their theme, they propose that “knowledge can be grouped into six major types:

1. Education for gestural, oral, visual, written communication, etc. so that one can enter into a peaceful relationship with the Other.
2. Education on the major cultural works that have marked the ascendance of humanity.
3. Scientific and technological education that allows one to understand the contemporary world.
4. Education in health, the environment, and sustainable development so that the world will last beyond our presence.
5. Education for being a citizen and for discovering the history of the emergence of democracy.
6. Education in creativity, imagination, curiosity, etc., which will allow everyone to find their place in the world.

The second imperative has to do with the necessity of equipping young people and adults with the desire and capacity to seriously and critically interrogate what is given and co-construct a knowledge that assists us in leading good and joyful lives together.

The third argues that whilst knowledge must transcend the local, it must, nonetheless, start with the cultures, concerns and hopes of the communities that schools serve. A curriculum for a democratic and community-oriented education should include substantial scope for local input and design, what the Royal Society of Arts in London has termed an ‘Area Based Curriculum’, which uses “the local area to illustrate curriculum content, and [uses] local stakeholders (including young people) to co-design the curriculum...supporting schools to partner with organisations or groups from the local area to design aspects of the curriculum utilising the local area as a resource” (Thomas, 2011, Forum p.298).

Lastly, a consequence of taking these first three desiderata seriously leads to a curriculum that emphasises connectedness: that is holistic in approach; organised around interconnected and interdisciplinary themes and project work, rather than separate subjects; and that encourages integrated forms of enquiry with young people and staff working in small communities of enquiry. A curriculum that contests “a form of knowledge which divides,
categorises, separates, and struggles to make connections (or maybe does not want to) between different disciplines” (Vecchi, 2004, p.18).

A radical curriculum in a radical democratic education needs a radical pedagogy, produced from answers to political questions about ontology – what is our image of the child? - and epistemology - what do we mean by knowledge and learning? Today’s ‘neoliberal’ schooling is based on two key assumptions:

The first is a representational view of knowledge, understanding knowledge to be an objective, stable and accurate representation of a pre-existing reality, a literal reproduction. The second is that because knowledge is representative of a real and relatively stable world, it can be transferred exactly, for example from one mind (the teacher) to another (the pupil). This assumption – ‘that communication is unambiguous and unmediated and results in unproblematic transference with full conservation of intent’ (Roy, 2004, p. 297) – inscribes the prevailing instrumentalist and techno-rational approach to education (Fielding and Moss, 2011, p.25).

Deborah Osberg and Gert Biesta propose a ‘pedagogy of invention’ as an alternative to this transmission model of pedagogy, an alternative more fitted to a democratic education, related to the ‘notion of emergence’, where knowledge is

*the creation of new properties...a process whereby properties that have never existed before and, more importantly, are inconceivable from what has come before, are created or somehow come into being for the first time...We believe that a complexity inspired epistemology suggests a ‘pedagogy of invention’ (we borrow this phrase from Ulmer, 1985) for it brings into view the idea that knowledge does not bring us closer to what is already present but, rather, moves us into a new reality, which is incalculable from what came before. Because knowledge enables us to transcend what came before, this means it allows us to penetrate deeper into that which does not seem possible from the perspective of the present. Knowledge, in other words, is not conservative, but radically inventionalist (Biesta and Osberg, 2007, pp. 33, 46–47: original emphases).

A similar approach to learning pervades the municipal schools of Reggio Emilia, valuing new thinking, new ideas and new perspectives and desirous of the wonder and amazement of the unintended outcome. Vea Vecchi (2010) argues that it is important to society
that schools and we as teachers are clearly aware how much space we leave children for original thinking, without rushing to restrict it with predetermined schemes that define what is correct according to a school culture. How much do we support children to have ideas different from those of other people and how do we accustom them to arguing and discussing their ideas with their classmates? (p.138).

Schools, she adds, need to consciously take a position on “which knowledge they intend to promote”: in short, there are alternatives, and choices of a political and ethical nature must be made between them. Contesting an idea of teaching that chooses to “transmit circumscribed ‘truths’ in various ‘disciplines’”, her choice is clear: “to stand by children’s sides together constructing contexts in which they can explore their own ideas and hypotheses individually or in groups and discuss them with friends or teachers” (ibid., p.28). She and her fellow educators work with what they term a ‘pedagogy of listening and relationships’, based on “understanding of problems through experiment, trial, error and testing”, where the learner develops theories, shares them with others, redevelops them in a pedagogy that emphasises the importance of relationships, listening (“one of the foundations of our work is the careful, respectful, tender ‘listening’ with solidarity to children’s strategies and ways of thinking”) and avoiding predetermined results.

When radical approaches to the curriculum and pedagogy have worked well they have invariably been enabled by forms of assessment at both local and national levels that have had the flexibility to respond to the particularities of context and significant professional involvement of teachers in the assessment, moderation and examination process. At classroom level they have incorporated high levels of peer and teacher involvement through assessment-for-learning approaches and additional community and family involvement through public, portfolio-based presentations. Once again, the compulsory education sector might have much to learn from the experience of early childhood education, in particular the latter’s use of ‘pedagogical documentation’ as a participatory process of evaluation that keeps open the issue of outcome rather than confining evaluation to the standardised and predefined (Rinaldi, 2006).

7 **Insistent affirmation of possibility**

Energised both by rage against “the abandonment of ordinary humanity to perpetual belittlement” (Unger, 2005a, p.46) and by profound belief in “the powers of ordinary men and women” (ibid., p.63) to create new and better ways of being in the world, an insistent affirmation of possibility requires us to keep options open, to counter the confinement of customary or casual expectation. This means removing, for example, the corrosive practices
of tracking or setting (Boaler, 2005, 2008) and exposing the false presumptions of this kind of labeling (see Hart et al., 2004). In their stead we celebrate views of human flourishing that see creativity and excellence as emulative rather than competitive in both genesis and accomplishment; that see curiosity and playfulness as more compelling initiators and more satisfying and productive enablers than the interminable treadmill of stickers, stars and prizes. In the words of Alex Bloom, “objective rewards and punishments are false stimuli, for, unless the right thing is done for the right reason one lives unethically ... Similarly, objective competition is wrong; it is not only unethical but it tends to destroy a communal spirit.” Furthermore, in eradicating it, “because there are neither carrots nor goads, there will be no donkeys, for when children are treated as we would have them be, they tend to reach out accordingly” (Bloom, 1949, p.171).

In sum, commitment to an insistent affirmation of possibility denies the legitimacy of ability grouping, promotes emulation rather than competition, and prefers intrinsic motivation and communal recognition to the paraphernalia of marks and prizes. It espouses and enacts a view of the world in general, and the educational world in particular, that is inclusive, enabling and ennobling of all for the benefit of all.

8 Engaging the local
A radical democratic school will seek to develop a vibrant reciprocity with its local community and to be an agent of democratic flourishing within that wider context. It will be a place where a common democratic identity is formed and constantly validated and expressed, both amongst members of the school community itself but also amongst other members of the local community that the school serves. It will be

a place for everyone, a meeting place in the physical and also the social, cultural and political sense of the word. A forum or site for meeting and relating, where children and adults meet and commit to something, where they can dialogue, listen, and discuss in order to share meanings: it is a place of infinite cultural, linguistic, social, aesthetic, ethical, political and economic possibilities. A place of ethical and political praxis, a space for democratic learning. A place for research and creativity, coexistence and pleasure, critical thought and emancipation (Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat, 2005, p. 10)

This means the common school operating as a ‘multi-purpose’ institution – a place of ‘infinite possibilities’ - providing education-in-its-broadest-sense and acting as a social and democratic resource to its local community, responding to the needs, the ideas, and the
desire to experiment of that community. We are much taken by the persuasive, imaginative work of engaged scholars like Keri Facer who argue strongly that “a physical local school where community members are encouraged to encounter and learn from each other (is) one of the last public spaces in which we can build intergenerational solidarity, respect for diversity and democratic capability” (Facer, 2011, p.28). Her argument, and ours, is for the role of schools as a powerful local democratic resource and public space for creating conversations that contest visions of future and work together for viable futures, a role strengthened, not undermined, by the potential of new technologies.

The development of a rich online education landscape, the increasing visibility and accessibility of folk educators, and the changing scripts for public services have the potential to open up new relationships between schools and their communities. These new relationships would be premised upon a search to understand the roles that parents, young people, community and cultural organizations and online educators might play as co-educators (ibid., p.25, original emphasis).

9 Accountability as shared responsibility
A radical democratic education must be accountable, but to whom and how? Neither earlier forms of professional accountability nor today’s neo-liberal corporate forms will do, for both are based on sub-contracting, to professionals or to managers and technicians, allowing citizens to slough off their responsibility for education. Located within participatory traditions of democracy, our understanding of accountability underscores the link between educational renewal and public responsibility; we cannot know what we are responsible for in anything other than a thin, box-ticking sense unless we return to shared educational purposes and from there co-author an account of core beliefs and the kinds of practices we believe will exemplify their realisation in an appropriately demanding and life-affirming way.

‘High energy’ notions of democratic accountability are better conceived and enacted as forms of ‘shared responsibility’, which will enable “different accounts of public purpose and practice to be deliberated in a democratic public sphere: constituted to include difference, enable participation, voice and dissent, through to collective judgement and decision” (Ransom, 2003). Because education is a shared concern and responsibility, for all citizens, then everyone potentially can and should be engaged in deliberation on ‘different accounts’ of public education, through dialogue, contestation, reflection and interpretation, taking responsibility for the process and the meanings arrived at. Understood in this democratic way, accountability is morally and politically situated, not merely technically and procedurally delivered (Fielding, 2001). It makes a claim on our ethical and civic responsibilities, which
cannot be adequately understood or provided for by a delegated mandate which provides too convenient an absolution.

One important corollary of the democratic school is, thus, the requirement that we develop new forms of accountability better suited to a more engaged understanding of democratic living. We can glimpse some of the possibilities. Pedagogical documentation, as practised in early childhood education in Reggio Emilia (and many other places), gives “the possibility to discuss and dialogue ‘everything with everyone’” (Hoyuelos, 2004, p.7), by making learning and learning processes visible and subject to deliberation, provides one example of how shared responsibility is not only a form of democratic accountability, but also a means of collective learning. Young people can and should be involved in such processes, as well as adults – educators, parents, politicians, all citizens.

Another example of such participatory practice is Bishops Park College, an 11-16 school in England where a Research Forum was developed towards the end of its radical phase, comprising a core group of young people, parents, governors, school staff and a small university research and development team, from which emerged a framework of aspirations and practices that formed the basis of the College’s accountability framework (Fielding et al., 2006). While more generally, Bent Flyvbgerg’s ‘phronetic model of social science’ offers further insight into the possible meaning of democratic accountability, premised on the Aristotelian maxim that social issues are best decided by means of the public sphere, not by science. Though imperfect, no better device than public deliberation following the rules of constitutional democracy has been arrived at for settling social issues...The phronetic model sees social scientists and social science professionals as analysts who produce food for thought for the ongoing process of public deliberation, participation, and decision making (2006, p.39).

Democratic accountability in education is not some form of balance sheet presented to investors. It is the exercise of mutual responsibility – of schools to their citizens, and of citizens to their school – which must involve public participation, deliberation and decision making, on the basis of various forms of documentation supplied by various documenters, and conducted in the context of democratic answers to political questions.

10. The common school
This final feature is, in many ways, a summation of much that has gone before. It is a design for the basic structure of a school that embodies and enables a radical democratic education
and is compatible with, even conducive to, the preceding features. This 'common' school contests the fragmenting, competitive and selective drive of neoliberal education, with its proliferation of selective schools - academies, charter schools, faith schools – intended only to serve the autonomous consumer. It is, instead, a public space for all citizens living in its local catchment area, children, young people and adults, without admission criteria except residence and without specialisms that enforce selective attendance - a truly 'comprehensive school'. It is age integrated (e.g. 0-11; 1-16; 6-16) and, because open to all, multi-generational; human scale in size, either one small school or small schools-within-schools; a place of depth and connectedness over width of coverage – interdisciplinary, inquiry-based, experiential; project based, both in its pedagogical approach and in its relationship with its community; and based on team working, involving educators and other workers with diverse perspectives and interests.

Such common schools have their own governing board and work in close relationship with the community they serve. But they are not autonomous, competing entities. They collaborate with other schools within networks of schools within the area of their democratically elected local authority. They participate in local educational forums. Although some are provided as co-operatives or by non-profit organisations, others are provided by the local authority itself – as municipal schools – since it is not possible for democratically elected and accountable bodies to be responsible for public education without being directly involved in its practice. All schools, whoever provides them, are in a relationship of democratic accountability with that authority, as well as with the community they serve. All schools contribute to creating and implementing a local educational project: “a shared and democratic exploration of the meaning and practice of education and the potential of the school...[providing] an educational context and ethos, as well as a forum for exchange, confrontation, dialogue and learning between schools” (Fielding and Moss, 2011, p.125). And all benefit from an infrastructure provided by the local authority for supporting the implementation and evaluation of the local educational project, including teams of pedagogistas, experienced educators each working with one or two schools, offering their staff opportunities for exchange, reflection and discussion, introducing them to new thinking and practices, and facilitating contact between local authority, local communities and schools.
4. Some concluding thoughts on democratic experimentalism, prefigurative practice and sustainability

Erik Olin Wright proposes three criteria to be applied to any consideration of institutional alternatives: desirability, viability and achievability. Following our brief, we have focused in this essay on viability, “a scientifically grounded conception of viable alternative institutions”. But we want to end by introducing three further concepts into the conversation: democratic experimentalism, prefigurative practice and sustainability. We see these as important parts of the process of transformative change that many of us are committed to; but also as being complementary to Wright’s three criteria and his view of transformational change as a cumulative, step-by-step process involving “utopian ideals that are grounded in the real potentials of humanity, utopian destinations that have accessible waystations, utopian designs of institutions that can inform our practical tasks of navigating a world of imperfect conditions for social change”.

**Democratic experimentalism**

The Brazilian social theorist Roberto Unger has coined the term ‘democratic experimentalism’ to capture an important means for bringing about transformative institutional change:

> The provision of public services must be an innovative collective practice, moving forward the qualitative provision of the services themselves. That can no longer happen in our current understanding of efficiency and production by the mechanical transmission of innovation from the top. It can only happen through the organisation of a collective experimental practice from below...Democracy is not just one more terrain for the institutional innovation that I advocate. It is the most important terrain (Unger, 2005b, pp.179, 182).

He views democratic experimentalism as an essential element of what he terms ‘high energy democracy’, which is about releasing the creative powers of ordinary people by eradicating the distortions and subjugations of class, gender, hierarchy and the myopic presumptions of prescribed role. For Unger, like Dewey, the essential doctrine of democracy is “faith in the constructive powers of ordinary men and women” (ibid., p.63) and “recognition of the genius of ordinary men and women” (Unger, 2004, p.lxxii). High energy democracy encourages a high level of organised civic engagement and “seeks to strengthen our experimental capacities – our ability to try out alternative arrangements among ourselves”; and this assumes, finds and nourishes “greatness in ordinary humanity” (ibid.).
Unger insists that democratic experimentalism is more than just *ad hoc* local projects that occasionally and by their own exertions break free from the constraints of orthodoxy, examples of which are always around us. He envisages the possibility of a state that actively encourages experimentation as part of a commitment to high energy democracy, in short an emancipatory state at ease with diversity. The state can act in various ways to achieve this end, including “producing new social agents” that can create innovative services; monitoring and helping “to propagate the most successful practices, accelerating the process of experimental winnowing out of what does not work”; and last, and perhaps most surprising in the current climate, by providing services directly but only “those services which are too innovative, too difficult or to unrewarded by the market to be provided directly” (Unger, 2005b, p.179) – government itself as a social agent of experimentation.

Such democratic experimentation, it seems to us, contributes to Wright’s criterion of viability, providing “*empirical studies of cases*, both historical and contemporary, where at least some aspects of (our) proposal have been tried” and so helping to develop “*systemic theoretical models* of how particular social structures and institutions would work”. But such experimentation can also impel the process of transformative change in another way, by offering “small-scale, fragmentary versions of future society...kinds of experimental anticipations”. As such, democratic experimentation has much in common with our second concept, *prefigurative practice*.

*Prefigurative practice*

One of the key texts of the New Left was a paper on prefigurative practice by the Gramscian scholar, Carl Boggs. His account describes it as “the embodiment within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision making, culture and human experience that are the ultimate goal” (Boggs, 1977/78, p.100). Similar kinds of arguments were also being made and lived out in internal socialist struggles within the ascendant feminist movement. Shelia Rowbotham insisted that the prefigurative practices of the women’s movement recognise the importance of “making something which might become the means to making something more” (ibid., 140). In arguing that “(w)e need to make the creation of prefigurative forms an explicit part of our movement against capitalism” (ibid., 147), she was not arguing for a utopian project that would bring everyone to their knees, but rather that “some changes have to start now else there is no beginning for us”. We need to “release the imagination of what could be. The effort to go beyond what we know now has to be part of our experience of what we might know” (ibid.).
This insistence that we “release the imagination of what could be”; and this anticipation of future modes of being through processes and relations, not just structures, that exemplify and embody the viability and desirability of radical alternatives – these are some of the most important contributions of progressive traditions of public education to the furtherance of democracy. Thus, Roger Dale argued that:

[R]ather than waiting until all the necessary social engineering has been done, and the planned widespread social change brought about, this approach to social change suggests that education through its processes, the experiences it offers, and the expectations it makes, should prefigure, in microcosm, the more equal, just and fulfilling society that the originations of comprehensivism aimed to bring about. *Schools should not merely reflect the world of which they are a part, but be critical of it, and show in their own processes that its shortcomings are not inevitable, but can be changed.* They aim to show that society can be characterized by communal as well as individual values, that all people merit equal treatment and equal dignity, that academic ability is not the only measure of a person, that racism and sexism are neither inevitable nor acceptable (Dale, 1988, p.17, emphasis added).

Returning to this theme recently, Keri Facer has written of the ‘future-building schools’ as “a school that recognizes its role as a prefigurative space for building socio-technical futures. In other words, it sees itself as a place in which young people, teachers and the wider community can come together to understand how to live well and wisely with our emergent technological capabilities” (2011, p.127; emphasis added).

The concept of prefigurative practice can too easily be laid claim to, letting in the merely different rather than the genuinely transformative. In our book, therefore, we have proposed criteria with which to develop and evaluate a prefigurative practice that strives to enact a new way of being in the world. These criteria cluster around three themes, the first of which is praxis:

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<th>1 Profound change</th>
<th>5 Transgressive holism</th>
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<td>2 Education and radical social change</td>
<td>6 Transformed community</td>
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<td>3 Positional restlessness</td>
<td>7 Celebrating and contesting history</td>
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<td>4 Permanent provisionality</td>
<td>8 The persistent pull of personalism</td>
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These insist, firstly, that the kinds of change with which we are concerned are profoundly challenging of the status quo, not palliative responses to whatever crisis happens to be pre-occupying dominant regimes of truth. Secondly, we argue for the necessity of education’s involvement in the processes of radical social change. Thirdly, within such processes the practices that characterise their daily realities need to exemplify a commitment both to an abiding suspicion of hierarchy and, fourthly, to a Promethean embrace of provisionality that permanently strives for a fuller realisation of a more just, creative and human fulfilling future.

That holistic emphasis is underscored by the fifth of our criteria, which argues that the role jumbling and expansive sense of possibility that energise the daily dynamic of prefigurative work is enhanced, not only by a resistance to pigeon-holing or circumscribing our work, but by an enacted commitment to a lived, expansive unity of being. If this holistic way of working is to be sustained and sustaining it also needs an overarching form of public space that draws on and encourages a range of subaltern spaces within which individuals and groups can develop multiple identities and practices. Our sixth criterion thus argues for the necessity of transformed and transformative practices of community that resist the totalising imperatives of collectivism and the atomising fragmentation of the market. If we are to develop our practice in these ways, our seventh criterion of prefigurative practice insists on the need to break free from the ahistorical presumptions of neo-liberalism’s self-proclaimed triumph and choose alternative histories which celebrate and contest a quite different view of human flourishing. At the heart of that contested history must lie an unswerving commitment to our eighth criteria, which we call the persistent pull of personalism: not just to Unger’s ‘specialness of ordinary men and women’ to which we have referred before, but also to resisting their betrayal and belittlement by so many regimes and ways of life.

Our second theme, strategy, underscores the importance of prefigurative practice addressing issues of social and political change at a strategic level.

| 9 Radical incrementalism | 10 Strategic engagement |

Contrary to much of the socialist and Marxist traditions, our ninth criterion argues for the possibility of a deep break with the hegemonic dominance of capitalism through anticipatory enactments of fundamentally different ways of being in the world. The claims, not only of prefigurative practice but also of democratic experimentalism, to radical credentials, rest on their cumulative and transgressive persistence, on their achievement of changed
understandings of “interests, ideas and identities” (Unger, 1998, p.19), and ultimately on their contribution to the possibility of ‘non-reformist reforms’.

It is important to recognise that the ambitions of radical incrementalism operate as much at a horizontal as a vertical level, “to increase popular participation and bring people together in problem-solving deliberations” (Wright, 2007, p.38). This catalytic power goes beyond the generation of transgressional energy and its cumulative incorporation in radical incremental change. It thus underscores the importance of our tenth criterion ‘which has to do with the necessity for strategic circumspection.

Our third theme attends to matters of **motivational engagement**, which provide the necessary bridge from macro-ideals to the meso-realities of the daily contexts of enactment.

| 11 Institutional transformation | 12 Narrative engagement |

In order to fulfil its emancipatory potential, prefigurative practice must provide “an anticipatory image of broader transformations” (Unger, 2004, p.412). It must, in Erik Wright’s terms, be viable and, above all, achievable. Transformative alternatives must thus illustrate, albeit in small, ongoing ways, our eleventh criterion, i.e. the grounded possibility of doing things significantly differently. Insofar as they do this they are likely to have pride of place in any radical strategy because they have the power of presence, the irrefutability of contemporary reality, that gives the lie to the familiar fabrications of ‘there is no alternative’.

Our last criterion, narrative engagement, picks up on the psychological necessity of not merely describing an alternative set of practices, but doing so in a way that is emotionally and intellectually compelling, in a way which excites our narrative sensibilities.

**Sustainability**

If democratic experimentalism and prefigurative practice contribute to the process of transformative change, our third concept might be considered post-transformative. After desirability, viability and achievability, sustainability confronts the chastening history of much radical education, so many examples of which fail to last the course, collapsing after a few years. In what might be termed the radical democratic camp, there are a few exceptions, most notably the network of municipal schools for young children in Reggio Emilia in Italy, whose democratic experimentation has survived for
nearly 50 years. In what might be termed the radical neoliberal camp, the experiment in marketisation has been running and indeed increasingly mainstreamed since the 1980s.

What we can learn from both examples is the importance of regional, national and global solidarities. Radical neoliberal reforms have been sustained and accelerated by the many academic, business and political connections that thread nations and international organisations, mutually reinforcing action and building belief and morale. Education in and for a radical democracy must learn from such experience, as well as from the lessons of its own histories, and the failure to connect and ally on a broad scale as a source of sustenance and inspiration. Regional, national and global solidarities need to be made real and telling by building reciprocal ideological, material and interpersonal support through values-driven networks and alliances, which draw on and contribute to the dynamic of radical social movements. In order to sustain and extend radical democratic approaches to education in, at least initially, a largely unsympathetic or uncomprehending climate, the importance not just of networks but of particular kinds of networks becomes apparent. The support provided by emancipatory alliances are of special importance because they offer a values-driven solidarity and a commonality of orientation so essential to those who work against the grain. The Coalition of Essential Schools in the USA and Human Scale Education in England provide two such examples.

But such solidarities are just one building block in a larger process of sustainability. What we need to construct, both from theoretical models and case studies, is a better understanding not only of how transformative change can be set in motion, but of how to create the capacity to continue to experiment and to future build. How can movements and experiments become sustainable institutions, without becoming static and reproductive? How can a dynamic democratic politics and provision of education not only be achieved but sustained, deliberating political questions and exercising participatory evaluation? How can citizen participation in the politics and the practice of education, with all its attendant demands, be nurtured and sustained?
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(12,449 words including references)
The Idea of Freedom in Radical and Deliberative Models of Democracy

Wojciech Ufel
wojtek.ufel@gmail.com
University of Wroclaw, Poland

Abstract

Basing on the idea of freedom brought by I. Berlin we can derive to classical models of democracy: liberal and republican. Reflection on postmodern theories of democracy – radically plural and deliberative – points that they do not strongly differ from the traditional ones, but rather give them new challenges. Radical democracy of Ch. Mouffe and E. Laclau praising pluralism and negative freedom is a deconstruction of a liberal model, while deliberative project of J. Habermas, praising community and negative freedom, remains in a republican tradition. In the end of the article the author also presents the understanding of the educative role of society and tradition in both classical and postmodern models of democracy.

Key words: deliberative democracy, radical democracy, freedom, Habermas, Mouffe, pluralism, deliberation, postmodernism.

In the second half of the twentieth century, numerous developments had a profound influence on political theory. The rise of new social movements, collapsing of the Soviet Bloc, accelerating globalization, arising global problems, development of mass media and new forms of mass communication etc. put new challenges in front of modern societies. What is more, major changes appeared in the social sciences as well: growing influence of post-structuralism and the postmodernism approach; devaluation of orthodox Marxism; evolution of critical theory; and the domination of libertarian and neo-liberal political, social and economic theories. It is in those conditions, when as a result of growing awareness of problems that contemporary political systems face, new propositions for democratic models arise. In this article I want to focus on two, perhaps most commented and influential conceptions: the radical democracy model proposed and developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe; and the deliberative democracy project outlined by Jürgen Habermas.

While exploring these two, post modern approaches to democracy, I will focus on how the idea of freedom is developed in the theories. To reach my goal, I will use the notions of “positive” and “negative” freedom (liberty) introduced by Isaiah Berlin. I will also explore how the understanding of freedom in post modern concepts of democracy can be compared to the understanding of it in “modern” or “classical” approaches, namely in the liberal and republican models. I stay aware
of the fact, that making the latter distinction is a simplification, but following J. Habermas (Habermas 1996b), I find it particularly useful in this analysis.

**POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FREEDOM IN CLASSICAL MODELS OF DEMOCRACY**

I. Berlin in his essay *Two Concepts of Liberty* proposed what is possibly the most influential and discussed distinction among different types of freedom (or liberty, as he uses both notions interchangeably). While discussing “negative” freedom, he writes: “by being free in this sense I mean not being interfered with by others” (Berlin 1969a, p. 123). This type of liberty becomes the centre of his political theory. I. Berlin is aware, that there have to be some restrictions: “we cannot remain absolutely free, and must give up some of our liberty to preserve the rest” (Berlin 1969a, p. 126) but the restrictions cannot be taken too far and the catalogue of basic freedoms: of conscience; speech; vote etc. must be guaranteed. An individual, above all, must have a possibility to reach its own goals. “All coercion is, in so far as it frustrates human desires, bad as such” (Berlin 1969a, p. 128).

As an opposite, I. Berlin “contrasts the »positive« notion of »self-mastery« motivated by a desire of people to conceive of and act on their own goals” (Cunningham 2002, p. 36). In this case one is not treated as “free from” (the influence of others), but is “free to” (self-master herself). When considered as an attribute of an individual, both notions can be understood as two dimensions of the same thing: a person, unbounded from an influence of others, makes a decision and acts upon himself. But the difference, in fact, became significant, when eventually those two notions “historically developed in divergent directions not always by logically reputable steps, until, in the end, they came into direct conflict with each other” (Berlin 1969a, p. 132). The problem appears when the idea of “positive” freedom is being implemented into politics and, instead of an individual, appeals to the whole society.

As a liberal philosopher, I. Berlin is especially aware of authoritarian and totalitarian power, and he claims that any government ruling in the name of “positive” liberty is a first step towards those dangerous and undesirable forms of political system. This is because “positive” freedom – when the common goals are ascribed to the society – becomes an excuse for coercion. Two assumptions combined, “rational self-direction... [and] that the ends of all rational beings must of necessity fit into a single universal” (Berlin 1969a, p. 154), open the door for the rule of experts ready to force an individual to pursue a common goal, thus decreasing an amount of “negative” freedom.

On those two concepts of liberty it is possible to draw the distinction between two normative, “classic” models of democracy, liberal and republican (sometimes referred to as “civic republicanism”). “According to the liberal view, the citizen’s status is determined primarily according to negative rights they have vis-à-vis the state and other citizens’ (Habermas 1996b, p. 22). The liberal model of democracy is derived from the modern age philosophers such as T. Hobbes and J. Locke. Throughout the ages of development of political thought the liberal concept has
taken many shapes and many issues have been discussed in a philosophical and political discourse. However, such features as: sovereignty; impersonal state powers; representative government; centrality of institutionalism to guarantee equality before the law and basic freedoms; separation of powers; separation of state from civil society; and competing power and interest groups has always been the core of this model (Held 2006, p. 78). With no doubt one can state, that the “negative” approach to liberty is the one more stressed than the “positive” one. However, what is also emphasized by I. Berlin, “it is sometimes necessary to constrain some freedoms, as when confronting »paradox of tolerance«… and perhaps the norms implicated in positive-libertarian conception could be appealed for guidelines” (Cunningham 2002, p. 38-39). But, as Frank Cunningham writes, “this is as far as one can go in the way of fitting conceptions of positive liberty into a liberal democratic theoretical framework and that they find a more comfortable home in theories of participatory democracy... or civic republicanism” (Cunningham 2002, p. 39). Thus, examination of “positive” freedom brings us closer to the republican model of democracy.

Republicanism as a model of democracy has a long tradition, from Aristotle and Athens, Cicero and Rome, through Niccolo Machiavelli and Jean Jacques Rousseau in modern times, to Hannah Arendt and Michael Sandel in contemporary political theory. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to further examine the development of this idea. Nevertheless, while writing about the republican model of democracy, I will refer to the main ideas of the previously mentioned thinkers, or to what is today developed in theories of communitarianism and civic republicanism. Common for this model are terms of “mixed government... the rule of law, and above all public-spirited citizenship” (Dryzek, Dunleavy 2009, p. 214). In case of this paper, it is important to stress what is named by David Held as the principles of justification in republicanism: “political participation is an essential condition of personal liberty; if citizens do not rule themselves, they will be dominated by others” (Held 2006, p. 44); and that “citizens must enjoy political and economic equality in order that nobody can be master of another and all can enjoy equal freedom and development in the process of self-determination for the common good” (Held 2006, p. 48).

The republican model of democracy assumes that citizens can create a community driven by a common conception of good. The goals of the society are agreed in a deliberative process with ethical consequences. For J. Habermas, politics in this point of view is “conceived as the reflective form of substantial political life” (Habermas 1996b, p. 21). Such a created ethical community is one, in which “political rights – preeminently rights of political participation and communication – are positive liberties” (Habermas 1996b, p. 22). Thus one can admit that the republican model of democracy fulfills the two basic assumptions that I. Berlin derives from the development of the idea of “positive” freedom: rational self-direction and belief in universal goals.

42 For more information on positive-libertarian conception see Libertarianism Defended, (Machan 2006).
43 For more see (Held 2006, p. 29-55).
William Rehg gives a good summary for this distinction between liberal and republican point of view according to the conception of “negative” and “positive” liberty: “republican views tend to ground the legitimacy of laws and policies in notions of »popular sovereignty«, whereas liberal views tend to define legitimate government in relation to the protection of individual liberty, often specified in terms of human rights” (Rehg 1996, p. xxv).

**Freedom in post modern models of democracy**

Post modern theories of democracy appear on a critique of other, modern theories. Concerning them as insufficient, they point out their weaknesses and mistakes. However, new theories cannot totally differ from the one they criticize, thus I want to compare the post modern models with those two, already described to trace continuities and changes that occurred in political theory.

The project of “radical democracy”, or “radical and plural democracy”, is brought by Ch. Mouffe in her book together with E. Laclau Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, published in 1985, and then broadly commented and reformed in her numerous later writings and articles. I would like to introduce the basic concepts of this theory (Laclau, Mouffe 2001; Mouffe 1993; Mouffe 1996)

In central place in this theory is the non-essential approach to the identity, which emerged from their critique of post-Marxism. In short, E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe summarize that “the fall of this last redoubt of class reductionism, insofar as the very unity and homogeneity of class subject has split into a set of precariously integrated positions which, once the thesis of the neutral character of the productive forces is abandoned, cannot be referred to any necessary point of future unification” (Laclau, Mouffe 2001, p. 85). This opens the way to the total deconstruction of class-based identity and, in its place, implementation of a discursively constructed identities unifying particular political subjects to the post-Marxist theory. As Ch. Mouffe writes, “there is no identity that is self-present to itself and not constructed as difference” (Mouffe 1993, p. 141).

The next step in understanding E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe’s project is through the introduction of their understanding of social relations (and thus also, in a way, of what is political) in radical democracy. Those relations are based on an antagonism – that is on a hegemonic influence of the Others, which prevents one for being fully himself. The category and its social role is clarified by Anne Marie Smith, though in very radical words: “it is only when an exploited individual begins to live her relation with capital as an antagonistic relation – that is, as a relation that is denying her identity, as something that is blocking herself from realizing what she regards as her true potential and stopping her society from becoming an ideal social order – that she is transformed into a worker who is ready to engage in subversive collective resistance” (Smith 1998, p. 67).

In her later writings Ch. Mouffe introduced a new notion in exchange for “antagonism”: “agonism”, which occurs between “adversaries”, “friendly enemies”, that is “persons who are friends because they share a common symbolic space but also enemies because they want to organize this common symbolic space
in a different way” (Mouffe 2000, p. 13). As antagonism now becomes the relation between enemies, its explosion can “tear up the very basis of civility” (Mouffe 2000, p. 104). The agonistic relation becomes the centre of the radical democracy project only combined with pluralistic relations among the people. However pluralism should not be understood here in its broadest definition, since “condition of possibility of pluralist democracy is at the same time the condition of impossibility of its perfect implementation” (Mouffe 2000, p. 16). It would put us in a situation, in which the pluralism would have to be understood outside the sphere of political (without antagonistic/agonistic meaning). Total pluralism perishes during the discursive construction of group identities.

From this place we can ask the question about the idea of freedom in the conception of Ch. Mouffe. As she is most of the time critical towards liberalism, she writes that pluralism itself is derived from liberal ideas: “pluralism, understood as the principle that individuals should have the possibility to organize their lives as they wish, to choose their own ends, and to realize them as they think best, is the greatest contribution of liberalism to modern society” (Mouffe 1996, p. 104). However, those conditions, truly equal to each other, can be achieved only through radically pluralistic politics, with no (discursively created) identities suppressed in the society: “the appeal to human rights enables an »agonistic« politics within the democratic polity by bringing into view the contingency of that founding distinction and hence the possibility that it might be drawn otherwise” (Schaap 2009, p. 59). In a similar way the conception of Ch. Mouffe is summarized by F. Cunningham: “The task... is to provide conditions that will reconstruct the identities of those in conflict in such a way that they are not so threatened by one another that they get locked into antagonistic relations unconstrained by adherence to liberal and democratic values” (Cunningham 2002, p. 193).

At this point I would like to cite what I. Berlin wrote about pluralism: “with the measure of »negative« liberty that it entails, [pluralism] seems to me a truer and more humane ideal than the goals of those who seek in the great, disciplined, authoritarian structures the ideal of »positive« self-mastery” (Berlin 1969a, p. 171). Hence, considering Ch. Mouffe’s priority given to pluralism and commitment to the possibility of organising one’s goal as he wishes, the ideal of freedom she is referring to is certainly a “negative” liberty.

The next model I am going to examine in this paper is a deliberative model of democracy. The project of deliberative democracy is developed by many contemporary political thinkers and philosophers, but the biggest contribution to this theory is certainly the one of J. Habermas, with his work unfolding since 1962 writing The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, presented finally in Between Facts and Norms first published in 1996. In the latter he summarizes his previous achievements in the theory of discourse, public communication, law and deliberative procedures, giving final shape to his political theory.

As the major focus of deliberative politics, J. Habermas conceives the democratic legitimacy of law in modern, pluralistic societies. The law lies between facts (facticity) and norms (validity), between the empirical realm and moral expectations. It is a “system of coercible rules and impersonal procedures that also
involves an appeal to reason, that all citizens should, at least ideally, find acceptable” (Rehg 1996, p. xi). As contemporary pluralistic and multi-cultural societies are not capable of developing one morally bounding ideology or substantial ethical doctrine, J. Habermas introduces a deliberative procedure that is supposed to grant a radically democratic legitimacy of law.

Deliberation itself in J. Habermas refers to the process in which rational, moral and equal citizens, through multiple acts of communication exchange arguments in order to achieve mutual understanding of their differing points of views: “for the centrepiece of deliberative politics consists in a network of discourses and bargaining processes that is supposed to facilitate the rational solution of pragmatic, moral, and ethical questions” (Habermas 1996a, p. 320). Those three mentioned conditions – of rationality, morality and equality – are the conditions of every human being, so the ideal situation of deliberation is, in that case, not exclusive. Everybody has got the same chance to speak up and propose an agenda, and the outcome of the procedure depends only on the unbiased judgement of arguments. In the deliberative ideal, the final outcome would be a shared understanding of every participant situation and point of view and consensual agreement on a rational and morally acceptable outcome. Furthermore, the issue is never closed to re-discussion, if the conditions change.

There are two another conditions of deliberative procedure in the public sphere: “the participants of the argumentation should leave their own particularities aside when they enter into the deliberation of common issues” (Üstüner 2006, p. 39); and they should all apply the rules of communication. Those “most important principles of communicative action are presupposed in linguistic communication” (Cunningham 2002, p. 176), and thus J. Habermas can establish a “discourse theory of ethics where participants are both willing and able to strive for agreement in accordance with the rules implicit in language, and moral judgements are assessed according to whether they could be accepted by participants in such discourse” (Cunningham 2002, p. 176).

The result of the deliberation is not solely the legitimacy of law. As J. Habermas writes, “every association that institutionalizes such a procedure thereby constitutes itself as a body of citizens” (Habermas 1996a, p. 306). Through a positive law a community is achieved, but it should be emphasized that this community is not moral, but rather “takes the shape of a self-organizing legal community” (Habermas 1996a, p. 326).

It is not an easy task to present J. Habermas’ understanding of freedom, as his theory is very complex. Fahriye Üstüner writes that “he tries to convert the self-interested individual into a self-governing citizen as in the republican view, but unlike that, he assumes this is possible without necessarily sharing substantial values, but through communication and deliberation in the political public sphere” (Üstüner 2006, p. 42). This would suggest a complex conception of freedom as a mix between “negative” and “positive”, with the latter one constituted by the first. However, the understanding of J. Habermas should be grasped in a slightly different way. As he writes, “individual private rights cannot even be adequately formulated, let alone politically implemented, if those affected have not first engaged
in public discussions” (Habermas 1996a, p. 450). So in his conception, “the private autonomy that was at first abstractly posited can retroactively assume an elaborated legal shape” (Habermas 1996a, p. 121). Thus, a logical order of freedom in a public sphere gives priority to the “positive” liberty, and only afterwards—through the democratic procedures—the “negative” liberty can attain legitimacy. Nevertheless, “the principle of law giving popular sovereignty appears to follow upon the subjective liberties of private autonomy” (Maus 2002, p. 91).

The issue as to whether the J. Habermas’ conception is stressing more the “negative” or “positive” freedom, whether the subjective liberties are given as in a liberal vision or disposed by popular sovereignty is broadly discussed. To give a solution to this problem, I would like to propose a three-step understanding of freedom in this conception: at the first step, individuals are free in a “negative” way, but this freedom appeals only to the private sphere; in the second step, free and equal individuals are treated as citizens, who enter a deliberation procedure in a public sphere, which is the step of “positive” freedom; in the end, “negative” freedom gains legitimacy in public sphere as an effect of communicative and procedural action.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, I would like to focus on similarities and differences between “modern” and “post modern” models of democracy. At the end I will try to answer the question, if there is a need to introduce new models of democracy, or if the post modern theories can be assigned to liberal and republican models.

The theory of Ch. Mouffe puts the main stress on “negative” freedom. Her concept can be in many issues adjusted to the liberal model of democracy, especially concerning her focus on competing powers and interest groups, pluralism, and the value assigned to the possibility of achieving one’s goals and desires. However, she gives a strong critique to liberalism as well, but the critique does not oppose her to this model, rather what is the matter is that “against the classical radical tradition, contemporary radical democrats deconstruct rather than reject the liberal tradition” (Norval 2001, p. 588). Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize the new challenges given to democracy in its liberal and pluralistic meaning by the work of Ch. Mouffe, especially concerning identity politics, ecology and struggle for equal rights.

The task of assigning J. Habermas’ concept to one of the classical models is, however, much more complicated. The appearance and, in fact, centrality of the idea of “positive” freedom in his theory undoubtedly puts it closer towards the republican model of democracy, but there are some significant differences pointed by the German philosopher himself: the procedural point of view breaks with the tradition of substantially ethical community; gives the central position to constitutionalism and law rather than to morality; and gives priority to the society-centred understanding of the politics rather than to the self-centred one (Habermas 1996b, p. 24-27).

But those differences do not oppose the republican model in a way that would lead to its rejection. Again, it is rather a challenge given to the classic model of

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44 The main voices in the discussion are presented in the article Popular Sovereignty and Liberal Rights (Maus 2002).
Transgression

democracy in order to adjust it to contemporary, pluralistic societies and to radically democratic demands of all.

Another conclusion I want to draw on the understanding of freedom in those models directly corresponds with the scope of this journal’s issue – the educational role of culture (including political institutions), history and society. The role is especially evident while considering the process of political socialization. In the next few paragraphs I will show, that this role becomes another element binding the republican and deliberative model on the one hand, and the liberal model with radical on the other.

Republicanism since ancient times has emphasized the role of tradition, society and state in “creating” or “educating” a “good citizen”. Since J. J. Rousseau, this concept exceeded the strict sphere of political, and became more substantive, and influenced morality more than ever before (Dziubka 2010). If we consider the thought of J. Habermas, we can notice many analogies to that model – it is the state and society, via constitutional procedures and informal will – and opinion-formation, which are the eventual creators of an individual. And, what’s more, this individual can become fully a subject of politics only when considered in relation to this whole system. Only than he becomes what has earlier been named as a “good citizen”.

The same problem is treated in a different way from the liberal point of view. Of course, the role of socialization is not denied as unimportant. But the education of the citizens is rather treated as their right than a duty. Moreover, growing influence of the state in the field of “creating new citizens” is strictly considered as a threat to freedom. It does not imply the rejection of the educational role of society and culture, e.g. for Friedrich Hayek freedom to learn from the others was the main element of every system, that wanted to develop45. But as long as it is incogitant and/or imposed on humans, liberalism was very critical about every manifestation of it. John Stuart Mill even called it a “despotism” and wrote, that “the despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement” (Mill 2001, p. 65).

Finally, in Ch. Mouffe’s concept we can see again the critique of the educational role of society and culture. This is expressed in a negative approach to hegemony. An individual is rather an object of politics under the rule of hegemonic, imposed discourses and cannot fully become a political subject as long as she is not free from any constraints. Thus, subverting those constraints is strongly linked to rejection or at least reconsideration and deconstruction of the educational systems in every society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


45 In his profound book The Constitution of Liberty he argues that spontaneous, natural order (cosmos) is always more effective in bringing to human development than artificial and teleological order imposed on society (taxis) (Hayek 1960).
A Political Theory of Dissent:
Dissent at the Core of Radical Democracy

Joonas Leppänen

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
To be presented, with the permission of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Helsinki, for public examination in lecture room 1, Metsätalo building (Unioninkatu 40), on 18 June 2016, at 10 am.

Helsinki 2016
ABSTRACT

The main idea that is advocated in this thesis is that a radical democratic theory needs a theory of dissent as one of its core concepts. The argument is made in favour of the view that a radical democratic theory requires a conception of justice as participatory parity and a account that makes change intelligible. The thesis defends the claim that Nancy Fraser’s concept of justice as participatory parity combined with Ernesto Laclau’s insights on populist democracy and hegemony best suits this requirement.

The thesis is done within the framework of radical democracy. It is argued that by radical democracy is meant a form of democracy that is more democratic than liberal democracy. The connection between radical and liberal democracy lies in the fact that radical democratic theories are usually based on a critique of liberal institutionalism.

Framed like this, there is an opposition between liberal and radical democracy. In the thesis it is claimed that a political theory of dissent should be positioned within the framework of radical democracy for a couple of overarching reasons. The first one is that the liberal democratic framework internalizes and domesticates dissent. This leads to the conclusion that the liberal democratic framework cannot treat dissent as a separate concept. Radical democracy, hence, is a view of democracy that is radical in relation to liberal democracy. It can be said to be radical towards democracy itself. To be radical towards democracy implies that radical democracy always stretches the boundaries of democracy.

A separate political theory of dissent is important for the sake of showing that dissent can and should be viewed as a positive and constructive feature in society. Dissent is positive and constructive for many reasons: it fosters democratic citizenship, it aims to remove injustices, and it may improve the institutional framework and strengthens participatory parity in society. Even though dissent, as a form of participation, is a positive feature in society it cannot be completely institutionalized. On the other hand, a democratic society is required to uphold dissent as a feature in a manner that is similar to a right.

It is argued that dissent should be viewed as a political conception that attempts to encompass actually occurring dissent. This is in contrast to dissent only as the idea of dissenting or fostering dissenting thoughts. It is proposed that dissent should be viewed as a conception that requires a divergent opinion to be articulated. The idea of articulated dissent ties the conception to social movements.

Dissent, as portrayed in this thesis, ties radical democratic theory to institutional reality. The main idea is that dissent stems from disagreement with society’s institutional arrangements and hence, it will also target those institutions. Hence, it is proposed that a theory of radical democratic dissent...
should be viewed as a theory that is positioned within the context of society’s institutional framework.
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In Helsinki
May 12.5.2016

Joonas Leppänen
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL CLAIMS

The main idea that I advocate in this thesis is that a radical democratic theory needs a theory of dissent as one of its core concepts. I will also argue that a radical democratic theory requires a conception of justice and an account of the logic of change. I will defend the claim that Nancy Fraser’s concept of justice as participatory parity combined with Ernesto Laclau’s insights on populist democracy and hegemony best suits this requirement.

This thesis is done within the framework of radical democracy. I will argue that by radical democracy is meant a form of democracy that is more democratic than liberal democracy. The connection between radical and liberal democracy lies in the fact that radical democratic theories are usually based on a critique of liberal institutionalism.

A theory of radical democracy views democracy as being more than merely a liberal constitutional regime or system. Radical democracy is an idea of democracy where democracy is an equally strong normative ideal as the ideals of freedom, human rights and equality. The three latter ideals are encompassed by the liberal democratic framework. Hence, democracy in radical democracy is an intrinsic good whereas it has a more instrumental nature within the liberal framework.

Framed like this, there is an opposition between liberal and radical democracy. As I view it, a political theory of dissent should be positioned within the framework of radical democracy for a couple of overarching reasons. The first one is that the liberal democratic framework internalizes and domesticates dissent. This leads to the conclusion that the liberal democratic framework cannot treat dissent as a separate concept. Radical democracy, hence, is a view of democracy that is radical in relation to liberal democracy. It can be said to be radical towards democracy itself. To be radical towards democracy implies that radical democracy always stretches the boundaries of democracy.

Radical democracy stretches the boundaries of democracy in two ways. First, it widens our conception of democracy by constantly challenging its boundaries. This challenge arises from the view that democracy is an intrinsic good within radical democracy. Hence, democracy is developed because it is valuable in itself. This challenge makes alterations possible in our conception of democracy. Second, the challenge, and the possibility for different alterations, in turn requires a conception of radical democracy as a concept that is in constant movement. This means that our conception of democracy may lead to practical alterations of society at the same time as the institutionalized forms of democracy changes the requirements and hence also our conceptions of democracy.
A separate political theory of dissent is important for the sake of showing that dissent can and should be viewed as a positive and constructive feature in society. Dissent is positive and constructive for many reasons: it fosters democratic citizenship, it aims to remove injustices, and it may improve the institutional framework and strengthens participatory parity in society.

Even though dissent, as a form of participation, is a positive feature in society it cannot be completely institutionalized. On the other hand, a democratic society is required to uphold dissent as a feature in a manner that is similar to a right.

I will argue for the view that radical democracy also implies a specific logic of change in order to be able to properly encompass the idea that democracy is in constant movement. The requirement of a logic of change has its grounds in value pluralism and disagreement. As we have a plurality of values they necessarily come into conflict with each other. Hence, there is necessarily a disagreement of values. The logic of change conceptualizes how disagreement is met, overcome or managed. Leaning partly on Ernesto Laclau, there are two main ways of making change intelligible. According to Laclau, societal change can be made intelligible by employing a dialectical or an antagonistic logic of change. I will argue along with Laclau for the view that an antagonistic logic is the more justified alternative for a radical democratic theory.

According to Laclau, change in a society is tied to the hegemonic struggle of disagreeing parties. Democracy is viewed as being in constant movement. The logic that governs this change should avoid being one that sets strict boundaries and obstacles to democracy. On the contrary, the idea of democracy in constant motion requires a logic that allows for constant re-evaluation of the concept of democracy. A dialectical logic transcends opposition by deriving this possibility from the opposing concepts themselves. Viewing change as dialectical opposition implies a partial determinism. On these grounds I propose, along with Laclau, that we should understand the logic of change as an antagonistic logic instead of a dialectical logic.

Further, I propose that a radical democratic political theory of dissent requires an idea of justice in order to set just limits for democracy. Nancy Fraser’s conception of justice as participatory parity seems to be the most viable such theory at hand for several reasons. If we want to take dissent seriously in a value pluralist society it is required to further participatory parity because it both defends and makes dissent possible. The promotion of participatory parity defends dissent because it is viewed as a possible way of participating. Insofar as dissent is viewed as a positive contribution to society, participatory parity enables the securing of everyone’s equal right to dissent.

The right to dissent is crucial for a radical democratic theory of dissent because it secures individual participatory freedom under conditions of value pluralism. The right to dissent can be seen as a value itself because it is one of the foundational values of democratic and value pluralist politics. In other words, the combination of value pluralism and democracy is an oxymoron if one does not recognize the value of dissent.
The conception of dissent as I view it should be viewed as a political conception that attempts to encompass actually occurring dissent. This is in contrast to dissent only as the idea of dissenting or fostering dissenting thoughts. I propose that dissent should be viewed as a conception that requires a divergent opinion to be articulated. The idea of articulated dissent ties the conception to social movements. I propose that social movements are created around articulated dissent. This leads to the view that one of the constituting factors of social movements in democratic society is dissent.

The requirements of dissent also tie a radical democratic theory to institutional reality. The main idea is that dissent stems from disagreement with society’s institutional arrangements and hence, it will also target those institutions. Hence, I propose that a theory of radical democratic dissent should be viewed as a theory that is positioned within the context of society’s institutional framework.

1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This thesis is structured in five chapters: an introduction, three major chapters and a conclusion. The concepts and ideas mentioned in the introduction will be discussed and argued as the thesis unfolds.

This thesis is framed as a radical democratic theory. Hence, the first task will be to clarify my stance on what radical democracy means. My view on radical democracy is based on the idea that radical democracy should be seen as an umbrella concept for agonist and deliberative democracy. In other words, deliberative democracy and agonistic democracy should be seen as radical democratic alternatives. The radicalness of the concepts are in relation to liberal democracy and to democracy itself in the sense that radical democracy always entails a view of democracy that pushes at the very edges of democracy itself.

This argument is made against a view that seems to be quite common nowadays where radical democracy, deliberative democracy and agonistic democracy are viewed as different forms of democracy. It is also quite common to equate agonistic democracy with radical democracy. I view both the latter views as conceptually and historically untenable.

After my view on radical democracy has been clarified, I will continue in the second chapter to clarify what I mean by dissent. Within this chapter I will relate dissent, amongst others, to features such as representation, democratic demands and institutions. I will also clarify what is meant by the idea of viewing dissent as a positive feature in society. This chapter is concluded with a preliminary outline for the requirements of a political theory of dissent.

In chapter three, I will continue the investigation by determining what kind of conception of justice is most justified for a radical democratic theory which takes into account the centrality of dissent. I will argue that a view of justice that
is based on the norm of participatory parity is the one that has the strongest justification.

This chapter on justice is approached through the recognition/redistribution debate between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser. The reason for this is that Fraser and Honneth can legitimately be viewed as two of the foremost philosophers, besides Habermas, on justice within radical democratic theory.

The debate between Fraser and Honneth is about the fundamental categories of justice. Honneth defends a position where recognition is seen as the fundamental category of justice from which all other forms of injustices can be derived. Fraser, on the other hand, defends a view that one has simultaneously to take into account three different categories of justice that cannot be derived from one another. Thus, in her view a conception of justice has to take into account socio-economic inequalities, issues of identity (recognition) and the problem of political representation.

I will argue that Nancy Fraser’s approach that is based on the normative ideal of participatory parity is more justified for a radical democratic political theory of dissent. One reason, I will argue, is that participatory parity meets one of the requirements for a political theory of dissent. Fraser’s framework also allows for justice to be defined from the point of view of dissent. This feature ties her idea of justice to social movements. Fraser’s conception of justice also has strong ties to institutional reality, which I view as a clear merit.

The debate between Honneth and Fraser is also relevant as it captures a wider trend in political philosophy where matters of justice have been evolving from economic distribution into differing conceptions where identities and values have to be taken into account in one way or another. I will conclude this part by building further on Fraser’s framework in order to make it more suitable for a political theory of dissent.

After the investigation on the conception of justice, I will continue, in chapter four, with an inquiry into what kind of conception of democracy is most justified for a radical democratic political theory of dissent. In this chapter I will argue that an agonistic conception of radical democracy is more justified than a deliberative democratic conception. The main reason is that deliberative democracy partially shares liberal democracies’ feature of internalizing and domesticating dissent.

Within the scope of agonistic democracy the idea of hegemony is central. Hence, I will clarify in this part how dissent and hegemony is related. Later on I will argue for the view that Laclau’s concept of hegemony can be combined with Fraser’s framework in order to answer some deficiencies in it.

At the beginning of the thesis I have argued that one of the requirements for a political theory of dissent is what I call a logic of change. In the chapter on democracy I will clarify what is meant by a logic of change and also argue for the view that a radical democratic political theory of dissent should employ an antagonistic logic of change.
Finally, I will, at the end of the fourth chapter, present some ideas that make the combination of Fraser’s theory of justice and Laclau’s political theory possible.

In the fifth and final chapter, I present one possible way of achieving a radical democratic political theory of dissent. The theory that I am arguing for is based on the combination of Fraser’s theory of justice as participatory parity and Laclau’s political theory. Even though there may be other options in achieving a radical democratic political theory of dissent, I claim that this combination results in one of the better options.
2 A POLITICAL THEORY OF DISSENT: AN OUTLINE

2.1 THE CONCEPT OF DISSENT: GENERAL REMARKS

The aim of this chapter is to reach a preliminary outline of what is meant by the concept of dissent as viewed as a central feature of radical democracy. As this thesis is done within the framework of radical democracy I will first present and argue for my view on radical democracy. I will also present some arguments that liberal democracy contains dissent by internalizing it within the liberal democratic system, hereby domesticating it. This is also relevant as I will later argue that deliberative democracy partially shares this feature.

By dissent I will within the context of this thesis mean the following. To dissent with something is to disagree with a specific feature in society and to articulate this disagreement. It is the articulation of dissent that makes it into a political matter. Viewed like this, dissent is a political and articulated disagreement directed towards a specific feature in society. On a general level the meaning of the concept of dissent is relatively unproblematic, and does not commonly give rise to any major philosophical debates. ¹

A guiding idea of my viewpoint is that dissent and the dissenters have something valuable to provide to society. Thus, the concept of dissent has both a descriptive and a normative character.

The value of dissent is tied to the idea of viewing it as a positive contribution to society. In other words, one value of dissent lies in the idea that those who dissent in society do it based on demands to correct wrongs in society or to change the state of affairs that are conceived as oppressing.

The feature of dissent as removing injustices shares a close tie to the idea of justice conceived through the normative idea of participatory parity and hence, also democratic participation. If dissent is conceived as a feature that is aimed towards oppressive institutions, it should also be viewed as a way of democratically justified participation in society.

¹ There are some works are closely related to dissent that warrant mentioning even though they mostly treat dissent in relation to some other feature of society. For example in Democracy and Disagreement, Gutman and Thompson treats disagreement in a way that can be interpreted similarly as my description of dissent. They however frame the question of disagreement within the context of deliberative democracy. Their goal is to overcome moral disagreement through deliberative democracy (Gutman & Thompson, 1996, p. 1). Another related book is Larsen’s The Right to Dissent. Larsen frames his book in the context of Habermas’ theory of communicative action and relates it to some classical philosophers and some modern ones like Rawls (Larsen, 2009). Even though there are many more similar works, most of them share the feature of treating dissent as secondary in relation to another social feature such as rights, moral obligation, civil disobedience etc. The bearing idea behind my thesis is to treat dissent as a central feature in radical democratic political theory.
I claim that dissent is a fundamental feature in democratic society. This is a very unproblematic claim because democracy by itself always implies differing views. As democracy is a way of either managing or living with this conflict of views, dissent becomes a necessity. One can conclude in line with Balibar that democratic citizenship as such is necessarily conflictual (Balibar, 2014, p. 284). The main question is not if dissent exists or not but how we should approach it in democratic society.

Dissent within the democratic framework challenges the idea of democracy as being merely a system of representation. Any system of representation necessarily implies exclusion (Benhabib, 2007, pp. 450-451). Exclusion, by definition, denies a part of the people voice in matters being decided within the body of representation. Hence, there remain voices that are not being represented and that are silenced. In other words, no democratic system can encompass all possible divergent views. Dissent allows for a channel of expression for the silenced voices. Dissent, thus, has an inclusionary aspect. This feature ties the concept of dissent strongly to the idea of participatory democracy.

Dissent should be seen as a positive feature in democratic society. It is targeted to correct wrongs in society and it furthers participatory democracy. On these grounds alone one can justify the view that we should allow and even foster dissent in democratic society. In other words, by guaranteeing a right to dissent it is possible to further democracy and democratic citizenship in society. In other words, dissent should not be viewed as a pathology in democracy which can be quenched in the name of stability but as a central feature of democratic society and political life.

Dissent is tied to the institutional arrangement of society. One possible target for dissent is oppressive institutions. Hence, besides furthering democracy and participation dissent has a feature of improving society’s institutional framework. Dissent that is targeting institutions can from this point of view be interpreted as claims for institutional improvement. This interpretation of dissent views it as being targeted, amongst others, against exclusionary and oppressive institutional practices.

The idea that dissent is tied to the institutional framework and strives to remove oppressive practices ties the concept of dissent to what I call the logic of change. The logic of change is the underlying logic that makes change in society intelligible.

A general thought experiment that can show how dissent can facilitate change in society depending on how it is conceived is by examining a specific form of oppressive majority rule.

If the conditions of the majority are good, the majority in a representative democracy can be interpreted as having an interest to uphold its own position. Under such conditions majority rule may lead to the interest to uphold the status quo. Such an interest may lead to exclusionary practices as claims against the status quo are not properly heard and perhaps even excluded within the representative body. This kind of majority tyranny rejects new ideas and change.
as they challenge the current status quo. If we view the representative system as the main facilitator of dissent in society, then change in society happens according to the will of the majority.

On the other hand dissent can be viewed as a feature that belongs to participatory democracy and it is viewed as a way of participating in society that has a strong democratic justification. If dissent is viewed like this, then change in society has a strong source in the minorities that are excluded or oppressed.

Of the two examples above I view the second one as the more democratic way of theorizing dissent in democratic theory. Hence, dissent and the dissenters should be viewed as making justified claims to be included or heard.

In the political theory developed in this thesis, dissent is viewed as a vehicle of societal change in democracy in line with for example Laclau or Mouffe. The dissenters are viewed as being able to bring forth new ideas, and thus furthering the development of democratic society.

One reason for depoliticization in modern capitalist society follows from the growing impact of the economic sphere which in turn leads to the wider usage of an economic or instrumental rationality. In other words, matters of politics become economic matters of how to tweak the bureaucratic machine that is the state (Young, 1990, p. 71) (Habermas, 1987, pp. 343-356).

The economization of society reduces social conflict to distributive matters and by extension value pluralism is reduced to mere interest group pluralism (Young, 1990). Claims of justice are translated to clever rhetorical slogans in the attempt to win and play the game. Hence, politics loses its dimension of justice or liberation. This reduces political matters to competing interests. The reduction distances the political decision makers from the citizens because those who should represent the people are concentrating on playing a game where the only victories are different economical configurations of the state machine.

The claims of the disaffected in society that all the political parties are the same and nothing will change by voting becomes true. It is true in the sense that when all political agents operate within the sphere of economics, in the language of economics and under the instrumental rationality of economics, then change is not possible as the commitment to the economic rationale is demanded from all who wants to take part. Also this makes a mockery of democracy as a value as there is no real discussion or deliberation. Even though it is unclear if the economization of any society has gone this far, the effects of such a development are clear to be seen.

I do not view the economization of society only as an effect of contemporary new liberalist policies but as a wider pathology of society that should be actively avoided in the name of value pluralism and democracy. A similar effect can be found, for example, in most forms of traditional Marxist theory where all matters political can be reduced to the relations of production, in other words economics. In this sense new liberalism and Marxism shares the effect of hiding politics behind economics (May, 2008, p. 45).

The opposite is also possible, as we can learn from the debate between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). The reduction of politics
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to a matter of ethics may lead to a situation where objective claims of justice
cannot be made as everything is reduced to an interpersonal level or to
intersubjectivity.

The possibility of dissent requires that a differing opinion can be voiced in a
framework of the dissenters choosing. If the dissenter(s) are not allowed to
define their claims on their own grounds and their claims are translated purely
into the sphere of economics or ethics, their claims can become interpreted
through hegemony. This entails that the claims can be hijacked in favor of
claims that are differ from the original intention. In other words, philosophically
the concept of dissent requires the rejection of reductionism.

Under the regime of economic reductionism dissent introduces values into
politics. In a regime of ethical reductionism dissent introduces a framework of
objectivity. Dissent also challenges the idea of politics as a game and in such
cases functions to remind the political elite of their position in society as
subordinate to the people.

In other words, the acceptance and fostering of dissent energizes political
conflicts by reintroducing values to an otherwise self-interested driven
pluralism. One aim of dissent is to get rid of the kind of politics that requires
that political claims create interest groups around them. Hence, dissent
reintroduces values into politics and challenges the view that politics is merely
about bargaining and making deals.

Most theories of modern capitalist society make presuppositions about
human nature or the political agent. For example a liberal capitalist theory
generally presupposes that humans are by nature, at least, somewhat egotistical
creatures that tend to live to maximize their well-being. When this idea is tied to
the idea of economic freedom, the political agent becomes a consumer instead of
a citizen.

In liberalism, the bearing idea is one of autonomy, in other words, to have as
much freedom as possible as long as it does not interfere with anyone else's
similar freedom. More often than not, the main focus is on the idea that freedom
is considered the absence of obstacles, in other words negative freedom.
However, when this idea is connected to the idea of maximizing economic
freedom the former idea of autonomy becomes obsolete. In other words, when
freedom is considered as economic freedom, to retain the idea of autonomy
economic freedom has to be limited as huge differences of wealth leads to
different possibilities of everyone which ultimately leads to a situation where an
increase in the freedom of some leads to the decrease of the freedom of others.

To dissent against this idea does not necessarily limit itself to dissent on the
distribution of wealth. Dissent may be directed amongst others, towards the
idea of the political agent as a consumer, the idea of freedom or the centrality of
economic freedom. In other words, the idea is that the power to define the target
and content of dissent should be characterized by the dissenters.

I do not claim that dissent by definition would reject only new liberalist
policies, it only serves as an example. Dissent could equally well be directed
against a theoretical or real framework of state capitalism or some ideal of pure communist utopia.

Dissent potentially challenges any set of prescribed definition of human nature or political agency. It is not that such a definition would necessarily be intrinsically false but the possibility of redefinition should always be open. In other words, any theory that takes freedom seriously requires that substantial definitions of human nature and political agency are left open. Freedom is considered as the removal of institutional limitations in the way of participatory parity.
2.2 RADICAL DEMOCRACY

This thesis is done within the framework of radical democracy, hence, it is necessary to spell out what is meant by the concept.

Within democratic theory there are differing conceptions of what we mean by radical democracy. Even though there are a lot of philosophers and political theorists who work on radical democracy, there are remarkably few thoughts on what is meant by radical democracy in itself.

Regardless of our conception of democracy the foundational difference of pluralism is central. In other words, a multitude of values implies a potential conflict that democracy in its different forms tries to manage or answer. Thus, all accounts of democracy strive to answer the question of how this difference should be regulated or how it should play out.

Liberal democracy regulates and domesticates the difference while the debate between deliberative democracy and agonist democracy treats this difference as foundational. Both deliberative democracy and agonist democracy share this to a certain point. Both share the idea that we need democracy because we have differences of opinions etc., the main opposition between them is whether or not it is possible to secure a ultimate common ground that everyone can consent to. The agonist would claim that it is impossible and the deliberative democrat would claim the contrary.

Adrian Little and Moya Lloyd have made some clarifying distinctions with regard to the concept of radical democracy (Little & Lloyd, 2009, p. 1). Their work consists mainly in identifying different strands of radical democratic theory. According to Little and Lloyd, the concept of radical democracy emerged as a response to a crisis within Western left-wing thought: the disaffection with socialist and orthodox Marxist thought to explain developments in the industrial world. These include the rise of new social movements that do not rely on class as a central feature for their critique or struggle. They also include the fall of the Soviet bloc and the demise of Communism.

On the question of radical democracy, Little and Lloyd provide some answers based on different approaches by theorists that either call themselves radical democrats or can on other grounds be counted as radical democrats (Little & Lloyd, 2009, pp. 2-3).

First, Lloyd and Little identify a characterization of radical democracy that they call post-Marxist or critical theory. This strand is identified as theories that at the same time are critical of the capitalist economy and historical Marxism. The major part of these are counted as belonging to critical theory. At this point they rely on a definition by Iris Young where she states that:

The radical anti-capitalist pursuit of justice is better thought of as a project of democratizing both the state, corporate economy, and civil society than bringing all the production and distribution of goods under democratic state direction. (Young, 2000, p. 183)
In this definition the opposition between radical democracy and its opposite, for example a representative or aggregationist conception, would lie with the question where and how democracy should take place. The radical democratic view would claim that people should have their say not only through the representative institutions of the state but also in areas where the state has little or no say at all. An aggregationist view would claim that a society is democratic as long as the people would have their say in choosing the representatives in the state.

According to Lloyd and Little, Iris Young counts works by Claus Offe, Jean Cohen, Andrew Arato, Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser and herself as radical democrats. These thinkers are counted as the critical theorists. Lloyd and Little also identify another strand of post-structuralist post-Marxist thinkers. To this group they count Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

The reason for the distinction between critical theorists and post-structuralists is to highlight that they belong to different traditions of thought. The critical theorists have their roots in the Frankfurt school and the post-structuralists trace their roots to French post-structuralism. Both strands are critical towards liberal democracy while at the same time being committed to some of the elements of it, namely freedom, equality and liberal human rights. They share the idea that radical democracy favors participation and self-government over the institutionalization of difference in representative democracy.

Both groups also place importance on power relations that undermine individuals or groups possibilities to exercise the formal citizenship rights of liberalism (Little & Lloyd, 2009, pp. 2-3). In other words, they do not reject liberalism but aim to reconstruct it and strengthen its democratic dimension. The difference between these groups lies according to Lloyd and Little in the view on dissensus or consensus. They claim that the critical theory radical democrats emphasize the possibility of a rational deliberative consensus where the post-structuralists emphasize dissensus and disagreement.

On this point it becomes quite clear that this characterization of radical democracy is related to the contemporary debate between agonists and deliberative democrats. Quite often the agonist view is thought to represent radical democracy while the deliberate account does not.

One of the main reasons for idea that agonism is equated with radical democracy has to do with the influence Mouffe and Laclau have had on radical democratic thought in Europe. It is common to refer to their work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* when referring to radical democracy.

I think that it is a misconception to equate only the agonist stance with radical democracy. I hold that both the deliberative and the agonist standpoints are radical democratic conceptions. The categorization that Lloyd and Little make between critical theory radical democrats and post-structuralists supports this view. Especially from the point of view of Lloyd and Little it is possible to
view the debate between agonists and deliberative democrats as being part of the wider debate or theoretical project of radical democracy.

I hold that it is false and also quite dubious to attempt to define away the deliberative democrats from the radical democratic accounts especially as a major part of them can be counted as critical theorists. It is dubious simultaneously counting theorists as radical democrats as long as they are doing critical theory and then suddenly assume that they have left the project of radical democracy when counted as deliberative democrats.

This is especially true as they have not changed their theories in a way to merit the removal of the categorization of radical democracy. In other words, my stance is that for example Jürgen Habermas has as much claim to being categorized as being a radical democrat as for example Chantal Mouffe. The difference lies in the conception of what radical democracy entails where Habermas argues in favor of a deliberative consensus and Mouffe for an agonist dissensus. In short, both the agonistic and the deliberative conceptions are sub-concepts of radical democracy.

One can also identify two different strands of deliberative democracy. John Dryzek distinguishes liberal deliberative democracy from its critical theory counterpart (Dryzek, 2000, pp. 8-30). Hence, one can divide deliberative democracy in its liberal and radical versions. This does not change my categorization as my focus is specifically on radical democracy. Dryzek’s distinction serves to show different ways of approaching deliberative democracy.

Another possible way to conceive radical democracy is as a political stance or as a leftist project (Little & Lloyd, 2009, p. 1). From this point of view radical democracy has taken the place that was earlier reserved for socialism. The idea is that the concept of radical democracy would encompass the heterogeneous movements of the left in a better way than socialism did. This characterization is in line with the difficulty of the political left of describing and providing a theory that could conceptualize contemporary struggles.

Within the Marxist framework all struggles could be subsumed under the category of class-struggle. Contemporary movements define themselves as struggling towards a myriad of different goals and on the basis of as many different reasons. Hence, the project of radical democracy can be viewed as spelling out and conceptualizing left-wing movements that supports the movements as well as vice versa. Thus, as we cannot view contemporary struggle through a theory that can reduce all struggles under one master concept (class-struggle) we need a theory that can conceptualize the myriad of struggles while not distorting the possibility of the movements to define themselves.

On the question of what it is that makes radical democracy radical, I would be inclined to give three answers. First, radical democracy is radical because it breaks the boundaries of the process of democracy as conceived within the liberal framework. With this I mean that the liberalist framework sets specific boundaries for the legitimate usage of democratic decision making. For example if democracy governs only in the public sphere. To widen democracy one has to
show and argue for the transferring of matters from the private to the public sphere. In other words, the boundaries for democracy within the liberalist framework are very strict. Radical democracy is radical because it allows for democracy to govern or happen potentially everywhere.

The other answer is that radical democracy is radical as it is an account in which one tries to encompass a multiplicity of different struggles within a conception of democracy while still being true to the multiple accounts on their own merits. In a sense this means that a radical democratic theory is radical because it is necessarily on the very edges of democracy. The edge of democracy entails the near impossible task of defining the potentially limitless. In other words, radical democracy has to give limits for democracy to be able to spell out an understandable conception of democracy at the same time as it has to give the ability to define democracy itself to the potentially unlimited different accounts of different movements. Hence, radical democracy entails taking democracy to its extreme by taking it to its limits.

Further, a feature of radical democracy is also that it views the normative ideal of democracy as equally important as freedom, human rights and equality. This means that apart from freedom, human rights and equality, radical democracy requires the idea of participation and a constant reminder that the ultimate power in a democracy belongs to the people. In this sense there is a claim in radical democracy of being more democratic that the liberal constitutional regime.

I will justify my conception of democracy by examining some of the radical democratic accounts and see how they fit in my perspective. This perspective entails, that radical democracy should be seen as a wider conception of democracy, whereas deliberative democracy and agonist democracy are sub-categories.

James Ingram has answered the question of what radical democracy is through his reading of Claude Lefort (Ingram, 2006, pp. 37-39) (Lefort, 1986). In his reading of Lefort, Ingram identifies two ways of politics that both are contrasted against totalitarianism.

One of them is liberalism and the other is radical democracy. According to Ingram, Lefort sees totalitarianism as a way of fusing power with society in the symbolic order. To do this it would be necessary to fight indeterminism with repression (Ingram, 2006, pp. 37-39). Ingram’s account can be read as adding support to my account of radical democracy and to the conception that liberalism internalizes dissent.

To avoid this totalitarian temptation in a democratic society one has to leave power, legitimacy, identity and unity open to question or conflict (Ingram, 2006, pp. 37-39). The liberalist way would do this by institutionalizing politics-as-conflict within a legal and institutional order. Radical democracy on the other hand posits conflict and dissent as the main constitutive features of democracy and leaves the symbolic place of power empty by avoiding to institutionalize any specific arrangement of power.
Hence, Lefort’s account of radical democracy as presented by Ingram adds to the idea that radical democracy and liberal democracy are two opposing ways of handling difference within democratic theory. This strengthens the conceptions and legitimizes the usage of radical democracy as being opposed to liberalism. Also, Lefort’s idea that the symbolic place of power should be left open add to the view that radical democracy always is on the edge of democracy in the sense that Lefort’s account presents the democratic struggle by not describing it or giving it any substance. In other words, the democratic struggle characterizes itself.

Even though it may be best to leave the “radical” in radical democracy undefined or open to different interpretations, it is clear that the scholarly debate has gone further as one of the main things is now the debate between agonism and deliberation or deliberative democrats and decisionists (agonists) as Bonnie Honig calls them (Honig, 2007, pp. 1-4). For Honig the main differences are the different answers the deliberative democrats and the decisionists can give to solve three democratic paradoxes.

The three paradoxes are the paradox of politics, of legitimation and of constitutional democracy (Honig, 2007, pp. 1-4, 8). Roughly the paradox of politics is a chicken or egg situation between universal foundations (deliberative democrats) and pure decision making (agonists) and how one can arrive to a general will from this. Honig relies on Seyla Benhabib for the characterization of the paradox of legitimation. Benhabib characterizes the paradox of legitimation by relying on Rousseau’s distinction between the ‘will of all’ and the ‘general will’ (Benhabib, 1994, pp. 28-29). The paradox of legitimation has its roots in the opposition between what individuals believe to be in their best interest in concrete situations, and what would be in their collective interest if they would be enlightened enough. In other words, there is a paradox between the idea that the legitimacy of democratic rule by a sovereign people refers to the ability to make choices that is in the collective interest of all and the idea that democratic rule should allow for the people to make their own choices according to their own individual will.

Lastly the paradox of constitutional democracy is the paradox between constitutionalism and popular sovereignty. In other words, how can a constitution constrain the sovereignty of the people across the boundaries of time?

Honig’s account of democracy also puts the agonists and the deliberative democrats within a single framework. She characterizes the debate between the agonists and the deliberative democrats as being a different attempt to solve the paradox of politics. Hence, this account adds to the idea that agonism and deliberative democracy is a subcategory of a wider theory of democracy.

It is possible to view Honig as a radical democrat because she closely ties her idea of democracy to Rousseau’s idea of participation. The strong emphasis on participation highlights, and partially overcomes the problem that a democratic system runs into if legitimation is achieved only through representation. We can also see that the second and third paradox requires a concept of democracy that
always questions itself. In other words, Honig’s conception of democracy can be said to view democracy itself as being always in motion.

Thus far it seems that my account of radical democracy can explain and categorize in a justified manner at least some conceptions of radical democracy and also the debate on agonism and deliberative democracy.

There are differing categorizations of radical democracy that imply the taking of a stance in the debate on how we should view the agonist/deliberation debate. I will present some of the competing ideas and I will show why my conception is better suited as a categorization of radical democracy, agonism and deliberative democracy.

In his book *Agonistic Democracy - Constituent Power in the Era of Globalization*, Mark Wenman views radical democracy as a distinct form of democracy apart from agonistic and deliberative democracy (Wenman, 2013, p. 3). With regard to the distinctions of different models of democracy, Wenman refers to David Held.

Held’s claim is that different models of democracy are complex networks of concepts and generalizations which in turn reveal chief elements of different conceptions of democracy (Held, 2006, p. 6). Held does not identify radical democracy as a distinct form of democracy, the only inclination is that radical democracy is a form of democracy that strives to expand or intensify deliberation in deliberative democracy (Held, 2006, p. 253).

Because Held’s book is fairly old, the original is written 1997, it is understandable that he does not identify radical democracy in relation with agonistic democracy. Hence, the view that radical democracy, deliberative democracy and agonistic democracy are own distinct models of democracy is not supported by Held and as such should be counted as Wenman’s own distinction.

I have pointed out earlier that I disagree with the categorization of radical democracy as a different form of democracy that is distinct from agonistic democracy and deliberative democracy. As I have pointed out, there are theorists within both groups that have justified claims for being counted as radical democrats. Wenman’s definition of radical democracy makes a categorization that cannot be accepted by the radical democratic theorists, and his categorization is counterintuitive as it defines their theories away from the scope of radical democracy.

Wenman defines theorists that are quite often associated with the agonist stance in a way that is untenable. For example, Wenman defines Chantal Mouffe as an agonist which of course is correct but then continues to define Ernesto Laclau only as a radical democrat (Wenman, 2013, p. 5). This is bewildering as Mouffe and Laclau have worked and published together *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, which is one of the quintessential works on radical and agonistic democracy.

The shared concept of hegemony that they utilize is based on premises that can be identified as agonist. Hence, we can see the problem that Wenman’s definition runs into where he has to bracket theories as either radical or agonist.
In other words, he cannot coherently uphold the view that one can be both an agonist and a radical democrat.

Wenman’s definition of Jaques Rancière as a radical democrat and not as an agonist philosopher is in my opinion somewhat mistaken. Rancière’s conception of politics is tied strongly to the idea of dissensus (Rancière, 2004) (Rancière, 2001). The idea of the political in Rancière is based on the idea of equality where politics happens when claims of equality are made by those who are not counted. Thus, there cannot be a common principle of adjudication and politics itself is viewed as a clash between those that are counted and those who are not.

I have no quarrel with viewing Rancière as both being a radical democrat and an agonist. He would be viewed as a radical democrat because of his critique of institutionalized politics and because he defines politics as occuring on the very edge of democracy. He would be counted as an agonist as his conception of democracy is based on fundamental disagreement.

For Wenman radical democracy and agonistic democracy are differed by how they answer the question constituent power and on their perspective on augmentation and revolution (Wenman, 2013, pp. 5, 65-73).

The radical democrats have according to Wenman an exclusive emphasis on revolution (Wenman, 2013, p. 60). With regard to Laclau, who Wenman counts as a radical democrat, this conception does not hold as Laclau views democratic revolution as simplistic (Laclau, 2005b, p. 260).

Wenman counts Alain Badiou, Ernesto Laclau, Jaques Rancière and Slavoj Žižek as radical democrats (Wenman, 2013, p. 5). Wenman’s focus on augmentation and revolution as a definition of radical democrats may hold to a certain point if we only focus on these philosophers. As I have pointed out it is justified to count Jürgen Habermas (Habermas, 1996), Iris Marion Young (Young, 2000), Nancy Fraser (Fraser, 2003a), Axel Honneth (Honneth, 1995) Jean Cohen, Andrew Arato, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001 (1985)) as radical democrats.

The latter group is recognized by the academic public as radical democrats. Some of them also make explicit claims of being radical democrats. With this in mind it seems very odd to claim that we should suddenly focus on how these philosophers’ answer the questions of augmentation and revolution in order to count them as radical democrats or as something else.

As a clarifying example we could take Habermas. He does not have an exclusive emphasis on revolution. However Habermas Between Facts and Norms can and should be counted as furthering of radical democracy (Habermas, 1996, pp. xlii, 471) (Grodnick, 2005).

At this point it seems quite clear that Wenman’s categorization cannot answer the question of how it is possible to be both a radical democrat and an agonist or a radical deliberative democrat. His only option seems to undefine a group of radical democrats and redefine them as only being deliberative democrats or agonists. This move is counter-intuitive as this is a difficulty that arises from Wenman’s categorization not from the theories he sets out to categorize. Before Wenman’s definition there has not been any difficulty of
categorizing those who nowadays take part in the agonism/deliberation debate as being justly counted as radical democrats.

To make it a bit more confusing, at least Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth can be read as agonists and as deliberative democrats. For an account on Axel Honneth as an agonist philosopher see (Deranty, 2004). I will later in this dissertation propose that one should give Fraser’s framework a agonist interpretation in order to make it more suited for a political theory of dissent. ²

Wenman’s categorization cannot explain how it is possible to at the same time view someone as being in all the three categories at the same time. Under my categorization one would view both Honneth and Fraser as radical democrats while leaving open the interpretation if they should be counted as agonists or deliberative democrats.

Wenman’s idea that radical democracy should be seen as a distinct model of democracy apart from agonist and deliberative democracy is in my opinion mistaken. It is mistaken because his definition is based on the necessity of being radical, deliberative or agonist. This in turn leads to a classification where earlier radical democrats cannot any longer be counted as radical democrats. A conception of radical democracy should be able to encompass all the different radical democratic theories and on this basis define radical democracy, not the other way around.

Another quite common view is that radical democracy can be viewed as being the same thing as agonistic democracy.

For example Lars Tønder and Lasse Thomassen seems to think that radical democracy is formed as a critique of both liberalism and communitarianism, which revives the Marxist critique of modern democratic thought while at the same time criticizing Marxism itself (Tønder & Thomassen, 2005, p. 4).

The main idea is that radical democracy criticizes liberalism for viewing equality and liberty as rights that are not themselves questioned or politicized. Hence, they share the idea that radical democracy holds to the values of equality and liberty of liberalism but they disagree with liberalism’s feature of taking these values “beyond dispute”. Also radical democracy criticizes communitarianism because of its feature of holding communities as having solid boundaries which in turn lead to the idea that it is not true to the value of pluralism.

This far I agree with Tønder and Thomassen, but they take the idea of radical democracy even further and claim that radical democrats “…also object to the deliberative model’s assumption that procedures can be rational and can produce rational decisions.” (Tønder & Thomassen, 2005, p. 4).

Hence, they seem to equate radical democrats with the agonists. As a large part of the deliberative democrats count themselves or is counted by others as

² Further it is possible to read the term radical democracy as coined by John Dewey in his essay “Democracy is Radical”, an essay that predates all the contemporary conceptions of radical democracy (Dewey, 1987). For sake of clarity, we will hold to the contemporary debate and let scholars on Dewey investigate the merits of his thoughts.
radical democrats, this definition of radical democracy as being the same as agonistic democracy is clearly dubious.

Actually deliberative democracy seems to criticize liberalism in quite a similar manner as Tønder and Thomassen claims, even though the deliberative democrats hold to the idea of rational discussion. I reject the idea that radical democracy should be seen as being the same as agonistic democracy and hold to the idea that agonistic democracy and deliberative democracy are both parts of the radical democratic critique of liberalism.

My stance is that the discussion within the scope of radical democracy has evolved into the debate on agonism versus deliberation. Both groups are and should be counted as being radical democratic accounts. Radical democracy, I claim, is the historical backdrop of the deliberation/agonism debate.

Radical democracy is not a model that can be developed as such, but it should be seen as a critique of liberal democracy and as an attempt to constantly widen democracy by challenging democracy itself. At the moment the focus within the project of radical democracy is how to answer questions of fundamental disagreement versus agreement and foundational questions on democracy itself.

I do not claim that the radical democratic project is on hold but merely that the academic interest at the moment lies on the question of deliberation and agonism. In other words, the agonist/deliberation debate furthers the project of radical democracy.

Further I do not view radical democracy as a model itself but more as a conception that is in constant motion. The conception is given meaning to by positioning it as a critique of other forms of democracy as for example liberal democracy. Hence, radical democracy is the necessary other that is required to further the questions of increased participation, politicization etc. in the wider scholarly debate on democracy. Radical democracy is a conception that claims to be more democratic than liberal democracy. The question of classification is related to the question of what makes radical democracy radical.

Ernesto Laclau provides three ways of conceiving radicalism in radical democracy (Laclau, 2005b, p. 259). First, if we consider liberal democracy which according to Laclau entails conceiving politics as a regime. Laclau points out that it is possible to conceive of liberal institutions without citizen participation. In other words, there is no logical tie between liberalism and democracy. Hence, according to Laclau liberalism and democracy are always in tension as the regime (liberalist) part of liberal democracy is partially opposed to the idea of citizen participation (democracy). Within this framework or line of thought, radicalism within liberal democracy would entail the internal democratization of liberal institutions.

The second idea is that the purely formal conception of universality is unable to constitute democratic subjectivity (Laclau, 2005b, pp. 259-260). Democracy as a system of institutional rules is only possible if the idea of democratic

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3 This argument is also found in Mouffe (2000).
subjectivity is systemically ignored. It has to be ignored because democratic subjectivity requires partiality which is in opposition to universality. Radicalism within this line of thought presupposes the constitution of an underdog as a political actor while the moment of universality is still present. This entails an acceptance of the universal as theoretically justified while denying it in practice. This idea constitutes the mass of people as a new political actor. It is a populist conception as it leaves the pejorative function of the term intact.

The third way continues from the previous. The earlier versions take for granted that democratic demands of the underdog coalesce around a certain pole. This assumption is according to Laclau excessive. Democratic demands have a variety of aims and nothing guarantees that they move in one specific direction (Laclau, 2005b, p. 260). It makes the democratic revolution simplistic especially if one conceives of making it as a unifying horizon dominated by the expansion of equalitarian logics to a wider sphere of social relations. To accept some popular demands is according to Laclau compatible with the exclusion of other demands from the equivalential chain. In this line of thought radicalization is linked to the idea of pluralism. The idea is that a populist democracy does not guarantee by itself the recognition of all democratic demands.

Hence, first of all, we end up with the idea that the first form of democratic radicalism is identified with universalism and the fact that of its removal of differences and exceptions. The second is concerned with creating the popular subject which is less than the whole but strives to be identified with the latter. The third one is based on the idea of radical pluralism and puts the principle of universalization into question. In Laclau’s words “we are dealing with differentiality that which asserts itself as the only and irreducible principle.” (Laclau, 2005b, p. 261)

According to Laclau, all of these ideas fail by themselves. The first one is compatible with undemocratic processes in civil society. The second identifies the community as a whole from some section of it. The third would lack any kind of common symbolic framework and would as such not be a society at all. Hence, all three conceptions are needed. This is however problematic as they seem incompatible with each other. This fact requires that they are conceived as a political articulation, not as a logical mediation. It is according to Laclau:

*The undecidable character of this interaction, the impossibility of conceptually mastering the contingent forms in which it crystallizes, is exactly what we call radical democracy. (Laclau, 2005b, p. 261)*

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4 A democratic demand has three features according to Laclau (Laclau, 2005a, p. 125). First of all, a democratic demand is a demand that is made by an underdog in society. Second, a democratic demand is egalitarian. Third, it is a demand made against exclusion, deprivation and the construction of a person as a deficient being
it is the

...the first strictly political form of social organization, because it is the first one in which the posing and the withdrawal of the social ground is entirely dependent on political interventions (Laclau, 2005b, p. 261).

If we consider this characterization of radical democracy and how it fits the categorization that I have made, we’ll see that Laclau is not too keen on positioning himself in the debate between the agonists and the deliberative democrats. It is however possible to position him according to his thought on hegemony and his social logic of antagonism.

However this is not necessary for my categorization as it is completely possible to further the project of radical democracy even though one does not want to take a stance in the debate on agonism vs. deliberative democracy. In other words, even though one could categorize Laclau as an agonist, it is not necessary because he is still part of the project of radical democracy as such. A similar idea also holds for Nancy Fraser. Even though it is possible to make the case for her being an agonist or a deliberative democrat, Fraser does not view the distinction as relevant because it does not concern real world problems. 5

To sum up, I view radical democracy as a form of democracy that is more democratic than liberal democracy. This means that radical democracy posits the ideal of democracy as being equally important as freedom, human rights and equality in liberal democracy. Radical democracy is thus a critique of liberal democracy. Radical democracy is also always critical of itself and challenges itself as an attempt to constantly widen the scope of democracy. This means that the question of how democracy can be more democratic and where it should govern is always central.

The agonism-deliberation debate should be seen as being about the fundamental categories of radical democracy. Hence, both agonist and deliberative democratic accounts are viewed as radical democratic accounts. This is the most justified way of viewing this categorization.

5 A response by prof. Nancy Fraser to my paper An Agonist Fraser – A Reinterpretation of Reflexive Justice and Radical Democracy presented at a seminar that was chaired by prof. Fraser and organized by the University of Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies (30.5.2013)
2.3 LIBERALISM AND THE DOMESTICATION OF DISSENT

2.3.1 REPRESENTATION

When considering democracy as a system of representation the focus is shifted from the actual demands of the people to questions regarding the institutional process of finding out the will of the majority. Viewed like this, a theory of democracy is not concerned primarily about how the people can speak for themselves. The main concern is shifted to the question of how we can conceive of a legitimate way that a part of the people can speak in the name of the people as a whole. Hence, by considering how the aggregation of peoples will is conceptualized, it is possible to shed some light on the relation between representation and dissent.

If we would agree that a parliament could completely represent the people's will, the idea of aggregation is fairly simple. The few representatives in parliament would be considered to legitimately represent the people on a scale that is based on the amount of parliamentarians in relation to citizens. A legitimate majority opinion would be established easily as the number of representatives would be small but they would still represent the people as a whole in a justified way.

In this kind of closed system the case could be made that everyone would be heard as every opinion would be represented. This kind of parliament clearly does not exist for real. There is no guarantee that the majority opinion that is voted through in parliament is represented amongst the citizens in equal proportion. This is especially the case in our modern democratic societies where everyone does not vote.

The system of representation in our contemporary democracies is designed in a way that allows the silent votes to be counted in favor of status quo. In other words, unvoiced votes are counted as votes given to the representative body in the same relation as the given votes.

The case could be made that in some kind of ideal democracy where the will of the citizen could only be expressed by the citizen himself/herself, unvoiced votes should be represented by empty chairs in parliament. In this case the will of the citizen as an individual would be viewed as inalienable and hence could never be counted in favor of any other idea than one that is voiced by the citizen himself/herself.

One could even claim that it would be more democratic to fill the “empty chairs” via lottery in comparison to current practice. The process of voting has other dimensions that the example above does not take into account such as establishing legitimacy. The main point is to highlight the conclusion that the practice of counting ungiven voices as something else than ungiven voices is problematic in contemporary democracies. This is especially problematic for a political theory of dissent as the conception seems, at least partially, to be opposed to the practice of representation and the principle that someone can justifiably speak on behalf of another.
The practice of counting empty votes in favor of the system is problematic also because this practice legitimizes and upholds hegemony. To uphold hegemony delegitimizes dissent as the silent votes, which are potentially dissenting, are in a sense hijacked in favor of hegemony.

Regardless of how one approaches the idea of dissent and democratic representation it seems that they follow different but closely related logics. The idea of dissent seems to, at least initially, make no assumptions on what the people actually wants. Dissent is always expressed by the dissenters themselves. The logic of representation does the opposite by assuming that one can make correct assumptions about the desires of the citizenry.\(^6\)

The problem that arises from the opposed logics is tied to the way a political theory treats this opposition and consequently dissent. As described earlier, the place of dissent can be viewed as being internal to the systemic framework itself. This is the way the liberal democratic framework and partially the deliberative democratic framework approaches dissent. Dissent, thus, is seen as a problem that can be managed by the political system. The other option is to conceive of dissent and conflict as one of the constitutive features of politics. In other words, dissent is viewed as a feature that gives birth to politics and treated as something that should not be managed, neutralized or internalized by a system.

The basic idea that most democratic frameworks are founded in is the idea of a pluralism of values and the idea that in a democracy the people, whatever it may be, has the ultimately power in society. These values can come in conflict which leads to the fact that different theories of democracy gives us different ways to approach disagreement. Dissent is closely tied to the conflict of values. Hence, we can derive how the different theories of democracy treat dissent by viewing how they treat conflicts.

The two main approaches are thus, the approach that internalizes the conflict within the system and its opposite, the approach that views the conflict as the main constitutive factor of democracy.

The liberal democratic theories internalize conflict within the system (Ingram, 2006, pp. 37-39). This means that within liberalism the idea of politics as conflict is subsumed under a legal and institutional order. The other possible

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\(^6\) It may be that dissent may be in line with the idea of true democracy in the sense that Simon Critchley describes it. True democracy is true in the sense that it is true in relation to democracy. Critchley’s idea of true democracy is based on the Marxist notion of true democracy. The main idea is that governing should take place from where one stands and speaks. This is according to him an actual and actualizable feature of democracy (Critchley, 2005, pp. 227, 229). For a more thorough categorization of true democracy see Abensour, (1997, pp. 47-72). The concept of true democracy is strongly attached to Marx and carries with it quite heavy baggage. Thus when I say that the concept of dissent may be in line with the idea of true democracy I only mean the interpretation of Critchley where he states that governing should take place from where one stands and speaks.
approach would be the one that can be called the radical democratic approach where conflict is viewed as the main constitutive feature of democracy.

Hence, dissent can be viewed as being internal to the democratic institutional configuration or external. If dissent is viewed as internal, the solution is to manage dissent and see what kind of institutions can contain and channel this conflict as a justified decision making process. On the other hand if dissent is viewed as external, it is part of what constitutes democratic society and also the demos.

2.3.2 TOLERANCE AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Within the liberal framework dissent is managed through rights and institutions that set the rules and boundaries for the management differing values and views. This however leads to problems when the conflicts challenge the systemic boundaries.

Within the liberal framework challenges to the systemic boundaries are managed through the introduction of new concepts. Two examples are the concepts of tolerance and of civil disobedience.

Both concepts share the function of exhaust-valves for conflicts that the liberal system cannot manage normally. For example in a liberal democracy different opinions are managed by dividing them in the public and private sphere. The opinions that need managing are within the public sphere. The private sphere is where people can do almost whatever they please as long as it does not affect any else. When matters affect others, they are managed by politics. Politics is in this sense the administration of public conflicts.

There are public conflicts that cannot be managed by the system. There are also values that put the entire system into question. These values are managed through the introduction of the liberal concept of tolerance.

The concept of tolerance has its roots as an instrument that promotes civic peace and an alternative to violent exclusions of religious dissidents. (Brown, 2008, pp. 1-2) The original meaning of tolerance can be described through the usage of tolerance in other areas than political theory (Brown, 2008, pp. 26-27). For example with regard to plants, drought tolerance explains how much drought a plant can resist until it withers and dies. Also one could approach tolerance through biology and how much foreign substance a cell can absorb before it collapses.

Hence, tolerance manages how far one should accept the excesses that are harmful to society or its basic values. In other words, the requirement of toleration stretches until the values tolerated goes from being manageable to
being dangerous for society. This is a very shallow description of the concept of tolerance and its contemporary usage. However most of the conceptualization of tolerance shares a similar idea. It is possible that this excludes Anna Galeotti’s attempt to translate toleration into recognition (Galeotti, 2006).

My claim is that tolerance within the liberal system is introduced in order to contain such differences that that cannot be managed by the liberal system. A more thorough account of how tolerance contains politics can be found in Schaap (2005). Schaap views tolerance as an adequate policy for the management of conflict that seeks to contain them by depoliticizing the conflict over ultimate ends (Schaap, 2005, pp. 27,28,35). According to Schaap, liberal tolerance overcomes conflict by referring to the common interest to security (Schaap, 2005, p. 38). With regard to dissent, this means that tolerance forecloses the possibility to dissent by referring to reason and security. Toleration is according to Schaap, blind towards its political nature and exclusions. Further Schaap points out that an ethic of toleration domesticates antagonistic relations by limiting politics by referring to the public good of security (Schaap, 2005, p. 41).

Schaap’s account of the domestication of tolerance adds to my claim that such dissent that cannot be managed by the liberal system requires the introduction of another managing conception such as tolerance. Liberal tolerance manages justified dissent by referring to reason and security. This can be seen as a limiting the boundaries of democratically justified dissent.

Legitimate dissent, within liberalism, would in this sense be dissent that is either administered through the liberal framework or not harmful enough to challenge the entire system. Hence, in the same way as the requirement of tolerance extends as far as the tolerated does not threaten the system, dissent is justified as long as it does not challenge the system as such.

A similar case as for toleration can be made with regard to civil disobedience within the scope of liberal theory. Civil disobedience within the liberal framework mainly functions as a corrective mechanism for such injustices that are excessive and are not corrected through normal means. Normal means refer to such means that liberal democracy provides. The main idea is that severe injustices can arise through the fallibility of the system and its creators. These injustices can be so severe that it may be justified to break laws in order to challenge them. In Rawls theory one should only target excessive injustices and only when all other means are exhausted (Rawls, 1978 (1972)).

Even though Rawls definition of civil disobedience is very narrow and that the presentation given here is superficial, we can see that civil disobedience as a concept is introduced in order to manage the challenges to the laws of liberal society that cannot be managed by the system. Hence, dissent towards unjust

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7 In contemporary discussion toleration is usually presented as a positive value and quite often its feature of despising the tolerated is neglected.

8 For a better description and analysis of Rawls’ conception of civil disobedience see (Leppänen, 2008). For a wider definition of civil disobedience within liberal theory see for example (Bedau, 1991)
laws is managed through the introduction of civil disobedience in liberal theory. Thus, the liberal framework seems to require the internalization and domestication of conflict and all such conflicts that are not internalized are excluded as illegitimate. With regard to civil disobedience it is only potentially legitimate as one cannot be given a clear right to not obey laws. The legitimacy of civil disobedience is always evaluated afterwards.

However there are some ideas within the theories of civil disobedience that are similar to dissent. The similarities are found in Habermas theory of civil disobedience. For Habermas one feature of civil disobedience is that civil disobedience is required to remind us where the power in a democracy lies. For Habermas, civil disobedience is paradoxical in the sense that it requires the state to foster a healthy suspicion towards the state while the state is not able to give any institutional guarantees for disobedience (Habermas, 1985, pp. 103,105). Hence, civil disobedience in Habermas can be interpreted as a feature of society that fosters democratic citizenship in the same way as dissent.

For Habermas civil disobedience functions as a litmus test for democratic society (Habermas, 1985, p. 101). Even though one can claim that Rawls theory also functions as a litmus test, the opposite can also be claimed. The role of civil disobedience in Rawls is more about showing to what extent a constitutional democracy is liberal than about fostering democratic citizenship (Cohen & Arato, 1995, pp. 568-569) (Leppänen, 2008, p. 74). Hence, Habermas view of civil disobedience is not as narrow as Rawls’.

The reason for comparing Rawls and Habermas lies in the fact that Habermas refers to Rawls definition. However with regard to dissent and its place within different theories of democracy one can see some clear differences that are relevant with regard to dissent. Habermas posits a clearly stronger focus on the function of civil disobedience as fostering the opposition against the state by the state. Hence, Habermas positions civil disobedience in a way that allows it to foster democratic citizenship. The main difference of how the concept of civil disobedience is positioned arises from the different theoretical approaches. Rawls furthers the liberal democratic framework where Habermas belongs to the tradition of radical democracy. The radical democratic frameworks focus more on participatory democracy. Liberal frameworks focus on achieving a wide space of autonomy through rights and freedom. ⁹

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⁹ It is possible to give other more radical democratic interpretations of civil disobedience. One such example is Robin Celikates (Celikates, 2014, pp. 215, 220-221). For Celikates, one of the problems with the strictly liberal definition of civil disobedience is that practical forms of civil disobedience or resistance seem to avoid the Rawlsian definition. In his work, Celikates attempts to give civil disobedience a more radical reinterpretation. In my opinion it seems that Celikates needs to redefine civil disobedience in order to understand different forms of contemporary struggles. My aim is to show that civil disobedience within the liberal framework can be seen as an example of liberal domestication. Hence I agree with Celikates on the problems on civil disobedience within the liberal framework. However my aim is not to develop either civil disobedience or liberalism as such. My aim is to use the example civil disobedience as an example of liberalisms domestication of dissent. Hence, Celikates work may add to my account by
Within the scope of liberal theory there has also emerged some attempts to internalize the conflict between the underdog and the elite. Stuart White refers to Pettit (1997) and McCormick (2011) in order to describe some possibilities to institutionalize the contestatory functions in democracy that ensures electoral accountability in order to avoid majoritarian tyranny. The main idea is that, through an analysis of different forms of democracy, White raises the question if we should need to introduce new contestatory institutions in order to hinder the elites to use the electoral systems in their favor (White, 2014, pp. 24-26).

Again, there is a similar idea as earlier where a problem with regard to democracy is identified and the solution is to internalize and institutionalize the problem.

If we compare with other forms of democracy, especially the contemporary agonistic forms, these can approach the dynamics of elite and the people as the underdog when by positing conflict and power at the very center of their theories. One can assume that White is aware of this as he refers to some of such philosophers such as Mouffe and Young.

The mechanic of internalizing dissent in liberal theories leads to the eradication of dissent as a positive feature because dissent becomes by definition part of the existing system. Also all possibilities of transcending the boundaries of the liberal framework are either solved by introducing a new feature into the system to manage the transgression or if this is not possible through exclusion.

The exclusion of features that the liberal democratic system cannot internalize is justified from the point of view of the liberal democratic system. This delegitimizes dissent because dissent, as I view it, arises, at least partially, from being excluded. The impossibility of challenging liberalisms justified exclusions delegitimizes dissent. Hence, the liberal political theories seem to have a problem to take into account dissent as a positive feature. I assume that this has to do with the general focus on the distribution of rights and freedoms where the radical democratic frameworks focus on participatory democracy.

2.3.3 TACIT CONSENT

The case can and has been made that the disaffection with politics and the widening distance between the people and politicians leads to a general disinterest to participate (White, 2014). According to White these phenomena put together can lead to a tyranny where powerful elites can control the majority in our parliaments.
Conceptually I will claim that one of the reasons for such tyrannical effect is that the “silent majority” sides through passivity or design with the ruling ideas. Such siding or consent is not active; it is consent by inactivity, in other words tacit consent. Those who tacitly consent are occupying the conceptual space between active dissent and active consent. In other words, dissent and dissensus are seen as active concepts of disagreement; their counterparts, consent and consensus are counted as active concepts of agreement.

The case has been made, for example by Mouffe, that the drive for consensus is one of the roots for depoliticization. I do not view consent or consensus themselves as the roots of depoliticization or disaffection. On the contrary, as dissent is an immanent manifestation of disagreement, consent as its counterpart is an immanent and active manifestation of agreement with hegemony.

I claim that the problem of depoliticization arises from the grey area of tacit consent that occupies the conceptual space between dissent and consent. Hence, conceptually speaking, depoliticization cannot intrinsically be derived from either of the concepts of dissensus or consensus.

I claim that one of the reasons for criticizing consent and consensus as depoliticizing has its roots in the liberal practice of counting unexpressed votes in favor of hegemony. With regard to depoliticization, my claim is that to actively consent or actively dissent with hegemony should conceptually speaking, be viewed as being as politically invigorating as the other.

However when the tacit consenters are counted on the side of those who consent we are making a false interpretation of reality. In other words, one of the features of hegemony is that it produces a picture of reality that viewed as objective in the sense that it is the unquestioned idea that one generally can refer to when making social claims in society. For those who consent, this view of reality is justified if consent is based on sufficient knowledge.

However those in the grey area of tacit consent are not making any claims about agreement or disagreement with regard to the view of reality. Thus, objectivity is imposed on them because they have not taken any stance in the matter. This leads to a situation where the dominant opinion is forced upon them regardless of their real opinions if any. This produces a widespread hegemonic view of reality.

Viewed like this, tacit consent is not viewed as a phenomenon that can be observed. On the contrary, tacit consent is viewed as a specific way in which liberalism represents political inactivity. Thus my claim is that, tacit consent can be viewed as a liberal strategy of producing consent and domesticating dissent.

In a democracy the ideal that everyone should have the right to voice ones opinion and have the right to formulate a stance in political matters is central. When this ideal is connected to the above mentioned phenomena where the hegemonic view is forced upon the individual one can see how this imposition of a picture of reality is illegitimate from a democratic point of view.
If this is true, then the critique of consensus as depoliticizing should not be directed at consensus itself as the problem lies with the mechanism of illegitimately hijacking the consent of those whose only expression is inactivity. In a sense the critique should be directed towards the misunderstanding of the inalienable right of the political agent in a democracy to express ones will and if not expressed to only be interpreted as not being expressed.

Of course, if the hegemonic picture of reality would be objectively true and everyone that consents to it would do so on the basis of sufficient knowledge there would not be any problems. The problem is that unexpressed voices are counted in favor of consensus even if they by right do not belong to either those who dissent or those who consent. Unexpressed voices in a democracy should not be counted as anything else than voices that cannot be counted in favor of anything else than being unexpressed.

Thus, the reason that tacit consent manifests as a “silent agreement” has its roots in how liberal democracy represents inactivity in order to “hijack” consent. From a radical democratic point of view, this view entails a misunderstanding of one’s inalienable right to express ones will. Further this practice removes the possibility and power of the agent himself/herself to shift this will in favor or against anything else. If this is true, then, the disaffection with consensus-based politics lies partially in how liberal democracy domesticates dissent. The radical democratic critique starts from the critique of a conceptual misunderstanding of the agent of democracy and of the hegemonic struggle in liberal democracy.

This misunderstanding of the inalienable right to express ones opinion in a democracy is a central feature for practical effects of illusory democracy such as “majority tyranny”, “aristocracy of orators” and the hijacking of parliaments by powerful elites. Also the claim to speak in the name of the people is similarly based on the same mechanism of hijacking tacit consent. However, the claim that one speaks in the name of the people, is not a feature that only would exist in liberal democracy. It is a strategy that is employed by, amongst others, social movements and populist movements.

By giving dissent and consent a radical democratic interpretation, it is possible to view both consent and dissent as political concepts, which are politically invigorating. Dissent does this by challenging the state of affairs and consent by defending the status quo and thus invigorating our democracy through politicization. In other words, consent can also be interpreted as the position where one is struggling to uphold or maintain a hegemonic configuration in society. In a sense, dissent and consent describe the opposites of the hegemonic struggle where consent sides with hegemony and dissent the opinions that challenges the hegemonic view.

Tacit consent and the idea of the silent majority hides differing opinions in society as all the different opinions within the group of tacit consent is unknown. This fortifies existing hegemony. Tacit consent is the opposite of dissent in two ways. First, it is the opposite of dissent in the sense that tacit consent is partisan towards the hegemonic configuration. However this agreement is not an active agreement but an agreement through passivity and
inaction. Thus, tacit consent is the opposite of dissent also through its passivity which itself leads to taking the stance of the hegemonic view.

Because this tacit consent in principle could be awakened, there is the potential for a democratic upheaval or sudden change in dissent. In other words, if those who tacitly consent would become active and side with the dissenters the possibility of an upheaval arises. Hence, the idea of revolution is intrinsic to the concept of dissent.

Even though there is a potential for revolution or widespread chaos in dissent, it does not lead to a right to “quench” this resistance or for the requirement that the dissenters abstain in the name of stability.\(^\text{10}\)

As a metaphor one could equate this with the public transportation system in a city. Let’s consider the situation where all citizens should use the system at the same time. This would probably lead to the collapse of the transportation system. However one could not claim on these grounds that any specific group of people should not have the right to use the system at a particular time. In the same way, one cannot claim that people should abstain from dissenting and possible chaos in the name of general stability.

On the contrary I claim that the potential for sudden change and upheaval leads to the duty for the state to listen and take into account the claims of the dissenters. In other words, because dissent can lead to chaos, and a democratic state does not have a right to quench dissent, the state is required to hear the dissenters on the grounds of justice, democracy and also in order to maintain a stable democratic society. Instability is hence interpreted as having its ground in the failure of the state not listening and attributing voice. In other words, dissent leads to a duty for the state to listen and take into account the dissenters claims. A similar idea can also be found in (Machiavelli, 1996, p. 16)

In general, dissent should allow any agenda as it does not violate a groups or an individual’s possibility to participate on par in society or diminish the possibility to dissent. This is similar to the ideal of liberal autonomy where one is free to do anything as long as one does not violate any others similar right. However if dissent is seen as articulated discontent and social movements are seen as the agents of dissent, it follows that only the movements that functions around a articulated agenda can be defined as social movements. In other words, a movement with a hidden agenda is not a social movement. It is a movement but cannot be counted as having ties to society as its demands and goals remain hidden.

The requirement that a social movement has to articulate its agenda to be counted as social movements is derived from its social character. It is a movement seeking to change, challenge or “discuss” issues that arises from society itself. Thus the social character of the movement implies that it has to have an articulated agenda as it is a group of interacting people working for a common cause, a cause which has its roots in democratic society. Thus, the

\(^\text{10}\) Rawls states this as an requirement for Civil Disobedience (Rawls, 1978 (1972))
group interacts with society as a whole. This interaction is impossible if the agenda is not articulated.
2.4 CENTRAL ASPECTS OF A POLITICAL THEORY OF DISSENT

2.4.1 ARTICULATION

One requirement of dissent is that it is articulated or voiced. I make this assumption on the basis of using dissent as a political concept and that dissent should be a concept that is positively tied to active societal change. To highlight the active features I will characterize unvoiced dissent as discontent. This characterization is analytical in the sense that it serves to highlight the active feature of dissent.

The passive form of dissent does not necessarily constitute discontent, the assumption is merely done in order to highlight that dissent as a positive concept with ties to social change necessarily has to be voiced. In other words, I do not make any claims of a definition of a possible passive counterpart of dissent. This categorization is instrumental for the definition of dissent.

The idea that dissent has to be articulated or voiced ties dissent to action. This tie is established by the fact that voiced dissent constitutes dissent as a medium of social change. The idea goes roughly as follows. In order to agree or disagree with social change the people in a democratic society has to be aware of this possibility. Hence, it has to be articulated.

The coupling of dissent and action ties the idea of dissent to the theory of social movements. Social movements are viewed as constituted by dissent and one of their functions is to gather dissenters. In a sense, social movements gather and channels dissent in society. A similar idea can be found in Laclau (2005, pp. 72-74).

The idea that dissent constitutes social movements is established through the feature of dissent as voiced. When dissenting people gather around specific demands and organize, they constitute a social movement.

What is important in this description of how a social movement is constituted is that they form around demands which in turn are done on the basis of dissent. The claim is that demands are made on the basis of dissent.

It seems that dissent is a fundamental feature in a democratic society. The whole idea of democracy is to answer the question of how we should approach the plurality of values and opinions in society.

A political theory of democracy is thus viewed as a political theory that attempts to answer the question of how we should cope with pluralism and differences of opinion politically. If this is true, then we can conclude that democracy is ontologically based on the idea of difference. One way of explaining how we can have a shared view of society even though the idea of democratic society is constituted around difference is through the idea of hegemonic power. This idea relies on the notion that a shared view of society is a partially imposed hegemonic view.
2.4.2 HEGEMONY, DEMOCRATIC AND UNDEMOCRATIC DEMANDS

I view hegemony in a similar way as Mouffe and Laclau. Hegemony is according to them when objectivity and power meets. Their definition of hegemony is detached from the Marxist conception. A common sense definition is that hegemony is the dominant political view.

The idea that commonality is created through hegemony is fairly common. However if we take the idea a bit further we can also establish that this commonality is based on difference. First, as the democracy is constituted around difference then it also follows that the mechanism of creating a commonality can be traced to this foundational difference. When hegemony is established hegemony itself creates dissent by imposing a unified view that cannot be shared by everyone. The hegemonic view cannot be shared by everyone because it universalizes a particular view. This necessarily creates those who are counted and taken into account and those who are left outside. Hence, hegemony itself functions as a cause of dissent.

This line of thought can also tie the idea of dissent to the idea of equality. The hegemonic view creates unity through the universalization of a particular. If the society that hegemony is imposed upon is constituted on foundational difference then those claims that are made against hegemony can be viewed as claims made on the basis of not agreeing with the hegemonic view. In a sense these claims are made as critical claims of not being taken into account in the hegemonic view. Hence, those being left “outside” are created as different and deviant in relation to the unified hegemonic view in power. This leads to the interpretation that the demands are made on the basis of being identified as different. The opposite of difference is similarity. With regard to institutions this translates to similar or equal institutional treatment. Hence, dissent that has its roots in the exclusion from the common world can be interpreted as demands that are made on the basis of equality. Thus, dissent is at least partially constituted by the value of equality.¹¹

The justification for dissent has its grounds in the foundations of democratic society. If dissent arises from the fundaments of democratic society, then it follows that the claims and demands made on that basis are also at least partially democratic. Because the democratic nature of dissent can be established through the link to the foundations of democratic society it is required by society as such to engage with dissent with proper seriousness. Hence, dissent cannot just be put aside as an annoying or harmful feature in society.

The above mentioned idea is similar to Ernesto Laclau’s idea that the making of demands requires identification with community which in turn establishes a

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¹¹ A similar idea can be found in Rancière’s theory of politics. The idea for Rancière is that political demands are constituted by equality is the same while the starting point is different.
link to existing society. I am only taking the same idea one step further to show that all claims made on this basis are democratically justified. Laclau defines democratic demands as being formulated to the system by an underdog and that there is an egalitarian dimension implicit in these demands and that their emergence presupposes an exclusion or deprivation of some kind (Laclau, 2005a, p. 125).

I do not claim that all demands or all dissent in society is democratic or justified. I propose that we can identify undemocratic demands in two different ways. Both ways presuppose the acceptance of the centrality of dissent within a radical democratic framework.

The first one is such dissent or demands that would narrow the boundaries of dissent itself. Thus, societal demands that would narrow the possibilities of dissent are undemocratic because, they would entail the potential exclusion of justified values and opinions.

Hegemonic plurality refers to the idea that the unifying factor of society, hegemony, is always viewed as a provisional but necessary feature. Hegemonic plurality can be viewed as an interpretation of hegemony as a regime. Demands that do not accept hegemonic plurality are undemocratic. Hegemonic imposition is undemocratic if one does not accept the idea that any hegemonic configuration can be legitimately altered. Hegemony as being provisional refers to the idea that the contents of the current hegemonic view could always have been different. Hence, hegemonic plurality is the view that there are always multiple conceivable hegemonic configurations at once in society. This is the second way of identifying undemocratic demands. Demands that do not accept hegemonic plurality are undemocratic as they attempt to impose a specific view that is seen as eternal.

For example fundamentalist or fascist claims cannot be seen to be grounded in any idea of hegemonic plurality. As I claimed earlier dissent arises from being excluded, oppressed, silenced or treated unequally by the institutions in society. This has its roots in the imposition of the hegemonic particular view. Fundamentalist, totalitarian or even neo-liberal demands can be seen as attempts to impose a particular hegemonic view. In other words, the grounds for these kinds of claims are not in the acceptance of democratic foundational difference but in a totalitarian hegemonic unity. Thus, such claims reject the idea of provisional hegemony. They also reject the idea that the unifying commonality of society is merely a provisional hegemonic construction. This leads to the necessity of upholding unity through an oppressing system of exclusion. In other words, these kinds of views cannot view accept a hegemonic pluralism that is necessary for democracy.

The idea of undemocratic and democratic claims can also be extended to social movements in a similar manner as democratic and undemocratic demands. To justify the evaluation of movements of this axis it should be possible to make it in practice.

If we take the text book case of movements oriented towards Nazism, the argument against the accepting of such movements would go as follows. If the
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movement has articulated its agenda, it would become clear that the movement strives to impose a view of societal unity that categorically excludes a part from society such as immigrants, Jews ethnic minorities etc. It would also be clear that the movement aims to quench the possibility to dissent against its views in order to uphold unity.

However more often than not, such movements do not openly articulate their agenda. At this point however their claims are not by definition democratic as one of the requirements of such claims is that they are articulated. Hence, for claims to be democratic it is necessary that they are articulated. This also means that unspoken claims and goals can be viewed as undemocratic. To articulate ones demands does not necessarily make the demands themselves democratic. The articulation gives the demands the required democratic form that allows the public to evaluate their content.

Democratic social movements are constituted around democratic demands. It is unclear what a nazi-oriented movement would constitute. In a sense they are not by definition even social movements as they are not taking part in society by articulating their demands. Such movements cannot be seen as being constituted by democratic dissent.

As a nazi-oriented movement cannot trace its justification to the democratic foundations of society, it will be categorized as something else than a social movement and will fall within the scope of tolerance in society. In other words, the Nazi-oriented movement is tolerated as long as it is not perceived as a threat in society. Thus, as such a movement gains influence its agenda will be necessarily be made clear. When its agenda is clear, such a movement can be justly excluded and marginalized because it cannot trace its claims the democratic and participatory societal foundation that democratic social movements can.

The idea that social movements necessarily have articulated agendas ties them to conceptions of justice and democracy with institutional ties. Hence, viewed like this, the conceptions of democracy and justice only make sense when they can be applied in reality.

The idea can be illustrated through the idea that democracy necessarily requires undemocratic principles to uphold. I claim that this is false. The idea goes roughly as follows. Normally when we make the claim that democracy requires undemocratic principles to survive one often refers to means that ensure that democracy is not voted away or hinders the rise to power by undemocratic groups. The fallacy arises when we think of democracy on an ideal level and make claims that refer to reality. In other words, so long as we only speak on a level of democratic principle the idea that democracy requires undemocratic principles makes sense. When we think of democracy in practice we require a situated concept of democracy. This distorts the meaning of the divide between ideal and real.

What we need is a concept of democracy that has some substantive content when situating it in reality. This does not mean that the concept of democracy is not contested or up for redefinition. On the contrary the concept of democracy
necessarily has to be a concept that can be contested and redefined. However we still require some content for the conception when situating it in reality.

It seems that we require a concept that at the same time has substantive content but at the same time is open for redefinition. One way of illustrating the benefits of a situated conception is through an example. This will also highlight why I view the idea that democracy requires undemocratic practices as meaningless.

I will later argue that a conception of radical democracy requires a conception of justice that is based on participatory parity. This idea consists of the idea that a just society is based on the norm that everyone should be able to participate on par in matters that concern themselves (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 35-36).

Some of the undemocratic practices that democracy supposedly requires are tied to the idea that we should not be able to vote away democracy and that democracy should be able to protect itself from the rise of undemocratic movements. The idea of participatory parity can answer both of these challenges by showing that the proposed actions are inherently undemocratic and, hence by referring to participatory parity, it is possible to exclude or discard such challenges. Hence, we will not need any undemocratic principles.

Let’s first consider the idea of voting away democracy. Voting away democracy lessens the ability of people to participate on par in society. Thus, voting away democracy is inherently undemocratic because it refers to the real possibility to participate in society as peers. Hence, one cannot claim on this ground that democracy requires undemocratic principles to be sustained.

When we take the other example with the undemocratic movement we can make a similar evaluation. One cannot justify the rise to power by an undemocratic movement with an articulated agenda by referring to the real possibility of people to participate on par in society. The undemocratic movement would hinder the possibility of participation for all. Hence, such a movement can legitimately be excluded on the grounds that the practical realization of its agenda would be undemocratic because it weakens the ability to participate on par in society.

The idea of democracy as a practical concept ties it to institutional reality. In other words, we need to refer the concepts of justice and democracy to societal practices in order to make sense of both the concepts and the institutions. This also allows the concepts of democracy and justice to be constantly contested as their meaning is derived from real struggles between social groups and institutions. Because the concepts are directed at institutional reality they are by definition normative.

Now if we return to the idea of social movements we can see that the institutional ties leads to the requirement that movements have an articulated agenda. Democracy and justice are what movements struggle for. The movements justify their struggles by referring them to institutional reality. Under this interpretation, social movements are formed around ideas of dissension with the institutional arrangements of society. If we combine the
notion that everyone should have a voice in democratic society with the idea that a movement has an agenda that is directed towards the institutional arrangements in society, then it is required that the agenda is articulated. If the agenda is not articulated there is the danger that a movement lose the democratic justification on which they are initially constituted.

To have a voice and a possibility of being heard requires that the criticism is articulated. The requirement of operating with an articulated agenda also comes from the idea that in a democracy the only one who can legitimately define and speak for oneself is oneself. This also applies to movements. Thus, it is required that a movement has an articulated agenda as it is the only agent that can define what it is about.

The idea that everyone should have a voice and be able to define themselves is derived from the concept of democracy. If we would allow for someone else to define ourselves in a meaningful way, then we would not have to allocate voice to everyone. If someone else could speak for us and in our name then for example the agenda of movements could be given a justified description by someone else. Hence, democracy would not require people to have a voice but a group of good interpreters. In a sense it would entail the outsourcing of the spirit of democracy. From this it follows that in order to be heard a movement and also an individual has to have the power of self-characterization.

With regard to democracy the inclusion/exclusion of undemocratic movements goes as follows. Justice is defined as the thing that movements are struggling for in a particular historical time. In this struggle even undemocratic movements are taken into account. A social movement is defined as a movement that has an articulated agenda with regard to the institutional arrangements of society.

When movements are being heard, we can make the evaluation if the claims of the movement are democratic or undemocratic against the background of participatory parity. Thus, democracy requires us to choose the option that promotes participatory parity. This can be seen as one example of how the view of justice as participatory parity sets limits for democracy.

It is possible to have movements that have hidden agendas or articulates their claims falsely. Democracy requires us to “hear” their claims and make our evaluation on that basis even if there is a suspicion that they may be false. This is required because the right to characterize a movement’s agenda should belong to the movement. The requirement for the characterization of the agenda by the movement is based on dissent. If the characterization of a movement would be given by someone else than from the movement itself, then one possible source for dissent would be the characterization. Hence, the power to characterize dissent and also movements that are based on dissent should belong to the movements themselves.

From the point of view of democracy this is not harmful as we still should operate on the axis of making our decisions on the basis what kind of institutional arrangements are required to promote participatory parity. For example, a fascist movement can hide its agenda and for example pose as a
movement furthering free speech. As this particular movement’s impact on societal institutions is made as institutional claims based on the idea of free speech, the fascist agenda is not that harmful. However if the true agenda is articulated or identified, then the movement is excluded as undemocratic.

The evaluation of the democratic or undemocratic character of a movement is done in two stages. First, every movement is counted as they are perceived to arise from society. At this stage even movements that clearly are perceived as undemocratic are counted. In the second stage we can refer to the goals of the movements when they are articulated. At this stage we can make the evaluation of the undemocratic or democratic nature of a social movement.

2.4.3 INSTITUTIONS
I will argue for the view that dissent and especially dissenting social movements should be seen as targeting institutional reality. I do not think that a radical democratic view should defend a view of institutional withdrawal. Institutional reality can be a cause for dissent. Hence, any reaction towards it should take this institutional framework into account. Further, it may be that withdrawal can be interpreted as a strategy of institutional engagement.

Dissent is directed against different forms of injustice that produces unwanted effects. As an example we can conceive of the dissenters as people that are suffering from material, cultural or identity-based injustices. These would be cases where dissent is directed towards injustices that arise from the institutional configuration of society. Dissent can also simply arise from disagreement with certain policies and hence the role of dissent would be to change them. In other words, any idea that seeks to change the current state of affairs in society can be when voiced counted as dissent. Dissenters belong by definition to the subaltern as they are in opposition to influence.

One of the aims of dissent as a positive feature is to remove institutional injustices in society. In such cases dissent is directed towards the oppressive feature in society. This can entail that the people that disagree with some feature of our society form a social movement around the cause. Iris Young defines one function of social movements as an attempt to encompass the unrealized possibilities of emancipation that is latent in institutions (Young, 1990, pp. 66-67). In other words, the social movements seek to remove institutional injustices and hence further the cause of freedom and equality. The centrality of conflict is present as the movements are in a conflictual relation to the institutions that are vehicles of oppression. The latent possibilities of emancipation are thus unmasked through the medium of social conflict.

Through the institutional linkage and the democratic nature of dissent, the concept of dissent is tied to reality. However dissent and the social movements based upon it should not be interpreted as interest driven activities. On the
contrary dissent and the social movements should be interpreted as movements that further value-based discussion. This is because of the central goal of democratizing undemocratic publics. According to Young, such movements attempt to break out beyond the limits of interest group pluralism with the goal of producing new and democratized participatory publics (Young, 1990, p. 67).

One of the problems in contemporary capitalist societies is what Habermas calls the colonization of our lifeworld (Habermas, 1987). The main idea is that if we allow instrumental reason to govern in areas that should be governed by communicative rationality we start making politics and political claims on the basis of interest. If interest is the basis of politics we reduce and set aside the plurality of values and replace them with the plurality of interests. In other words, we substitute value pluralism for interest pluralism. I claim that as dissent seems to democratize publics it can be viewed as an attempt to reintroduce values to already instrumentalized publics and politics.

In Habermasian terms, dissent could be interpreted as an attempt to turn around the invasion of our lifeworld (Habermas, 1987, pp. 305-396). Within the Habermasian framework dissent belongs to the sphere of communicative reason. According to Young’s interpretation of social movements they capture the insurgent demands of new social movements that cannot be managed within the limits of interest group pluralism. This idea is similar to my interpretation of Habermas’ life world thesis.

I would add to Young’s idea that dissent is the feature that captures the insurgent demands; the movements are the agent that furthers them through the medium of social conflict. Interpreted like this, social conflict is based on dissent.

Oppression is, according to Young, embedded in unquestioned norms and symbols that can be found in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following them (Young, 1990, pp. 39-42). Hence, oppression is not something that has to be consciously imposed by someone.

One feature of dissent and consequently social movements is to remove oppressing and subordinating practices from institutions. This feature shows us two things about dissent and social movements. First, it clearly shows the emancipatory potential of dissent and the new social movements. Consequently, social conflict can also be viewed as having the potential for emancipation as it is one medium that dissent can be communicated through.

Society can be viewed as a division between a political community and the political order. The idea is that the political community is the legitimating factor for the political order that governs it. The idea of dissent belongs to the political community as dissent has its roots in a disagreement with the order (Laclau, 2005a). If this is true then dissent and the movements can also be viewed as a legitimating factor for the political order in a democratic society. The order is in a sense legitimated through how it treats dissent. A democracy should accept and guarantee dissent in society.

Dissent can thus be viewed as factor on which one can measure how democratic a society is. In other words, it functions as grounds for justification.
as dissent functions as a litmus test for democracy where the deciding factor is how well society can accept dissent and potential subversive activity against the order.

One of dissent’s features can be seen as the removal of institutional injustices. Oppression itself does not need a clear agent of oppression. Systemic injustices or the power of the oppressor is one of education and practices. Interpreted in Foucauldian terms the power of the oppressor is governmentality. If we combine this idea with the idea that dissent has its roots in the legitimating part of society, a new feature of dissent is revealed. Because dissent is grounded in the legitimating factor of society and oppression at least partially is a practice of governmentality, dissent can be interpreted as a feature that unmasks unwanted practices of governmentality.
2.5 A PRELIMINARY OUTLINE AND THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A POLITICAL THEORY OF DISSENT

A political theory of dissent should take dissent seriously in the sense that dissent is not wholly internalized within any systemic framework. Such a theory should allow for the self-characterization of dissent. This means that the power of characterizing the substance of any particular dissent should remain with the dissenter. Hence a political theory of dissent should avoid using a framework that characterizes dissent in a way that goes against the principle of giving the power of characterization to the dissenters. Because the main flaw in liberal democratic theories institutionalize and contains dissent the requirement of the self-characterization of dissent requires a political theory of dissent to be framed within a radical democratic framework.

I treat dissent as a way of participating in society. Because dissent is viewed as participation it is tied to the concepts of democracy and justice. Hence, a political theory of dissent requires a justified combination of justice and democracy in order to promote participation, and also dissent, while still being able to give dissent limits that can be conceived as just and democratic.

Because the boundaries of dissent are limited and dissent should be able to challenge almost every feature of society, dissent requires a concept of democracy that is continuously in motion and challenges its own boundaries. This can also be taken as an additional argument for framing a political theory of dissent within the scope of radical democracy.

The possibility to dissent should be viewed as a right. This is required by value pluralism and the plurality of differing opinions that it is based on. In other words, because there are different values there will be disagreement. As long as there is disagreement in society there will also be dissent. Hence, as dissent is always present in a value pluralist democratic society and when it is viewed as a way of participation, it gets the same character of being a right as any other way of participation. Further, the articulation of dissent should be viewed as an expression of voice in democratic society. This adds to the right-like nature of dissent.

The right to dissent promotes individual participatory freedom. It does this by guaranteeing the possibility and right to dissent and the power to characterize it from where one stands. Because dissent may stretch the boundaries for participation and democracy, it will also widen the individuals means of participation. It is, however, impossible to institutionalize dissent fully as the potential for dissent is limited only by dissent and the norm of participatory parity. In other words, any rules for dissent may delimit forms of dissent with strong democratic justification.

A political theory of dissent views dissent as a positive contribution to society. The positive contributions are at least that dissent fosters democratic citizenship, it removes injustices and diminishes depoliticization, it aims to
improve society’s institutional framework and it strengthens participatory parity in society.

A political theory of dissent needs to use a justified logic of change in order to explain how society changes. This logic should not be a logic which sets unnecessary limits for dissent. In other words the logic of change in a political theory should be one that is compatible with dissent, its self-characterization and participatory parity.

Dissent is a legitimate form of activity in democratic society. Social movements come into being around democratic demands that are based on dissent. Hence, the democratic legitimacy of dissent and social movements is established through the link between dissent and democratic demands.

Social movements can be conceived as the agents or vehicles of dissent in society. They movements are constituted around a cause which can be interpreted as articulated dissent. A political theory of dissent should also be able to provide a possibility to make the distinction between democratic and undemocratic dissent and demands.

The right to dissent and the feature that social movements channel dissent in society may lead to widespread chaos. This feature only strengthens the requirement of the state to listen and take dissent into account properly. Hence, dissent requires the state take seriously into account the claims of the dissenters. Hence, a radical democratic theory of dissent puts the burden of stability on the state by ascribing it the duty to take democratic dissent into account.

The preliminary requirements for a radical democratic political theory of dissent are:

(1) A framework that enables dissent, in other words does not institutionalize or contain dissent

(2) A framework that allows for the self-characterization of dissent

(3) A framework that is based on a logic of change that does not constrain dissent

(4) A conception of democracy as being in constant motion;

(5) A conception of justice that recognizes democracy as a primary good and enables us to distinguish between democratic and undemocratic demands.

(6) A view that dissent is a positive feature in society
3 DISSENT AND JUSTICE

3.1 RADICAL DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE

The main aim of this part is to investigate what kind of conception of justice is most suited for a radical democratic political theory of dissent. I will argue for the view that one of the most justified views on radical democratic justice within radical democratic theory is one that is based on the norm of participatory parity.

I view the concepts of justice and democracy as equally important. In other words, justice and democracy are closely related and one cannot give precedence to either of the concepts.

Many radical democratic theories focus primarily on democracy and lack a concept of justice. For example, Mouffe and Ranciére create theories of democracy and contestatory politics but lack a concept of justice. One of the few radical democratic theorists with an articulated concept of justice is Nancy Fraser.

Radical democratic theories of deliberation focus on justice within the space of the deliberative moment. This means that the concept of justice employed does not surpass the boundaries for deliberation. I claim that a radical democratic theory requires a wide concept of justice that transcends the deliberative moment but does not limit dissent.

Central features of dissent are to foster participatory freedom and also to remove institutional injustices. An interpretation of justice that takes into account the centrality of dissent should be able to enable dissent. Further, it is important that the content of justice is such that the dissenters could define their dissension themselves, at least to a certain extent. I will argue that a view of justice that is based on the norm of participatory parity is the one that has the strongest justification.

The justification of this view is that it sets limits for democracy at the same time as the conception is very wide. The conception of justice as participatory parity is wider than a concept of deliberative justice as it transcends the deliberative moment.

With this I mean that is a wider principle than for example the all-affected principle. The all-affected principle is an important part of participatory parity but the principle of participatory parity can cover a wider array of social injustices.

As Fraser points out, the all-affected principle has two main problems (Fraser, 2008b, p. 64). The first one is that, the all-affected principle is prone to what Fraser calls “...the *reductio ad absurdum* of the butterfly effect...” This means that the all-affected principle fails because potentially everyone is affected by every decision in a globalized world. The other problem is that the
all-affected treats relations in an objectivistic manner and hence, relegates the question of who justice should affect to social science.

As a part of Fraser’s norm of participatory parity she treats the question of who the subject of justice should be, through the idea that all those who are subject to any given governance structure has a moral standing as subjects of justice towards it. She claims that her stance is better than the all-affected principle because, in her view:

...what turns a collection of people into fellow subjects of justice is neither shared citizenship or nationality, nor common possession of abstract personhood, nor the sheer fact of causal interdependence, but rather their joint subjection to a structure of governance that sets the ground rules that govern their interaction. (Fraser, 2008b, p. 65)

The discussion on justice will initially focus on the Recognition/Redistribution debate between Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth. Both Fraser and Honneth can arguably be counted as two of the most important philosophers on justice within the scope of radical democratic theory besides Habermas.

One central feature of the Recognition/Redistribution debate is that it focuses on the normative core of justice. Hence, the debate is partially about the concept of justice a radical democratic theory should employ.

One important aspect of the debate is to notice that Honneth does not claim that his theory of recognition is a complete theory of justice for a modern capitalist society. He restricts his theory to the recognition order. Nancy Fraser on the other hand strives to create a theory of justice that takes into account a modern capitalist society as a whole. With regard to Fraser’s theory it is important to notice that it is precisely her wider scope that allows her to create one of the few radical democratic theories that connects the concepts of democracy and justice.

The debate between Honneth and Fraser highlights some philosophical challenges that Fraser’s theory of radical democratic justice needs to overcome in order to answer in order to be philosophically justified. Later in this work I will argue that the incorporation of Laclau’s theory of democracy with Fraser’s theory of justice as participatory parity creates one possible radical democratic theory that is founded on dissent.

As I mentioned one of the main disputes in the Recognition/Redistribution debate is on the normative core of justice. Despite this, the debate can be read as a debate on how strong philosophical foundations a political concept of justice should have. It is quite obvious that Honneth can claim to have a stronger philosophical foundation for his theory.

Fraser’s goal on the other hand is to achieve a usable theory of justice. In this sense the weaker philosophical foundations may be tied to the practical usability of a theory of justice.
The different take on foundations is also tied to the different projects of the respective philosophers. Honneth strives to find the roots for feelings of injustice and seeks to secure a stronger way to tie the Habermasian theory in reality while Fraser has a more practical approach and ties the concept of justice to existing institutional reality and the possibility for emancipation that lies within them.

It is true that there are some clear philosophical problems in Fraser’s theory. As I mentioned one possible solution can be found in Laclau’s theories of hegemony and populist democracy.
3.2 FRASER’S THEORY OF JUSTICE AS PARTICIPATORY PARITY

3.2.1 INTRODUCTION
In this chapter I will present Nancy Fraser’s conception of justice as participatory parity. One of the main sources that I rely on is her articles in the joint book *Redistribution or Recognition* (2003) with Axel Honneth. In the article *Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics* (2003a), which is also published elsewhere, Fraser defends a view where justice should be approached through two spheres of justice. Later in *Scales of Justice* (2008) Fraser introduces a third political sphere of justice. In other words, Fraser’s theory of justice evolves from a dualist perspective into a perspective based on three spheres of justice. The way that I present Fraser’s theory of justice follows this evolution which means that my presentation will cover both the dualist perspective and then the introduction of the third political sphere.

Fraser's general view is that justice should hold the position of the most important virtue in society. Justice is according to Fraser the first social virtue and it is required in order for other virtues to flourish (Fraser, 2012, p. 42).

Nancy Fraser divides her framework of justice in spheres which each corresponds to a different kind of remedy for a different structural injustice. These remedies are redistribution, which corresponds to the injustices of socio-economic inequality, recognition which corresponds with status inequalities of cultural identity, and representation which corresponds to political misrepresentation or misframing.

In this chapter the focus is more on the sphere of recognition than the other two spheres. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, the debate between Honneth and Fraser is mainly a debate if one should view recognition as a matter of self-realization or political justice. The second reason is that questions that relate to distributive justice are treated extensively by other philosophers. In this thesis, representation is treated partially later in the chapter on democracy. My view is that representation is better treated in terms related to democracy. Hence, my interpretation is that one can give more substance to Fraser’s sphere of representation by treating it through concepts such as hegemony.

Fraser’s framework is an attempt to mediate between the decline of the socialist imaginary and the shift to identity politics. It is be worth to note that Fraser’s division of injustices should be taken as an analytic distinction, and that real world injustices usually overlap in the different spheres. She writes that “...virtually every struggle against injustice, when properly understood, implies demands for both redistribution and recognition.” (Fraser, 1997, p. 12). To this quote one could also add the third sphere of representation.

Even though this distinction is an analytical distinction it is according to Fraser historically determined (Fraser, 2003a, p. 9). This means that the historical evolution of capitalism determines the concepts we use, thus also
determining the analytic divisions we make. It may be that Fraser views this distinction according to the Marxist dialectic of base and superstructure. If the distinction is interpreted this way, Fraser would open for Laclau’s critique of dialectical logic as being too deterministic. However it may be that this analytic distinction merely implies a quite standard view from critical theory where the historical evolution of society is connected to the conceptual frameworks we employ. Regardless of the interpretation given to Fraser's framework, my interpretation of hegemony can describe the evolutions of different conceptualizations through hegemonic struggle.

The different spheres of justice have two points of reference, a political and a philosophical (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 9-11). Philosophically they refer to the normative paradigms developed by a theorist and politically they refer to the claims that social movements make in the public sphere.

The normative core of Fraser multi-partite framework of justice is participatory parity. Within Fraser’s framework, this means that injustices are unjust because they hinder the possibility and means for adult members of our society to interact with one another as peers.

The overall goal of Fraser's project is to analyze, and to identify an overarching emancipatory political project (Fraser, 1997, p. 3). Her understanding of justice is made for and derives from the development of the “new social” movements and from her diagnosis of our times.

Fraser strives to avoid framing her conception of justice either as class-struggle or identity politics (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 11-12). She claims that instead her conception of justice is a distinctive perspective of social justice that can be applied to the situation of any social movement. Her understanding of justice is understood through from the perspective of social movements. Fraser’s concept of justice refers to folk paradigms of injustice.

Folk paradigms of justice mean that her understanding of justice is tied to what the social movements struggle for in any given historical time. Thus, justice is the essence of the struggles of the movements regardless of what kind of conceptual framework the movements frame the struggles within. The idea is thus to try to provide a conceptual framework that one can use to theorize any given social movement without imposing a specific theory on the movement. Thus, the idea is to allow the movements themselves to retain their freedom to define their struggle while still being able to tie them to the larger emancipatory project of promoting participatory parity.

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12 This idea is very similar to the idea of hegemony. Another way of reading this would thus be that any current hegemonic configuration determines the conceptual framework we use. In order to avoid historical determinism, it is necessary to understand hegemony in a similar way as Mouffe and Laclau. (more on this in chapter 4.6.2)
3.2.2 REDISTRIBUTION, RECOGNITION AND REPRESENTATION

If we first consider the redistribution part and imagine a division that has its roots in the economic system of society. The injustice could then by definition be traced to the political economy of society. Any cultural injustices that derive from the current division would also have its core in the political economy, thus the division requires redistribution as opposed to recognition.

One example of such a division could be, for example, class differentiation in orthodox economist Marxism (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 16-17). Here the working class is the group of workers who sell their labor power under arrangements that authorize the capitalist class to appropriate surplus production for their own benefit. Thus, the core injustice here is exploitation of the working class. The working class may also suffer from cultural injustices, but they are not rooted in an autonomously unjust status order, but are derived from the economic structure. The remedy thus is redistribution. Class exploitation requires restructuring of the political economy to alter the benefits and burdens of class distribution to be overcome. In Marxism the task is to abolish the working class as such. What is important to notice here is that recognition of the distinctiveness of the working class is not needed when the point is to abolish class altogether.

At the other end of the imagined conceptual spectrum Fraser identifies a social division that has its roots in the status order of society. All structural injustices attached to it would be traceable to the institutional patterns of cultural value. The core of this kind of injustice would be misrecognition and the remedy recognition.

An example of this kind of injustice could be sexual differentiation (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 17-19). Here the social division between heterosexuals and homosexuals is not grounded in the political economy as homosexuals are distributed throughout the entire class structure and as such do not constitute an exploited class. The sexual division is rooted in the status order as institutional patterns of cultural value construct heterosexuality as normal and homosexuality as perverse and despised.

The effect is to construct homosexuals as a despised sexuality subject to status subordination. Of course homosexuals suffer also from economic disadvantages, but these are not rooted in the economic structure. Rather they derive, according to Fraser, from the status order “...as the institutionalization of heterosexist norms produces a category of despised persons who incur economic disadvantages as a consequence of their subordination status” (Fraser, 2003a, p. 18). Thus, the remedy of this kind of injustice is recognition, not redistribution. (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 17-19)

The division of redistribution and recognition can also be seen from the viewpoint of the “equality/difference” problem. This is a common thematic in feminist thought where the problem is what the goal of the feminist struggles should be. Those striving for equality are seen as trying to treat all in the same way and thus try to steer away from highlighting the specific nature of femininity. On the other hand there are those who strive to advance the feminist
cause by promoting specificity and thus end up in a position that is antithetical with regard to equality. Within Fraser's framework, the equality point of view would be attributed to the sphere of redistribution while specificity refers to recognition.

Even though Fraser claims that the fall of the Soviet Union and the decline of the socialist imaginary are at the core of her theory, I view the equality/specificity problem as central. This reading is based on the idea that Fraser's norm of participatory parity can subsume equality and freedom in one norm. In other words, Fraser's framework is based on a norm that can treat the different logics of equality and specificity simultaneously. This reading is also strengthened by the fact that Fraser's theory does not require the acceptance of her zeitdiagnose to be justified.

One important thing to notice is that Fraser's status model of recognition is about justice, not self-realization. The concept of recognition is commonly taken as a matter of self-realization as Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth do. For Taylor and Honneth recognition by another is a necessary condition for attaining full and undistorted personhood. Thus, denying someone recognition in this sense is according to Fraser to “deprive her or him of a basic prerequisite for human flourishing (Fraser, 2003a, p. 28).” In other words, Taylor and Honneth understand recognition in ethical terms as a matter a “good life”. Fraser defends a view that sees recognition as a matter of justice. On the question of why misrecognition is unjust she answers:

...that it is unjust that some individuals and groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated and which disparage their distinctive characteristics or the distinctive characteristics assigned to them. (Fraser, 2003a, p. 29)

According to Fraser varieties of recognition politics that fail to respect human rights are intrinsically unacceptable even though they may promote social equality (Fraser, 1997, p. 12). Thus, for example neo-nazi group’s claims for recognition would be precluded.

Fraser claims that the ways we are arguing about justice have changed with the decline of the Keynesian-Westphalian framework (Fraser, 2008, p. 12). Hence, many assumptions that were taken for granted within that framework are no longer self-evident. One such assumption is that regardless of the matter of justice it was a general assumption that the unit of justice was the modern territorial state.

The Keynesian-westphalian framework also gave, according to Fraser, a distinctive shape to arguments about justice (Fraser, 2008, p. 13). The arguments where mostly about what the citizens in a national state owed each other. Thus, it went without saying, who the subject of justice was. Nowadays the situation is different as social processes that impact our lives overflow
national boundaries, some examples one could mention are transnational corporations, international currency speculators, large institutional investors and governmental and nongovernmental public opinion.

With the political dimension of justice, Fraser tries to establish social criteria for belonging. That is, she tries to conceptualize who should be included or excluded from those who are entitled to just redistribution and reciprocal recognition. By establishing decision rules the political dimension also sets the procedures for staging and resolving contests in the other two spheres. Thus, the political dimensions tell us who can make legitimate claims and how these claims can be adjudicated (Fraser, 2008, p. 17). Because the political dimension is focused on procedure and belonging, the prime concern of this sphere is representation. Fraser identifies two different forms of political injustices against participatory parity on this political level. The injustices are misrepresentation and misframing.

Within the scope of misrepresentation we have the injustice that occurs when political boundaries or decision making rules deny some people parity of participation (Fraser, 2008, pp. 18-19). Fraser calls this ordinary political misrepresentation. The issue here is “ina-tram-framework representation. Questions related to this are for example ones that debates merits of different electoral systems etc.

The other injustice, misframing, concerns the boundary-setting aspect of the political dimension. The injustice arises when the community’s boundaries are drawn in such a way as to wrongly exclude some people from the chance to participate at all in its contest over justice.

The aspect of framing is according to Fraser crucial to every question of social justice (Fraser, 2008, pp. 19-20). Frame-setting is according to Fraser one of the most consequential political decisions. Misframing is a serious injustice that can in one stroke deny some people the right to even have rights. People that are subject to misframing, thus articulated, cannot make first-order claims of justice and are thus reduced to non-persons with respect to justice.

As the political dimension of representation is used to signify the stage setting where struggles over redistribution and recognition plays out, the political in Fraser’s philosophy should be seen as an attempt to establish criteria of who should be included and who should be excluded from those who are entitled to just recognition or redistribution (Fraser, 2008, p. 17).

Hence, the political dimension should not be confused with a view of “the political” that highlights the contestatory and power-laden aspects in society. Fraser’s distinct usage of the concept of political should not be seen as a denial of the contestatory or conflictual aspects in society.

As I mentioned earlier, the normative core of Fraser’s framework is participatory parity. Thus, all claims for redistribution or recognition should seek their justification in whether the injustice in question functions as a barrier to participatory parity or not (Fraser, 2003a, p. 35). Fraser distinguishes two conditions for participatory parity that correspond to the two remedies of injustice. These are the objective and the intersubjective condition of
participatory parity. The objective condition corresponds to redistribution and the intersubjective to recognition. The objective condition states that distribution of material resources should ensure independence and “voice”. The intersubjective condition states that institutional patterns of cultural value express equal opportunity for achieving social esteem. Neither one of the conditions are sufficient alone, both are necessary.

Thus, the conditions for participatory parity is, according to Fraser that institutionalized patterns of cultural values should express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunities for achieving social esteem and the distribution of material resources should be such that it ensures participants independence and voice (Fraser, 2003a, p. 36).

The introduction of the political sphere in her framework also lets question who and how people should be taken into account when furthering participatory parity in society.

The core of Fraser’s multi-partite framework of justice is the radical democratic norm of participatory parity. Within Fraser’s framework, this means that injustices are unjust because they hinder the possibility and means for adult members of our society to interact with one another as peers (Fraser, 2003a, p. 36).

As I see it, the main merit with Fraser’s approach is that it ties strongly together the idea of democracy and justice. In a sense what she claims is that a matter is just as long as it is democratic in the sense of an idea of self-rule. More specifically Fraser’s idea of justice refers to the institutions, in other words, participatory parity is what we should want to achieve through our institutions. Fraser’s conception of justice sets the limits for a radical theory of democracy. What should be pointed out is that Fraser’s theory is grounded towards practical use. Her project can be read as a project of creating a usable concept of justice instead of focusing on giving strong philosophical grounds.

3.2.3 ABNORMAL JUSTICE

Fraser frames her conception of justice according to the way she sees contemporary political life (Fraser, 1997, pp. 11-13). That is, in the socialist era before the fall of the Soviet Union, social movements and injustices where often framed as class-based struggles for socio economic equality.

After the fall of the Soviet Union and with it the decentering of class the new social movements started to mobilize around and contest cultural differences. With this development, questions of cultural identity started to dominate and thus redistributive claims started to recede. Thus, the struggle for recognition was quickly becoming the paradigmatic form of political conflict. Group identity replaced socio-economic class as the medium for political mobilization. Thus, cultural recognition became the chief goal of struggle. This all happens in a time when material inequalities are on the rise, especially globally between north and
south, but also within the nation states. The result is according to Fraser a “complex political field with little programmatic coherence”. It is against this backdrop that Fraser proposes to integrate recognition and redistribution in a single framework.

Another characteristic of our times is also according to Fraser that the self-evident frameworks behind our understandings of justice are declining (Fraser, 2008b, p. 49). That is, in “normal” times there is an unspoken widely shared consensus on how we should frame our claims of justice, who the subjects of justice are and how justice claims should be adjudicated. Fraser claims that we now live in “abnormal times” where cold-war paradigms of justice are no longer self-evident. Globalization and the decline of U.S hegemony is also making it harder for us to frame our justice claims in intelligible ways.

Fraser identifies three nodes of abnormality in abnormal times, the what, the who and the how of justice. The first node concerns the matter that justice should concern itself with (Fraser, 2008b, p. 53). For example, justice as a comparative relation must answer, what is it that it compares? In normal times it would be clear and self-evident what the object of justice would be. Everyone could for example take it for granted that justice should focus on divisible material goods. Another question that concerns abnormal times is who should be taken as a subject of justice; who’s interests should be taken into consideration (Fraser, 2008b, pp. 53-54)? It is no longer self-evident that the subject of justice should be the citizen within a nation-state. Finally the third node of abnormality concerns the how of justice. This is chiefly a procedural node. That is, the how of justice concerns itself with identifying or giving criteria for the procedure and the grammar of justice (Fraser, 2008b, pp. 55-56).

For example in a debate on global economy one could easily imagine as many, in some way justified, different appeals to different institutions as there are debaters. In this debate a proponent of some kind of conservative neoliberlism could for example appeal to the WTO or the Davos-summit when an activist critical of current trends in globalization could justify his or her claims to the process of the World Social Forum. To adjudicate the claims we would have to solve to what kind of grammar of justice we would refer to in order to solve this issue. The problem is that in the before-mentioned debate the grammar of justice is what is at stake even if it is not articulated (Fraser, 2008b, p. 63).

These three nodes represent according to Fraser the destabilization of the previous hegemonic grammar of justice. The destabilization of the what reflects our uncertainty of the substance of justice, for example socio-economic reform or cultural identification. The who destabilizes the previous grammars frame. That is previously claims of justice would have been made within a westphalian nation-state. The how reflects according to Fraser a hegemonic feature that was previously hidden and has become visible when the justice

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13 This refers to Fraser’s interpretation of hegemony. She views hegemony similarly as Thomas Kuhn views paradigmatic change in science. In other words, Hegemony is viewed as the current paradigm.
Dissent and Justice

discourse is not any more framed within the distributivist paradigm of the westphalian state. (Fraser, 2008b, p. 56)

Fraser grounds her framework of justice in the contemporary struggles of the social movements. In her words “dimensions of justice are historically disclosed through the medium of social struggle” (Fraser, 2008b, p. 56). Thus, justice is always defined historically by what is contested at that particular time. In this sense we always have to rely on a diagnostics of our times (zeitdignose) when we wish to speak on matters relating to justice. Her conception of justice relies on what she calls folk-paradigms of justice (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 11-12). Abnormal times, such as we live in, this consensus does not exist and almost every aspect of justice is “up for grabs”. Thus, we can no longer refer to self-evident conceptions of justice. As an example of self-evident frameworks she uses the cold-war paradigms of justice. (Fraser, 2008, pp. 71-73)

3.2.4 REFLEXIVE JUSTICE

Fraser presents the two concepts in relation to her idea of abnormal times. Abnormal times refer to the notion that our time is characterized by our inability to refer to self-evident frameworks of justice to adjudicate claims for justice. According to Fraser we have two possibilities. One is to try to establish such a framework and develop a “new normal”. This however would, according to Fraser, be a premature closing of the venues of contestation at a time that demands flexibility. On the other hand leaving every framework open would be to” revel in abnormality” and leave our claims of justice more or less unsolvable.

Fraser associates discourse ethics with the closing or establishing a new normal and agonism with keeping the framework open and revel in abnormality. Her solution would be to go both ways and establish provisional frameworks that always are subject to question. This would, according to her, cultivate responsiveness to emergent exclusions and invite us to reflexive self-problematization through concepts such as misframing. Fraser calls this approach reflexive justice. She claims that her framework of justice scrambles this opposition between a “normalizing” discourse ethics and agonism that irresponsibly revels in abnormality. Reflexive justice valorizes openings that breach the exclusions of normal justice and at the same time it valorizes the closure that enables political argument and collective decision making. From a point of view of reflexive justice the opposition between discourse ethics and agonism is, according to Fraser, a false antithesis. She refuses to absolutize either model to exclude the insights from the other and tries to incorporate both to establish a new genre of theorizing for abnormal times (Fraser, 2008b, pp. 72-73).

The idea of reflexive justice is, for Fraser, akin to the Kuhnian theory of scientific revolution where you have a normal (paradigm) and then the violent
upheaval (revolution) where after a new normal is established (new paradigm) (Fraser, 2008b, p. 49). The idea is also presented as the idea of hegemony theory where hegemony would be the same as normal discourse and counter hegemony abnormal. (Fraser, 2008b, pp. 74-75)

Fraser’s idea was to prove that the contradiction between agonism and discourse ethics is a false antithesis. However because Fraser is using the Kuhnian framework to describe the opposition, her point of view does neither serve to overcome the opposition between agonism and discourse nor does it add any value for the analysis of modern capitalist society. Fraser’s Kuhnian approach merely provides a superficial description of hegemony.

I claim that it is possible to give a different interpretation that can add to the means of social analysis. This reinterpretation is, in my opinion an agonist one. The main goal is to allow for an analysis where modern capitalist society can be simultaneously viewed from the point of view of abnormal and normal. This requires that the idea of paradigm change is discarded. Hence, the value added would be that one could be able to view matters of justice in society at the same time from the point of view of hegemony and counter hegemony. In other words, I propose that reflexive justice should not be interpreted as an attempt to overcome the contradiction between discourse and agonism but as an approach to justice that includes a strong element of social analysis. The reason that this dynamic should be interpreted as an agonist point of view has to do with the deliberative approach’s necessity of relying on some form of background consensus. This approach would entail the possibility of viewing society through the “lenses” of abnormality, which in turn is incompatible with the idea of a common reference point. Thus, if interpreted as an ongoing dynamic, from an agonist perspective, it is possible to avoid the reliance on paradigm, ruling hegemony or closed frameworks in social analysis. This reinterpretation is required because Fraser’s perspective does not by definition allow for the possibility to simultaneously view society from the point of view of closed and open frameworks.

For Fraser the closed framework is viewed as hegemony. This entails that a movement that strives for the opening of a hegemonic framework will be ascribed as one of counter-hegemony. If this is true, then, one could conclude that the idea of an open framework is not open, in a strict sense, because the open framework will actually be one derived from the closed framework in the same way as counter-hegemony is tied to hegemony. Hence, her idea is that agonism (open frameworks) and discourse (closed frameworks) are actually derived from one another. Agonism and discourse ethics are thus related to each other dialectically. This differs to my point of view of radical democracy because I view agonism and discourse as two distinct points of view of radical democracy. Fraser’s point of view requires the deriving of agonism from deliberation whereas while I view them as sub-categories of radical democracy.

Regarded in this way the idea of reflexive justice does not transcend the opposition of agonism and discourse but constructs agonism as being derived from discourse. Hence, for Fraser, agonism and discourse does not refer to
different ways of conceptualizing democracy or radical democracy. In this thesis I have presented agonism and deliberative democracy (discourse) as two different approaches within radical democracy. The approaches differ on how they attempt to overcome difference, either by reason and deliberation or through hegemonic struggle. If one follows Fraser’s line of thought this becomes difficult, if not impossible, to view reflexive justice as a mechanism of social analysis because open and closed frameworks ends up referring to each other. One cannot view society from the point of view of hegemony and counter-hegemony because they are conceptually derived from each other.

On these grounds I reject Fraser’s interpretation and propose to reinterpret the framework as an agonist framework that has its grounds in the difficulty of capturing ontological assumptions. In other words, reflexive justice would not refer to paradigm change but with the difficulties of capturing social reality and framing political claims, demands and questions.

This entails that we accept the division between agonism and discourse as an opposition that cannot be conceptually overcome. Hence, they are viewed as two conceptually different and detached perspectives. Interpreted this way reflexive justice as a method, requires us to view society at the same time through the lenses of discourse and as an agonist view. When I claim that this view is an agonist perspective I merely assert that in politics one cannot understand reason as the ultimate adjudicator of conflicts.

Reflexive justice cannot be viewed as a discoursive method as this would entail accepting the idea of a rational consensus and hence would render the agonist perspective less valued than the discoursive one from the beginning. Of course, it is not necessarily required that one should view reflexive justice as one or another if viewed as a method because a method does not need to be viewed as either agonist or discoursive. Despite this, I would argue for the view that one should view Fraser’s framework as an agonist one in order to highlight the critique of a common conception of reason as ultimate adjudicator of conflicts. In a sense, this only serves as a clarification of what is meant when one claims that Fraser’s framework is radical democratic.

In Fraser’s defense, her idea of reflexive justice should be seen as an attempt to historically encompass the idea of abnormal/normal, not take part in the agonist debate. In a sense this can be seen as an attempt to reject the relevance of the whole debate.14

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14 This is roughly a statement of Fraser’s take on my idea of reflexive justice presented as a response by her in a seminar at the Collegium for Advanced Studies at the University of Helsinki
3.2.5 FOLK-PARADIGMS AND THE SUBALTERN

Fraser’s understanding of justice is understood through the lenses of social movements (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 11, 12). This is what she means when she claims that her understanding of justice refers to folk paradigms of injustice.

Justice in Fraser is understood to be historically determined by the struggles of social movements. The struggles of the social movements are where Fraser anchors her philosophy in really existing society. Hence, Fraser’s claim that her theory is written “from the social movements to the social movements”. In her words dimensions of justice are historically disclosed through the medium of social struggle. Thus, justice is always defined historically by what is contested at that particular time. In this sense we always have to rely on a diagnostics of our times (zeitdiagnose) when we wish to speak on matters relating to justice. Her conception of justice relies on what she calls folk-paradigms of justice (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 11-12). This entails that instead of giving a substance to justice other than what is required by participatory parity, justice is defined in struggle, hence all struggles are struggles for justice.

As I pointed out in the chapter on participatory parity that one of the merits of Fraser’s idea is that it ties together justice and democracy as an unified democratic conception of justice. Where most theories focus solely on either justice or democracy, Fraser’s idea of justice as participatory parity provides a conception of justice that can limit the conception of democracy. In other words, Fraser’s theory provides the possibility of not having to accept all kinds of claims in the name of democracy. In other words, this provides the possibility of making the distinction between democratic and undemocratic claims. Fraser’s idea of folk-paradigms does a similar thing in the opposite direction. This is a democratic conception of justice. To this we arrive from the idea that as the concept of justice is determined in a struggle and all struggles are in a sense struggles for justice. Hence, justice is something that social movements struggle for when they struggle to achieve participatory parity. Thus, justice is adjudicated in reference to participatory parity and it is defined trough contemporary struggles for justice. Another way of describing this dynamic would be that initially all struggles for justice are accepted because they give meaning to the concept of justice in this specific era. After this meaning is established one can make the evaluation of the democratic legitimacy of movements and claims by referring to the norm of participatory parity.

In one of her earlier essays, “Rethinking the Public Sphere”, Fraser introduces the concept of subaltern counterpublics. The background of the concept is a critique of the Habermasian liberal public sphere where the assumption is that one overarching public sphere would be desirable from the point of view of democracy and that multiple spheres would be a step away from democracy.

Fraser’s argument against a single public sphere in egalitarian multicultural societies goes roughly as follows. A truly egalitarian society would be a classless society without gendered or racial division of labor. It would not have to be culturally homogenous. These societies permit free expression and association
and are thus likely to be inhabited by social groups with diverse values identities and cultural styles. Here Fraser asks if “...a single, comprehensive public sphere [would] be preferable to multiple publics?” (Fraser, 1997, p. 83).

Fraser claims that public spheres are not only a place the formation of discursive opinion but also a venue for the formation of social identities. Thus, participation is not only about being able to state propositional contents but also to “simultaneously constructing and expressing ones cultural identity in idiom and style”. The spheres are also situated in culturally specific institutions and social geographies e.g. various journals, newspapers, internet, parks and cafeterias and so on. As these institutions are “culturally specific rhetorical lenses” that filter and alter utterances the can accommodate some expressive modes and not others. Thus, because no such lens can be neutral public life in egalitarian, multicultural societies cannot consist in a single comprehensive public sphere (Fraser, 1997, pp. 82-84).

Thus, according to Fraser, her framework acknowledges the historical and power-laden character of justice discourse but adds an interest in emancipation which is an, “insistence that the grammar of justice be reconstituted so as to enable the subaltern to speak in authoritative terms.” (Fraser, 2008, p. 75).

Again, Fraser’s point of departure is participatory parity whereas her analysis of the public sphere is done against the backdrop of how to narrow the gap between dominant and subordinate groups in social life. Fraser defends a view that a plurality of contesting publics does better at ensuring participatory parity than a single overarching one. The reason for this is that Fraser claims that in a single public sphere subordinated groups would not have any venues to undertake communicative processes that are not under the supervision of dominant groups. She also bases her argument in history which she claims shows that members of subordinated groups have repeatedly found it fruitful to constitute alternative publics, these alternative publics are what Fraser calls subaltern counterpublics. (Fraser, 1997, p. 80)

The subaltern counterpublics are discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups can invent and circulate counterdiscourses that in turn can form oppositional identities, interests and needs. One example of such a counterpublic is according to Fraser the feminist movement the United States where the variety of “own” bookstores, publishers academic programs etc. allowed the movement to invent new concepts for describing reality such as sexism, sexual harassment and marital, date and acquaintance rape. This again allowed the reinterpretation of women’s identities in official public spheres. Fraser claims that widening and emphasizing the contestatory function of publics is a good thing in stratified societies. (Fraser, 1997, pp. 81-82)

The idea of contestatory public spheres adds to the idea that democratic citizenship is contestatory in nature.
3.3 HONNETH AND JUSTICE AS SELF-REALIZATION

3.3.1 INTRODUCTION
The main aim of Fraser's theory is to create and defend the political conception of justice based on participatory parity. This led to her view that recognition should be viewed from the perspective of institutions and how they hinder or promote participatory parity in society. Axel Honneth’s social theory of recognition is an attempt to reconstruct historical materialism in a way that fuses theory to practice in a way that retains its emancipatory intent (Deranty, 2009, p. 51). Thus, Honneth, as Fraser, are true to critical theory’s bearing idea of transcending the immanent. Honneth social theory is based on the Hegelian notion of struggle for recognition. An idea he has been able to bring to completion through the social psychology of G.H.Mead.

For this part of the thesis I rely, in addition to Honneth’s work, on Simon Thompson’s *The Political Theory of Recognition* and Jean-Philippe Deranty’s *Beyond Communication*. The main reason for this is that in Thompson one can find one of the better descriptions of Fraser’s, Honneth’s and Taylor’s theories of recognition and their critique of each other. Deranty’s work on Honneth is one of the most thorough works on the mature version of Honneth’s theory of recognition and its foundations.

Honneth’s theory of recognition has three stages that each relate to the development of the individual. The name “Struggle for Recognition” derives from the idea that a failure in the development of the individual constitutes a threat or injury. This injury leads to a struggle to overcome it which in turn brings about a development of the individual.

Honneth grounds his theory empirically through the social psychology of G.H.Mead (Deranty, 2009, p. 241). It is through the social psychology of Mead that Honneth finds the tools to fulfill Hegel’s uncompleted stages of recognition. Honneth’s and Hegel’s theory shares the idea that there are three stages of development of the individual. They are mind, self and society. For Honneth these are love, rights and esteem.

Honneth finds in the theory of Mead the tools to reconstruct the intersubjectivist intentions of Hegel in a post-metaphysical framework (Deranty, 2009, pp. 241-242,245). The basis of Mead’s theory lies in the dialectic of the I and the Me. This link between Honneth’s normative social theory and social psychology is the most characteristic feature of his philosophy as a whole. This is also the feature that annoys his critics the most.

In the center of Honneth’s theory one can find conflict. Both behavior and norms are changed through struggles. Social and historical struggles are seen as group interests and moral struggles that generate new needs and norms. (Deranty, 2009, p. 241).
Honneth’s three spheres of recognition designate the three fundamental types of normative interaction which are necessary for modern subjects to develop their full anatomy (Deranty, 2009, p. 271). In this one can deduce the implication that subjects are dependent on their fellow beings for their self-realisation. The sphere of love is the one in which the subjects affective life is secured, in other words recognition through the intimate sphere. The sphere of rights is the one through which the subject is able to see himself as equal to all as full subject of rights, in other words the sphere of legal, universalistic recognition. The last sphere of esteem is the one through which the subject is able to see her contribution to societal life validated, recognition through individual performance. In the negative the three spheres forms the foundation for social critique. In Honneth’s words:

_The reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of mutual recognition, because one can develop practical relation-to-self only when one has learned to view oneself from the normative perspectives of one’s partners in interaction as their social addressee._ (Honneth, 1995, p. 92)

According to Deranty, Honneth’s concept of self-realisation is wider than the common usage of it (Deranty, 2009, p. 275). The common usage is the fulfillment of capacities and desires of an already complete identity. Honneth’s usage of the concept is about the formation of identity and the formation of the self. One is not a self at all if one is not a full self. Self-realization refers to the ontological possibility of subjective identity before an ethical notion of the good life. Even if rights are granted it is abstract to speak of freedom in a world that makes the full development of subjectivity structurally impossible. To have no self that exercises autonomy is to not be recognized.

In other words, demands for recognition are not only a psychological thing but they point to the conditions of a possibility of normative practical life in general (Deranty, 2009, p. 276).

### 3.3.2 LOVE, RIGHTS AND ESTEEM

To experience love is to feel the” affectionate attention of concrete others”. Love consists of a strong emotional attachment between a small number of people (Honneth, 1995, pp. 87, 95-96). It marks our primary affectional relationship with each other. According to Thompson these descriptions highlights two important characteristics (Thompson, 2006, p. 25).

The first characteristic is love as affect, as emotion (Honneth, 1995, p. 107). According to Thompson, Honneth sees this as a positive affect, it becomes a matter of love, care or friendship, not hate, cruelty or enmity. The second
character is the limited scope of love. Honneth sees, according to Thompson, love as being necessarily limited which means that there is room only for a few important people that have a significant impact on one's sense of self. Love cannot according to Honneth be extended at will.

Love can thus only be shown to our "significant others"; children, lovers and friends (Thompson, 2006, p. 25). Even though, for example, romantic love is different from care for one's children, they still have in common the characteristic of being positive emotional attachments to a necessarily limited group of people.

Love, according to Honneth, is the first mode of recognition. It is conceptually and genetically prior to respect and esteem (Honneth, 1995, p. 107). Conceptual priority refers to the idea that we cannot, according to Honneth conceive of the other modes of recognition if we do not first know love. Love is according to Honneth the basic prerequisite for other forms of recognition (Honneth, 1995, p. 107).

Love for Honneth is not only a relationship between subjects but also a practical relation-to-self (Honneth, 1995, pp. 107, 129) (Honneth, 2003a, p. 139). This means that each form of recognition leads subjects to relate to themselves in a distinct way. Esteem leads to self-esteem, respect to self-respect. Being loved by one's primary care-giver leads to a body-related self-confidence. Honneth uses self-confidence to signify the idea that when we develop such self-confidence we believe that our needs and feelings have value and can also express them without shame or embarrassment. This positive self-relation is the prerequisite of all further positive relations to oneself (Honneth, 1995, pp. 107, 176).

According to Honneth other individuals are regarded as morally responsible. Honneth regards moral responsibility as the core of a person that is worthy of respect (Honneth, 1995, pp. 114, 119).

This means that people deserve respect as people that can be held accountable for their actions (Honneth, 1995, p. 114). According to Honneth it is because of our capacity for rational autonomy that we can be attributed moral responsibility. Thus, when we say that we respect others we say that we regard each other as capable of acting autonomously on the basis of rational insight.

To fail to respect someone is to not accord them the same degree of moral responsibility as to others thus allowing us to restrict their personal autonomy (Honneth, 1995, p. 133).

According to Honneth this mode of recognition is necessarily mutual and reciprocal (Honneth, 1995, p. 108). One's attitude of respect for another is thus tied to the others respect for oneself. On this point Honneth follows Hegel and Mead contending that we can only see ourselves as right-bearers (worthy of respect) once we understand our own obligations towards others. For us to get this understanding we have to adopt a generalized view of the other.

In other words, one should adopt the viewpoint of no particular person in society. Legal systems in modern society help us to realize Honneth's idea of reciprocal respect. According to Honneth it is "in obeying the law, legal subjects..."
recognize each other as persons capable of autonomously making reasonable decisions about moral norms (Honneth, 1995, p. 109). Thus, when they obey the same rules, they acknowledge my rights and their obligations towards me, they show me respect.

Respect is shown to others only by treating them as bearers of rights (Honneth, 1995, p. 116). If rights do not exist, no respect is possible. Thus, Honneth establishes a very close connection between rights and respect. This is not something that should be seen as static in society but this mode has a developmental potential. In other words, we can always strive for a more complete realization of our system of rights. Honneth contends that to get recognition as a citizen it is necessary to possess all of the three types of rights, civil, political and social (Honneth, 1995, p. 117).

Esteem is the third and final mode of recognition that Axel Honneth identifies. Honneth argues that individuals deserve esteem in virtue of their concrete characteristics or traits or abilities (Honneth, 1995, pp. 121, 125, 129). Thus, they are not esteemed only because they are associated with a particular culture or social identity, but because they possess specific features that distinguish them as unique individuals (Honneth, 1995, p. 122). Certain physical characteristics are not something worth of esteem because they have no ethical significance. According to Honneth individuals deserve esteem for attributes that contribute to the achievement of societal goals.

Esteem is thus a reward for persons that help their society to achieve particular goals. Thus, “the social standing of subjects is ... measured in terms of what they can accomplish for society within the context of their particular forms of self-realization” (Honneth, 1995, p. 127).

Hence, according to Honneth, each society has certain goals or values that help to define its identity. In his words a society has a set of ethical goals and values that comprises its cultural self-understanding (Honneth, 1995, p. 122). It is a sort of intersubjectively shared value-horizon (Honneth, 1995, p. 121).

Honneth does not, however, contend that a society would share a single set of values but we have after the “collapse” of traditional hierarchies of values seen the emergence of a condition of value pluralism (Honneth, 1995, p. 125).

In this value pluralism, many values compete against each other for social precedence (Honneth, 1995, p. 127). These are struggles for esteem. Thus, value systems are in a constant flux as some values wane and others wax. Thus, there is a permanent struggle to control the means of symbolic force and to shape the climate of public attention.

Thus, groups that share certain values strive to raise the profile of their own value-system and if they succeed they gain esteem (Honneth, 1995, p. 122). Thus, contemporary societies are not characterized by a consensus of values but rather by a temporarily stabilized agreement on societal goals. In modern society we have witnessed what Honneth calls the equalization of esteem (Honneth, 1995, p. 130). This means that we share the same chance of acquiring esteem in contrast to for example medieval society where one could have esteem because of being born into a particular status group.
### 3.3.3 THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION

The idea that recognition is something that we have to struggle for is an idea that has its roots in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* in the master/slave dialectic. For Honneth the idea is that societal conflicts can be explained and normatively assessed by using the idea of recognition. In general Honneth assumes that social conflicts occur when people demand recognition that they feel that they are denied. At the same time as we can analyze and describe conflicts through the concept of recognition we can also according to Honneth do it the other way around, which is to analyze the concept of recognition through social conflicts.

By analyzing the directions of the conflicts we could see what the realization of undistorted relations of recognition would look like (Thompson, 2006, pp. 161, 162). Thus, according to Tompson, Honneth ties his theory of social development to a theory of moral progress. In other words, Honneth’s theory explains why social conflicts occur at the same time as we can see how an ideal society would look like that would be achieved through these conflicts.

To get a clear picture of how this dynamic works it is necessary to explain how Honneth gets from the feeling of injustice to the struggle and from the struggle to recognition. For Honneth, we can find the root for our struggles in the negative emotional reactions of for example anger, rage, shame and indignation (Honneth, 1995, pp. 132-135). Honneth uses an empirically grounded phenomenology as the foundation of his theory. In other words, he thinks that he can find evidence for his theory from the above mentioned hurt feelings. Thus, having these feelings amounts, according to Honneth, to that the rules of recognition are violated. Honneth identifies three ways we can be denied recognition (Honneth, 1995, pp. 143,162-163). If we are being maltreated, we will feel humiliated and thus our self-confidence is damaged. If we are excluded from citizenship, thus denied our rights I will lose self-respect. If the way of life which we are associated with is being denigrated, self-esteem will be lost. In other words, Honneth tries to establish the connection between the hurt feelings as an evidence of injustice.

After Honneth has established the link between our feelings of hurt and injustice, the link between injustice and struggle should be established.

To get from the feeling of personal hurt to struggle we have to first see the hurt as an injustice and then come to the conclusion that it is not only about personal injustice but an injustice made to all people in a relevantly similar position. In other words, we have to bridge the gap between private experiences of injury and impersonal aspirations of social movements. In Honneth’s theory this gap is bridged by an intersubjective framework of interpretation (Honneth, 1995, pp. 132, 163). This framework helps people to see that their feelings of hurt are tied to social processes that deny them recognition. Thus, it is the collective feelings of injustice that motivate our struggles against a certain kind of oppression. Thus, disrespect (lack of recognition), is the motivational force behind social resistance. Hence, the realization that a feeling of hurt is not only
a personal feeling, but a collective one, gives us reason to join with each other and struggle against this injustice.

After the link is made between injustice and struggle, it still remains to establish the link between struggle and recognition. The dynamics described above, show how Honneth’s theory of recognition can explain social conflicts. If we turn this dynamic around, the social conflicts can also shed some light on recognition. According to Honneth the struggles move society in a direction towards a full realization of undistorted recognition. Thus, if we analyze the direction in which the relations of directions are moving, we can understand the idea of recognition that is emerging. Honneth claims that this direction is also a story about the moral progress of society.

One explanation of the development of relations of recognition can be found in Thompson, (2006, p. 164), Thompson interprets Honneth in a way that sheds light on the concept of recognition by describing the development of rights in Britain. Thompson, and also Honneth, follows the work of T.H. Marshall on this point. According to this account, rights developed in Britain in a series of historical stages in the order of civil, political and lastly social rights. This can be interpreted as a result of the unfolding of the developmental possibilities inherent in relations of recognition. Thus, as a principle of equality was introduced, it created a developmental pressure towards further expansion of these relations. For example once it is established that all men are equal, we have no grounds to consider women to be unequal. Thus, this dynamic is the ground for the successive expansion of rights. Thus, recognition is present in a way in every struggle for recognition as an embryo which then is realized through the struggle itself.

This framework also provides, according to Honneth, an interpretive framework for a process of moral formation (Honneth, 1995, pp. 115-118, 168-170). Thus, to study social struggles enables us to understand how a society makes moral progress. To do this a framework must be able to answer the question if a struggle is seen as reactionary or progressive. According to Honneth we can use as a normative standard a hypothetical anticipation of an approximate end state to determine if a struggle is taking us in the right direction or not. After we can identify this hypothetical end state we can also identify an idealized sequence of social struggles which would ensure a process of moral development in which the potential of mutual recognition is unfolded. After this we can determine if a particular struggle is part of this idealized sequence. According to Honneth if a society would experience this particular series of struggles of recognition a society would also have established moral progress.

For Honneth the link between social theory and practice is the feeling of injustice.
the motives for social resistance and rebellion are formed in the context of moral experiences stemming from the violation of deeply rooted expectations of recognition. (Honneth, 1995, p. 163)

Thus, Honneth relies on the idea that the fundamental motivations for social movements are moral, not utilitarian (Deranty, 2009, p. 312).

Honneth’s theory does not only designate group/class specific symbolic expressions but also the symbolic, cognitive and normative resources that can be mobilized by dominated subjects to transform their individualized negative social experience into a collective representation (Deranty, 2009, p. 317). They form the basis of social action aiming at overcoming existing social injustice.

Honneth reinterprets class struggle as a struggle for symbolic power. With this interpretation the theory is sensitive to all forms of domination and oppression, it is not only restricted to proletarian movements (Deranty, 2009, p. 325).

For Honneth it is important that critical theory should not restrict social suffering to the kind of suffering that is visibly present in the public sphere (Deranty, 2009, p. 328).
3.4 FRASER’S CRITIQUE OF HONNETH

3.4.1 THE REDISTRIBUTION RECOGNITION DEBATE

One of the main questions for my thesis is what kind of institutional arrangements are required to enhance dissent as a positive contribution to society. Hence, I hold to the idea that dissent and the concept of justice should retain a tie to institutional reality. My view is based partially on the idea that one should focus on what is changeable in society to be able to provide a concept of dissent that retains its connection with societal pathologies that emerge through institutions as oppression that can at least partially be approached objectively. Hence, I agree with Fraser that there seems to be a problem with Honneth’s move to anchor justice primarily to the feeling of injustice.

The main problem is that this is a feature that removes the possibility to approach injustice and domination without actually asking the person or group if it is feeling dominated. For example, one could conceive that a person that lives on an economic minimum in society would be perfectly content with his/hers situation. Under a strict interpretation this would not entail an injustice if the person would not acknowledge that he/she is suffering from injustice. On the other hand one could also conceive of a wealthy person that claims that taxation of wealth is injust and that he/she is suffering from injustice. This would entail that the feeling of injustice could be present even though one could objectively show that no injustice has taken place. Taken to its extreme the reliance on the feeling of injustice, leads to the possibility that the feeling of injustice could be cured by going to a psychologist and not by reconfiguring institutional reality.

Of course Honneth does not go this far nor does he claim that the feeling of injustice is the only thing we should focus on but despite this he leaves the possibility open for this interpretation.

Another problem with regard to Honneth’s theory is that every injustice in society is framed as misrecognition. With regard to a political theory of dissent, this would mean that dissent would be derived from the obstacles in the way of self-determination, in other words, misrecognition. My idea is that the institutional reality is a central ground for the feelings of injustice which further can be articulated into dissent.

Hence, to remedy injustices one should reconfigure societal institutions. Also when interpreted this way dissent is viewed as positive because it has its roots both in changing institutional arrangements to better society at the same time as it strives to remedy the roots of the feeling of injustice which may or may not prove to be a hindrance to a person’s ability to flourish as a person. Hence, I view the strong ties to institutional reality in Fraser’s framework as a clear merit. This however requires at least partially the acceptance of the idea that injustices are rooted in institutional reality.

Both Honneth and Fraser share the same goal, which is the attempt to secure a normative foundation for critical theory. For them it is important that the
foundation should needs to be anchored in reality and through an analysis be able to transcend the immanent pathologies of society.

Fraser’s theory can be read as an attempt to create a complete theory of democratic justice for contemporary capitalist society. She claims that her division of justice into redistribution, recognition and representation can encompass every aspect of justice in contemporary capitalist society. Her theory is founded on the idea that one has to view justice through all of these different spheres as none of the spheres by itself enables the possibility of overcoming injustices.

Fraser’s theory can also be read as a theory that attempts to incorporate the democratic ideals of equality and difference in one single framework (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 7-9).

With regard to the sphere of recognition Fraser defends a status model of recognition which entails that recognition should be seen as a matter of justice, not self-realization. Honneth argues for the view that recognition should be viewed as the possibility to attain full personhood in society. It is thus a prerequisite for human flourishing. For Fraser recognition is a matter of justice, not ethics. In order to treat recognition as justice she treats it as an issue of social status.

Fraser’s status model of recognition does neither treat misrecognition as a matter of psychical deformation nor a hinder for ethical self-realization. It is “to be constituted by institutionalized patterns of cultural value in ways that prevent one from participating as a peer in social life.” (Fraser, 2003a, p. 29). This reframes the question of recognition so that it is not conveyed through belittling attitudes but rather through social institutions (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 28-29).

Fraser characterizes four advantages of her own status model of recognition over the model of self-realization furthered by Honneth (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 30-33).

The first advantage is, according to Fraser, that her model allows one to justify claims for recognition as morally binding under modern conditions of value pluralism. Fraser’s claim is that her model of recognition avoids sectarianism as it does not appeal to a distinct conception of self-realization or account of good life that can be universally shared or established as authoritative. According to Fraser an attempt to justify claims for recognition that appeals to an account of self-realization or good life is necessarily sectarian. Thus, she claims that no such claims can be established as normatively binding if one does not share the theorist’s conception of values.

Fraser claims that her model is deontological and nonsectarian and that it embraces the spirit of subjective freedom. With this she means that subjects themselves define what is important to them and how to further their respective cause within the limits that ensures similar freedom for all. According to Fraser her model is nonsectarian as it appeals to a conception of justice that can and should be accepted by people with differing conceptions of the good. The moral wrong in Fraser’s scheme is that misrecognition denies the possibility of
participation on par with each other in society. Her norm of participatory parity is according to her nonsectarian and can “justify claims for recognition as normatively binding on all who agree to abide by fair terms of interaction under conditions of value pluralism.” (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 30-31).

The second advantage of the status model is that under the conception of status subordination the wrong is located in social relations, not interpersonal psychology. According to Fraser to locate misrecognition in internal distortions or interpersonal psychology is a short step from blaming the victim, or adding insult to injury (Fraser, 2003a, p. 31).

On the other hand when misrecognition is equated with, for example, prejudice in the minds of the oppressors, the overcoming of them requires the policing of people’s, minds which is an authoritative and illiberal approach. The status model avoids these both problems as it is sees misrecognition as a matter of externally verifiable impediments by social institutions to some peoples standing as full members of society. Thus, to overcome this kind of status subordination change is required in social institutions and practices.

For Fraser this means that her conception of recognition acknowledges that misrecognition can have the types of ethical effects that Honneth and Taylor propose but maintains that the wrongness of misrecognition does not depend on such effects (Taylor, 1992). Thus, she claims that her model decouples the normativity of recognition claims from psychology and that this move strengthens the normative force of her models. She holds that when recognition claims are premised on a psychological theory of undistorted identity formation it remains vulnerable to the fact that if the psychological theory of identity formation turns out to be false, the whole theory of justice goes with it. What Fraser tries to do is to is to avoid being "hostage" to matters of psychological facts. Within her framework one can show that a society that impedes the parity of participation is morally indefensible “…whether or not they distort the subjectivity of the oppressed.” (Fraser, 2003a, p. 32).

The third advantage is according to Fraser that the status model avoids a view that everyone has an equal right to social esteem. According to Fraser Honneth’s conception of recognition views social esteem as one of the conditions for intersubjective conditions for undistorted identity-formation. According to Fraser viewing esteem as a right for all makes it meaningless as it becomes a reduction ad absurdum argument. Her own model avoid this according to her by entailing that everyone has an equal right to pursue social esteem under conditions of equal opportunity (Fraser, 2003a, p. 33).

The fourth advantage of her model is that by construing misrecognition as a violation of justice it integrates the claims for recognition with claims for redistribution of resources (Fraser, 2003a, p. 33). According to Fraser recognition is assigned to a universally binding domain of deontological morality as distributive justice. When both categories exist within the same normative conception, they become potentially subsumable under a common framework. The self-realization view, in contrast have not the possibility of conceptual integration and makes it incommensurable with distributive justice.
According to Fraser the result is that if one holds to the self-realization view and wants to endorse both recognition and redistribution, one risks philosophical schizophrenia.

Fraser's model also overcomes a traditional view of conceptional incompatibility between the Anglo-American liberal tradition and the phenomenological tradition (Fraser, 2003a, p. 33). This is so because the roots to the redistribution paradigm are associated with Kantian Moralität and Recognition has its roots in the phenomenological tradition associated with Hegel and Sittlichkeit. Normally these conceptions are held to be conceptually incompatible, but according to Fraser her status model overcomes this by treating both redistribution and recognition as a matter of justice. Thus, Fraser's framework can accommodate both conceptual views in a single framework without succumbing to philosophical schizophrenia.

Fraser sees that the reductionism of the conceptions of justice into one overarching conceptions is an impossibility. She holds that it is neither possible to subsume matters of recognition under a conception of redistributive justice nor is it possible to subsume a conception of redistributive justice under a conception of recognition. Even though many of the redistributive theorists, such as Amartya Sen (Sen, 2009), are sensitive to questions of status subordination, they are still according to Fraser bound by the measures of distribution of rights and resources and cannot adequately handle cases outside of maldistribution and legal discrimination. On the other hand Fraser also rejects that theories of recognition can adequately handle questions of recognition. Here she claims that for example Honneth assumes a reductive culturalist view of distribution.

According to Fraser, Honneth supposes that all economic inequalities are rooted in the cultural order that privileges some kinds of labor over others, thus to remedy these kinds of injustices it is enough to change the cultural order (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 34-35). Fraser uses an example of a skilled white male industrial worker who becomes unemployed due to a factory closing because of a speculative corporate merger. According to Fraser the injustice of maldistribution in this case has little to do with misrecognition. It is according to Fraser a consequence of imperatives to a specific economic order whose existence is based on the accumulation of capital. Consequently a theory of justice should in this case reach out beyond the sphere of recognition and ask whether the structural economic mechanism inherent to capitalism impedes parity of participation in social life.

According to Fraser Honneth’s conception of recognition runs into difficulties when trying to distinguish whose claims for recognition are justifiable. As Honneth’s model is based on the idea of self-realization it follows, according to Fraser that claims for recognition that enhance the claimants self-esteem are justified while those who diminish it are not (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 32-33). According to Fraser this means that racist identities would merit some recognition as they enable “poor” white Europeans end Euro-Americans to maintain their sense of self-worth by contrasting themselves with their
supposed inferiors. Thus, it is doubtful if enhanced self-esteem should function as a justificatory standard for recognition claims.

Honneth comments on a general level on Fraser’s project. A reason, according to Honneth, to be doubtful of Fraser’s project and to engage with it critically is that Fraser is fearful that the tradition of critical theory is shifting to far from its traditional key concept with the recognition-theoretical turn (Honneth, 2003a, p. 111). Even though Honneth agrees with Fraser that there is an urgency to solve problems regarding an ever-growing lower class as a result of unrestrained capitalism, he thinks that this is best done within a normative framework of recognition as it establishes a link between the widespread feelings of injustice and the objectives of the emancipatory movements (Honneth, 2003a, pp. 111, 123-124). Also he thinks in contrast with Fraser that the shift to identity politics is not a new phenomenon even though he also shares the view that many of the contemporary social movements frame their struggles as related to identity politics.

For Honneth the debate between him and Fraser is about the categorical tools critical theory should use in its attempt to “articulate and morally justify the normative claims of social movements” (Honneth, 2003a, p. 113). Honneth also points out that there is a problem with anchoring critical theory to the normative claims that have already been articulated in the public sphere and gained public notice as social movements as this position neglects the everyday struggles that has not been articulated in the public sphere. According to Honneth the orienting of critical theory towards the publicly displayed demands of the social movements has the unintended consequence of reproducing exclusions.

Also a problem arises as Fraser defines justice through the struggles of social movements; the concept of justice is derived from a small part of politically recognized claims (Honneth, 2003a, pp. 113, 123-125). Honneth even goes so far as to claim that Fraser lacks the tools for hypothesizing about the causes of injustice. (Honneth, 2003a, p. 128) According to Honneth, his own work is made as an answer to flaws in theory where Fraser’s work can be seen as an answer to flaws in societal development (Honneth, 2003a, p. 126).

Honneth concludes by claiming that:

...a satisfactory conception of the capitalist social order requires not only including the three spheres of social recognition, to whose normative principles subjects can connect their legitimate expectations of reciprocal recognition. Rather, we must also consider the cultural values involved in the institutional constitution of the economic sphere through interpretations of the achievement principle, which give it a particular shape in the form of a division of labor and a distribution of status. (Honneth, 2003a, pp. 155-156)
Honneth continues by criticizing Fraser on the point of methodology on the point that Fraser does not adequately explain the reasons why the capitalist order should suddenly be investigated through the spheres of economy and culture.

He points out that for example in Habermas one can find a methodological dualism, but the two complementary perspectives of social integration and system integration are justified by referring to the object domain itself. They are understood according to Honneth “...as aspects of coordination of social action that are essential to or constitutive of the reproduction of late-capitalist societies.” (Honneth, 2003a, p. 156).

The overall point however is that Honneth does not find anything analogous to this in Fraser’s reflections, thus he claims that it is completely unclear why her methodological dualism should be justified. Honneth concludes by claiming that any sort of methodological perspectivism that is not anchored in a social-theoretical view of how social reproduction in capitalist societies is lacking. Honneth claims that his own view is a moral-theoretical monism that can be justified

Since the central institutions of even capitalist societies require a rational legitimation through generalizable principles of reciprocal recognition, their reproduction remains dependent on a basis of moral consensus – which thus possesses real primacy vis-à-vis other integration mechanisms, since it is the basis of the normative expectations of members of society as well as their readiness for conflict. (Honneth, 2003a, p. 157)

Thus, Honneth’s attempts to show that the struggles and conflicts in capitalist societies refer to principles of mutual recognition that are considered legitimate by members of society itself. Thus, Honneth posits contra Fraser that a moral experience of disrespect is regarded as the motivational basis for all social conflicts. He sees that Fraser’s opposition between economic and cultural conflicts at most can have secondary significance since it only specifies different ways in which disrespect is experienced.

The main difference according to Honneth is that Fraser first establishes autonomy and equality and then continues towards social participation whereas Honneth is oriented towards towards unobstructed identity formation (Honneth, 2003a, p. 176).

With regard to Fraser’s criticism where she claims that Honneth treats self-esteem as a right which can valorize racist identities, Honneth answers by giving a thorough account of why one cannot make “demands” for social esteem (Honneth, 2003a, pp. 168-169). Esteem can, according to Honneth, “...only be the result of a process of judgment that escapes our control, just as sympathy or affection does. (Honneth, 2003a, p. 168)” In a sense, this entails that according
to Fraser’s interpretation of esteem her criticism is valid whereas if esteem is framed as Honneth understands it will not valorize racist identities.

Either way, Fraser raises an important question as the dynamic where disaffected groups attempt to raise their own status by diminishing others is quite common, especially for racist or xenophobic movements. Hence, I am inclined to agree with Fraser and treat esteem through the status model and hence be able to point out the dynamic of making claims for esteem that diminish other’s status as claims against participatory parity.

Fraser agrees with Honneth that both of their frameworks position critique in relations to contemporary social struggles. She also agrees that both frameworks are able to theorize culture in present day capitalism and that both frameworks promises to provide standards of justice that can adjudicate current claims for justice (Fraser, 2003b, p. 199). She concludes that for both of them, recognition is central to the effort to reconstruct critical theory.

The question for Fraser is which framework is more suitable for the task of renewing critical theory. For Fraser the suitability of the framework is decided on the grounds of how it meets three issues (Fraser, 2003b, pp. 199-200). The first issue concerns itself with the empirical reference point of critical theory. She claims that there can be no metaphysically decided agent of change or a prioristically identified addressee of critique at a time where the Marxian metanarratives have lost their credibility. Thus, the question arises how critical theory should position itself in relation to the current political situation especially as lots of the contemporary social movements seek recognition. The second issue is the place of culture in the new phase of capitalist society, for example, post-fordist, globalized or the phase of the information age. The third issue concerns itself with the normative standards that inform the critique.

Both Fraser’s and Honneth’s frameworks embrace the dialectic of immanence and transcendence that has traditionally been the guiding idea in critical theory. This is the reason why Fraser stresses the first issue of the empirical reference point of critical theory. This is done in contrast to theories of justice that adopt a god’s eye view that is totally independent of actual society.

For Fraser, the empirical reference points are found in the actual struggles of the social movements while for Honneth it is anchored in a moral psychology of pre-political suffering (Fraser, 2003b, pp. 202,203,205). Fraser claims that her view based on the social movements are more plausible as they struggle for something that “really” merits injustice instead of an untested pre-political discontent or merely a “feeling of injustice”.

For Fraser, the starting point is the decentered discourses of social criticism. It is a critique connected with social context by folk paradigms that constitute a hegemonic grammar of contestation and deliberation. Folk paradigms are not any specific grammar but “transpersonal discourses that are widely diffused throughout democratic societies” (Fraser, 2003b, p. 207). They do not only exist in the public sphere but also in workplaces, households and civil society associations. For Fraser these folk paradigms functions as the empirical reference point (Fraser, 2003b, p. 208).
The second issue for Fraser is the place of culture and widely one should understand its scope in capitalist society (Fraser, 2003b, p. 217). In other words, how far down should one understand that the cultural order extends and what is its relation to market mechanisms and distributive outcomes? Can misrecognition be seen as the root of all subordination in society? With regard to critical theory, Fraser asks if critical theory should unreservedly embrace the “cultural turn” and if one should replace an economistic paradigm with a culturalistic one (Fraser, 2003b, p. 218)?

Fraser agrees with Honneth that culture should not be seen as a mere reflection of political economy but it should be seen as a vehicle of political ordering at its own (Fraser, 2003b, pp. 217-218). Also both maintain that culture often serves as a medium of domination, in other words that society harbors injustices that does not have their roots in the political economy. Both also theorize culture in terms of recognition to highlight the social weight and moral significance of culture in contemporary capitalism. At this point however the agreement ends.

According to Fraser, Honneth subordinates social theory to his moral psychology. Hence, what Honneth does according to Fraser is to view all social processes in capitalist society as being directly regulated by cultural evaluation. Also all injustices can be remedied by a cultural change.

Fraser points out that one feature of contemporary capitalism, is that it creates a quasi-objective, anonymous and impersonal market that follows its own logic (Fraser, 2003b, pp. 217, 218). This logic creates class-relations that are not merely reflections of status hierarchies. They created through a complicated process that sometimes instrumentalizes, dissolves or circumvents status distinctions.

On this ground Fraser proposes that one cannot theorize capitalist society in a monistic way but that one has to take into account the distinctive dynamics of the capitalist economy and theorize its interaction with the status order (Fraser, 2003b, pp. 217-218). For example, today’s struggles against neo-liberal global capitalism cannot be rooted in ideologies about achievement but in system imperatives and governance structures of globalizing capitalism.

Deprivation does not occur as an under-valuing of labor contribution but because of economic system-mechanisms that excludes many completely from labor markets (Fraser, 2003b, pp. 217, 218). Naturally many of these imperatives have its grounds in Eurocentric racism but they cannot simply be changed by cultural measures. They require a wholesale restructuring of global system of finance, trade and production. These kinds of issues escapes according to Fraser recognition monism and require a two-dimensional framework to be properly analyzed.

Fraser also claims that the status order of society is too complex to divide it only into love, esteem and rights. Fraser holds that the recognition should be understood as status equality and not in terms of an intact identity (Fraser, 2003b, pp. 219-221). Also for Fraser the status order institutional expression is
the status order as a whole, in other words it is not divided a priori in three spheres with three corresponding psychological injuries.

The third issue was the normative component of critical theory, its understanding of justice and its moral criteria for adjudicating claims. Fraser proposes that critical theory cannot rely on a sectarian view of justice at the same time as it is determinate enough to clearly have a standpoint on what is right and what is wrong (Fraser, 2003b, pp. 223-233). Fraser claims that Honneth's approach cannot meet both requirements at the same time. To avoid sectarianism, Honneth must adopt an anything goes approach with regard to determinacy as any form of human flourishing would be counted as good. On the other hand if Honneth wants to have a determinate view on how to adjudicate claims he has to adopt a moral psychology that is restrictive, in other words sectarian. According to Fraser, her own approach manages both claims at the same time as it assumes both the reasonableness of ethical disagreement and the equal moral worth of human beings. It is compatible with all accounts of a good life that respects equal autonomy. Her norm of participatory parity articulates specific interpretation of what participatory parity requires. It rejects formal notions of equality as insufficient and maintains that to respect equal autonomous and moral worth of others one has to accord them the status of full partners in social interaction.

The dialectic of immanence and transcendence represents the legacy of critical theory's left Hegelian tradition. Historically the Frankfurt school tied this problematic to the seeking or identification of the revolutionary subject. According to Honneth this is one reason why the earlier theorists did not see the need to problematize the methodological structure as an individual problem (Honneth, 2003b, pp. 238, 239). Thus, as long as one could regard the proletariat as the pretheoretical class with an inherent interest of overthrowing capitalist relations one did not have the need to explain which experiences or practices could guarantee a transcendency of the social order.

According to Honneth the talk of transcendence and immanence designates a normative potential that reemerges in every new social reality because it is attached to forms of practice or experiences that are on one hand indispensable for societal reproduction and on the other hand points beyond all other forms of societal organization (Honneth, 2003b, p. 244). Thus, according to Honneth the connection between transcendence and immanence is stronger than Fraser sees. Transcendence should be a property of immanence itself so that the facticity of social relations always contains a dimension of transcending claims. Honneth states that even if such a connection seems a bit high-flown under present conditions, there are some approaches that follow this program such as Castoriadis, Marcuse, Habermas and Foucault. The approaches should be seen as attempts to fill the gap left by the disintegration of the production paradigm.

The difference with regard to the empirical reference point between Fraser and Honneth are guided by two completely different sets of ideas. Fraser starts with the folk-paradigms of justice and pursues the aim of anchoring theory in present-day society. Honneth’s moral-psychological reflections seek according
to him quasi-transcendental justification of critique in the structure of social reality. His idea is the hypothesis that all social integration depends on reliable forms of mutual recognition whose insufficiencies are tied to feelings of misrecognition (Honneth, 2003b, p. 245). This is regarded as the engine of social change. Thus, the same instance that is in principle to guarantee the possibility of transcending the given order must also be able to explain historically how normative changes and improvements in form of social organization have come about.

To answer the question of sociologically explaining current developmental processes of capitalism is according to Honneth a too big question, especially as Fraser understands the disagreement between her and Honneth only in terms of the cultural turn. Honneth does not try to establish a categorical framework for adequately describing a modern capitalist society (Honneth, 2003b, p. 249). According to himself he only tried to reveal the moral constraints underlying social interaction on different levels in society. The guiding idea is that mutual recognition guides the inclusion in society. The mutual recognition or how we intersubjectively learn to affirm one another in particular respects amounts according to Honneth to social integration.

According to Honneth Fraser overdramatizes the moral psychology that Honneth uses. Honneth claims that moral-psychological considerations about the function of recognition plays a role in the conception of justice only insofar as they support the social-theoretical thesis that social integration works through forms of mutual recognition. (Honneth, 2003b, p. 258)

Honneth also criticizes Fraser for claiming that he incorporates a particularist idea at the same time as she introduces participatory parity, an idea that seems to be quite particular in itself (Honneth, 2003b, p. 259). Both Fraser and Honneth seem according to Honneth to agree that the most important good is the creation of social relations in which subjects are included as full members in the sense that they can publicly uphold and practice their lifestyles without shame or humiliation. In a sense Honneth’s recognition is the same as participatory parity as the development and realization of individual autonomy is only possible when subjects have the social preconditions for realizing their life goals without unjustifiable disadvantages and with greatest possible freedom.

3.4.2 COMMENTS ON THE DEBATE
The main theme of this thesis is to focus on radical democracy founded on dissent, I will assess the debate between Honneth and Fraser with this in mind. In other words, the question is which of the frameworks is most justified for a radical democratic theory founded on dissent. I will argue for the view that Fraser’s framework based on participatory parity has the stronger justification.
First of all let's consider the roots of injustices in both Fraser's and Honneth's frameworks. Fraser grounds her framework in the idea of participatory parity and in the removal of institutional obstacles that lies in the way of its realization. She defines justice as the stuff that social movements struggle for in a specific historical time (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 11-12). These folk-paradigms of justice are not philosophical paradigms per se but paradigms that inform present day struggles in society which leads to a view centered on social movements.

For Honneth the idea of recognition and justice is tied to the pre-political feeling of hurt and injustice. This feeling is that is derived from obstacles in the way of self-determination. Honneth’s theory is also tied to the social movements with the difference that in his theory the struggles of social movements are grounded in morality.

To make the case for one framework over the other with regard to a radical democratic theory based in dissent is tied to Honneth’s and Fraser’s respective views on theory and philosophy.

Fraser seems to be content with weaker philosophical grounding for her framework. One could claim that she ends up doing more political theory than political philosophy. With political theory in this case I mean that Fraser strives to formulate a better and more applicable theory of justice instead of focusing on stronger justification. In other words the justification of Fraser’s theory refers to the practical usability instead of solid philosophical grounds.

Honneth seeks to secure stronger philosophical justification for his theory than Fraser. He strives to investigate and clarify the underlying philosophical grounds for our feeling of injustice and what social phenomena hinder us to flourish as persons.

One of the reasons why the arguments in the debate between Honneth and Fraser seem to go past each other is tied to the different justificatory principles and perspective on philosophical grounds.

With regard to justice and dissent the most important factor is how a theory can encompass the idea of self-characterization of dissent. This self-determinacy refers to the idea that the dissenters themselves can formulate dissent. In other words, the dissenters themselves should define the causes and the roots for their dissent.

The idea of justice as participatory parity allows for dissent to be defined by the dissenters as dissent and also political struggles are viewed as means of participation. In other words, participatory parity requires that dissent is accepted as a way of participating in society. The idea of participatory parity also strengthens the view that the only limit of dissent, apart from participatory parity, is dissent itself. In other words, all dissent is allowed as long as it does not hinder anyone else’s possibility to dissent. The claim can be made that Honneth’s theory of recognition provides for the stronger self-characterization of dissent because he derives justice from the feeling of injustice. However what I attempt to describe with the self-characterization of dissent is not if dissent can be traced to subjective feelings of hurt. My aim is analyze such dissent that
is articulated. The power of this articulation is what I attempt to capture with the idea of the self-characterization of dissent. This articulation can be based on subjective feelings of hurt but also on an understanding of, for example, objective conditions of domination. Because Fraser’s participatory parity allows for the self-characterization either way, it is more suitable that Honneth’s theory which emphasize subjective feelings of hurt.

Fraser’s folk-paradigmatic idea of justice starts out from the notion that justice is the stuff that social movements struggle for. She states that we should exclude movements that are against human rights from this consideration (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 11-12). I would disagree with this despite being in favor of human rights as such.

As I proposed one should approach this question in two stages. First one should allow everyone to be considered in what the struggles are about. As all social movements rise from society, everyone is counted. In the second stage one should take into consideration the goals of the movement. It is at this second stage we can evaluate whether a movement is democratic or not.

Hence, Fraser’s view is somewhat incoherent when she claims that movements that do not respect human rights should be excluded from a priori especially as she does not give any argument in favor of her view. Without such an argument this is an arbitrary division that has the same strength as claiming the opposite. Her argument seems to rest on the idea that human rights as such should not be contested at all.

My assumption is that Fraser merely attempts to introduce a principle which allows us to exclude movements that are against human rights from decision making in actual society. In order to achieve this it is unnecessary to refer to an uncontestable view of human rights. It is enough to show that some movements are working against participatory parity and are hence anti-democratic or oppressive. Thus, participatory parity itself is a sufficient principle to exclude anti-democratic movements.

The idea of justice as participatory parity seems to be a way of securing a view of justice that has enough substance to allow for normative evaluations while still leaving the content sufficiently open to allow for its definition by the dissenters.

In Honneth’s framework every struggle for justice is tied to the moral psychological hurt of not being able to flourish as an individual. Honneth does not claim to make a theory that could explain contemporary capitalist society as such, only the recognition order.

It is noteworthy that Fraser’s theory allows for the interpretation that recognition as a phenomenon works in the manner that Honneth claims. The difference lies in where the injustice of misrecognition is. Justice as participatory parity allows for a wider view of justice than the possibility for self-determination.

The framework of participatory parity allows the dissenters to frame dissent as a struggle for justice regardless of where its roots are. Hence, it may be that dissent could be tied to self-determination, but it is not a necessity. Hence,
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justice as participatory parity allows for the interpretation that one cause for dissent may be tied to Honneth’s theory of recognition but others are equally possible.

If we return to the question of giving philosophical grounds Fraser and Honneth seems to have a quite different view on them. As I have pointed out, Honneth justifies his theory by giving it strong philosophical grounds. I did claim that this is one of the reasons Fraser and Honneth seems to be misunderstanding each other constantly.

Honneth starts from the pre-political idea of the feeling of injustice and continues a solid and coherent argumentation which is based on the theory of Hegel. His goal is to give stronger ties to reality to the Habermasian framework. Honneth does not refer to political grounds in his theory. Fraser on the other hands starts out by claiming that the different spheres of justice have two points of reference, a political and a philosophical.

She continues by claiming that philosophically they refer to the normative paradigms developed by a theorist and politically they refer to the claims that social movements make in the public sphere. Hence, it is completely viable to claim that Fraser is more tied to the project of creating a working framework of justice whereas Honneth is interested in its philosophical grounds. It may be that a conception of justice in a modern capitalist society requires a kind of minimal justification in order to retain usability.

It is also viable to interpret the different views on philosophical foundations as having its ground in different justificatory principles. Honneth justifies his theory with strong and coherent philosophical argumentation. Fraser on the other hand uses the practical usability of her framework as a justificatory principle. To make the case for the view that stronger philosophical grounding could at some point become a negative feature for a theory would require a thorough investigation in itself.

Regardless of how the view one has on philosophical foundations, I claim that it is possible to make some practical improvements to Fraser’s framework, by introducing some of Laclau’s ideas. This can be done without sacrificing the practical usability of the framework.

The case could be made that within the sphere of recognition one should adopt Honneth’s theory of recognition. Because of this it is necessary to answer the question of whether the status model of recognition or recognition as self-realization is more viable from a point of view of dissent. One problem is that Fraser states that it may be that her model of recognition is actually presupposing Honneth’s idea but she is inclined to not letting the moral psychological feature govern her framework as it would be to introduce Honneth’s intersubjective ethical model in a political framework of justice.

Fraser claims that one of the advantages of her model is that it allows us to justify claims for recognition as binding for all who agree to abide by fair terms of interaction under conditions of value pluralism. One of her claims is that this entails that Fraser’s model would be non-sectarian. However Honneth argues rightly that Fraser’s idea of participatory parity is a sectarian idea itself. It is true

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that the norm of participatory parity is sectarian, but it only requires that one is a democrat.

As I already pointed out, I would favor the status model on the grounds that it does not need to locate injustices in psychology, even if it probably is true that the feelings related or derived from injustices hinders us to flourish as persons.

In my opinion it is a clear merit of the status model that it can show that injustices are unjust whether or not misrecognition has the effects that Honneth argues for. It also makes the ties stronger to institutional reality. The objective nature of Fraser's framework does not diminish the requirement of self-characterization, on the contrary, it strengthens it because the ability for self-characterization is not restricted to subjective feelings of hurt but allows for the consideration of objective causes for injustice.

One problem with Honneth’s framework is one can make the case that Honneth’s idea of recognition may lead to the right to have self-esteem. A right to self-esteem may again lead to a position where one has to accept the such self-esteem that relies on oppressing others.

Esteem is the third mode of recognition that Honneth identifies. Honneth argues that individuals deserve esteem in virtue of their concrete characteristics or traits or abilities (Honneth, 1995, pp. 121, 125, 129).

Thus, they are not esteemed only because they are associated with a particular culture or social identity but because they possess specific features that distinguish them as unique individuals. According to Honneth individuals deserve esteem for attributes that contribute to the achievement of societal goals (Honneth, 1995, p. 122).

Esteem is thus a reward for persons that help their society to achieve particular goals. Thus, “the social standing of subjects is ... measured in terms of what they can accomplish for society within the context of their particular forms of self-realization” (Honneth, 1995, p. 127).

Hence, according to Honneth, each society has certain goals or values that help to define its identity. According to him, society has a set of ethical goals and values that comprises its cultural self-understanding (Honneth, 1995, p. 122).

Honneth does not however contend that a society would share a single set of values but we have after the “collapse” of traditional hierarchies of values seen the emergence of a condition of value pluralism (Honneth, 1995, p. 125).

In this value pluralism many values compete against each other for social precedence. These are struggles for esteem. Thus, value systems are in a constant flux as some values wane and other waxes. There is a permanent struggle to control the means of symbolic force and to shape the climate of public attention (Honneth, 1995, p. 127).

Thus, groups that share certain values strive to raise the profile of their own value-system and if they succeed they gain esteem. Honneth’s view on esteem has been criticized by Fraser as self-esteem may be interpreted as a right as it is seen as a necessity for undistorted identity formation (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 32-33). Social-esteem is an intersubjective condition for undistorted identity formation.
As morality is supposed to protect this, it follows that everyone is morally entitled to self-esteem. According to Fraser viewing esteem as a right for all makes it meaningless as it becomes a *reduction ad absurdum* argument (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 32-33).

Fraser relies on a distinction in moral philosophy where respect is owed universally on the grounds of a shared humanity, esteem however is given differentially on the grounds of specific accomplishments or contribution (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 32-33). Thus, giving respect equally to everyone is sensible, while according esteem equally to everyone becomes an oxymoron.

Her own model avoids this according to her by entailing that everyone has an equal right to pursue social esteem under conditions of equal opportunity (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 32-33). According to Fraser, Honneth’s conception of recognition runs into difficulties when trying to distinguish whose claims for recognition are justifiable.

As Honneth’s model is based on the idea of self-realization it follows, according to Fraser, that such claims for recognition that enhances the claimant’s self-esteem are justified while those who diminish it are not (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 37-38).

Thus, it is, according to Fraser, doubtful if enhanced self-esteem should function as a justificatory standard for recognition claims (Fraser, 2003a, pp. 37-38). On the other hand, anti-racist claims could be seen as illegitimate as they could threaten the self-esteem of the racist. Here one of the problems is that prejudice can give the bearer psychological benefits.

Hence, it is possible to view Honneth’s idea of esteem and self-esteem as something that one should have right-like claim to attain. Fraser’s framework only states that everyone should have an equal right to pursue social esteem under conditions of equal opportunity.

The status model makes it easier to combine the idea of recognition to a political theory of dissent. A view of justice that leaves a major part of its definition to the dissenters can be combined with the idea of dissent as the limit of itself. This view also entails the viewpoint that there are multiple spheres of justice that all can be governed by an idea of justice that is specific to that sphere.

Honneth’s idea treats the idea of flourishing as a person as a primary idea that should govern other spheres of justice. Fraser makes the claim that Honneth attempts to interpret all forms of justice through his idea of recognition. This is understandably not compatible with a perspective that allows for multiple frameworks of justice.

However it is also clear that the Fraserian framework lacks philosophical coherence and justifications at some points. The main points are Fraser’s ideas on abnormality, agonism, discourse and hegemony. I have attempted to give reinterpretations of her framework where needed to make the framework as a whole more philosophically sound. Many of the insights that add philosophical justification to Fraser’s framework can be derived from Ernesto Laclau’s theories of hegemony and democracy.
3.4.3 HOW MANY SPHERES OF JUSTICE?

Fraser’s framework as it is presented in (Fraser & Honneth, 2003) is clearly lacking with its perspectival dualism. Perspectival dualism refers to the division of justice into the spheres of recognition and redistribution. The main problem in my opinion is not that Fraser’s dualism lacks justification as Honneth thinks, but mostly that the sphere of politics is left out. Fraser corrects this by later in (Fraser, 2008a) introducing the sphere of representation which can be seen as the political sphere that was left out initially.

There is however a point to Honneth’s critique. If one is only interested in making a functioning theory of justice the question of justification can be avoided, but the framework would be left open for a philosophical critique at this point.

Honneth refers as an example to Habermas perspectival dualism as justified while Fraser leaves completely open the question of why society should suddenly be viewed through the dualist framework or later through the three spheres that she proposes. I agree with Honneth that there does not seem in Fraser’s work any justification except that it leads to a clever and working theory of justice.

I claim that this problem can be overcome by giving Fraser’s framework a reinterpretation that would be compatible with my dissent-perspectival idea at the same time as introducing the central idea of Michael Walzer in his book Spheres of Justice.

If we assume that the perspectives in Fraser’s framework of justice would not refer to an all-encompassing view of all existing spheres of justice, then the problem of justification would look a bit different.

The problem of justification would be removed as one would not have justify the specific two or later three spheres of justice but to justify the idea that there are many spheres of justice that while related with each other has own specific features that shows that justice works a bit differently in different spheres. Fraser seems to have a similar dynamic in mind as she points out that a social movement may open up new spheres of justice through contestation (Fraser, 2008, p. 59).

Hence, this would require that the Fraserian framework would be interpreted as a framework where there are potentially more spheres of justice that what she claims. Hence, according to this interpretation Fraser would only have given us interpretations of three spheres of justice that alone would not explain all features of contemporary capitalist society. Walzer’s idea is roughly that there are different spheres of justice that all functions a bit differently in the different spheres (Walzer, 1983, pp. 3-10). Also one should avoid to monopolize what is distributed in one sphere and also that this monopoly should not be used to dominate other spheres (Walzer, 1983, pp. 10-11,19).

However Walzer treats all justice through the idea of distributive justice even though he uses his theory to approach matters of justice such as affects, family, women and also recognition (Walzer, 1983, pp. 227-229, 239-242, 249-258).
Hence, to make use of Walzer's idea in this case implies that one would use only his idea of different spheres of justice and decouple it from being subsumed under the distributive paradigm. Hence, the idea framed this way could be read as a critique of for example the Marxian or new liberalist idea where the sphere of economy and hence the view of justice within it is falsely used to define all forms of justice. This would also entail a critique of any view that would see ethics or only the recognition order as the defining feature of all of justice.

In a sense the critique is quite similar as Fraser's idea that one should not view justice only as a question of redistributing wealth or identity political ordering, but at the same time through lenses that are true to the specific forms of justice at hand. Hence, if reinterpreted by adopting a decoupled version of Walzer's idea of justice it is possible to justify the multiple perspectives from the point of view that different areas of justice should be investigated through a conception of justice that is in line with that specific area of justice.

The connection with a political theory of dissent is made through the idea that the amount of spheres of justice should be left open. One of the features of dissent can be to show that our existing ideas of justice are not applicable in a specific case. Hence, this would warrant the introduction of a different sphere such a case.

On the level of theory this entails the introducing of a new sphere of justice to our framework of justice. Hence, the framework of justice can be justified by reinterpreting the Fraserian framework so that it leaves open the amount of spheres of perspective on justice and through the idea that such a reinterpretation is also justified by the idea that it allows for new spheres to be introduced through contestation and dissent.

One can find arguments in favor of from Fraser's own theory. The sphere of representation in Fraser's framework should encompass both representation in the sense of who gets to speak in matters at hand but also in the sense of how a question of justice is framed (Fraser, 2008, p. 17). The only argument that I can find in Fraser's theory is that the sphere of representation fits with recognition and redistribution in order to make three key concepts that start with re-. To have three concepts is more a question of style than any theoretical requirement. In other words, under my interpretation, Fraser already has at least four spheres of justice in her framework. Walzer's analyzes similar aspect that Fraser analyzes through the spheres of misrepresentation and misframing through the spheres membership and procedure.
3.5 JUSTICE AS PARTICIPATORY PARITY

The idea of participatory parity is central for Fraser’s theory of justice. However there are not a lot of philosophical arguments for participatory parity as such. In other words, it remains a bit unclear why we should accept the idea as participatory parity as the normative core of a theory of justice. I also agree with Honneth that Fraser’s claim that Honneth’s theory is sectarian is a bit dubious as the idea of participatory parity as such is a quite sectarian ideal. The sectarian nature of participatory parity is not a problem as the only requirement is that one is a democrat.

Fraser’s idea of participatory parity can be viewed as an attempt to capture liberty and equality under a single framework. This seems to entail that Fraser first seems to establish the space of autonomy through the concept of participatory parity and then builds her framework on that.

She does not provide too many arguments for accepting the idea or an explanation of how we can assume that everyone should accept participatory parity as the core of a theory. One possibility would, of course, be to assume, as Rawls does, that we could agree to participatory parity, at least in the case of ideal theory.

Hence, we would assume that participatory parity could be agreed upon rational grounds and under conditions that rule out partisan interests. Another possibility would be to approach the concept through empirical practice and assume that Fraser merely attempts to provide a working concept of justice that is possible to utilize for empirical purposes. I assume that this latter interpretation is the case.

However the philosophical grounds to accept this kind of interpretation are rather weak. Also the first possibility seems dubious from the point of view of dissent as I keep stressing that we should not force a specific interpretation on justice that forces dissent to be framed in a similar manner. For example, if we approach the idea of participatory parity as an idea of ideal theory we also at the same time can infer that matters of justice could be inferred in a similar manner and hence we would accept a substantive view of justice. Hence, if participatory parity should be accepted as the normative core of our framework we should be able to argue for it without referring to ideal theory.

The main argument for accepting participatory parity for me is through the requirements of dissent. As I pointed out the main idea is to view dissent as a positive feature in society and as a feature that is oriented towards betterment of society despite not being necessarily tied to discourse theory. A discourse theoretical view could accept participatory parity on the grounds of ideal discourse.

When participatory parity is viewed from the point of view of dissent, it is accepted because it allows for the possibility and creates a “right” for everyone to dissent. The key idea is that if we claim that everyone should be able to participate on par in society we also have to accept that one way of participation is through articulated non-agreement with society, in other words dissent. This
idea, however, does not necessarily establish the idea of autonomy as such but actually widens the possibility of participation as any form of dissent within the limits of democracy is accepted. Hence, participatory parity is viewed as central for any conception of radical democracy that is based on a political theory of dissent. The idea of justice as participatory parity also sets limits for the concept of democracy in a radical democratic theory. With this I mean that the limit between what is considered democratic or undemocratic can be assessed using the norm of participatory parity. Hence, in a democracy most claims can be accepted as being democratic as long as they promote participatory parity.

I view Fraser’s idea of establishing the idea of liberty and equality as the clear merit of her framework as it also allows for tying together different traditions of political philosophy, especially its continental strands that focuses more on power and conflict and the liberal ones that focus on establishing as wide a field of liberty and equality as possible.

In my opinion the idea of participatory parity can also be viewed as an argument for the idea that very strong philosophical or ontological grounds for a theory of justice can be a negative feature. In other words, some part of the strength of Fraser’s framework, namely those concerning the core of her framework, lies inadvertently in her philosophical argumentation for a weak basis.

This idea however rests on the idea that when giving stronger philosophical justifications one gives at the same times arguments from which it is possible to infer substantive conceptions of political action and that the power to define political action lies with the political actors themselves.
3.6 SUMMARY

At this stage I think we are ready to make some initial assumptions on what kind of framework of justice would be best suited for a radical democratic political theory of dissent.

From the debate between Honneth and Fraser, I have concluded that Fraser’s framework of justice has stronger justification, mainly because it leaves a larger part of the substantial question to be defined by the dissenters themselves. While Honneth’s theory may, initially, seem to, in a better way, allow for the self-characterization of dissent, I claim that Fraser’s theory is stronger because it allows for the wider possibility of articulation of dissent. In other words, Fraser’s theory is not restricted by subjective feelings of hurt or obstacles in the way of self-realization. The ideas of justice defined through social struggle combined with the norm of participatory parity allows for any form of dissent while still being able to provide the means of distinguishing between the democratic or undemocratic nature of such claims. This is done in two stages where the first stage allows for any claims to enter the picture in order to allow for maximum participation and also gives meaning to the concept of justice. In the second stage the articulated demands can be distinguished as either democratic or undemocratic by referring to the norm of participatory parity.

I also think that, overall, Honneth’s theory as such has a stronger philosophical justification. This, however, is something of a problem with regard to dissent as it seems that a strong philosophical foundation may lead to giving substantive and somewhat binding views on justice that lessen the self-characterization of the dissenters.

Even though Fraser’s framework functions as a basis, it needs some reinterpretations partially because of the requirements of dissent and partially because it lacks philosophical strength where needed. Hence, from this point on I will refer to the political theory of dissent instead of Fraser’s framework to clarify when I am talking about my reinterpreted framework and when I am referring to Fraser’s original framework.

Fraser’s framework was divided into three spheres that refer to remedies for different injustices, redistribution, recognition and representation. A political theory of dissent requires that the number of spheres be left open to allow for the possibility of introducing new contestations of justice through the idea of dissent.

This also makes the framework stronger as it does not have to justify why justice should suddenly be viewed from the point of view of three perspectives as Honneth has rightly criticized Fraser for. I claim that political theory of dissent should avoid this. One way to illustrate how one could leave the number of spheres open is through Walzer’s idea that there are different forms of justice that merit different forms of remedies. In other words, it is not necessary to specify the amount of spheres. On the contrary, the amount of spheres should be left open in order to allow for different perspectives of justice when needed.
This holds especially as “spheres” are merely analytic distinctions which opens the way for more thorough social analysis. With regard to Fraser’s theory I have argued that she already has introduced four spheres by giving the sphere of representation a double meaning.

The concept of justice is defined in Fraser’s framework through contemporary struggles of our time. However, Fraser rules out struggles that are against human rights. A political theory of dissent should view the ruling out as an arbitrary boundary and hence view justice as defined through every contemporary struggles.

The boundaries are set by the idea of democracy, which is incorporated through the norm of participatory parity. For example with regard to claims that against the idea of human rights one could assess their democratic nature as following. First of all, the claims are accepted as claims which are potentially democratic. It is the claims-making that gives them this nature. On this level they are included in assessments on, for example, justice is. However when the claims are articulated and thus made political one can assess if they promote or hinders participatory parity in society. As violations against human rights can be seen as violating the possibility to participate on par in society, such claims can be viewed as being undemocratic and on this basis legitimately be excluded.

The merit of Fraser’s framework is that it does not require a substantive view of justice. The substantive view of justice is rejected by the requirements of dissent to allow for the self-determination and self-characterization of the dissenters.

However, the contestation in the open aspects of Fraser’s framework seems to be solved at least partially through rational discussion, while the dissent-perspectival framework views the “filling” of concept through hegemonic contestation. This also introduces the question of political power. This idea is also more in line with the idea of a theory that is written from and for social movements.
4 RADICAL DEMOCRACY AND DISSENT

4.1 GENERAL CLAIMS

I have proposed that the best conception of justice for a radical democratic theory of dissent is based on the norm of participatory parity. A central argument is that the idea of justice as participatory parity allows for the self-characterization of dissent. In addition, participatory parity both sets limits for democracy and makes alterations possible in institutional frameworks.

The main objectives of this chapter are to clarify what kind of conception of radical democracy is best suited for such a theory and to combine Fraser’s conception of justice with Laclau’s political theory. This move will finalize the construction of a political theory of dissent.

I first clarify some central ideas and concepts that a radical democratic political theory of dissent should take into account and after that I show how a political theory of dissent can be modified to incorporate these concepts.

I start by presenting some thoughts on how we should conceptualize societal change and democratic struggle. One of the reasons for this is to further highlight the idea that conflicts can and should be seen as a positive feature in society. In other words, this is done in order to clarify why and how dissent should be represented in a democracy.

A radical democratic view implies a conception of democracy as being in constant motion. In order to explain this development conceptually and socially we need what I shall call a logic of change. The logic of change conceptualizes and makes democratic change in society intelligible. On the conceptual level, following the ideas of Ernesto Laclau, we have two main alternatives. These are dialectic and an antagonistic logic. I argue with Laclau that an antagonistic logic of change is more suited for a radical democratic political theory of dissent.

One of the main debates within radical democratic theory is the debate between the deliberative democrats and the agonists. I will argue in favour of the view that a political theory of dissent is more justified when viewed as an agonist theory. One of the reasons is that deliberative democracy partially shares liberal democracy’s feature of internalizing conflicts and thus hides many important forms of dissent.

After the investigation into some of the key concepts for a radical democratic political theory of dissent, I present some of Ernesto Laclau’s ideas that can add strength to Nancy Fraser’s theory of participatory parity. These ideas are Laclau’s and also Mouffe’s insights on hegemony and populist politics. I show how Fraser’s theory can be strengthened by incorporating some of Laclau’s

15 Even though I focus primarily on Laclau in this dissertation, the theory of hegemony is largely adopted jointly between Laclau and Mouffe in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.
ideas. Laclau’s theory of politics can also further explain how political movements arise, which is a feature that Fraser’s current theory cannot.

Fraser’s theory of justice as participatory parity employs the concept of reflexive justice in order to explain the difference between open and closed frameworks. Further, she argues for the view that we need to have closed frameworks in order to make decisions and thus also change institutional configurations. In order to explain change from one social configuration into another, she employs the idea of open frameworks. I claim that a theory of hegemony is better suited to this. Chantal Mouffe’s and Ernesto Laclau’s theory of hegemony struggle can explain a similar dynamic as Fraser strives for with her notion of reflexive justice.

It is also possible to interpret Laclau’s theory as one that is tied to the idea of participatory parity. I will argue for the view that Laclau’s idea of democratic demands can be interpreted as enhancing participatory parity.

The question of viewing politics as institutional versus anti-institutional engagement is central in contemporary radical democratic theory. I have earlier argued that a radical democratic theory of dissent should be tied to institutional reality. I will elaborate on this conception a little further in order to achieve a more justified view of the concept of democracy and democratic politics.

After the key concepts have been straightened out, I will provide an argument about how these key concepts should be incorporated into a radical democratic political theory of dissent. The overall claim is that one possible radical democratic political theory of dissent can be achieved by integrating Nancy Fraser’s theory of justice and Ernesto Laclau’s theory of democracy.
4.2 DEMOCRACY AND THE LOGIC OF CHANGE

The logic of change explains how democracy changes both conceptually and socially. For a political theory of dissent the logic of change explains how social change, based on dissent, can be achieved. As dissent is directed disagreement towards some feature of society it implies conflict.

The logic of change can be approached through Laclau’s ideas of different social logics. In this conception we can identify at least three ways of conceptualizing social logic. The first one is the liberalist conceptualization. The second with its root in Hegelian thought is to view change and struggle from the perspective of dialectical contradiction. The third one is to view opposition as antagonistic.

Within the liberalist framework all social matters are reduced to a system where rules and movement are internal to themselves (Laclau, 1990, pp. 11-12). All possibilities for social change are hence viewed as being systemic possibilities. In liberalism, conflicts are internalized and carried out within the scope of the framework.

Change that is not internal to the liberalist system is viewed as an anomaly and its legitimacy can be questioned. Hence, according to Laclau, antagonistic relations do not even exist in a liberalist system as all conflicts are internalized and hence play out neatly within the scope of the system itself. One can arrive at this idea through the realization that whatever an agent does within the liberalist system its identity as a maximizer of interest remains (Laclau, 1990, p. 12).

In Laclau’s view the liberalist interpretation where political agents are reduced to maximizers of interest cannot explain antagonistic relations in a sufficient manner. The liberalist system eliminates antagonistic relations by confining them to the margins.

Because there are divergent interests in society they come into conflict. According to Laclau, the liberalist system manages this conflict by meeting interests in a sufficient way to ensure a stable society. Those interests that are completely against the liberalist idea are unaccepted and can be legitimately excluded. Change within the liberalist framework is contained in the liberal system.

In the liberalist framework, common ground can be reached by an appeal to the basic principles of reason as seen by liberals. A conflictual relation that cannot be reconciled through reason becomes a blind spot. In a sense, this eliminates politics as conflict and can be viewed as a false interpretation of pluralist politics. Real political antagonism is reduced to technical questions of how to recognize divergent interest (Mouffe, 2013, pp. 3-4).

A dialectical contradiction, again, implies a contradiction where the means to overcome the contradiction is found within the opposition itself. In other words, every current contradiction determines its subsequent forms. Hence, one can in principle track the evolution of certain social oppositions and determine their logical conclusion. With regard to social change, this means that social change
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can be viewed as a logical evolution of current oppositions. The logic of
dialectical change entails, according to Laclau, that change is logically
determined through the transcending of the conflict in question. With regard to
dissent, this entails that the possibility of change is intrinsic to dissent and its
counterpart, for example institutional oppression.

The idea of dialectical contradiction as the engine of change is closely tied to
the idea of historical determinism. The most common examples would be the
evolution of spirit in Hegel or class opposition in Marx.

It is noteworthy that the logic of change within a dialectical framework is
always determined from within the opposites themselves and oppositions are
overcome in a way that follows a specific trajectory according to reason, spirit,
and so on. The dialectical logic ascribes a privileged position to the agents that
are opposing each other. Thus, other oppositions that may be relevant are ruled
out. This reduces or rules out different real possibilities of dissent. In other
words, dialectics conceptualizes oppositions in a way that does not take all
possibilities of social conflicts into account.

According to Laclau, another possible way of conceiving change is to view
concepts and social forces as being in antagonistic relations to each other. The
main difference is that this way of conceiving the logic of change is not
historically determined and conceptual change is not a logical consequence that
follows intrinsically from within the concepts themselves. In this view the
oppositional relations in society depend entirely on factual and contingent
history (Laclau 1990: 8).

The difference can be clarified by presenting Laclau’s example of the
opposition between worker and capital and viewing the conflict from the point
of view of dialectics and antagonism. First we shall take the opposition between
worker and capital and view it through the lenses of dialectical contradiction. In
this opposition, the worker is in contradiction to capital because of the class
structure of society. We have arrived at this moment in history through the
evolution of the modes of production in society and through the overcoming of
the oppositions that any given societal stage creates. In an industrial capitalist
society the opposition between capital and worker is logically determined by the
current societal stage and the mode of production which creates the opposition.
Hence, the opposition between worker and capital is a necessity. The opposition
is transcended by the revolution that this opposition necessarily creates at which
point another societal stage is entered. Thus, resistance is a logical conclusion of
this opposition.

When the opposition between worker and capital is approached from an
antagonistic point of view, antagonistic opposition exists only if the worker
actually resists and in the form chosen by the worker (Laclau, 1990, p. 9). In
other words, resistance in Laclau’s sense is not a logical conclusion of the
contradiction between worker and capital. Hence, an antagonistic perspective
does not accept the idea that resistance is a logical conclusion of any opposition.

The reason why Laclau views the contradiction between worker and capital
as an antagonistic relation is that the logic of dialectical contradiction
presupposes the idea of a determined historical movement. In such a saturated space there is no space for multiplicity. History could not have evolved in any other way and in a sense the future is already decided. All societal oppositions are viewed as necessities that arise from objective history.

Laclau tries to show that one cannot and should not view social oppositions as objective relations. They should be seen as “the limit of all objectivity” (Laclau, 2014, pp. 161-165). In other words, one cannot deduce anything objectively from any given social opposition nor can one deduce any future societal configuration from such an opposition. An opposition exists only where it is created and articulated and the alterations that a conflict may lead to should not be viewed as logical conclusions but as contingent features interpreted in terms of a hegemonic power struggle. Hence, society should not, according to Laclau, be viewed in terms of a purely objective order (Laclau, 2014, pp. 161-165). Thus, a society and social conflicts are only one possibility out of many. Everything could have played out in a different way.

With regard to the self-characterization of dissent, this means that one cannot merely restrict oneself to one specific hegemonic social order. Such claims that refer to another hegemonic project have to be counted in order to allow for the self-characterization of dissent.

With regard to the idea of history, the antagonistic perspective is opposed to the idea of historical determinism (Laclau, 1990, pp. 12-13). The antagonistic account treats history as a matter that is not necessarily coherent.

The idea of the dialectical logic of contradiction views change as springing from within the objective relations of oppositional concepts and forces. Dialectical contradictions arise from an objective order in society which in turn is tied to the idea of historical determinism. An account of dialectical logic has to accept some form of determinism as there is only a limited possibility to overcome conceptual oppositions from within concepts themselves.

This finitude leads to the necessity of viewing society as an objective order. The antagonistic perspective is not tied to any conceptual necessity nor is it tied to the idea of historical determinism. On the other hand, this leads to the idea that one cannot view society as being constructed around an objective order but as being tied to the idea of contingency.

I claim that a radical democratic political theory based on dissent should frame its internal logic of change as an antagonistic logic. This is a requirement of dissent. I argued earlier for the self-characterization of dissent. This means that the dissenters themselves should retain the possibility of characterizing their dissent. To allow for the self-characterization of dissent, dissent should be limited only by participatory parity. Historical determinism and the idea that conflicts can be deduced from an objective order cannot be justified because they derive the characterization of dissent and dissenters from a conceptualization of society which characterizes dissent and conflict in society. In other words, historical determinism cannot be combined with the self-characterization of dissent.
The problem with this idea when applied to political struggles is that it requires a view of political struggles that partially removes the question of power. The question of power is partially bypassed because contradictions are transcended through features intrinsic to the opposing concepts. A theory of hegemony is better suited for a political theory in order to explain political struggle in terms of power.

I do not claim that the idea of dialectics as such is faulty. With regard to theory and theoretical reflection it is a useful tool, but as an idea that real conflicts should be transcended in this way it seems implausible. One of the problems with dialectics implemented on politics is that it may draw oneself into the quagmire of historical determination.

For example, if we consider the Hegelian idea of history as the fulfilment of objective spirit or the Marxian idea of viewing history as determined by the modes of production, it is possible to view dialectics as not being completely historically determined if there are many possible ways to transcend contradictory relations.

However, history seems to be at least partially determined if there is not an unlimited number of possible ways to transcend these conceptual contradictions. Another problem with dialectics, more specifically the forms that assume some kind of historical determinism, is that they seem to give a specific role to a specific political agent.

For example, in Marxism it is the proletariat that is the privileged political agent. With regard to dissent, dialectics seems to at least in some forms force the idea of viewing political conflicts without taking into account relations of power other than opposites. Another problem is that there is the possibility of having to accept some form of historical determinism.

With regard to the theories of justice that I have presented earlier, it is a bit problematic that both Honneth and Fraser seem at least partially to adhere to approaches that follow dialectical logic. For Honneth this is clear as he derives his theory from Hegel, especially the master-slave dialectics. For Fraser it is evident through her critique of other ideas of justice, such as Honneth’s and liberal theories, as being false antitheses.

I assume that Fraser’s usage of the term antithesis relates to Hegel’s aufhebung, which Fraser quite often describes using the formula thesis – antithesis – synthesis. So when Fraser claims that some feature is a false antithesis she claims that the opposite of the contradiction is false. One example is when she claims that the idea of discourse and agonism is a false antithesis. Hence, what she claims is that discourse and agonism should not be viewed in terms of conceptual contradiction, instead they should be viewed as concepts that add to each other. In my opinion this view is false.

However, it is possible to view the dialectics in Fraser’s theories as an approach that uses dialectics as a theoretical tool and not claim that the dynamics of struggle in society should be viewed as dialectical struggles. On this point I also assume that it is possible to detach the idea of dialectical struggle from Fraser’s framework, even if it was there from the beginning.
For Honneth, the detachment of dialectics seems to be somewhat more problematic as his whole theory of recognition presupposes the idea of dialectical struggles. However, Honneth does not, at least explicitly, adhere to any idea of historical determinism and he does not presuppose any specific political agent as being primary in any way.

However, his idea of recognition does entail that at least in the recognition order society strives towards full recognition. This does not presuppose any kind of determinism as such, but as Honneth has such close ties to the Hegelian approach, the case can be made that there is at least the possibility of determinism with regard to recognition.

One interpretation of dialectics in Honneth’s theory would go as follows. Initially there is the idea of a relation of power that creates misrecognition. This leads to the struggle for recognition. From these premises recognition happens when the power that creates misrecognition and its counterpart, the struggle for recognition, is transcended. The possibility for recognition is thus intrinsic to the opposition between the power that creates misrecognition and the struggle that aims for recognition.

However, if one does not put as much weight on the Hegelian connection, then the same feature seems only to be a proof of a framework that is normatively strong. My critique is perhaps unfair, but it illustrates a problem that is present if one employs a too strict conception of dialectics in order to explain social change.
4.3 PROCEDURAL AND IDEAL DEMOCRACY

The concept of democracy is commonly viewed as a dynamic concept where the real part and the ideal part of democracy interacts and sets boundaries for the final conception. The idea is that ideal democracy is the utopian view of democracy that is limited by the real or possible institutional arrangements of government. In a sense ideal democracy is the regulative ideal that ought to regulate the real configuration of democratic society.

From this division one can conclude that democracy is attractive and something to strive for but that it is at the same time by definition unrealizable because of the boundaries set by reality. While it may, initially, seem like a good idea to operate with a utopian concept for purposes of regulating real world institutional arrangements, there are some serious issues with this idea.

A main problem is that because there are different interpretations of the ideal, it is always unclear what kind of institutional configuration is acceptable as the best possible configuration. In other words, if we lack a common conception of what an ideal democracy would look like, it is hard to make any evaluations of what kind of arrangements are best. If we cannot do this we have to accept that every interpretation of the democratic ideal is at least partially valid. A regulative ideal where any interpretation of the ideal is valid can hardly be seen as a regulative ideal at all.

To make sense of this confusion it is quite common to introduce the idea of democracy as a constant process, and I agree. In other words, the institutional arrangements of democracy and the democratic ideal are both viewed from the perspective of constant betterment.

To reach a coherent view of the division between real and ideal democracy one needs to introduce the idea of democracy as a process. Thus, we have the ideal of democracy that is always unattainable but has the function of eternally guiding the institutional configuration on the path towards ideal democracy.

Because of the possibility of multiple interpretations, the ideal concept of democracy has to be very vague. Usually, it is sufficient to define ideal democracy as a societal configuration where societal power belongs to the people. This idea is compatible with a conception of pluralist liberal equality and also other conceptions of democracy.

In this dissertation, participatory parity functions as the content for what is meant by the idea that the power in democratic society belongs to the people. The reason why it is sufficient to define the ideal in such minimal terms is because any definition of ideal democracy that would be more specific runs into the same problem of multiple interpretations that the idea of process was implemented to overcome. In other words, because one cannot provide a clear substantive content to the original ideal concept one needs the idea of democracy as a process. The idea of democracy as a process cannot be given a clear definition of the ideal as the idea of the process was implemented in order to avoid this problem. No ideal form of democracy can give this answer as an
eternal truth. It is from this chain of thought that the division of real and ideal democracy arises.

For the process-based idea to be sensible, it is sufficient to accept that we do not know the best configuration but we have the inclination that we can always have a societal configuration that is a bit more democratic than the current one. In other words, we are always tweaking the societal configuration to make it a little more democratic. This is done through a process of trial and error.

If we have, within this line of thought, a different idea of a democratic configuration, we should supposedly argue for its implementation and show that the configuration of democracy that we argue for is more in line with the ideal of democracy. Hence, we should start to implement it because it is more reasonable and more democratic.

Different theories of democracy are argued for on the grounds that they are more democratic than our current or opposing configuration because they are more in line with the concept of ideal democracy. I point out again that the concept of ideal democracy retains its quite open or undefined nature.

One could claim that we need a democratic procedure to decide on which societal configuration is more democratic and because we cannot have a substantive view of democracy. The substantive view is impossible because we cannot have an eternal truth about democracy.

If it were possible to have a substantive concept of democracy as the ideal, it would make the real and ideal divide unnecessary. In other words, we would never have had the problem of how to decide between competing conceptions of democracy as the problem would be decided once and for all. Hence, we need a democratic procedure so that we can reach an outcome that we can call democratic when we have competing ideas of democracy. In other words, we cannot decide which configuration is more democratic by referring to a substantial concept as many competing conceptions would have a similar claim. Hence, we need to create a procedure that can be interpreted as democratic so that we can overcome the problem of deciding on a democratic configuration.

The outcome of the democratic procedure is thought of as being democratic. This idea leads to the further idea that the struggle for the concept of democracy is incorporated into the procedures. Hence, the concept of democracy is left open by definition. We would not need the concept of procedures in order to arrive at the best configuration if we had a clearly defined concept of democracy.

While I agree that the concept of democracy is open in the sense that it is always contested, I disagree with the introduction of the concept of procedure to aid us in overcoming the real and ideal democracy. I disagree on two accounts.

First, we have the idea that as long as the procedure of arriving at a specific institutional configuration is democratic, we can conclude that the procedural outcome or institutional arrangement is also democratic.

From this we can conclude that any current configuration is democratically acceptable to some extent as long as it has gone through the correct procedures. One can always argue that any current institutional arrangement is democratic
because it is part of the democratic process or trajectory towards the ideal of democracy.

The configuration itself always refers to an interpretation of the ideal concept of democracy. However, the interpretation of the ideal concept of democracy does not have its origin in the ideal concept but in the interpretation of the ideal. Hence, the interpretation uses itself as a guideline for itself. If we have another conception of democracy we need to show why it is more democratic than the current configuration. This is, however, always done while referring to a conception of ideal democracy. From this we arrive at the second reason for my disagreement.

As any current configuration has gone through the procedural process and by virtue of being “more” democratic than a former arrangement, any argument for a new configuration has to show that it is “more” democratic either by referring to the same concept of ideal democracy that the former arrangement did or by introducing a new ideal democracy and trying to show why it is better than the former. Both strategies are problematic.

First, if we refer to the same concept of ideal democracy we would not in fact need the idea of procedural democracy as we would in a sense operate with a substantive concept of democracy. This would be satisfactory if everyone could agree upon the use of that interpretation, but we should remember that the concept of an ideal democracy has to be open and vague by definition.

On the other hand, if we want to introduce a new concept of ideal democracy that the new institutional arrangement should refer to we have to introduce a new interpretation of what the ideal is either by referring to yet another newly introduced concept or by accepting that we cannot introduce new parts in this chain ad infinitum. Hence, we arrive to the idea that at some point one of the concepts of democracy is always conflicted in a way that cannot be reconciled through any process.

Thus, the opposition that the procedural idea tries to overcome by introducing the idea of democratic procedure is not overcome, as the opposition will always and necessarily exist on a different level. The idea of procedure is useful only to strengthen the current status quo as the most democratic as it is by definition the currently most democratic alternative.

Also, while operating with an idea of democratic process and democratic ideals, one always keeps referring to a higher order of democracy. In other words, democracy is democratic because it refers to the democratic ideal that is more democratic than any other because it in turn refers to yet another democratic ideal or thought.

The procedural idea requires the premise of constant betterment of democratic practices. This idea of constant betterment is precisely the idea that leads to the requirement that one has to show why a certain idea of democracy is better than the earlier and then in turn creates the infinite chain of referring to democratic ideals. On these grounds I would reject both the divide of real and ideal democracy and the idea of democratic procedure as a means to arriving at the most democratic institutional configuration. Instead, the struggle for the
meaning of the concept of democracy must be interpreted as a struggle for the hegemonic interpretation of the concept.

There are also other arguments against the procedural account of democracy. For example, in Wittgenstein’s interpretation in Mouffe (1999) one can find the argument that the procedural is actually substantial. The reason for this is that, according to Mouffe’s interpretation, Wittgenstein argues for an account where life-forms are prior to meanings (Mouffe, 1999, p. 749). In other words, identities are prior to speech. If this is true, then speech carries with itself substantial ethical commitments. In other words, speech is not free of substance, which leads to the idea that procedural democracy is substantial. If this is true, then there are ontological restrictions for procedural democracy.

The relevance of the critique of procedural democracy as something that can solve the opposition between different forms of democracy is that dissent as such can and often has its roots in differing conceptions of democracy. The emphasis on dissent allows us to translate this opposition into the terms of hegemonic struggle.

The procedural account seems to push away the opposition by always referring to something that is further away. Hence, differing conceptions of democracy are in a sense internalized in this chain in a very vague way that will never lead to a conclusion.

On the other hand, if we follow Mouffe’s interpretation of Wittgenstein, we arrive at the conclusion that procedural democracy is actually substantive because life-forms or identities are prior to speech acts. Hence, we need to introduce the idea of hegemonic struggle to make sense of the unbridgeable opposition that different conceptions lead to. The different conceptions all share legitimacy especially in a political theory of dissent insofar as they do not destroy the possibility of dissent altogether. Hence, an account of dissent cannot work with a procedural account and can only work with a substantive concept under the premise that the substantive concepts are viewed as contingent or provisional.

The idea of participatory parity can be viewed as a normative ideal that lies between a purely ideal and a procedural idea of democracy. As an example one can view Rawls as a proponent of a substantial idea and Habermas as defending a purely procedural theory. While Rawls spells out the principles for justice in society in A Theory of Justice, Habermas focuses more on the procedure (Rawls, 1978 (1972), pp. 53-54) (Habermas, 1994, p. 6).

Participatory parity can be viewed as being between these two accounts as it focuses on the possibilities and rights of participation. The difficulty of making sense of a purely ideal or procedural conceptualization of democracy leads to the idea that we need another concept to set limits for democracy. I propose that Nancy Fraser’s account of justice as participatory parity can set limits for democracy where needed.

Further participatory parity as a regulative ideal is compatible with an antagonistic logic of change. Participatory parity only sets such limits on democracy that ensures that democracy does not change into something else. In
other words, participatory parity can be viewed as a safeguard for democracy while making democratic alterations possible.
4.4 DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

As this thesis is done within the scope of radical democracy it is necessary to take a stance in the debate between deliberative and agonistic democracy. This means taking a stance on the foundations of radical democracy itself. To achieve this it is relevant to present the main arguments for and against the deliberative and the agonist conception. Deliberative democracy holds the position of being the more widespread conception of democratic theory. One could even make the case for viewing deliberative democracy as the leading theory of democracy at the moment. Hence, it is justified to start our investigation there.

While there is nothing wrong with deliberation as such, there are some arguments that force us to reconsider its leading position within radical democratic theories. For this dissertation, the different strands of democratic theory are considered against the background of which one of the theories is most capable of meeting the normative requirements of a political theory of dissent. In other words, the question is what kind of radical democratic theory is most suitable for a political theory of dissent. I have already ruled out liberalism as being suitable for a political theory of dissent because liberalism internalizes dissent within the system which domesticates dissent itself.

Along with Iris Young, I understand deliberative democracy to be a normative account of democratic legitimacy and of how citizens in a democracy should participate (Young, 2001, p. 672). The idea is that the best way to be politically active is through deliberation. The process of deliberation means that conflicts and disagreements in a pluralist society are overcome by different parties making proposals and arguing for and against them. The difference between deliberative democracy and other accounts is that deliberative democracy compels us to take into consideration others’ accounts, not merely our own.

The general idea is that the aim of the deliberative democrat is to create more and better spaces for deliberation so that we can arrive at conclusions that can be accepted by all (Young, 2001, p. 672). The discussion is governed by the idea that participants argue for their own cause under the idea that the best argument wins. Thus, we should argue for our own position and at the same time take into consideration other accounts. This requires a common idea of adjudicating differences. Within the deliberative paradigm participants in deliberation are committed to changing their own positions on the tenets of reason.

Hence, reason is the common idea that is used to determine which account and which positions are the ones that should be furthered and which should be discarded. This leads to the importance within deliberative democratic theory to achieve a process of deliberation that can take into account as many different voices as possible while still being able to uphold some idea of common ground. The requirement of common ground arises from the requirement that we should attempt to overcome political opposition through argumentative procedures.
Young points out a couple of points in the deliberative account which are open for criticism. First, the deliberative account pictures an ideal situation where everyone should be included and everyone would be heard on equal grounds. However, in the real world of politics, Young points out, we have powerful elites that represent structurally dominant groups that have a significant influence on the political process. She agrees that deliberation can happen in the real world in boardrooms, parliaments, etc. However, elite groups can control the deliberative settings by controlling entrance to deliberative organs. In her words, “Deliberation is primarily an activity of political elites who treat one another with cordial respect and try to work out their differences” (Young, 2001, p. 677).

If the process of deliberation is controlled in this manner the justification for the deliberative conception diminishes. According to Young, we can justify resorting to protest and using non-deliberative means if the process of deliberation is exclusive (Young, 2001, pp. 677, 681, 683-686). Also, according to Young, formally inclusive processes of deliberation limit the access of structurally unequal groups. In other words, real world deliberation under structural inequality cannot be conceived of as democratic in the sense that deliberative theory proposes. Deliberative processes remain unjust as they reproduce and strengthen the structural injustices by only granting formal voice to the marginalized. The practical discourse appears “innocent” to the deliberative democrats while others see hegemonic powers and so on at play.

Another convincing critique against deliberation is levelled by Lynn Sanders. She argues that the fact that some people are better at arguing than others tips the process of deliberation in favour of people who are versed in argumentation. Sanders adds that there are also people that we listen to more and those that we decide not to listen to. Hence, deliberation presupposes mutual respect which we mistakenly decide exists when we start the practice of deliberation. Sanders also points out that there are material restrictions on deliberation that are unequally distributed. In other words, we require equality of resources, a guarantee of equal opportunity to articulate persuasively and also what she calls epistemological authority, that is, “the capacity to evoke acknowledgement of one’s arguments” (Sanders, 1997, pp. 347-349).

For Sanders, the main problem is how more of the people that do not speak up and are alienated from politics could be heard and how those who “normally” dominate political discourse could be forced to listen and take into account those who do not take part.

There is a problem when democratic theorists make abstractions about the people who take part in deliberative practices. This has according to Sanders two effects (Sanders, 1997, p. 350). First, it has the positive effect of assisting the ending of discrimination based on ascriptive characteristics.

On the other hand, it also deprives democratic theorists of tools to notice “systematic patterns of exclusion” (Sanders, 1997, pp. 350-351). This idealized speech situation may lead to a situation where those who discriminate and those who are discriminated against become blind to discriminatory practices.
practical situation all rational arguments may still be disregarded completely, a matter which deliberative democratic theory has difficulty in answering.

Deliberation may prove to work against itself in trying to foster an autonomous spirit if the process is one that is discriminatory (Sanders, 1997, p. 360). A discriminatory process may lead to a situation where participation leads to a sense of alienation instead of community.

If deliberation cannot overcome structural inequalities and the problem of power, then injustices are reproduced through the process of deliberation itself.

Against both of these critiques Kadlec and Friedman attempt to defend the deliberative democratic project. They frame the answer as a challenge to the question of control, design and change (Kadlec & Friedman, 2007, pp. 7, 9-11, 15-18).

The challenge to control is the challenge of who controls the deliberative process (Kadlec & Friedman, 2007, p. 7). They argue that it is possible to overcome the critiques of both Young and Sanders by deploying non-partisan intermediary organizations to oversee the process.

There should also, according to them, be multi-partisan deliberative leadership coalitions (Kadlec & Friedman, 2007, pp. 7-8). The main idea with non-partisan intermediary organizations is that they could cultivate properly democratic opportunities for deliberation. These multi-partisan leadership coalitions would be formed to ensure that all involved parties would have a stake in becoming involved in the process of deliberation as that would be one way to further any cause. The agendas would be partially balanced as there would be different parties involved in the process. This idea is in principle the same as Rousseau's idea of a non-partisan legislator.

I fail to see how a non-partisan intermediary group would differ from having bureaucrats or involving NGOs in the process of deliberation. If one or some groups were given the task of ensuring that the deliberative process would be as fair as possible, then I assume that the partisan forces would start to attempt to influence the non-partisan intermediary groups.

Hence, the problem would be reproduced merely in another venue. Also a multi-partisan coalition is no guarantee of a deliberative process as it makes sense for some parties that form a majority to form a coalition to dominate the decision process according to their respective interests where matters of politics are being haggled over rather than deliberated upon.

Kadlec and Friedman also identify the problem of design, which is the process of framing the questions at hand. They identify two different ways of framing: “framing for deliberation” and “framing to persuade” (Kadlec & Friedman, 2007, pp. 9-11). Again, they partially argue for intermediary organizations, which I claim would become partisan when institutionalized. The problem of design is partially overcome by defining the two ways of framing and then implementing non-partisan guides to ensure that the process does not evolve into a framing to persuade.

Kadlec and Friedman also identify the problem of striving towards a consensus as it presupposes a background agreement with one another. They
propose using the concept of confluence which means “gathering or flowing together at a juncture” (Kadlec & Friedman, 2007, p. 13).

In my opinion, this is the same strategy as Rawls implements with his introduction of the notion of overlapping consensus (Rawls, 2005). The overall problem with their solution is that the solution is always to develop deliberation by instituting some kind of non-partisan agent to eliminate political conflict.

Even though we could find actors that are completely non-partisan we have to remember that partisan forces are usually very experienced in politics while non-partisan guides would come from the outside and would be very susceptible to influence. In other words, the non-partisan actors would be either idealists that are unused to politicians or politicians themselves.

Also, this does not answer the question of what should be done when a participant in the deliberative process simply does not accept another person’s arguments, however reasonable they may be. From personal experience this is more often than not the case in party politics.

They also claim that the critique Sanders levelled based on the idea that deliberation requires mutual respect as a prerequisite for deliberation is false and that their process-based approach treats mutual respect as something that grows from the deliberative process (Kadlec & Friedman, 2007, p. 14). This may be the case, but one can use the same argument in support of the agonist perspective. The main idea seems to be that mutual respect grows from social interaction. This seems acceptable but is not in any specific way attached to the deliberative paradigm unless one claims that this only holds for interaction based on the tenets of reason within the deliberative paradigm. As there are many other ways of fostering mutual respect, it seems highly unlikely that this is what Kadlec and Friedman would have in mind.

The last problem that Kadlec and Friedman identify is the problem of democratic change (Kadlec & Friedman, 2007, pp. 15-18). The main idea is that a democratic theory should be a vehicle of social change and that the theory of deliberation should be more strongly anchored to change. They argue that the development of deliberative norms provides contexts and opportunities for people to take part in and foster communicative inquiry on common concerns.

They rely on Dewey’s account of social intelligence as one of the main characteristics that a well-designed process of deliberation stimulates (Kadlec & Friedman, 2007, pp. 15-18). However, they also point out that a process of deliberation should always be controlled outside the official channels to overcome the problems of reproducing the discriminatory practices that Young and Sanders warned about.

If deliberation is conceived as a practice governed by reason, then one opens for the critique that we would not need more democracy but a government of elites (Lafont, 2006, pp. 8-9) For example, if the idea why we adhere to the principle of deliberation is that it leads to the best results and that this process is governed by reason, then it is plausible to claim that we should focus on getting an elite government. This claim would itself also be made on the basis of reason.
As Lafont points out, the principle of deliberation is also used as a justificatory principle. Outcomes of political decision-making can be justified as if they would have been through the scrutiny of public argumentation (Lafont, 2006, pp. 10-13). This goes for all decisions regardless of whether they have factually been through any deliberative process. Lafont argues that democracy is at the best a sort of epistocracy. This holds especially if we consider the idea that the point of deliberation is to achieve answers that are in everyone’s interests combined with the idea that everyone personally knows what is in their own interest. Hence, Lafont argues that the main defence of deliberation does not come from its adherence to reason, but from its strength to justify and legitimize outcomes.

Lafont also touches on the problem of why minorities should consent to a majority view (Lafont, 2006, p. 17). The minority does not consent because of substantive correctness but because the view after deliberation is more likely to reflect the force of the better argument at that specific time.

Hence, despite deliberative democracy’s strength of legitimation and justification we still return to the question of reason. Lafont points out that the democratic commitment to public justification is not satisfied if a minority has not been given sensible reasons that they can accept. In other words, the process is justified only insofar as it is mutually justifiable. From this arises the further problem of how mutual justifiability can be adhered to under conditions of deliberative disagreement. What follows from this is that we should commit to a “permanent possibility of effective contestation of collective decisions” (Lafont, 2006, p. 22).

This means that the mutual justification is not undermined but the minority should accept that they have not been able to give reasons for their claims that most people in the community can accept (Lafont, 2006, pp. 20-23). However, if they succeed in giving reasons then the majority should by parity of argument have to accept the claims of the minority.

According to an epistemic view, deliberative democracy is justified and decisions made through the process of deliberation are legitimate because democratic deliberative values have more epistemic value that any other democratic alternative (Marti, 2006, pp. 31-33). In other words, decisions made through such a process are more likely to be right than other democratic processes, even though other processes may be more correct in certain particular cases. This view is attributed to philosophers such as David Estlund (Estlund, 1997) and Joshua Cohen (Cohen J., 1986).

This ideal has to adopt a “standard of rightness” that is in a sense objective and not dependent on the deliberative process. In other words, through deliberation we will arrive at, or at least be closer to, objective truth. This idea is based on what Marti calls the ontological and the epistemological theses:
One or several standards of rightness of political decisions exist as something at least partially independent both from the decision-making procedure and from the participants’ beliefs, preferences and desires. And this standard is knowable. (Marti, 2006, p. 34)

Democratic deliberation is in general the most reliable democratic procedure in order to identify which are the right political decisions, and therefore it is the adequate method to make legitimate political decisions. (Marti, 2006, p. 35)

From this Marti arrives at the conclusion that we have two ways of justifying deliberative democracy, the intrinsic justification and the instrumental justification (Marti, 2006, pp. 35-36). The intrinsic justification is when justification is based on the intrinsic feature of the process itself. Instrumental justification is when justification refers to the outcome of the process. The different justifications are not mutually exclusive.

David Estlund conceives of the ideal speech act as something broader than merely a regulative ideal that in an ideal situation should mirror society (Estlund, 2006, pp. 86-87, 90). He claims that his view is supported by Habermas. Estlund conceives of the ideal speech situation as a breakdown theory, based on Marcuse. This means that the role of deliberative democracy is to identify deviations from the deliberative ideal so that we can decide what to do with them later.

This idea is based on the reinterpretation of the Habermasian public sphere in the sense that there should be an informal public sphere that is unruly (Estlund, 2006, pp. 86-87, 90). This means that the informal sphere should not be governed by any principles of deliberation. In such a public sphere conflicts could play out and arguments based on emotions could be given in order to provide new insights for political deliberation. It seems that Estlund attempts to introduce an agonist public sphere in order to avoid some of the criticism against deliberative democracy. The introduction of the agonist public sphere can be viewed as agreeing with the agonist critique of deliberative democracy. I would claim that such an introduction would turn Estlund’s conception into an agonist conception of democracy.

If deliberative democracy is about striving for truth, the question will always return to the question of whose truth we are striving for, as the conception of reason and the rules of the deliberative process define the outcome. Hence, if the speech act and the rules are not in reality defined together by everyone then the definer is the one holding the ultimate power in deliberative democracy.

One of the main ideas in deliberative democracy is that through deliberation we can arrive at a view of the common good. According to Jane Mansbridge, no decision about the common good can be legitimate if it does not take into account conflicting interests (Mansbridge, 2006, pp. 107-108, 117-119, 128-129). Consequently, according to her, deliberation should also be judged on the basis
of how well it can command genuine consensus and how well the process can clarify the conflicts at play.

She proposes a view of the deliberative process as a three-stage process to properly take into account conflicts in deliberation (Mansbridge, 2006, pp. 107-108). At the first stage, different interest groups or the “like-minded” deliberate amongst themselves to clarify their own agenda, also allowing for suppressed groups to mobilize. This idea is quite similar to Fraser’s subaltern counterpublics.

At the second stage we would have full-scale deliberation where both conflicting and common interests would attempt to clarify both conflict and commonality in order to achieve mutual understanding (Mansbridge, 2006, pp. 117-119). If this proves impossible there would be a third stage of negotiation to reach a decision in spite of disagreement. This three-stage model is partially proposed because, according to Mansbridge, deliberative processes that are aimed at understanding may suppress dissent.

She points out that conflict in opinion has always been central for thinkers like Habermas, Arendt and Wolin (Mansbridge, 2006, pp. 128-129). The main problem is when self-interest plays a bigger role in political decision-making. However, this kind of thinking, according to Mansbridge, undermines well-reasoned and fair decisions in conditions that reflect closely the equality and freedom of each individual.

In other words, such deliberation, which attempts to force conflict of interests within procedures, does not respect freedom and equality. One is forced to accept something that is not acceptable, at least partially. Mansbridge’s three-stage deliberative process may actually provide a solution to this. However, it is unclear if her theory strictly speaking should be conceived of as a deliberative democratic theory.

This is, as I see it, also one of the pitfalls of the classification of agonist as opposed to deliberative democracy. As long as we hold strictly to one view and attempt to define clearly different standpoints, we forget the bigger picture of how radical democracy could evolve into something better.

We tend to miss different points of view and that different paradigms do better in comparison to one another. Hence, the reaction should not try to define Mansbridge as either deliberative or agonist but to ask the question if her point of view differs on some relevant points from valuable aspects of agonistic democracy. On this point I would claim that even though I agree with her on the feasibility of her model and that it is probably also applicable in reality, the main difference with agonists is the constitution of identity. For many of agonists, identity is constituted through conflict. Pluralism is not merely a fact of pluralism (Rawls, 2005) but refers to the circumstances that constitute identity.

Thus, even though the question of whether Mansbridge is an agonist or a deliberative democrat is at least partially irrelevant, her model should be expanded to take into account the wider implication on identity if one wants to view her theory as one that could overcome the opposition between deliberation and agonism.
4.5 CHARACTERIZATION OF AGONISTIC DEMOCRACY

At the moment there are not many overall works on what agonistic democracy entails. One of the first comprehensive works is Mark Wenman’s book *Agonistic Democracy: Constituent Power in the Era of Globalization*. Even though I disagree with Wenman on many points, I will follow his work in order to paint a clearer picture of what the unifying factors of agonistic democracy are and also to show the differences between his and my characterization of radical democracy and agonistic democracy.

To begin with, Wenman identifies deliberative democracy, agonistic democracy, cosmopolitan democracy and radical democracy as new models of democracy (Wenman, 2013, pp. 3, 18, 28). These are all different forms of democracy and mark different standpoints in contemporary debates. He identifies three central components that mark agonistic democrats; they share an emphasis on constitutive pluralism, a tragic vision of the world and a belief that certain forms of conflict can be a political good.

The parts that I mainly disagree with are the claims that radical democracy is a distinct form of democracy and that the “tragic vision” is a common feature. I agree that most agonists share an idea of pluralism as constitutive pluralism, in other words they usually hold to an idea of value pluralism. This is an idea of pluralism as opposed to, for example, Rawls’ idea of pluralism as a fact.16

The main idea of pluralism as a fact is that the world is factually such that there are different political values and hence we are required to take this into account when creating theories of society. In other words, theories based on the idea of pluralism as a fact are based on the idea of how we should manage the diversity of values. As Wenman also points out, agonists usually do not agree to this conception but “…reject the idea that pluralism can be mediated by a determinant set of rational principles” (Wenman, 2013, p. 29).

Agonists focus on how different identities are created and conditioned and on how plurality itself can be distorted and manipulated (Wenman, 2013, pp. 29-31). Hence, pluralism is not something that is characterized by managing a conflict of values but it shares the idea that identities, values and moralities are actually created and formed in and by the conflict. Agonists share the idea that there is no common measure or principle according to which one can adjudicate between competing values.

Wenman also distinguishes the tragic vision as one characteristic that all agonists share. According to Wenman, one characteristic of both ancient and post-modern times is the “…idea that conflict, suffering and strife are endemic in social and political life and not a temporary condition on a journey towards reconciliation or redemption” (Wenman, 2013, p. 35).

This should not, according to him, be understood as a mere conflict between good or evil but as “… an impossible contest between incommensurate

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16 See, for example, Rawls (2005).
conceptions of the good, where neither has unqualified right on their side.” (Wenman, 2013, p. 35).

Thus far I agree with Wenman. However, I disagree with the idea that tragedy or tragic vision should be a necessary feature of agonism.

Wenman ascribes the idea or the resurrection of the idea of tragedy to Nietzsche through Connolly (Wenman, 2013, pp. 36-37,39). He cites Derek Barker to show that tragedies are open to interpretation and that they do not decisively resolve the questions that they raise and as such are open to interpretation and discussion. Inherent in the idea of tragedy can also be found the idea that suffering and despair is involved. Even though we can find the ideas of tragedy, as Wenman does, in Connolly’s, Honig’s and Foucault’s writings it still remains unclear why tragic vision is counted as something that all agonists should share.

Where Wenman identifies conflict, suffering and strife as necessary prerequisites for agonism, I would agree wholly only with the idea of conflict. I do not think that the concept of tragedy is a necessary feature of agonism. Clearly, some agonist philosophers do share the idea of tragedy and utilize it in a fruitful manner, but postulating it as a necessary feature only confuses matters by bringing in the whole discussion of different interpretations of the tragedies of antiquity into the contemporary discussion of the foundations of democracy.

Wenman’s requirement of tragic vision seems to be connected to his distinction of agonistic democracy as being different from radical democracy.

The idea of tragedy in connection with agonism is derived from the Nietzschean idea of tragedy as opposed to optimism. Here the tragic view accepts conflict as inevitable and the optimist as dissolving conflicts. 17

This idea as such is similar to the division between agonistic and deliberative democracy, where reason dissolves the conflicts in deliberative democracy and agonistic democracy embraces conflicts as inevitable.

As a feature that characterizes agonistic democracy, the idea of tragic vision merely serves to bracket all agonists as being related to Nietzsche and Greek antiquity. This characterization does not provide any new insight into the contemporary debate between agonists and deliberative democrats. In other words, relying on the idea of tragic vision merely narrows down the number of agonist philosophers. Not many agonists utilize or take part in the scholarly discussions on tragedy.

The idea of tragedy is inherently related to the idea of things going wrong. In a tragic story; the hero usually loses or at least does not achieve what he was set out to do. In relation to contemporary democratic politics this idea seems somewhat out of place. I claim that even though agonists highlight and embrace conflict and struggle, there are not many tragic elements in the sense of suffering or misery. On the contrary, agonistic democracy should be seen as a strand of democratic theory which sees conflict as something positive.

17 On this I am indebted to Sanna Tirkkonen. For an article where the topic is discussed, see Tirkkonen (2015)
By putting more weight on the idea of the tragic vision than the idea that irreducible conflict characterizes agonism, Wenman opens agonistic democracy up for the critique that it is inherently tied to the idea of misery and suffering. This only serves to heighten the misunderstanding between agonists and deliberative democrats.

The third feature Wenman identifies is the idea of conflict as a political good (Wenman, 2013, pp. 45-46). This idea is, according to him, the part that is often misunderstood with regard to agonism. He claims, rightly, that agonists are often criticized for not being able to give a conception of the political good and thus that agonists are also criticized for not being able to give a normative position. What is misunderstood, according to Wenman, is that agonism is itself a political value. In other words, it is conflict as a positive value that is emphasized.

4.5.1 AGONIST ALTERNATIVES

The agonistic critique of deliberative democracy is traditionally a critique of consensus and the insistence that the democratic contest or struggle should go all the way to include the principles and procedures that regulate political life (Schaap A., 2009, pp.1-3).

One of the most influential theories of agonism is Chantal Mouffe’s idea of agonistic pluralism. Mouffe’s thesis is that a consensus-based approach can lead to a moral distinction between those involved in the presumed consensus and those that are not (Mouffe, 1999, p. 754). In other words, this leads to a distinction between good and evil which in turn leads to a relation between friend and enemy which can only play out as a societal pathology of antagonism or the destruction of the enemy.

Mouffe assumes that the we/they relation is fundamental for us to understand the sphere of the political (Mouffe, 2005, p. 52). In Mouffe’s scheme, conflicts should play out as agonism between adversaries, that is, within the democratic system so that they do not evolve into antagonistic relations between friends and enemies. An enemy is one whose demands are not recognized, an adversary is one who shares some common ground. The common ground in Mouffe’s case refers to adherence to democracy.

According to Mouffe, collective identities always entail a we/they distinction. We should not try to overcome these distinctions through consensus, instead the divisions should be energized through confrontation (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 5-6).

The reason for this is that, according to Mouffe, consensus leads to no-difference policies which in turn lead to growing disaffection with politics and thus the decline of democracy (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 62-63).
When politics is played out in the register of morality antagonism cannot play out as agonism, that is, a legitimate conflict of plurality of interest that can never be completely reconciled (Mouffe, 2005, p. 76).

Consensus silences this plurality through a conceived unity of interest. Hence, what is at stake in Mouffe’s theory is what to do in order to achieve a situation where conflicts play out as agonism and not as destructive antagonism. In other words, politics should be conducted within the sphere of democracy, that is, within the field where conflicts play out agonistically. In short, Mouffe’s idea of agonism is that pluralism is defined as many competing values and empirical restrictions for unlimited deliberations lead to non-rational consensus plus hegemonic practices (Mouffe, 2013, pp. 3-4). What should be noticed is that Mouffe actually defines common and shared boundaries for democratic agonism.

Mouffe presupposes that liberty and equality are central values that we could all agree upon (Mouffe, 2013, p. 7). A similar idea where emancipatory politics requires liberty and equality can be found in Balibar (2002, p. 2). The idea of the centrality of equality and freedom can also be found in Laclau’s idea of democratic demands and Fraser’s idea of participatory parity. However, Mouffe does not provide us with an idea why, how and where we have agreed upon this principle. One way of doing this is by referring to a postulated or idealized discourse, but that would go against the principle of agonism.

However, this is only the case if one views agonism as a value that has priority over democracy. Wenman seems to see agonistic democracy in this way. However it is justified to set democratic boundaries for agonism, even if it would merely serve to make sense of the concept. Hence, if democracy and agonism are both viewed as values as such, then one can conclude that democracy has priority in Mouffe’s theory. My characterization of agonism as a sub-category of radical democracy defines all the agonist alternatives as being secondary to democracy. Hence, under my categorization there is no problem with the idea that Mouffe gives priority to the idea of democracy.

Mouffe argues for an agonistic public sphere where passions can be played out politically (Mouffe, 2005b, p. 124). The idea is that passions are central for the democratic struggle. This would be a way to get away from the striving for consensus in the political centre. Her argument is that the movement towards the political centre gives grounds for the rise of fundamentalist movements.

Thus, we arrive at the problems with liberalism and deliberative democracy, namely that they cannot approach and think about conflicts in political terms (Mouffe, 2005b, p. 125). Conflicts are solved through other mediums such as economics or morality. A well-functioning democracy requires adversarial positions to function properly. The democratic struggle mobilizes the passions towards democratic design (Mouffe, 2005b, p. 127).
The problem with the public sphere in liberal and deliberative democracy is that when political conflicts are translated into moral terms, the conflicts lead to enemy relations (Mouffe, 2005b, pp. 126, 129-130). The idea is to have the political played out between adversaries. The main idea is that adversaries fight for hegemonization of their viewpoint. Enemies fight to destroy. The hegemonic struggle constitutes the democratic struggle. For Mouffe, hegemony is when objectivity and power meet (Mouffe, 1999, pp. 752-753).

Another agonist alternative is William Connolly’s. His idea of agonistic democracy is based on the importance of genealogy as a key to undermining claims to normality and the fostering of agonistic respect as a feature to dampen agonistic contest (Wenman, 2013, p. 109). In Connolly (2002), agonistic democracy is a model where no positive vision can be enunciated and contestation takes priority over every other aspect of politics. Agonistic respect is a civic virtue that allows people to honour different final sources. “Agonistic respect is a reciprocal virtue appropriate to a world in which partisans find themselves in intensive relations of political interdependence.” (Connolly, 2002 (1991), pp. xxv-xxvi).

Connolly investigates the identity/difference dilemma and analyses how democratic identity can either become oppressive or configured to foster diversity. One task is thus to avoid the translation of difference into a threat in order that a certain collective identity is not “dogmatized”. According to Connolly, democracy is the key practice that should be nourished. A democracy “infused with agonism” is a democracy where different and divergent orientations can flourish in public life (Connolly, 2002 (1991), pp. 200, 210-211).

Connolly also states that agonal democracy presupposes a reduction in economic inequalities that require a mobilization of public energies to promote it (Connolly, 2002 (1991), p. 212). Hence, for Connolly democracy requires some kind of material equality. This idea is very similar to Fraser’s idea. Connolly’s strategy of mobilizing public energies also seems to be similar to Fraser’s subaltern counterpublics. The mobilizing is done against hegemony, which in Connolly’s theory is described as a predominance of will in public life (Connolly, 2002 (1991), pp. 200, 210-211).

What should also be noticed is that Connolly’s agonal democracy requires equality. The case that one of agonistic democracy’s features is equality becomes somewhat stronger. Moreover, with the idea of politics as a “politics of becoming” Connolly also shows how pluralism is in a sense pluralized. The politics of becoming is a paradoxical politics where new things surge into being, such as new identities and new moral inspirations that upset older and stratified conceptions of these things (Connolly, Pluralism, 2005, p. 121).

Another agonistic theory that also focuses on equality is Jacques Rancière’s theory. For Rancière the concept of equality is essential for his conception of democratic politics.

Rancière contrasts the idea of police with politics (Rancière, 1995, pp. 39-61). The police is for Rancière the governing functions that belong to the social
order. The sphere of politics is when claims of equality interrupt the police order and reintroduce the principle of equality as opposed to a naturally conceived social order. Even though Rancière holds that politics is in a sense pure and always directed towards the social order, he is not an anarchist (Klockars, 2010, pp. 285-290). For Rancière there are no natural grounds for a social order and he strives to conceive politics as the challenging of existing power structures.

The democratic element in Rancière is connected with his view of equality (Rancière, 1995, pp. 39-61). Equality, according to Rancière, is not a positive evaluation. Equality exists on a pre-evaluative level where no values as such exist. It is when an evaluation is made that we can start speaking of equality and inequality. Hence, everyone is potentially equal as no one has any natural or given right to evaluate him- or herself above another. Thus, on the level when we start to conceive of justice and stability, questions of equality come into play (Klockars, 2010, pp. 285-290).

For Rancière, democracy does not entail a specific social system but an activity that is closely related to politics in its “original” meaning (Rancière, 1995, pp. 39-61). Hence, democratic politics for Rancière can be conceived of as the returning of politics to its original level of equal diversity (Klockars, 2010, pp. 285-290). Hence, Rancière creates an opposition where on one side is democracy and politics, and on the other order and different social structures.

Democracy is thus not a government or model for a state but a reintroduction of the foundations of politics, in other words the dismantling of order (Klockars, 2010, pp. 285-290). Thus, we should not focus on politics as a question of how power is legitimately exercised. Instead we should focus on the disruption of current configurations of power and ruling ideas (Rancière, 1995, pp. 39-61). Hence, politics is grounded in difference not power. The reason for me to count Rancière as an agonist is tied to the idea that, for Rancière, disagreement is a fundamental factor of politics.

With regard to the debate on recognition, there are some works that approach the idea of recognition from an agonist point of view. These are amongst others James Tully and Patchen Markell. Also there is the possibility of reading Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser as agonists. James Tully’s approach, which is heavily influenced by Foucault, can also be read as an agonist account of recognition (Owen, 2012, p. 133).

Overall agonistic democracy in my opinion should be seen as theories of democracy that are constructed on the basis of disagreement and conflict. They are opposed to deliberative democratic theories with which they often are contrasted and together with deliberative democratic theories they are usually also opposed to liberal democratic theories. Hence, agonistic theories of democracy assume the priority of the value of radical democracy and approach it from the point of view of agonism.

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18 see for example (Tully, 1995), (Tully, 2008) and (Tully, 2009)

19 see for example (Markell, 2003)
One can conceive of agonistic theories that are not democratic at all. On this point Wenman’s identification of agonistic democracy is misleading as it seems that he first establishes agonism and after that its relation to democracy. This has to do with the conception that all models of democracy are seen as distinct models and not as an evolution of a wider debate on democracy. In other words, the categorization of radical democracy as the umbrella concept establishes the priority of democracy in a way that does not lead to unnecessary criticism later on.
4.6 LA CLAU’S RADICAL DEMOCRATIC POPULISM

4.6.1 DEMOCRATIC DEMANDS AND PARTICIPATORY PARITY

The main aim of this chapter is to present some of Laclau’s political theories. Through this integration it is possible to achieve a more justified radical democratic framework that is based on the ideas of dissent and participatory parity.

One of the reasons for utilizing the insights of Laclau is that his idea of politics that arises from democratic demands can be interpreted as participatory parity. As I have mentioned earlier, democratic demands are demands that 1) are made by the underdog in society, 2) have an egalitarian dimension and 3) have their roots in exclusion, deprivation and society’s creation of others as deficient beings (Laclau, 2005a, p. 125).

In Fraser’s terms, Laclau’s first feature would coincide with her idea of subaltern counterpublics and a strong connection to new social movements. The second feature coincides primarily with the sphere of distribution but also with the sphere of recognition. Lastly, Laclau’s third feature can be seen as similar to Fraser’s sphere of recognition and the sphere of representation.

Laclau’s insights into populist democracy can add strength to Fraser’s framework by giving a better interpretation of democratic politics. The key concept for this understanding is Laclau’s concept of hegemony.

From the point of view of dissent, Laclau’s theory can show how the idea of the people is created through dissent. Laclau’s theory is also strongly tied to the idea of actually occurring dissent as he views the struggles of society as contingent antagonisms. This means that social conflicts should be interpreted as conflicts when they actually happen and are created, and not seen as logical necessities.

Laclau’s theory is a radical democratic alternative that encompasses the antagonistic logic of change. In my interpretation, he is also an agonist philosopher. One of the strongest arguments for this is when he claims that reason cannot function as a common adjudicator for political conflicts as reason itself is dependent on hegemony (Laclau, 1990, p. 31).

Even though Laclau’s reinterpretation of populism is innovative and also useful, I hold that the use of the concept of populism is bad. In other words, even though Laclau’s theory is based on many ideas of populism he has a strong commitment to democracy. The common usage of populism views it more or less as a social pathology. With the common usage I refer to, for example, how populism is used to describe far-right anti-immigrant movements in Europe. I would be inclined to view populism as a social feature that is bad for democracy even though Laclau gives us the possibility of distinguishing between democratic and undemocratic populism. Hence, I agree with the substance that Laclau gives to the concept of populism. My disagreement is with the usage of the concept of populism for this description. In my view, giving a democratic...
reinterpretation of the concept of populism is an attempt to hijack the concept by giving it a new interpretation.

4.6.2 HEGEMONY
As mentioned earlier, I follow Mouffe and Laclau’s views on the concept of hegemony. Roughly stated the view is that hegemony is the place where power and objectivity meet. To arrive at this, they have partially rewritten Marx’s concept of hegemony as found in Gramsci’s work (Norval, 2005, p. 86). One of the main reasons for me to follow this interpretation of hegemony is that Laclau’s work on hegemony shows convincingly that no analysis of politics can be done without understanding hegemony and the hegemonic struggle.

The underlying idea behind this concept of hegemony is that it highlights both politics and society as contingent features. In other words, the political and the social are created through power and decisions. Hegemony temporarily fixes the meanings of social relations (Critchley, 2006, p. 114).

Both Laclau’s and Mouffe’s concepts of hegemony are detached from the Marxian idea of historic necessity (Laclau, 1990, pp. 27-28). It has to be detached in order to avoid the totalizing effects of “objective structures”. Fixed objective structures are an impossibility as no hegemonic configuration can fully totalize itself into society.

Hence, from the point of view of Laclau’s concept of hegemony, the Marxian concept of hegemony is impossible because it has strong ties to historical necessity and hence to objective structures.

Laclau operates with “open signifiers”, meaning that a concept is left open to different interpretations and will be filled with different content depending from what point of view the concept is used (Laclau, 1990, pp. 27-30). In other words, a left-wing and a right-wing politician would mean different things when referring to, for example, the concept of justice.

The hegemonic struggle is a struggle about whose definition fixes the meaning of concepts for a wider audience (Laclau, 1990, pp. 27-30). The hegemonic struggle is thus translated into a struggle on hegemonizing the contents of concepts and fixing them according to a specific configuration.

According to Laclau, the field of the social could be likened to a “trench war” where different political projects attempt to hijack as many of these signifiers around themselves (Laclau, 1990, pp. 27-30). Necessity and objectivity in this case would be grounded in “stable hegemony” and in between we would have times of “organic crisis” when hegemonic articulations weaken. A complete
hegemonic totality would, according to Laclau, be impossible because it is not empirically possible for a social force to impose its supremacy completely.\(^{20}\)

The hegemonic structure as a whole is always in question (Laclau, 1990, pp. 27-30). A social structure cannot, according to Laclau, be seen as the realization of a project or of rationality which has its foundations in a preceding configuration. A social structure has to be seen as an act of construction. According to Laclau, all the rules that govern coherence in society are grounded in hegemony and are thus dependent on who is in command. This does not mean that every new configuration would be founded completely apart from any current hegemonic configuration. It only means that the new configuration would not be determined by the preceding configuration. There would still be a partial relation as the preceding structure makes new structures possible.

Political agents in society share a similar relation to societal structures as they actualize some structural possibilities while rejecting others. In other words, the identities of political agents change when the structures of society change (Laclau, 1990, pp. 27-30). Laclau uses as an example the trade union’s relationship with society. When society changes we are not left with the same trade unions in a new configuration but with trade unions who have also changed their identity.

Any structural objectivity that is formed is based on a power relationship. This is also true for any decision made on this basis. We can arrive at this insight by examining how a decision is made in Laclau’s theory.

First, an agent is autonomous but not completely detached from social structures. A social structure as such is ultimately undecidable as any other configuration could have been possible. Hence, according to Laclau, this means that a political subject is determined by the distance between an undecidable structure and any decision made on the basis of it (Laclau, 1990, pp. 27-30). When determining grounds for the decision the social structures are actually as primary as the decision itself because the structures are undecidable. If different possible decisions refer to different undecidable structures, then such a decision means repressing the possible alternative. Hence, any conception of structural objectivity is formed as a power relationship.

Laclau points out that a decision taken on the grounds of undecidable structures may seem unreasonable as it cannot refer to any solid grounds (Laclau, 1990, p. 31). This is, however, only the case if the undecidability is only attributed to the social structures. Undecidability, according to Laclau, can be viewed as a factor that is located within reason itself. Hence, reason and undecidable structures are not opposites but something that supplements and highlights reason’s deficiencies.

This means that when two groups make decisions on the basis of undecidable structures the relation between them will be one of antagonism and power.

\(^{20}\) One can see the similarity to Mouffe’s idea, where democratic society is characterized as something that cannot be realized fully because democracy is constituted by the fact that no factor can control the totality (Mouffe, 1999, p. 752).
(Laclau, 1990, p. 31). Both decisions are made on the basis of reason but there cannot be any ultimate rational ground for deciding which of the decisions would be correct. This undecidability is transcended on the basis of power.

Hegemony as such can be associated with political domination (Howarth, 2008) (Connolly, 2002 (1991)). I pointed out earlier that any established hegemony is undemocratic as it always entails the imposition of a specific point of view as being universal. Hence, from this point of view the struggle for hegemony may be democratic but any set hegemonic configuration is at least potentially undemocratic. This holds even if hegemony is constructed in a manner where “empty signifiers” should be filled with democratic content. Hegemony’s undemocratic nature comes from the imposition of a set of ideas as universal.

4.6.3 REMARKS ON HEGEMONY
Laclau’s and Mouffe’s idea of hegemony is a reworked version of the Gramscian idea.

The Gramscian idea is roughly that hegemony is a political mechanism through which a group establishes its intellectual and moral leadership (Gramsci, 2000, pp. 249-250, 306). The hegemonic group uses a combination of coercion and consent to forge together a new hegemonic bloc that is based on the universalization of the group’s own interests (Khan, 2008, p. 196).

In the Marxian framework the proletariat has to establish its counter-hegemony by achieving the consent of subordinated groups (Gramsci, 2000, pp. 249-250, 306). For Gramsci, domination and hegemony are decoupled in the sense that domination is the power that is used through the state while hegemonic power is the wider societal power.

What Laclau and Mouffe did in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy was to detach the idea of hegemony from its class essentialism (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001 (1985), pp. 137-138) (Khan, 2008, p. 196). In other words, there is no privileged class agent. Thus, any group in society can construct a “hegemonic bloc”, not only the proletariat.

According to Khan, in Laclau’s view the stability of society exists in a paradoxical tension with the social (Khan, 2008, p. 196), and the social is identified with the infinite play of differences. Society, on the other hand, exists to limit that play by containing it within the finitude of an order. Even though there is an attempt to institute this totality by society, it is impossible as society is always exceeded by the social.
The social is governed by the political logics of difference and equivalence, where difference refers to expansion and complexity and equivalence to simplification (Laclau, 2005a, p. 82) (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001 (1985), p. 130). 21

Laclau’s view is that hegemony is the political relation of power that is temporarily able to bring together the fragmented and particularistic moments of the social into the ordering of social relations (Khan, 2008, p. 196). Hence, no hegemonic agent can ever achieve full hegemony as Laclau rejects an idea of universal history moving in the direction of a specific telos.

According to Khan, Laclau’s theory of hegemony is

“dubious” insofar as it is a “notion of hegemony (understood as a conception of the social bond in which there will always be a leader) is a monistic form of power relation that precludes the very possibility of more egalitarian forms of power. (Khan, 2008, p. 201)

I agree with Khan that it seems that Laclau views politics as the perpetual replacement of one hegemony with another (Khan, 2008, p. 201).

This may be problematic if hegemony itself is found to be undemocratic. In a sense, Laclau could probably agree that the idea of hegemony as such, that is, the filling of empty signifiers according to a specific configuration, could be undemocratic. However, it is problematic only if one holds to the idea that any configuration of hegemony is supposedly eternally final.

Laclau’s theory rests on the idea that the democratic populus is based on democratic claims. From this it follows that any hegemony that is built on democratic claims should also be democratic. Hence, when a hegemonic position is “won”, it would be a democratic configuration.

However, this only means that the content would be democratic; hegemony as such would still have its undemocratic nature.

Hegemony and difference are compatible in Laclau’s and Mouffe’s work, according to Howarth, if one takes Marx’s idea that “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” seriously (Marx & Engels, 2005, p. 71) (Howarth, 2008, p. 187). Hence, in order to secure the compatibility of hegemony and difference it has to be understood that freedom and equality are not self-sufficient values but a balanced tension of mutually constitutive logics.

The logic of hegemony is interpreted as the political practice of linking different demands and identities into a common project that recognizes and respects difference (Howarth, 2008, p. 187). This presupposes the move from a closed system of social relations in which all identities and interests are fixed to an open-textured social ontology that is marked by radical contingency and a plurality of heterogenous social spaces.

21 In Khan (2008), the logic of equivalence refers to complexity and difference to simplification. It is probable that this is the author’s error rather than a different interpretation.
4.6.4 DEMOCRATIC POPULISM

A political theory of dissent needs a theory that can explain how dissent arises and how it is channeled in society. Ernesto Laclau’s theory of populist democracy can explain this dynamic. This, however, requires an understanding of populism as something else than the traditional view which, for example, explains right-wing populist movements in Europe. Laclau’s conception of populist politics creates a new and innovative way to understand populism. His view also opens up the possibility of making an evaluation between democratic and undemocratic populism.

According to Laclau, political identities are necessarily popular (Laclau, 2014, p. 176). Political identity and the populus are created through chains of equivalences, in other words through similarities of demands that are connected to each other. For example a populus can be created on the basis of a group of people whose demands are not met. The similarity or equivalence then would be the unanswered demand. Political identity is formed at the same time as the populus is formed. In other words, political identities are created on the basis of equivalence of demands. This is what Laclau refers to when he speaks about a populist logic. From this conception it follows that all political identities are popular because they are formed on the basis of a populist logic.

One should not confuse Laclau’s interpretation of populism with the common definition that is used to describe, for example, the far right movements in Europe. Laclau’s interpretation provides a novel way of analysing how popular identities are formed. Further, it is possible to evaluate democratic and undemocratic populism on the basis of this.

For Laclau, populism is necessarily tied to politics and also to all democracy. The idea of creating popular identities through chains of equivalences resonates well with a political theory of dissent. This holds especially in the case where the connecting of unanswered demands creates the populus. In this case the populist movement is created through dissent.

In order to make the distinction between democratic and undemocratic populism, one needs to take a look at the boundaries of populism.

Laclau is sympathetic to Mouffe’s logic on agonism/antagonism (Laclau, 2014, p. 176). For Mouffe, this distinction establishes the boundaries between democratic and undemocratic politics. In Laclau’s scheme, the democratic boundaries of politics arise from the idea that the populus is based on the idea of democratic demands. In other words, a populus that is created on the basis of democratic demands is also democratic. When a populus is created though the equivalence of unanswered demands one should notice that it is created around unanswered democratic demands.

For Laclau, it is important that the demands arise from society even though they can be created so that they are partially from the outside (Laclau, 2014, p. 176). Hence, the demands should be such that they have a link with society which gives them their nature of being democratic while also being open to the opportunity of introducing features that do not necessarily follow from current society.
Democratic demands are made with one foot in society (Laclau, 2014, p. 176). It follows that the antagonisms that Laclau speaks about are democratic. However, there is the possibility of making claims and building populist agendas around claims from the outside; these are considered undemocratic because they are claims that strive to eradicate democratic politics as such.

I interpret Laclau’s conception of claims that are based on the “outside” as claims that are against democratic politics. The idea is that when one makes claims that accept democratic politics as such but are highly critical of society, one makes claims that are partially based on society. An easier way to conceptualize this is by thinking of outside claims as anti-democratic claims, in other words, claims that strive to eradicate democratic politics as such.

Hence, the political is the arena for democratic claims making. If we use the Mouffean distinction of agonism/antagonism, those claims that are partially interior to the system could be rewritten as agonistic claims while claims that are made completely on the basis of exteriority could be considered antagonistic. Mouffe also employs this kind of distinction as she speaks for a democratic agonistic politics that does not turn into undemocratic antagonism. Hence, Laclau and Mouffe share the idea that one should be able to make a distinction between anti-democratic claims and democratic claims. It serves to remind ourselves that Laclau defines political logic as antagonistic as opposed to contradictory. Hence, when Laclau refers to antagonism he refers to the underlying political logic, whereas Mouffe refers to the boundaries of democratic politics.

Simon Critchely seems to have a view of the political project that sounds somewhat similar to Laclau’s. He starts from the idea that we are stuck with both capitalism and with the state. However, it is possible to be distant from the state within the state (Critchley, 2005, p. 226). The idea is to work within the state against the state to open up places of opposition. Thus, an oppositional political project creates political subjectivity by gluing together cells of opposition. This idea seems very similar to Laclau’s interpretation of populist reason, where political identities are formed around unmet demands.

The people in a democracy should have the power in a society. However, people have very different values and views on political reality. Thus, the concept of democracy should be eternally left open to contestation. If democracy is always open to contestation, we cannot have a consensus on the content of democracy. Hence, the question for us is how to deal with the varying concepts of democracy and still be able to have a concept that can be used for guiding institutional arrangements. This struggle should be interpreted as a hegemonic struggle where the current concept of democracy is the hegemonic one.

This does not mean that the current conception is the best one in any way, nor does it assume that the following view would be more democratic than the

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22 Democratic demands are demands that 1) are made by the underdog in society, 2) have an egalitarian dimension and 3) have their roots in exclusion, deprivation and society’s creation of others as deficient beings (Laclau, 2005a, p. 125).
last one. Hence, a view of democracy cannot be said to be more or less
democratic by referring to a hegemonic conception of democracy because all
such conceptions are interpretations on how we can realize the idea of power to
the people. This is because any common source is also created through
hegemonic struggle. In order to transcend this contest we need a minimal
substantial conception of what the power of the people entails. In this
dissertation I have claimed that the norm of participatory parity can be
interpreted as such a conception. This does not change the undemocratic nature
of the imposition of hegemony.

If hegemony is undemocratic because it imposes its view of democracy on
others we can also conclude that any institutional configuration is undemocratic
as it is based on a view that does not take into account the whole populus. The
only conception of democracy that would take into account the whole populus is
one that would take into account every possible conception of democracy. Such
a concept is clearly impossible and highlights the necessity to operate with an
open concept of democracy.

Dissent in a radical democratic theory highlights this idea. It reminds us that
all of our institutions are constantly contested and that a specific hegemonic
view can never be counted as the whole truth. Similar ideas can be found in
Laclau’s and Mouffe’s theories. For example, in Mouffe what constitutes
democratic politics is the clash of irreconcilable hegemonic views (Mouffe, 2013,
p. 17).

On the basis of Laclau’s theory of populism it is possible to distinguish two
kinds of undemocratic populism. The first one is when the populist claims and
hence also the populist agenda are created on the basis of exteriority or from the
outside of society. In other words, they are anti-democratic claims which aim to
destroy the field of the political as such. Hence, democratic claims have to
accept the democratic contestation to be counted as democratic claims. This
means that democratic claims are such claims that take into account hegemonic
plurality and hence can be internal and partially external claims. The main
requirement is that they can accommodate the idea of such democratic claims
that are based in another hegemonic construction which do not aim to
undermine the field of the political.

The other form of undemocratic populism is when the populist cause
imposes its own particular view as universal. Hence, the populist cause should
take into account hegemonic plurality in order to retain its democratic nature. If
movements attempt to impose its particular claims in a way that excludes other
formations of identity, one can also speak of an undemocratic populism.

A similar idea to Laclau’s can be found in Balibar’s work where he claims that
the demos in democracy is a schismatic notion that is divided against itself while

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23 This is but one node that one should investigate to achieve a measurable conception of what a
possible idea of good democracy vs. bad democracy could entail.
Balibar further suggests that it would be better if Laclau had concentrated on how the demands in Laclau’s theory could be democratized in order to serve emancipation (Balibar, 2014, p. 195).

I do not see this as necessary since the demands in Laclau’s theory are defined according to both democracy and emancipation. Laclau’s definition of democratic demands can, as I have shown, be interpreted as participatory parity. Participatory parity is a normative ideal that is democratic and also serves emancipation as participatory parity requires institutions to secure parity for all. I would claim that Laclau’s definition of democratic demands would be sufficient in order to answer Balibar’s claim. I consider that my interpretation of Laclau’s democratic claims as participatory parity make this matter even clearer.

4.6.5 INCLUSION AND THE LIMITS OF DEMOCRATIC POPULISM

In a globalized world the question of who should be taken into account and how they should do it is central and usually quite problematic with regard to democracy. The main problem is who should be able to take part and have a say in democratic decisions.

The easy answer is that everyone who is affected by the decision should be taken into account, but in a globalized world there are severe empirical restrictions as many decisions cut cross traditional boundaries. This leads to the idea that while democracy is necessarily dependent on the people, the notion of the people is also one of the most problematic ideas in democracy. Bonnie Honig seems to make a similar conclusion in her article “Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory” (Honig, 2007).

The question at hand is how we should establish the demos in particular cases. The question is obviously tied to how we frame political goals and questions. The general question is who should have a say in particular decisions. There are a lot of different answers to the questions. Because political questions may transcend national borders a strict interpretation of the all-affected principle is problematic as those affected can be outside of a national border and hence, can be interpreted as legitimately excluded. Hence, the construction of the demos is related to how we conceive of the body of representation as a body that is responsible mainly to the people that elected it.

In other words, the all-affected principle is viable when talking about the democratic process as a whole. The idea of restriction or exclusion has closer ties with the idea of representation. The logic behind the idea of representation necessarily carries with it the idea of exclusion. In other words, when the decision of who should be represented is made someone necessarily has to be excluded. The logic of representation as an exclusionary logic becomes a wider problem of politics if one founds politics on the idea of discourse. According to Seyla Benhabib, the idea of discourse as an ethical principle requires that
everyone is able to take part in the discourse. At the same time we have the logic of representation that requires exclusionary principles (Benhabib, 2007, pp. 450-451).

In other words, the idea of representation necessarily requires borders, or at least some kind of limits. Otherwise we could not establish who is represented as otherwise “everyone” should be represented.

Hence, representation itself is intrinsically exclusionary (Benhabib, 2007, p. 448). On the other hand, the idea of democracy as a principle where inclusion is seen as one main factor only functions to highlight the contradictory nature of democracy itself. Benhabib’s solution is her idea of porous borders, which is the idea that while representational democracy requires set and perhaps strict borders they should be such that anyone can potentially cross them and take part as part of the represented body.

One interpretation of this is that the definition of who constitutes the demos in democracy is necessarily both defined and undefined at the same time. This contradiction arises from the inherently conflicting logic of democracy. For Benhabib, demarcation does not amount to injustice, injustices arise from the allocation of membership and voice (Benhabib, 2007, p. 449). Hence, for Benhabib the people are constructed as those who are within the borders of the represented.

As we saw, the people for Benhabib are more or less established within the borders of a geographic location. Or at least this is true in the case of nations as the body being represented is also based on geographical location. Naturally, it is possible to conceive of representative bodies that are not based on geography but there are few existing democratic bodies that are not connected at some point to the idea of geographic location. One alternative way of constructing the people is Laclau’s idea of populism, where the people are constructed around political demands.

However Laclau’s idea runs into some problems as his idea at an initial glance seems to be lacking any principle of inclusion or an idea of attempting to establish some limits to democracy. However, on closer inspection, we can find both in his theory.

In a way, Laclau’s idea is very similar to Mouffe’s idea where she establishes the limits for agonism as being democratic conflicts. The way Laclau arrive at this is a little different. For Laclau the idea is that we have articulated demands that the people are constructed around. The people are also constructed as those whose demands are not met. These people then enter the hegemonic struggle and attempt to “fill” or “hijack” the empty signifiers and arrange the configuration of them according to their own idea.

If we go back a bit, we can see that for Laclau the important demands are democratic demands. Hence, if we start from the idea of democratic demands, which are demands made on the basis of equality, freedom, etc., we can conclude that the people constructed around the demands not being met are a democratic people. This idea of the people is quite different as we see because the people that are constructed comes into being through conflict.
It is possible to interpret that the people created through the populist logic cease to exist when hegemony is established. This is only if we require the democratic populus to be specified for a longer amount of time. The people as such remain, the identities and the different struggling populus remain.

Hence, one can conclude that the idea that the people in a sense vanishes actually gives room to further democratic and also undemocratic demands in an ongoing process of political struggle.
4.7 FRASER AND LACLAU

I have mentioned earlier, that one can conceive of Fraser’s framework as an agonist conception or a deliberative conception of radical democracy. I claim that it is most justified to conceive of Fraser’s conception as an agonist conception. This will allow us to better be able to combine Fraser’s theory with Laclau’s theory. In order to arrive at this, I will first present Fraser’s conception of radical democracy, and then make the case for viewing her theory as an agonist conception.

The concept “radical” has a central role in Fraser’s thought. She places what she calls the radical democratic norm of participatory parity at the core of her framework (Fraser, 2003a, p. 36). What she does not do, at least in a clear way, is to elaborate on the meaning of “radical” in the norm. This is in my opinion problematic because she ends up relying on a norm that is not sufficiently clearly defined.

In Fraser’s early work she explicitly states that a conception of radical democracy must be able to provide answers to the question of what is required to ensure that everyone can participate as peers. She claims that a conception of radical democracy is distinguished from rival conceptions of democracy by the answers it gives to the questions if democracy requires social equality, recognition of difference and absence of systemic dominance or subordination. She states that to be a radical democrat is to appreciate and eliminate two obstacles of democratic participation. These are social inequalities and misrecognition of difference. (Fraser, 1997, pp. 173-175) Her interpretation is that radical democracy “...is the view that democracy today requires both economic redistribution and multicultural recognition” (Fraser, 1997, p. 174). To this one could add the sphere of representation that Fraser introduces in her later works.

As it turns out with regard to Fraser, she defines radical democracy in a way that perfectly fits her own conceptions of justice. In other words, she claims that her norm of participatory parity is a radical democratic norm and she then defines radical democracy as an idea which implies a view of justice that takes into account both the spheres of redistribution and recognition.

Hence, participatory parity is a radical democratic norm in Fraser’s theory because it takes into account redistribution and recognition. To follow this definition would allow most contemporary theories of justice to be characterized as radical democratic because they take into account redistributive justice and also some form of identity-based justice claims.

It is however possible to read Fraser’s theory in a way where she takes radical democracy as a given. In this sense when Fraser states that radical democracy should take into account recognition and redistribution, what she means is that radical democratic theories should focus on these matters. The conception of radical democracy itself is left open.

The first way of defining radical democracy is problematic with regard to dissent. She defines radical democracy in a way that fits her theory perfectly but
this definition may effectively exclude other conceptions of radical democracy. With regard to dissent, this is problematic with regard to the self-characterization of dissent and the idea of democracy as being in constant motion.

My definition of radical democracy as the umbrella concept for the debate between agonism and deliberative democracy is compatible with Fraser’s theory. However this may require that Fraser’s theory should also be positioned on the agonist deliberation axis. To define Fraser’s theory according to my conception of radical democracy would provide Fraser’s theory with an explanation for what it is that makes her norm of participatory parity radical. With regard to a political theory of dissent I will claim that it is most justified to conceive of Fraser’s theory as an agonist theory.

Fraser attempts to define her theory somewhere between agonism and deliberative democracy through the concept of reflexive justice (Fraser, 2008b, pp. 72–73). With regard to agonism she claims that it “reveals in openings” and opposes the kind of closure that Fraser strives to encompass with the idea of closed frameworks. The idea of closed frameworks in Fraser’s theory refers to such frameworks which are widely accepted and referred to without question. I claimed earlier that this dynamic is best conceived of through the idea of hegemonic struggle.

Agonism does not necessarily have to “reveal in openings” or oppose a closure of the kind that Fraser seems to have in mind. I do agree with Fraser that a conception of society should be sensitive to the dynamics she tries to encompass with the closing and opening of frameworks.

A practical example of Fraser’s conception could be the following. First if we conceive of the agonist part, or the part that utilizes an open framework. A social movement that is not averse to conflict utilizes the openness of a framework to challenge existing conceptions and attempting to introduce new political conceptions and ideas. Fraser would conceive of this as agonism.

When similar claims are negotiated within an institutional body, say parliament, the rules and regulations that govern this process requires a framework of closure, in other words a set conception that promotes decision-making. This would be conceived as deliberation (discourse).

Fraser attempts to solve the opposition between agonism and discourse by overcoming the opposition between them. I disagree with the fact that Fraser is trying to frame this as a question of agonism contra deliberation (discourse) and that the solution would require an overcoming of this opposition. If one conceives of Fraser’s theory as an agonist theory one can both retain the dynamic that Fraser attempts to encompass and further give an account of what is meant by radical democracy in her theory.

The agonism deliberation debate is a debate on the foundations of democracy. It is a debate on if democracy has a common ground on which to adjudicate conflicts or if disagreement is fundamental. In Abnormal Justice Fraser proposes that a central feature of our times is that almost all aspects of justice are up for grabs.
Abnormality in Fraser refers to the open framework. This is completely in line with an agonist conception. The difficulty in Fraser's definition is when she claims that we can move from agonism to discourse in a manner that is similar to Kuhnian paradigm shifts. As I have pointed out the deliberation versus agonism debate requires the taking of one of the positions. One cannot be held to the deliberative account and the agonist account at the same time.

Abnormal justice is not compatible with the deliberative account because then every aspect of the frameworks would not be up for grabs. In other words, abnormal justice requires that one has to reject any notion of fixed and shared similarities if one holds to the idea that all aspects of justice is up for grabs.

The agonist conception obviously can meet the requirements of the open framework and I claim that it is also possible to have closed frameworks within the agonist conception. I have earlier proposed that this dynamic is better conceived of through Laclau’s theory of hegemony. The closed frameworks would be the hegemonic idea to which one can refer to when making claims of justice.

Another agonist feature in Fraser’s theory is her conception of the subaltern counterpublics. The subaltern counterpublics are smaller sheltered public spheres that exist in order to mobilize ideas so that they are stronger or more widely accepted when they enter the public sphere (Fraser, 1997a, pp. 81-82). In other words the subaltern counterpublics exist as arenas where ideas are mobilized against the hegemonic view.

The subaltern counterpublics are similar to Laclau’s idea of democratic demands that arise from the excluded or deficient in society. The subaltern counterpublics are also similar to the idea that one can find in Mouffe’s work; mainly that she thinks that political mobilization cannot exist without a production of conflictual representation of the world (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 24-25). Without the disagreement with the representation of the world, Fraser would not need the subaltern counterpublics at all.

I would claim that the idea that one has venues where oppositional identities are made and that these venues exist to mobilize against hegemonic views, require an understanding of a we/they opposition that is usually equated with an agonist conception.

Hence, Fraser identifies the requirement for the oppositional setting in politics. A similar oppositional setting is most often found within the agonist theories as they usually are based in the idea that societal conflicts have their roots in insurmountable disagreements and that political power allows conflicts to be “decided”.

Thus, Fraser’s conception can be interpreted as an agonist one. It would not be possible to go the other way and interpret her framework as deliberative as a framework that assumes a background consensus cannot incorporate the “open” framework where everything is up for question.

Fraser’s own position in this debate is that she does not want to position herself in either group as she views the debate as not being directly about real problems. It is in a sense understandable if one is focused on how to change
institutional arrangements but as she also is an academic and is working on
democratic theory one could counter with the argument that it is a real problem
that one cannot ground ones theory solidly or coherently. Hence, as an activist
her answer is completely feasible but as an academic it is lacking.

Fraser’s dynamic of opening and closing is philosophically more sound when
interpreted in accordance with Laclau’s theory of hegemony. Further this allows
us to frame Fraser’s framework as an agonist theory of radical democracy. This
also adds meaning to radical democracy and to Fraser’s governing norm of
participatory parity. This however requires the framing of Fraser’s framework as
an agonist framework of radical democracy.

The interpretation of Fraser’s theory as an agonist theory is however a
plausible interpretation because of the agonist elements that already exist in
Fraser’s theory. This interpretation also adds to the possibility to combine
Fraser’s framework with Laclau’s political theory.

I mentioned that it is better to conceive of the dynamic that Fraser attempts
to encompass with the concept of abnormal justice though Laclau’s theory of
hegemony.

One reason for the need for such a move is that one should be able to explain
how political concepts, such as of justice, gets their meaning if one claims that
they are “up for grabs” or open.

I propose that in this case one should utilize insights from Laclau in order to
explain how the struggle to “fill” the concepts should unfold and also thus to add
philosophical strength on the part of Fraser’s framework. The theory of
hegemonic struggle also adds the element of political power to Fraser’s
framework.

One could also describe the dynamic that Fraser attempts to encompass
through Laclau’s idea of hegemony. The claim is that the filling of the signifiers
or hegemonic configuration is equated with the closed frameworks and Fraser’s
idea of open frameworks is equated with Laclau’s idea that no configuration can
ever be totalized. Hence, we could have the dynamic of opening and closing in
one single framework that is an agonist one. This is according to me the most
plausible explanation.

With regard to the question of political power, I do not claim that Fraser
would not have taken into account power relations, especially as her earlier
writings focus on power and takes into account Foucault’s work. Also, her work
on feminist theory is closely tied to the question of power. However, the only
explicit reference to a dynamic of political power, in her framework of justice, is
through the subaltern counterpublics.

Hence, Laclau’s theory of hegemony and populist reason would add strength
to Fraser’s theory by introducing a way to theorize power and also the struggle
for the conceptualization of political life.

With regard to dissent this allows for the self-characterization of dissent. This
move is also compatible with regard to Fraser because she claims she
makes theory from and for the social movements. Hence, to provide a more
justified way of characterizing democratic politics that allows the movements
themselves to characterize their struggles should be a welcome reinterpretation to Fraser’s theory.
4.8 DISSENT, RADICAL DEMOCRACY AND POPULISM

With regard to the concept of radical democracy I hold that both deliberative democracy and agonistic forms of democracy should be counted as being sub-categories of radical democracy.

Radical democracy as such is a form of critique of liberal democracy where the idea is loosely to widen the scope of democracy in different ways. With regard to dissent the main task is to consider what kind of democratic approach it fits better. It is quite clear that dissent as defined in this dissertation, does not fit into the liberal paradigm as liberalism strives to institutionalize the conflict and in this sense also institutionalizes dissent.

What this leads to is that liberalism cannot encompass dissent that comes from outside of the system and hence needs to rely on exhaustive valve mechanisms like theories of civil disobedience etc. Thus, the question arises which of the two radical democratic frameworks are more plausible for an approach based on dissent.

One of the main problems, in some cases merit, with regard to the deliberative approach is that it relies heavily on the idea of reason to overcome conflicts. If it ultimately can fall back on reason to resolve differences, we need to accept that there is an underlying mechanism on which basis one can adjudicate conflicts on.

Hence, we arrive at a similar problem that the liberal paradigm runs into where conflicts get internalized into the system. Those differences that cannot be adjudicated by reason's decree lose their legitimation as they become branded as unreasonable. Hence, differences that stem from the outside and that reject our conception of reason are excluded in a way that seems legitimate. Thus, one can interpret deliberation as domesticating dissent.

As pointed out by Laclau a conception of radical democracy should avoid any institutionalization of any singular configuration of democracy. In part, it is because of the impossibility of such an institutionalization and in part because such an institutionalization would in itself constitute a regime that is anti-democratic by nature.

With regard to the foundations of democracy one can read Laclau’s approach as a critique of both liberal and deliberative democracy. Both frameworks rely on the idea of a common signifier to make sense of the framework. Also both frameworks attempt to secure a neutral procedure to govern society in a neutral and proper way.

As Mouffe pointed out through her interpretation of Wittgenstein, life-form precludes speech acts. Hence, identity is prior to speech which leads to the idea that there are ontological restrictions for adjudicating conflicts through procedures or deliberation. In other words, procedures contain ethical commitments and are as such themselves substantive conceptions.

Hence, as dissent requires a non-substantive view on society, because anything could potentially be a target for dissent, a dissent-perspectival view on
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democracy should avoid foundations that restrict or carry substantive baggage with them.

Also if it is so that identity or way of life is prior to language, then one cannot choose only rational discussion as the proper medium of politics as for some this is not at all the most suitable form of participation.

Hence, the framework of democracy should be able to encompass the idea that not all clashes between different life worlds can be bridged or adjudicated through the medium of rational discussion.

Thus, if one sees participatory parity as one of the core features of democracy, then it seems that the framework cannot be one that relies primarily on rational discussion. At this point it seems that the agonist framework is the more suitable one for a dissent perspectival framework.

It should be pointed out that Wittgenstein’s idea of the priority of life-world is not an uncontested view. However it seems a plausible idea if we compare it to real life political discussions where it is for example very hard to see any possibilities for equal deliberation between someone at the top of the socio-economic ladder and someone from the bottom.

Hence, there is also an agonistic relation between different positions in society. This may be a quite self-evident idea but it adds support to the Mouffean interpretation of Wittgenstein. This interpretation does not prove deliberative democracy wrong as such but it sets ontological constraints for the deliberation process in the sense that one has to show how and why language can bridge the gap and adjudicate conflicts between life worlds.

Also it shows quite clearly that deliberative democracy is a substantive form of democracy. This is in the sense the more grave critique as one of the main pillars of deliberative democracy is to strive for a procedure in that everyone can take part in equally. The procedure itself should be as neutral as possible. The Mouffean/Wittgensteinian critique also highlights that the conflicts are based in identity. Hence, with regard to dissent, and if we hold to the idea that dissenters themselves should hold the power to decide on the means of participation, it seems that one should reject the framework of deliberative democracy.

If a radical democratic political theory of dissent requires the rejection of the deliberative framework then we should investigate if the agonist frameworks can better answer the requirements of dissent.

First of all the idea of hegemony is a central concept in the agonist theories, especially Mouffes and Laclau’s theories. With regard to dissent and the problems deliberative democracy runs into, the idea that one should be able to decide on the means of participation and that one cannot have any set form of adjudicatory principle (reason) that everyone should adhere to, the idea of hegemony provides some solutions.

Hegemony, as presented by Laclau, is the main factor that also determines the rules of coherency. Hence, hegemony in Laclau occupies the same significant place that reason occupies in deliberative democracy. The difference is that a hegemonic configuration is never “eternal”. This also leads to the idea
that rules of coherence are changing and that from an “eternal” point of view they are undecidable.

This should not be seen as a rejection of reason as such but as a feature that shows where reason is lacking, or as Laclau puts it, it highlights a deficiency of reason itself. This idea also highlights the centrality of antagonism and power in politics over reason. Hence, the idea of the centrality of hegemony seems to be in line with the idea of the self-characterization of dissent.

The struggle for hegemony, which in Laclau translates to the struggle for the “filling” of the empty signifiers according to ones owns view is also in line with the idea of dissent. This is so because struggle as Laclau describes it becomes a struggle where rhetoric is central as we cannot ground our political claims in any strong ontological foundation. This idea is compatible with Fraser’s theory because, as I have shown, she avoids strong ontological foundations and stresses that her theory is derived from and for the social movements. Further for Fraser the concept of justice is “filled” through the struggle of the new social movements. Hence the dynamic of “filling” empty signifiers is arguably present in Fraser’s theory.

The idea of hegemony, though, retains its feature of being at least partially undemocratic when set while the struggle for hegemony is democratic by nature.

It is partially undemocratic because if we follow Laclau’s definition hegemonic totality is impossible as no social force can totalize it completely. It would be completely undemocratic if any hegemonic configuration would be totalized. However hegemony still “forces” a certain view with its set rules of coherence upon us whether we agree to it or not, hence there is an undemocratic character in hegemony itself.

Under this interpretation the struggle for hegemony retains the character of being more democratic than the current configuration as the struggle itself highlights or unmasks the “oppressive” power of hegemony. What this entails in a larger picture is that democratic society should allow and foster the struggle against hegemony in order to keep itself democratic.

In this sense the outcome or the victor of a hegemonic struggle creates an elite which loses a part of its legitimacy when winning. From this we can conclude that society should foster the struggle between political adversaries on the grounds of democracy itself. With regard to dissent, this legitimizes the subaltern as the subaltern will per definition have a stronger democratic legitimation than any existing power.

Laclau’s and Mouffe’s reinterpretation of hegemony which detaches the privileged role of the proletariat also allows for the idea that the democratic legitimation of dissent is available for any dissenting group. It also allows for the detachment of the potentially historical determinism of the dialectical logic. However if we follow the idea that any dissenting group has a stronger democratic legitimation than any existing configuration we still have to answer the question of how we can ensure the boundaries of democracy as there exists
claims that attempts to overthrow hegemony that in themselves are undemocratic.

On this point we can also rely on Laclau’s framework as it treats all claims that come completely from the outside as anti-democratic claims that are aimed to destroy politics as such. This is precisely the dynamic that allows for the understanding of democratic claims in a way that does not domesticate dissent. In other words, the possibility of treating claims that are partially from the outside as democratic, and still retain the possibility to make a distinction between democratic and anti-democratic claims, allows for a radical democratic theory that does not domesticate dissent within itself.

Hence, accepted claims fall within the boundary of having at least some ties to the existing systemic logic. Having roots inside the current configuration does not determine claims but makes them dependent on current politics. This allows for new introductions because of the possibility of making claims that are partially from the outside.

Hence, the boundaries of democratic claims are set to ensure that democratic politics as such is not destroyed. This is an important factor with regard to dissent as we can on this point make a categorization of what entails democratic dissent with strong legitimacy versus hegemony and what kinds of claims can be excluded as undemocratic. Also the detachment of the privileged position of the proletariat makes it possible for anyone to dissent and have strong and legitimate claims. The strong privileged position of the proletariat in the earlier Marxist traditions makes the claims of the proletariat against capital privileged in relation to other democratic claims in society.

Laclau’s reinterpretation of populism as not merely a pathology of democracy but as one of its core principles can be linked to the idea of dissent.

One of the main ideas is that the populus of populism is constituted through chains of equivalence between groups or actors whose demands are not met. In other words, the populus is constituted through those who dissent and whose dissent is not taken into account.

For this interpretation to be valid one has to answer the question of how we can identify the kind of populism that Laclau talks about and the negative kind of populism that for example Mouffe refers to in her analysis of the depoliticizing effects of consensus.

As we have seen, Laclau thinks that the claims are undemocratic if they are made completely from the “outside” which means that they strive to eradicate the field of the political. When this idea is viewed through the perspective of dissent, the eradication of the field of the political is similar to eradicating dissent. Hence, the boundaries of democracy are set as the boundary that keeps the field of the political intact.

In other words, the boundaries of democracy should guarantee dissent as long as dissent does not turn against itself in a way that eliminates its own possibility. In a sense, the boundaries of democracy could be seen to maximize dissent as long as it is not incompatible with the possibility of itself. Thus, the boundary of dissent is set by the actual possibility to dissent itself.
The function of dissent as a core principle also highlights the provisionary nature of democratic configurations and the fact that no democratic configuration can ever encompasses the whole full truth. Hence, democracy exists only as long as it does not exist completely. Hence, any claim of a full and true description of democracy is impossible.
4.9 DISSENT, INSTITUTIONS AND THE QUESTION OF ENGAGEMENT

A very common question within democratic theory is if one should seek change by engaging with existing institutions or should one choose a strategy of withdrawal. Mouffe argues for a radical politics of engagement with institutions rather than one of withdrawal (Mouffe, 2013, p. 71).

I agree with Mouffe’s idea, also Fraser and Young seems to be adherents to the idea of institutional engagement, Fraser’s framework of justice is tied to the possibility of institutions to guarantee participatory parity and Young tries to unmask latent possibilities of emancipation in our existing institutions.

However from this we cannot yet conclude how this engagement should be played out. For example it is possible to engage with institutions, both deliberatively and agonistically. Mouffe clearly favors the agonistic approach with the claim of attempting to make the institutions a vehicle for democratic change (Mouffe, 2013, pp. 75-76). In order to facilitate this change we should be able to articulate a common world (Mouffe, 2013, p. 81). The common world in Mouffe’s and also Laclau’s theories are constituted through the hegemonic struggle.

For example Laclau argues for the idea that identities are created through the antagonistic relations, hence a common world can also be constructed only on a similar basis.

For Mouffe the common world is constructed in opposition to opposed to our adversaries. Also for example Fraser and also Benhabib seems to favor an approach where the idea of conflict and decision making can be separated so that we can have a conflictual discussion and reach a decisional closure (Benhabib, 2007, p. 452) (Fraser, 2008a, pp. 72-73). The idea that we can have agonistic politics and reasonable decision making is also that can also be found in for example Mouffe’s idea of conflictual consensus (Mouffe, 2013, p. 15). For Laclau the inherently antagonistic nature does not disqualify reason, it only highlights the fact that reason cannot alone function as an adjudicating principle in politics.

Generally what these philosophers share is the idea that there is something valuable in conflicts, democratic discussion and also in reasonable decision making.

This is something that probably most of us can agree with. However a theory of radical democracy has to be able to accommodate all the above mentioned features in order to be justified. The question is tied to the question of justifiable grounds for democratic politics. For this thesis it is especially relevant because it is tied to the question how radical democracy should be conceived of if the idea of dissent is counted as a central feature.

With regard to the question of institutional engagement I would claim that institutional engagement is a necessity. The main question is not whether one should engage with institutions or not, but how one should do it.
As I claimed earlier, dissent arises from lack of voice or exclusion. Lack of voice and exclusion are effects of institutional arrangements in society. If this is true then dissent necessarily arises as an effect of institutional arrangements.

With regard to non-institutional engagement there are two main ways to conceive of it.

First if we consider dissent as having arisen from the institutional configuration of society one option is to leave the institutions and society behind. If one would be able to leave society completely behind this would entail some kind of complete exit strategy. In practice this would entail leaving everything behind. If one relates this strategy to the idea of dissent, it entails the complete dissolution of dissent as there would remain no one and nothing to dissent with. This would also entail leaving society completely. As a wider phenomenon this would be an impossibility because such a withdrawal would dissolve society completely.

The other possibility of withdrawal would be a withdrawal from the institutional configuration in order to undermine the legitimacy. This however cannot be viewed as a practice that would be non-institutional as the aim of withdrawal is to change the institutions as such. Hence, withdrawal in this sense should always be seen as an attempt to influence existing institutions. This is true especially if one conceives of politics based on dissent. Politics as withdrawal without the attempt to influence anything is not politics. It is something else, perhaps a party or a social gathering.

As we have institutions, we already also imply membership. Membership in democratic institutions also implies representation. And if we have membership and representation we also get their logical counterpart which is exclusion. Hence, if we have representation we have exclusion, as exclusion can potentially affect everyone, it leads to dissent.

Also as everyone cannot be represented, that same everyone can dissent. Be it for reasons of getting membership or any other feature. Even if we follows Benhabib's idea where representation has set boundaries while membership is potentially given to everyone, dissent arises on the principle that we cannot, at any given time, guarantee representation and voice to everyone.

Hence, on the question of who can dissent, or whose dissent should be taken into account, we would have to answer that potentially everyone on both questions. It is only potentially as there are limits to dissent as we have seen. Mainly this would include such dissent that destroys the future possibilities for dissent.

As Laclau pointed out, the idea of injustices arise from the idea of membership and voice. Hence, dissent arises from an already existing populous or those who are connected to it through ties or partial ties.

Hence, if we return to the question of engagement or withdrawal and we remember that the idea of dissent being directed towards institutions we can conclude that the people in a democracy is constructed from those whose demands are not met in relation to existing institutions.
If we use the principle in relation to a representative model we could conclude that we need an open system because dissent is by definition not tied to any substantive claims, hence all models that are based on dissent are provisionary.

This highlights the nature and the feature of democracy of its own widening. In other words, dissent is tied to the idea of widening democracy to areas where it is nonexistent. The common world in a democracy is articulated through dissent and through the conflict that arises from it. Also dissent as a strand of agonist democracy which highlights the deficiency of reason makes reasonable decision making possible while it does not force any specific conception of rationality on everyone.
5 A POLITICAL THEORY OF DISSENT

5.1 GENERAL REMARKS

The main research question for this thesis was to investigate what a radical democratic theory that is based on dissent would look like. I set out to investigate dissent within the framework of radical democracy. I have defined dissent in general terms, where to dissent with something is to disagree with a specific feature in society and to articulate this disagreement. The claim is that a radical democratic theory should feature a political theory of dissent at its core.

The political theory of dissent developed is a theory of society that embraces dissent and values pluralism as core values. Such a theory should be able to enable as much dissent as possible while still not removing or diminishing the possibility of dissent for others. Hence, dissent is tied to parity of participation. I frame this theory of dissent within the framework of radical democracy. I believe that radical democratic accounts are the best democratic theories to embrace the centrality of dissent. A radical democratic theory enables dissent and does not neutralize it as liberal democratic theories may do.

I argued that radical democracy should be seen as an umbrella concept of agonist and deliberative democracy. The agonist and the deliberative account should be seen as radical democratic accounts. The discussion on agonism versus deliberation should thus be seen as a discussion on the foundations of radical democracy. I claimed that radical democracy is more democratic than the constitutional liberal regime because it puts equal weight on the normative ideal of democracy, freedom, human rights and equality.

With regard to a political theory of dissent I claimed that the radical democratic theory that has the strongest justification is the agonist version. The main problem with the deliberative account is that it shares some of liberalism’s attempt to internalize or contain dissent within a systemic framework. Deliberative democracy does this by adhering to an account of commonly shared reason.

In the first part on justice I argued that a political theory of dissent should not have too many substantive claims on justice. A too specific or substantive conception of justice may contain dissent by not enabling it, amongst other things, towards itself. My claim is that participatory parity is a sufficient minimal conception of justice that enables dissent and still brackets dissent within democratic limits.

Hence, I argued for the view that Nancy Fraser’s framework of justice as participatory parity proved to be the most justifiable for a political theory of dissent. The main reason is that the framework enables dissent and allows for the self-characterization of dissent. Another reason is that it is not burdened by as strong philosophical foundations as Axel Honneth’s framework is. To investigate the relation between strong philosophical foundations and practical
application of theories of justice in political theory on a general level would be an interesting question to further delve into.

However, the lack of philosophical grounds in Fraser’s framework can, in some cases, be seen as a weakness in her theory. I have argued that one can view Laclau’s account of democratic demands as a version of Fraser’s account of participatory parity. Partially based on this I have claimed that one can arrive at a more better radical democratic account that asserts dissent as one of its core features by combining Fraser’s account of justice as participatory parity with Laclau’s account of populist democracy and hegemony.

The normative core of dissent, within democracy, lies in its ties to participatory democracy. This means that dissent is viewed as a way of participating in democratic society. Hence, if we guarantee participatory parity in society we should also enable dissent as a way of participation. In other words, the norm that guarantees rights to participate also guarantees the right to dissent. Because dissent can be targeted towards almost any feature in society and we are required to guarantee parity of participation, we are required to allow for the self-characterization of dissent.

I claim that a political theory that takes dissent seriously has to utilize partially open concepts of democracy and justice in order to allow for definition through dissent. The contents of the concepts of justice and democracy are decided temporarily through hegemonic struggle. This does not entail the legitimation of undemocratic movements. I proposed that the evaluation of the democratic nature of movements should be made in two stages. First, every movement is accepted when a substance is given to the concept of justice and democracy. In this I follow Fraser when she states that the concept of justice is determined by the struggles of contemporary social movements. This interpretation means that the hegemonic struggle for justice determines the contents of justice. In the second stage we can evaluate if the demands of the social movement are in line with participatory parity. Hence, an undemocratic movement is accepted in the definition of justice and democracy. Undemocratic movements are, however, legitimately excluded when they make articulated and concrete undemocratic demands.

The hegemonic configuration of power in society may impose identities upon us. For example, a citizen or a consumer can be viewed as examples of identities that are labelled upon a political actor. Both identities are carried through by the conception of democracy and justice. The political actor conceived as a consumer is carried through by a liberal conception that is strongly based on economics. This conception has been criticized as employing an instrumentalizing conception of justice.

The citizen is carried through the idea of the democratic national state as signifying the member of the political community that has a say and voice in political matters. Both identities are political identities that can be and often are criticized through dissent. Hence, a political theory of dissent requires an idea of

24 This interpretation relies on Laclau’s definition of hegemony.
political agency that is in movement in the sense that it can be specified at any
given moment while also having the potential of being something else.

An account of radical democracy is tied to the idea of democracy as being in
constant motion and widening its scope in order to create democratic
possibilities where they are not available. A political theory of dissent is most
justified when framed as an agonist account because the agonist perspective
retains the possibility for self-characterization of one’s struggle, means and
goals. The deliberative view constrains self-characterization through its reliance
on reason and such rules for deliberation that domesticate dissent.

Following Laclau, reason should not be thought of as being outside of politics
but as being governed by it. The agonism that I am advocating rejects any single
governing principle as grounds for adjudicating conflicts. Also, the agonist
account of identity formation through conflict allows for self-characterization.
In other words, dissenters should be able to define themselves. The agonist
perspective makes it possible to be identified politically through dissent.

A political theory of dissent is tied to the idea of liberty and equality through
the idea of participatory parity. Participatory parity is not arrived at on the basis
of some “ideal theory” but one can justify it on the basis of the requirements of
dissent itself. In other words, dissent requires the widest possibility to dissent
which does not contradict others’ equal possibility. Hence, dissent is also a
regulative principle because of the before-mentioned requirement. Even though
the way through which we arrive at this distinction is similar to liberalism’s
distinction between unreasonable and reasonable, my account differs from it
because dissent as such is not bound by reason. In other words, while the
account of reasonable/unreasonable refers to a form of reason to make
distinctions, the account of dissent refers to every aspect that one can question,
even itself. One could argue that there is some aspect or hidden claim which
refers to reason. This is, however, only partially true. My account, like Laclau’s,
treats reason as referring to hegemony. Further, the notion of hegemonic
plurality requires the accepting of a plurality of hegemonic projects and hence
also a plurality of accounts for reason. Thus, my claim is that the liberal
distinction between reasonable/unreasonable refers to one specific account of
reason. My account based on dissent does not do this as it can refer to a plurality
of different accounts of reason.

Dissent can be justified through the idea of the hegemonic struggle. As
mentioned at the beginning, hegemony itself is always potentially undemocratic
as it imposes a particular view on society. Hegemony also dictates the
requirements of reason. The hegemonic struggle itself is democratic as it is the
place where views and identities are vetted against each other. Because the
struggle is democratic and hegemony itself is potentially undemocratic,
dissenters always have stronger democratic legitimacy. This idea also leads to
the idea that a democratic state is required to listen to its dissenters as they
have, by definition, stronger claims of legitimacy than the state itself. The
potential for wider unrest that is intrinsic in dissent leads to the requirement
that the state takes dissent seriously. The responsibility for unrest lies on the
state, not the dissenters. Dissent limits itself in the sense that any view that would destroy the possibility to dissent can be viewed as illegitimate.

A political theory of dissent is tied to the struggles of social movements. The introduction of Laclau’s theory of populist democracy leads to the requirement of a plurality of populisms. I, however, proposed that the concept of populism should not be hijacked. Nor should it be associated with a simplified politics of blame, where, for example, complex political questions are reduced to the fault of, say, immigrants or other minorities. Hence, the logic that Laclau describes is viable and provides important insights into democracy, but it should not be called populism.

Laclau’s theory raises the question that society itself may be an impossibility. The impossibility is arrived at from the idea that the people are created through dissent, in Laclau’s theory, by the chains of equivalence of unanswered demands. The idea of society requires the idea of a people. Hence, a populist agenda creates society as it imposes its own view as the hegemonic view. However this destroys the idea of the people for those whose demands are not met. The establishment of a hegemonic view is continuously challenged in hegemonic struggle. This means that there are also more demands that are connected in different ways. From this one can conclude that democracy requires a pluralism of populisms or conceptions of “the people”. The problem is that if society requires the idea of a people then the pluralism of “peoples” does not constitute society. Or more specifically the requirement of a pluralism of populisms requires the pluralism of societies which can be interpreted as no society at all.

If society is conceived through a specific view of the people, then the only way to constitute society is by fully totalizing a hegemonic view. This would entail a totalitarian society that imposes a specific view on everyone while rejecting others. As Laclau claimed, a full totalization of hegemony is impossible. Hence, a radical democratic theory of dissent has to accept to some extent the provisional nature of society itself.

I argued that a concept of democracy should be open within the limits of participatory parity in order to enable dissent. One possible radical democratic theory that has dissent at its core can be achieved by combining the theories of Nancy Fraser and Ernesto Laclau. This combination results in an agonist theory of radical democracy which is based on the norm of participatory parity. I view Laclau’s account of democratic demands as his version of participatory parity.
5.2 THE FRAMEWORK OF THE POLITICAL THEORY OF DISSENT

Because of the possibility of interpreting Laclau’s democratic demands as a version of participatory parity both Laclau’s and Fraser’s theories enable dissent by not giving too strong a substantive content to justice. In other words, it is possible to interpret both theories as allowing for the maximal amount of dissent but still not hindering the equal possibility of dissent for others. This means that the combined theory adheres to the principle of participatory parity in a way that guarantees maximal participatory freedom for all.

A radical democratic account of dissent guarantees the right to dissent because it is viewed as a form of participation. Because dissent is often targeted against current affairs in society that are deemed unjust or exclusionary, this right enables the underdogs in society to voice their grievances. Both Fraser’s and Laclau’s frameworks share the feature of being based on the idea of underdogs in society. Laclau states this explicitly as a feature of democratic demands. In Fraser’s framework the strong position of the underdog is clear partially because of her critical approach in which she starts with injustices in society. Further, Fraser introduces the conception of subaltern counterpublics, which is a mechanism that allows divergent opinions to be mobilized against public opinion so that the people and their opinions can take part on equal grounds in the public sphere. This means that the possibility of mobilizing is recognized and partially guaranteed. It is only partially guaranteed as the mobilization of anti-democratic demands can be excluded according to the two-stage evaluation I have presented earlier. Hence, it is safe to claim that the combined theory fosters and guarantees dissent in society.

The two-stage evaluation is central for meeting the requirement for a political theory of dissent. Here one should employ a conception of justice that recognizes democracy as a primary good and enables us to distinguish between democratic and undemocratic demands.

The right to dissent and value pluralism leads to an account of radical democracy that promotes individual participatory freedom. Because of the possibility of contradictory values in a value pluralist society, the right to dissent becomes a necessity. This necessity arises from the hegemonic position of certain values and the necessity of divergent values in society. Hence, the right to dissent becomes a necessity. Because society should guarantee participatory parity for every individual and it is possible to conceive of individual dissent, this account of radical democracy guarantees individual participatory freedom for all.

Both value pluralism and an account of participatory freedom are central features in Laclau and Fraser. Hence, the radical democratic theory of dissent that is built on Laclau’s and Fraser’s theories meets the requirement of promoting individual participatory freedom for all.

In order to be able to make an interpretation based on dissent of Fraser’s theory one has to make some modifications. The main modifications are that
Fraser’s framework should be seen as an agonist account of democracy and that the division of justice into three spheres should be revised. I have argued for the view that Fraser’s framework is philosophically stronger when conceived as an agonist conception of radical democracy. I have also shown that it is possible not to conceive of Fraser’s framework through three spheres of justice. This is especially the case as Fraser divides the spheres of representation into two different spheres. Hence, it is justified to claim that Fraser divides her framework of justice into four spheres. If one introduces the insights of Michael Walzer’s in *Spheres of Justice* one can further argue for the view that the number of spheres of justice should be left open as we cannot beforehand decide how justice should work in every instance.

I have argued for the view that the dissent that a radical democratic theory should take into account is actually occurring dissent and not merely dissenting thoughts. In other words, dissent that is not articulated into actual demands is politically irrelevant. It may be that dissent that is not actually articulated is impossible. The idea of dissent as actually occurring dissent establishes its ties to social movements. I have proposed that social movements should be conceived of as being constituted on the basis of demands. Leaning on Laclau, I propose that social movements should be viewed as entering the hegemonic struggle by unifying different demands on the basis of equivalence.

Laclau’s theory of hegemony and populist democracy explains how social movements arise and how the hegemonic struggle should be conceived. Fraser’s theory has a stronger tie to institutional reality. Hence, the combination of the two theories strengthens each other by allowing for a description of how movements are established (Laclau) and ties them strongly to institutional reality (Fraser).

I have proposed that a radical democratic theory based on dissent requires a logic of change to explain change in democratic society. This logic of change is most justifiably conceived of as an agonist logic in order not to domesticate dissent. A dialectical or historical determinist logic may internalize and domesticate dissent. The problem with dialectical logic is that the possibility of change is intrinsic to a dialectical opposition. Antagonistic logic views change as a contingent feature. Hence, Laclau’s account of an antagonistic social logic can be integrated with a radical democratic theory based on dissent. Antagonistic logic also has the descriptive feature of being able to sufficiently describe change in democratic society.

It may be that Fraser is tied to a dialectic logic, although not necessarily so. If one conceives of Fraser’s framework as an agonistic framework this detachment of dialectics becomes stronger. Fraser may presuppose an antagonistic logic as she does not presuppose any metaphysically decided agent of change and she employs a “hegemonic grammar of contestation”. Hence, it is possible to interpret Fraser’s framework on the basis of Laclau’s antagonistic logic of change.

A radical democratic political theory based on dissent views dissent as a positive contribution to society. Some positive features of dissent are that it
fosters democratic citizenship, removes injustices, improves our institutional framework and strengthens participatory parity in society. The combined framework of Fraser and Laclau shows how dissent is positive by showing a strong tie to institutional reality and guaranteeing the right to dissent in society.

The close tie to social movements and demands based upon dissent combined with the idea of participatory parity explains how democratic citizenship is fostered in a radical democratic theory based on dissent. To voice demands and to be heard is a requirement of participatory parity. Hence, a theory of dissent fosters democratic citizenship by guaranteeing the introduction of ways of participation that are based on the needs and means of the dissenters themselves, in other words on the self-characterization of dissent.

The removal of injustices is explained through the emphasis on dissent and its ties to institutions. When institutions are oppressive they can be the basis of dissent, which in turn leads to demands and movements against them. This again leads to a requirement for the state to listen and meet the demands. If the demands are not met they may lead to mass movements that are aimed at overthrowing current hegemonic configurations. Hence, dissent should be viewed as a feature that improves the institutional framework. The possibility of cataclysmic change in society does not lead to the legitimation of lessening dissent in society. On the contrary, I have argued that this possibility leads to the requirement that the state listens to and takes dissenting voices seriously in society.

The improvement of institutional frameworks is tied to the idea of the removal of institutional oppression. When oppression or any other feature that dissent is targeted at is removed, the frameworks are at least potentially improved. This is viewed as a continual process since a completely unoppressive framework is probably impossible.

Another positive contribution is that dissent strengthens participatory parity. This is quite self-evident in a framework that sets the norm of parity of participatory parity as a guiding norm. I have proposed that Laclau’s conception of democratic demands can be seen as a conception of participatory parity. Hence, it is justified to claim that Fraser’s and Laclau’s frameworks share the central idea of participatory parity. This in turn adds to the possibility of combining their theories.

Fraser’s account of recognition can also be explained using Laclau’s framework. Fraser states that it may be that her account of recognition presupposes a mechanism that Honneth describes. This also leaves us the possible interpretation that recognition should not be viewed in a similar way as Honneth does.

Honneth follows a Hegelian framework where social concepts follow from each other according to the dialectics of the struggle for recognition. As I have pointed out, social change that is based on antagonistic relations does not ground itself in the conceptual logic of contradiction and their transcendence.

Laclau conceives of identity as formed through antagonistic relations. Recognition in both Fraser’s and Honneth’s theories are conceived of as a
struggle. It is also possible to view both Fraser’s and Honneth’s theories as agonist accounts of radical democracy. Hence, it may be that the struggle for recognition could be conceived of as one that is based on antagonistic relations. This opens up the possibility of viewing recognition politically through Fraser’s status model and combining it with Laclau’s account of hegemonic struggle. Honneth’s theory could probably be viewed as a struggle for recognition where the dialectical other is hegemony. Hence, it would seem as if one can retain the substance of Honneth’s theory of recognition within the combined framework of Laclau and Fraser.

Even though one would retain Honneth’s dialectical account within the framework it would not change the fact that society should be viewed through antagonistic logic. Antagonistic logic governs the hegemonic configuration of society. Honneth’s dialectical account only explains how individuals and groups relate to hegemony. Hence, Honneth’s dialectics can be viewed as being internal to the larger framework.

Fraser conceives of justice through her conception of our times as being abnormal. This means that almost every part of our conceptions of justice can be contested. Laclau’s account of hegemonic struggles and the filling of open signifiers describe the same dynamic that Fraser attempts to encompass. Fraser’s theory is, however, tied to the idea of viewing hegemonic struggle in terms of Kuhnian paradigm change. Laclau’s and Mouffe’s account of hegemonic struggle is better as it actually explains how hegemony is created on a conceptual and practical level.

Misrecognition is for Fraser when the cultural structures of value create an identity that is despised. Within Laclau’s framework the same idea is interpreted as having its grounds in the hegemonic configuration. More specifically, the open signifiers that hegemony “fills” are filled in a way that makes certain identities despised. Hence, one effect of hegemony is that it constructs certain identities as despised.
5.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this dissertation I have defended a radical democratic political theory of dissent that is arrived at by integrating the ideas of hegemonic and democratic populist struggles of Laclau with Fraser’s radical democratic theory of justice as participatory parity. The framework of the combined theory can answer the requirements of a political theory of dissent.

The requirements were that a framework should enable dissent and not contain it in the manner of liberal democracy and some forms of deliberative democratic accounts. Another requirement that I argued for was that the framework should employ a conception of justice as participatory parity in order to set limits for democracy. Participatory parity is interpreted as a minimal definition of justice in order to allow the interpretation of democracy as being open and in constant motion. Because dissent is viewed as participation, it secures the participatory freedom for all. Dissent, thus, strengthens participatory parity and also improves the institutional framework in society. It is thus justified to view dissent as a positive contribution in society.

There are probably many possible radical democratic frameworks that can answer these requirements. However, there are very few radical democratic frameworks that integrate the conceptions of justice and democracy under a single framework. It is common to focus only on justice or democracy as single features. My view is that a conception of justice requires a justifiable conception of democracy and vice versa. To combine justice and democracy is a clear merit of Fraser’s framework. This also improves Laclau’s theory as Fraser’s conception of justice sets necessary limits for democracy. With regard to the framework of justice, the combination of Laclau and Fraser is considered an improvement over the philosophers’ own theory in isolation.

Hence, the investigation of the political theory of dissent proved to be fruitful in the sense that it led to a way of creating a better framework of radical democracy by integrating the insights of two thinkers that initially seemed to be quite different. The investigation also leads to the characterization of radical democracy as an umbrella concept which in my opinion is the most justified way of approaching the discussion on agonism and deliberative democracy.

Overall, I have defended the view that dissent, the plurality of values and the necessary conflict that arises from them are and should be taken as a basis in radical democracy. This means that a radical democratic theory should start out from the idea that the necessary divergent values, opinions and conceptions of society are the basis of democracy. In a sense this means that when we talk about democratic society we talk about the possibility of having different views about what society means and how it should function. If society is viewed as a single unified conception shared by agents in society, then a democratic society becomes an oxymoron. In other words, democratic society would not be a society at all. However, it is more justified to view society as being constituted by the hegemonic struggle of different conceptions of society. In this sense democratic society’s foundations show their provisionary character.
If the constitution of society is viewed on the basis of hegemonic struggle, then it is justified to claim that society is constituted on the basis of dissent. Hence, a political theory that attempts to understand such a society should also be based on the idea of the centrality of dissent.

My main aim in this thesis was to investigate what it would entail to base a radical democratic theory on dissent. I have given a suitable definition for dissent and argued for a specific conception of radical democratic justice. Further, I have shown that we need a logic of change in radical democratic theory. Lastly, I have argued for the centrality of the conception of hegemonic struggle and have suggested that it is possible to build a radical democratic theory of dissent by combining the theories of Nancy Fraser and Ernesto Laclau. Even though it is possible to conceive of other possible theories I consider that Fraser’s and Laclau’s combined theories provide the best current radical democratic alternative.
6 REFERENCES


References


A CURIOS MERGER IN THE SEARCH FOR A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL COMMUNITY: MICHAEL OAKESHOTT AND RADICAL DEMOCRACY

Funda GENÇOĞLU ONBAŞI

Abstract

Michael Oakeshott, one of the most influential theoreticians of the twentieth century, has been brought to the forefront surprisingly by a strand in democratic theory that advocates the radicalization of democracy. What is interesting is that Chantal Mouffe, the leading theoretician of the project of radical democracy argues that Oakeshott, who is known as one of the symbolic names of the conservative thought, could make an important contribution to their project. In doing that Mouffe is aware of the incongruence between their approaches but nevertheless she insists that Oakeshott’s conceptual and theoretical framework can be incorporated into radical democracy. As this article shows, the most important parallelism between the two approaches is their concern with individual and his/her life choices and with the danger and/or impossibility of politics of uniformity as well as their focus on the general rules that are supposed to regulate the intersection between the public and private. But they seriously diverge in their approach to the processes through which these rules emerge, in short, to the concept of politics: while Oakeshott has a consensus-oriented conception of politics which has no particular reference to the conflicts, antagonisms, unequal power relations or hegemony Mouffe’s conceptualization of politics is built completely on these phenomena. This in turn leads us to argue that these two approaches are indeed too different to be brought together or that the effort to bridge them is far from being persuading, since this pair seems artificial.

Keywords: Oakeshott, Mouffe, radical democracy, pluralism, difference, democratic politics.

Öz

Demokratik Toplum Arayışında Tuhaf Bir Birleşme: Michael Oakeshott ve Radikal Demokrasi

Yirmiçi yüzyıl siyasal düşüncesinin en etkili kuramlarından Michael J. Oakeshott yakın dönemde umulmadık bir siyasal akım tarafından ilgi odağı

* Yrd.Doç.Dr., Başkent Üniversitesi, Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü, Bağlama Kampsüsü, ANKARA, fundao@baskent.edu.tr
haline getirildi. İlgili çekici olan, demokrasinin radikal bir yorumunu yapma
iddiasındaki bir yaklaşımanın en önende gelen temsilci Chantal Mouffe’un
muhaliflerin en önunde gelen temsilcilerinden biri olan Oakeshott’un
kendi projeleri açısından açıklama bir rol oynayabileceği iddia etmesidir. Bunu
yaparken Mouffe, kendi görüşleri ve Oakeshott’un bakış açısı arasındaki
farklığı ayırdırdı; ancak yine de Oakeshott’un kavramsal ve kuramsal
cerçevesini radikal demokrasi projesine entegre edilebileceğini önermektedir. Bu
çalıştıklarının da gösterdiği üzere iki yaklaşımanın en önemli ortak noktası
siyasal topluluk kavramıyla ilgili olarak yazdıkları siyasal topluluk çerçeveleyen
kuralların önemini, bu kuralların içeriğiyle ilgili olarak birey ve bireyin yaptığı
seçimlerin önceliğini, bireylerini bütünleşen toplumsal projelerde biraraya
getirmeye çalışmanın imkansızlığını ve hatta tehditini vurgulamalarıdır. Ancak bu
kuralların oluşum süreçlerine, yani aslında bir anlamda siyaset kavramına
yaklaşımıları neredeyse birbirine tamamen zıt kutupları yansıtmaktadır:
Oakeshott uzlaşma kavramını esas alan, toplumun kendi dinamikleriyle
şekillenen bir siyaset algısından söz eder ve çatışma, antagonizma, eşitsiz güç
ilişkileri ve hegemonya gibi kavramlara hiç atıfta bulunmazken Mouffe tümüyle
bu kavramları üzerinde şekillenen bir siyaset anlayışını savunmaktadır. Bu ise
aslında iki yaklaşımanın biraraya gelememeyecek kadar farklı olduklarını ya da
onları biraraya getirme çabalarının ikna edicilikten uzak ve yapay olduklarını
duşünmemize yol açmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Oakeshott, Mouffe, radikal demokrasi, çoğunluk,
farklılık, demokratik siyaset.

INTRODUCTION

Michael J. Oakeshott is considered as one of the most significant political
theorists of the twentieth century. His views have been usually evaluated in
terms of their contribution to conservative thought in the Western world.
Recently, however, there was a change in the interpretative debate about
Oakeshott, in the sense that his works began to constitute an important reference
point in the discussions revolving around the concept of democracy. In
Gerencser’s (1999: 845) words, certain features of Michael Oakeshott’s
political thought have attracted interest from “an unexpected source, those who
are advocates of radical democratic theory and practice.” As is well known, at
the core of such discussions concerning democracy, we see the questions
associated with equality in the context of difference. All of those involved in the
debate tries to find an answer to a very crucial question that Mouffe (1992a: 3)
formulates as follows:
How can the maximum of pluralism be defended—in order to respect the rights of the widest possible groups—without destroying the very framework of the political community as constituted by the institutions and practices that constitute modern democracy and define our identity as citizens?

It deserves attention that in such a context there has been a revived interest in Oakeshott’s political philosophy. For instance, Mouffe, as a central figure in the debates about democracy, has given a central place to Oakeshott’s views in her influential works that advocates radical democracy. She has built her basic arguments upon central themes of Oakeshott’s political thought on the grounds that she has found a theoretical potential in his work. At this point, one is tended to ask, why this is the case, that is to say, why look to Oakeshott while there are a number of political theorists to draw upon for a democratic theory? More specifically, why an advocate of a “radicalization” of democracy draws upon a figure who is well known for his conservative disposition? Actually, the starting point of this study is this question and hence it will, to a great extent, be based upon an analysis of the ways in which an important strand in contemporary democratic theory tries to come to terms with the question of plurality by incorporating Oakeshott’s framework into its own. Nevertheless, the main contention of this article is that although in some cases there is much to be gained from bridging different theoretical standpoints, the coupling between Oakeshott and radical democracy seems highly artificial.

This article starts with an overview of the major themes and questions that Oakeshott dealt with in analyzing the relationship between individual and political community. Then, it will highlight the central themes of the debate about a radicalization of democracy, and the main criticisms directed by the advocates of this approach towards the dominant understanding of democracy (i.e. liberal democracy). After doing that it will try to delineate the essentials of the alternative vision that the project of radical democracy brings to the fore and discuss the place of Oakeshott’s views in this alternative vision.

1. OAKESHOTT ON RATIONALITY, REASON, PLURALITY, AND THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY

Oakeshott’s critique of rationalism lies at the centre of his thought. It is necessary; therefore, to grasp the essence of this critique in order to understand his views about experience, knowledge, human conduct, politics and the state. Before an analysis of his critique of rationalism, however, we should look at how he defines rationalism and its main characteristics. In a letter to Karl Popper Oakeshott (1948) says, “When I argue against rationalism I do not argue
against reason. Rationalism in my sense is, among other things, thoroughly unreasonable.” This is an interesting sentence that deserves attention. What does ‘rationality’ mean for Oakeshott and what does ‘reason’ refer to in his formulation? What constitutes the essence of his critique of rationalism and of his alternative understanding of reason? Oakeshott (1962a:1) characterizes rationalism as “the most remarkable intellectual fashion of post-Renaissance Europe.” According to him, although it is not the only or the most fruitful fashion in modern European political thinking, rationalism in politics is strong and it has come to colour the ideas of all political persuasions. He argues that “almost all politics today have become rationalist or near-Rationalist” (1962a: 1). At this point we should point out that when we consider the time period during which Oakeshott’s major works appeared, we see that his position was that of an opposition to the mainstream politics of the time. As Eccleshall (1992: 173) points out, “what seems to have prompted Oakeshott to reflect more explicitly about the nature of politics was the penchant of post-war Europe for economic planning. Certainly, he was appalled by the reforming zeal of the British Labour government of 1945-1951.” When we look at his definition of “the general character and disposition of the rationalist” we see that the rationalist for Oakeshott stands for independence of mind on all occasions; he stands for thought free from obligation to any authority except the authority of ‘reason’; he is the enemy of authority, of prejudice, of the merely traditional, customary or habitual (Oakeshott, 1962a: 1). He defines the Rationalist’s “mental attitude” as “at once sceptical and optimistic”:

Skeptical because there is no opinion, no habit, no belief, nothing so firmly rooted or so widely believed that he hesitates to question it and to judge by what he calls his ‘reason’; optimistic because the Rationalist never doubts the power of his reason.... to determine the worth of a thing, the truth of an opinion or the propriety of an action. Moreover, he is fortified by a belief in a ‘reason’ common to all mankind, a common power of rational consideration which is the ground and inspiration of argument (Oakeshott, 1962a: 1-2).

According to the rationalist, “the unhindered human reason” is an “infallible guide in political activity: “Consequently, much of his political activity consists in bringing the social, political, legal and institutional inheritance of his society before the tribunal of his intellect; and the rest is rational administration, ‘reason’ exercising an uncontrolled jurisdiction over the circumstances of the case.” (Oakeshott, 1962a: 4). It becomes clear from those quotations that Oakeshott defines rationalism as a doctrine that takes reason to mean as the pipeline to the universal truth and certainty. It is the idea that through the guidance of reason, which is common to all humanity, it is possible
to reach general abstract principles about the ideal or about the best for all. Oakeshott strongly rejects this formulation of reason and the consequent understanding of rational politics. The main reason for his rejection is his claim that such an understanding results in “the assimilation of politics to engineering.” “The conduct of affairs for the Rationalist, is a matter of solving problems... political life is resolved into a succession of crises each to be surmounted by the application of ‘reason’ (Oakeshott, 1962a: 4).

Oakeshott (1962a: 5) argues that rationalist politics has two components: one of them is the politics of perfection and the other is the politics of uniformity. For him, “the essence of rationalism is their combination”. For the Rationalist, politics can consist only in solving problems and there can be no problem without a ‘rational’ solution; besides, the rational solution of any problem is, in its nature, ‘the perfect solution’. There is no place in the rationalist scheme for a ‘best in circumstances’, only a place for ‘the best’; because the function of reason is precisely to surmount circumstances. In other words, in rationalism there is the belief that reason is supposed to point out “the best” irrespective of the circumstances, meaning irrespective of social, political, legal and institutional inheritance of any society. There is the view that “all rational preferences necessarily coincide”. This is how, in Oakeshott’s view, the politics of perfection leads to the politics of uniformity. As a result, “political activity is recognized as the imposition of a uniform condition of perfection upon human conduct.”

After considering the way Oakeshott defines the main characteristics of rationalist politics we can now look at his objections to that disposition. According to Oakeshott, the rationalist politics, with its emphasis on reason, politics of perfection and politics of uniformity, has led to a certain understanding of the state, which is “state as an enterprise association”. This association is not the ideal condition in his view, but it has somehow (and unfortunately for Oakeshott) become the most widespread. Enterprise association denotes an understanding of the state as an association whose aim is to pursue a common goal. In the second essay of his book On Human Conduct Oakeshott deals extensively with that notion as well as the alternative that he proposes. He defines enterprise association as “…relationship in terms of the pursuit of some common purpose, some substantive condition of things to be jointly procured, or some common interest to be continuously satisfied” (Oakeshott, 1975: 114). What is most important in such a scheme is the reduction of individuals to mere “role players” and hence Oakeshott strongly rejects the view that identifies enterprise association with civil relationship:
Some writers take this view of the matter, because they mistakenly think there is no alternative to it... they find it impossible to imagine association except in terms of a common purpose... They are concerned to celebrate or to believe it to be of supreme worth, or, as they say, the only mode of relationship in which the ‘social’ nature of man is fully requited (Oakeshott, 1975: 118).

Oakeshott, on the other hand, opposes the idea that enterprise association is the ideal condition and that there is no alternative to it. He proposes the concept of “civil association” as an alternative way of conceptualizing the state. Before going into the details of this alternative model, however, we should first grasp Oakeshott’s thought about reason and knowledge, individuality and contingency, all of which are central to his thoughts about politics. As Shirley Letwin (1978: 53) points out, rationalism takes it for granted “reason is the power to discover a system of laws... Reasoning is identified with starting from a universal truth and deducing from it a particular conclusion.” Our world, it is argued, presents us a picture of confusing variety and frequent, irregular change; it is difficult for us to cope with it. Only by using reason this ‘chaos’ can be reduced to order. Rationalism supposes to “allow us to hope that by exercising our reason we can put everything into a clearly defined place in a single system” (Letwin, 1978: 53). Oakeshott opposes to such an understanding of the world around us and develops instead, “a thesis of the primacy of practice” (Gray, 1993: 202). As was mentioned before, rationalism insists that practice (practical life) should be governed comprehensively by a system of propositions and principles; otherwise practice is irrational. Oakeshott (1962a: 7) thinks that such a claim is a result of a mistaken conception of knowledge and tries to show how mistaken it is by developing his own: “every human activity whatsoever involves knowledge. And universally, this knowledge is of two sorts” which are technical knowledge and practical knowledge. Technical knowledge is the knowledge that can be “formulated into rules which are or may be deliberately learned, remembered and... put into practice... its chief characteristic is that it is susceptible of precise formulation”. Therefore, it “can be learned from a book and “can be applied mechanically. The second sort of knowledge, practical knowledge, on the other hand, “exists only in use” and cannot be formulated in rules. Therefore, says Oakeshott, it can be called as “traditional knowledge.” According to him, these two sorts of knowledge are inseparable; they are “the twin components of the knowledge involved in every concrete human activity.” Oakeshott criticizes rationalism for underestimating practical or traditional knowledge; for considering only the technical knowledge as knowledge. He argues that these two are inseparable, they cannot be considered identical with one another; and none of them is able to take the place of the other (Oakeshott, 1962a: 7-13). This emphasis on practice (practical life, practical knowledge etc.) brings with it a radically different conception of
‘reason’ from the rationalist conception of the term. In this conception “reason has to be understood not as a pipeline to universal truths, but rather as a creative capacity to transform whatever is experienced into a variety of interpretations, responses, and reflections (Letwin, 1978: 56).

It is at this point that the emphasis on circumstances comes into the scene. Human beings find themselves in a variety of experiences none of them reducible to one another. There are different modes of experience in human life. According to this second definition of reason, a human being is always interpreting his experience and responding in the manner he selects; hence he can give different meanings to events (Letwin, 1978: 57). Circumstances are important but not in the sense of automatically causing desires or determining the interests. “A man’s circumstances are only conditions which he interprets and takes into account in making choices.” So, the conception of reason as a creative capacity implies that human beings make sense of the world around themselves not only through technical knowledge, but also through practical knowledge that in turn is inseparable from the circumstances in which a human being finds himself. Here the importance of individuality and contingency comes out. In Letwin’s (1978: 59) terms,

We are obliged to recognize that human beings may disagree for many reasons, not because some are less wise and good than others, but because being rational they can always notice or emphasize different aspects of what they perceive, or pursue different purposes. We are obliged, in short, to renounce the dream of achieving unity by common recognition of one universal truth.

Letwin (1978: 58) explains that, Oakeshott draws a picture of the human world “not as a chaos being reduced to systematic unity by reason but as a web of responses that are constantly being created by intelligent individuals.” In that picture, “each human being possesses individuality not in spite of but because of his rationality... to say that human beings possesses individuality means that each is the maker of his own thoughts, that he is capable of shaping a personality, and that he is responsible for what he becomes (1978: 59, emphasis added). Oakeshott (1962b: 184-185) also underlines this notion of individuality in his depiction of the “image of ourselves as we have come to be” according to which,

[w]e are apt to entertain a multiplicity of opinions on every conceivable subject and are disposed to change these beliefs as we grow tired of them or as they prove serviceable. Each of us is pursuing a course of his own…We are all inclined to be passionate about our own concerns… Each of us has preferences of his own…
In sum, then, by evaluating their circumstances human beings reach different views about what is good, bad, true, false etc. besides, these considerations are not constant they are open to be reformulated; they are contingent upon the circumstances, they are constantly made and remade. Such a conception of rational human conduct is very different from the rationalist understanding. As I have mentioned before, rationalism assumed the possibility of a knowledge that is completely freed from the particular circumstances, prejudices, previous experiences, etc. As we have seen, Oakeshott rejects this; and in that respect he is in line with the subjectivism of the Austrian school, to use Dunleavy and O’Leary’s (1987: 89) terms. They define subjectivism as “the doctrine, which asserts that the private experience of each individual is the ultimate foundation of knowledge” according to which, From this perspective, social facts are what people think they are, and the proper subject matter of economics and politics consists of the expectations and evaluations of individuals... The process of verstehen (understanding from within) is distinctive to the social sciences (Dunleavy, O’Leary, 1987: 89).

Oakeshott’s emphasis on reason as a creative power has important implications for his critique of enterprise association, and hence, for his alternative model, i.e. the civil association. Since he defines reason as a creative force leading to a variety of interpretations, reflections and responses whereby emphasizing the significance of individuality and contingency, it becomes impossible for him to accept the enterprise association as the ideal condition. The main reason for this is that enterprise association is built upon the idea of a collective good, common purpose. However, in Oakeshott’s formulation since we all have reason, we all have different goals, purposes, enterprises etc. none of us can impose these upon others, we choose them we formulate them out of our different interpretations of the world around us. As O’Sullivan (2002) puts it,

What he is saying is that we always look at the world from a particular standpoint-scientific, historical or practical. We can become aware what that standpoint is, but we can never a view from nowhere… we always wear conceptual spectacles when we look at the world. Although we can never get rid of them, we can become aware of them and the assumptions they make.

Moreover, again due to our reason as a creative power and/or as an intelligent capacity, we always tend to change or reformulate them on the face of our conditions. So, in short, there can be no common good to pursue, in Oakeshott’s own words there can be nothing common to all. Letwin (1978: 60-61) uses the term “metaphysical skepticism” to denote this kind of approach: “Metaphysical skepticism rejects the possibility of achieving knowledge which will remove uncertainty and reveal the purpose and destiny of human life.”
What, then, is the main characteristic of a civil association, the ideal condition? What is the role of the government? What is the function of the state in the ideal condition? Letwin points out that the government, as a ruler of a civil association does not organize life for the members of the community. In other words, the object of the rules of the political community is not to overcome rifts, to give men a purpose in life, or to create national unity, but to allow individuals to make their own lives as they choose (Letwin, 1978: 66-67).

Oakeshott deals with the general character of rules of a civil association in his *On Human Conduct*. It is a system of law (lex) “which prescribes not satisfactions to be sought or actions to be performed, but moral conditions to be subscribed to in seeking self chosen satisfactions and in performing self-chosen actions (1975: 158). His distinction between civil obedience and civil obligation is important to understand the role that he prescribes for the rules of conduct in civil association. Our obligation does not stem from a fear of penalty for not following those rules, and also it does not stem from a view that those rules should be obliged to because they serve some common purpose. We feel obliged to the rules of the civil association because we have the respect for their authority. We feel obliged to them even if we may have questions about their desirability. In other words, we have to acknowledge their authority no matter we approve or disapprove. However, what rules are most desirable cannot be decided in the abstract or for all times. It can be decided only by living through those rules, if there is a need for change it will be revealed by the practice, that is, in the course of the spontaneous development of the society.

These points about the rules of a civil association are in direct relationship with Oakeshott’s conservatism. He attributes a special importance to the historical, political, legal and institutional heritage of a society, in short to the circumstances that human beings find themselves within. It is not possible, for him to ignore them by engaging in grand change programs shaped according to some abstract generalizations or universal truth claims. He believes that we can only think of ‘a best in circumstances’ not ‘the best’. And what is best for a society cannot be determined only by technical knowledge; traditional practical knowledge is also required. Practical knowledge exists only in use, that knowledge can be acquired only through practice. So, if there is a need for change, it will be influenced by the direction of the movement of the society. Oakeshott is against radical change programs imposed upon society and rejects the presupposition that “some over-all scheme of mechanized control is possible” to administer the practice (1962a: 23). On the notion of change, he insists that “the politics of destruction and creation” is not better than “the politics of repair” and that “the consciously planned and deliberately executed” is not better than “what has grown up and established itself unselfconsciously over a period of time” (1962: 21). This is true, therefore, for the law of the ideal
condition. As was mentioned above, their desirability can be a matter of discussion among the cives. There is always room for such notions as desirability of laws (he defines politics around this notion) approval, disapproval. Oakeshott (1975: 165) states “where these conditions are understood to be alterable, and where there are known procedures in which they may be deliberately enacted, changed, or terminated, cives are invited to think of them in terms of approval or disapproval.” However, we should always remember that what is asked of the cives is their acknowledgement of the authority of these rules not their approval. Once those rules are in force they are considered to have an authority that is not open to be questioned and/or challenged.

What can be said about the criterion of desirability is that “the rules should be such as to maintain the character of a civil association and not to convert it into an enterprise which will compel everyone to do what those in power consider desirable” (Letwin, 1978: 66). According to Oakeshott “the rules of civil association are not to be understood as demanding associates to take certain actions in order to achieve a particular, substantive common purpose. Instead, such rules are to be understood as formal considerations to be subscribed to in pursuing one’s own ends” (Gerencser, 2000: 132). In Oakeshott’s (1962b: 187) terms, “the office of government is not to impose other beliefs and activities upon its subjects, nor to tutor or to educate them, not to make them happier in another way, not to direct them, to galvanize them into action, to lead them or to coordinate their activities... the office of government is merely to rule.”

As this brief analysis shows, Oakeshott’s understanding of reason as a creative intellectual capacity, which transforms whatever experienced into a variety of interpretations, responses, and reflections, naturally results in his assertion that there can be nothing common to all and hence there is no way of eliminating plurality within the society. This is the basic principle an ideal type of political community (i.e. a civil association or societas) should be built upon. This, as we shall below, is at the same time the main point of convergence between Oakeshott and a certain group of the political theorists who advocate a radicalization of democracy. Before coming to an analysis of these convergence points, however, we should look at what prompted those students of democracy to urge for a radicalization of democracy. Thus, the next section of this study will deal with the question of pluralism in liberal democratic tradition.
2. THE QUESTION OF PLURALISM, IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

In order to see how liberal democratic tradition deals with the question of plurality, it would be illuminating to look at the historical development of liberal democratic conception of citizenship and the constitution of public political life. One core principle, which constitutes the basis for the liberal democratic citizenship, is that of universality. The major questions that we referred above as ‘the questions associated with equality in the context of difference’ include such questions as:

How are democracies to deal with divisions by gender or ethnicity or religion or race, and the way these impinge on political equality? What meaning can we give to the political community when so many groups feel themselves outside it? How can democracies deliver on equality while accommodating and indeed welcoming difference? (Phillips, 1993: 2)

These questions that contemporary democracies face take us to the questions of justice, equality and freedom. Members of the nation-states have different personal identities as evidenced by their ethnic affiliations, religious beliefs, their views of personal morality etc. In all these areas there is a little possibility of convergence. At the same time, however, the individuals and groups having those particularities need to live together politically. This in turn means that there should be some common ground or reference point from which their claims on the state can be judged. In liberal democracy, the notion of citizenship is supposed to provide this reference point; but nowadays it is at the center of hot debates whether it can really meet such expectations. Liberal democratic notion of citizenship is grounded on the premise of universality. Universality implies that all individuals are given the same formal legal/legal rights regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion or class that result in an abstract notion of citizen-individual. The rationale behind this formula is that these latter categories are conceptualized and formulated as private matters. The real of politics, on the other hand, is defined in the public sphere and so is citizenship. Consequently, liberal democratic citizenship has taken the form of a legal status where everybody is equal and the possessor of the same political rights. The public sphere, so defined, has to be impartial with regard to the ‘private concerns’. However, both the intensity of the ongoing intellectual debates and the problems at the practical level show that this distinction has not been so successful in dealing with particularities. The notion of citizenship in its liberal democratic formulation has tried to solve the problem by creating a homogenous public by relegating all particularity and difference to the private (Mouffe, 1992a: 7). Liberal democracy has presumed that we can abstract some
essential human sameness in people and tried to structure the political public realm on this principle of universality. Within this framework, being a member of a political community has come to mean being the bearers of the same legal rights. As Hall and Held point out, “From the ancient world to the present day, citizenship has entailed a discussion of, and a struggle over, the meaning and scope of membership of the community in which one lives. Who belongs and what does belonging mean in practice? (Hall, Held, 1990: 144). In today's conditions, it has become increasingly difficult to answer this question largely due to the process that we call globalization. The latter has been going hand in hand with the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization that is also known as the tension between universalism and particularism (Ronald Robertson quoted in Keyman, 1995: 100). If the deeply different perspectives on critical subjects are allowed to dominate political life (because such differences have important implications for collective life and consequently for political decisions), the result may become disunity; on the other hand, if citizens are told that in politics they should not use their most fundamental beliefs about what is true, that may seem both unreasonable and a serious infringement of full liberty; consequently "this conflict is the dilemma and it is a genuine one" (Greenawalt, 1999: 670). Various theorists respond to the above-mentioned questions and this dilemma in various ways. This study will try to show how an important strand in democratic theory (i.e. radical democracy) has been trying to respond them. While doing that we will pay a specific attention to the ways in which their proposed alternative draws upon Michael Oakeshott’s political thought.

3. MICHAEL OAKESHOTT AND RADICAL DEMOCRACY

Mouffe, the most prominent advocate of the project of radical democracy, builds her basic argument upon a critique of liberal pluralism and defines the project as a “strategy” to “pursue and deepen the democratic project of modernity” (1993:21). At the center of her critique of liberal democratic tradition lies a rejection of a perspective that tries to come to terms with pluralism through the presumption that via ‘rationality’, which is common to all human beings, it is possible to reach a consensus in the public realm. As we have seen in the previous section, liberal democratic tradition tries to get rid of antagonisms that stem from the radical plurality of views, beliefs, opinions, and experiences by

“…relegating pluralism and dissent to the private sphere in order to secure consensus in the public realm. All controversial issues are taken off the agenda in order to create the conditions for a ‘rational’ consensus. As a result, the realm of politics becomes merely the terrain where
individuals, stripped of their ‘disruptive’ passions and beliefs and understood as rational agents in search of self-advantage within the constraints of morality, of course submit to procedures for adjudicating between their claims that they consider ‘fair’ (Mouffe, 1993: 140).

In the light of our analysis of Oakeshott’s views on rationalism and politics of uniformity we can say that there is an important parallelism between Mouffe and Oakeshott in their rejection of the possibility of reaching a consensus through the use of reason that is common to all humanity. Although Mouffe does not refer directly to Oakeshott in her criticism of a consensus based upon rationality, the parallelism between the two can be observed quite easily. The point where Mouffe directly draws upon Oakeshott is Oakeshott’s differentiation between two alternative interpretations of the modern state that is between civil association and enterprise association or between universitas and societas (Mouffe, 1992b: 232-235). As we have seen above, universitas indicates an engagement in an enterprise to pursue a common purpose or to promote a common interest. Contrary to that model of association of agents engaged in a common enterprise, defined by a purpose, societas designates a formal relationship in terms of rules, not a substantive relation in terms of common action. In Oakeshott’s (1975: 201) words: “The idea societas is that of agents who, by choice or circumstance, are related to one another so as to compose an identifiable association of a certain sort. The tie which joins them... is not that of an engagement in an enterprise to pursue a common substantive purpose or to promote a common interest, but that of loyalty to one another”.

It is not a mode of relation, therefore, in terms of common action but a relation in which participants are related to one another in the acknowledgment of the authority of certain conditions of acting. To belong to the political community -societas- what is required is that we accept a specific language of civil intercourse. Oakeshott calls this res publica. Those rules prescribe norms of conduct to be subscribed to in seeking self-chosen satisfactions and in performing self-chosen actions. To recover citizenship as a strong form of political identification requires our loyalty to the res publica, to the political principles of modern democracy and the commitment to defend its key institutions. ‘Equality and liberty for all’ is the central political principle of modern liberal democracy. "The conditions to be subscribed to and taken into account in acting are to be understood as the exigency of treating the others as free and equal persons" (Mouffe, 1992b: 236). However, there is an important point that needs to be underlined here. She considers that if interpreted in a certain way, Oakeshott’s reflections on civil association views illuminating. She (1992b: 231) argues:
We need to conceive of a mode of political association, which, although it does not postulate the existence of a substantive common good, nevertheless implies the idea of commonality, of an ethico-political bond that creates a linkage among the participants in the association, allowing us to speak of a political ‘community’ even if it is not in the strong sense.

So, she sees the model of a civil association can serve such a purpose by envisaging a common identity of persons who might be engaging in many different communities and who have different conceptions of good, but who accept submission to certain authoritative rules of conduct, and thereby linked to each other:

It seems to me that Oakeshott’s idea of the civil association as societas is adequate to define political association under modern democratic conditions. Indeed it is a mode of human association that recognizes the disappearance of a single substantive idea of the common good and makes room for individual liberty. It is a form of association that can be enjoyed among relative strangers belonging to many purposive associations and whose allegiances to specific communities is not seen as conflicting with their membership in civil association. This would not be possible if such an association were conceived as universitas, as purposive association, because it would not allow for the existence of other genuine purposive associations in which individuals would be free to participate (Mouffe, 1992b: 233).

What is required to belong to the political community is that we accept a specific language of civil intercourse, the respublica. Those rules only provide a framework of common practices to guide political activities of the citizens. The identification with those rules, in turn, creates a “common political identity”. So, it is in this sense that Mouffe finds Oakeshott’s views useful to a radical democratic project. She is attracted to Oakeshott’s elaboration of the concept of societas, because with it Oakeshott has portrayed a strong conception of political community (Gerencser, 1999: 847, emphasis added.) Moreover, she thinks that such an approach brings with it not abandonment but a reformulation of the public/private distinction and hence can help us to find an alternative to the limitations of liberalism: “In societas, every situation is an encounter between “private” and “public”… The wants, choices, and decisions are private because they are the responsibility of each individual but the performances are public because they are required to subscribe to the conditions specified in respublica” (Mouffe, 1992: 237-238). She finds this important because, in a similar vein, the project of radical democracy also proposes, as a major strategy to overcome this shortcoming of liberal understanding of pluralism, the
revitalization of the public sphere in the form of a new mode of articulation between the public and the private.

Notwithstanding the common ground between Oakeshott and Mouffe, Mouffe has important rejections and criticisms regarding that model. At the heart of that criticism we see her claim that Oakeshott’s idea of politics is a flawed one “for his conception of politics as a shared language of civility is only adequate for one aspect of politics: the point of view of the ‘we’, the friend’s side… What is completely missing in Oakeshott is division and antagonism that is the aspect of the ‘enemy’.” (Mouffe, 1992b: 237-238).

Indeed, this is the most distinguishing aspect of Mouffe’s interpretation of Oakeshott. She draws attention to the fact that “to introduce conflict and antagonism into Oakeshott’s model, it is necessary to recognize that the respublica is the product of a given hegemony, the expression of power relations, and that it can be challenged” (Mouffe, 1992b: 237-238). If we recall Oakeshott’s views about the unquestionable nature of the authority of the respublica we can grasp what Mouffe sees as absent in that approach. As we have seen, Oakeshott argues that even if we find those rules undesirable we have to acknowledge their authority. With his emphasis upon spontaneity he sees those rules of conduct as the expression of the spontaneous development of a particular society; they evolve and take shape in accordance with the particular path that the historical development of a society follows. They emerge as a result of the political, legal and cultural inheritance of that society. Oakeshott does not question, takes for granted, or simply ignores, the nature of the process through which those particular rules come to have that authority. In other words, he does not mention the power relations and its dynamics characterizing a particular social context and their influence in determining the rules of conduct whose authority has to be acknowledged by all in the society. He fails to see that those rules are an expression and/or reflection of the particular configuration of power relations. He does not tackle with the crucial question of how those groups who neither ‘desire’ nor ‘approve’ those rules come to accept their authority.

Mouffe, tries to shed some light on these complex processes by insisting that “(p)olitics is to a great extent about the rules of the respublica and its many possible interpretations, it is about the constitution of the political community” (Mouffe, 1992b: 237-238). In order to grasp the essence of this argument we should be familiar with the definition of “politics” that she proposes. In this definition, Mouffe draws largely upon Carl Schmitt. In her words:

… for Schmitt, the criterion of the political, its differentia specifica is the friend-enemy relation; this involves the creation of a ‘we’ as opposed to a ‘them’, and it is located, from the outset, in the realm of
collective identifications. The political always has to do with conflicts and antagonisms and cannot but be beyond liberal rationalism since it indicates the limits of any rational consensus and reveals that any consensus is based on acts of exclusion (1992b: 123).

Mouffe maintains that the political can be defined only with reference to relations of power and antagonisms and that unless we do this we completely miss its nature. This is why she criticizes liberal democratic tradition for “conceiving the well-ordered society as one exempt from politics” (1992b: 139). As we have seen, in liberal understanding of pluralism the diversities that are viewed as the source of conflict are relegated to the private realm. Mouffe (1992b: 127) sees this kind of an approach as “a dangerous liberal illusion which renders us incapable of grasping the phenomenon of politics.”

The definition of politics based upon antagonism is directly related to the notion of ‘relational identity’ which Mouffe develops with reference to Derrida’s concept of “constitutive outside”. Mouffe uses the concept by pointing out that it “cannot be reduced to a dialectical negation” and that it implies something more than saying simply that there is no ‘us’ without ‘them’ (Mouffe, 2000: 12-13). According to this, “in order to be a true outside, the outside has to be incommensurable with the inside, and at the same time, the condition of emergence of the latter. This is only possible if what is ‘outside’ is not simply the outside of a concrete content but something which puts into question ‘concreteness’ as such” (Mouffe, 2000: 12).

This approach brings with it the perception of the us/them relation as one between friend and enemy instead of as simple difference. Hence, “(f)rom that on, it becomes the locus of an antagonism, that is, it becomes political” them’ (Mouffe, 2000: 13). This in turn means that antagonism can never be eliminated and it constitutes an ever-present possibility in politics. In addition to this, such a conception of requires a non-essentialist framework, which suggests that all identities are necessarily precarious and unstable (Mouffe, 1992a: 10). A corollary to that understanding of politics is the conceptualization of democracy as a continuous process rather than as an end point to be reached at. It is the precariousness of identities that makes democracy an endless process since, as was mentioned above, an identity can develop through its relation and, perhaps more importantly, on the face of the challenge posed by its constitutive outside.

To sum up, the comparative analysis made above shows that there are both important divergences and convergences between the theoretical frameworks developed by two leading figures of the modern political thought. They share a common ground in regard to their concern with individual and his/her life choices and with the danger and/or impossibility of politics of
uniformity as well as in regard to their focus on the general rules that are supposed to regulate the intersection between the public and private. These can be considered as the essentials of their understanding of (democratic) political community. However, the points raised by Mouffe related with the conceptualization of politics with reference to conflict and antagonism, as well as the hegemonic configuration of unequal power relations seems to indicate an almost completely different understanding of political community.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The relation between the individual and the community has been at the heart of the political thought since the antiquity. The debate has always revolved around this central theme and all those involved have endeavoured to find the ideal way of relating the individual to the society. This article made a comparative analysis of two leading modern political theorists, who are well known for their concern to come to terms with this crucial question. The starting point of this study was a indeed a humble curiosity: how and why Chantal Mouffe, an advocate of the radicalization of democracy incorporates the ideas of Michael Oakeshott, a conservative (or conservative individualist), in her reflection on the notion of democratic political community. Although Mouffe writes about the points of divergence between Oakeshott and herself and revises the former in a significant manner, she nevertheless finds important parallelism between the two perspectives. However, her emphasis on the notions of conflict, antagonism and unequal power relations with reference to the concept of hegemony is the keystone of a distinct view on socio-political life, especially on the decision-making processes that end up with the formulation of the rules of the respublica. This is so because Oakeshott has a rather consensus-oriented perspective in this respect in that he does not go beyond suggesting that these rules are to emerge as part and parcel of the practical life of the society and they are to prioritize the self-chosen actions of individuals. So, it is a bit puzzling that Mouffe tries to bring together this approach with her antagonism and conflict-oriented perspective. These two approaches seem to be mutually exclusive rather than complementary and hence the attempt to bridge them seems to be destined to be unconvincing.

NOTES

2 As Gerencser rightly points out, Oakeshott uses a series of terms that carry with them similar meanings. The central theoretical distinction in On Human Conduct is between
civil association and enterprise association. However, Oakeshott uses a series of Latin terms to explore this distinction. Thus, discussing civil association, he uses *civitas* for this ideal condition, and *respublica* for the comprehensive conditions of association. However, in the third essay of *On Human Conduct*, he introduces the terms *societas* and *universitas* for the historical expressions of civil and enterprise association respectively. Thus, we see civil association, *civitas, respublica* and *societas* on one side; and enterprise association and *universitas* on the other. See, Gerencser, “Oakeshott, Authority and Civil Disobedience”, footnote 3. I prefer civil and enterprise association in this paper, but when we come to a review of Chantal Mouffe’s elaboration on Oakeshott’s thought we will need to use the other terms that she prefers.

3 Mouffe tries to make it clear that she does not accept Schmitt’s ideas in toto and especially his understanding of democracy “as a logic of identity between government and governed, between the law and popular will” which she thinks “perfectly compatible with an authoritarian form of government”; and also that she does not accept the consequences Schmitt draws from his critique of liberal democracy. She says “If Schmitt can help us understand the nature of modern democracy, it is, paradoxically, he must himself remain blind to it.” What she finds helpful in Schmitt’s thought in that sense is his definition of politics with reference to friend/enemy relation, antagonism and conflict. For a detailed analysis of Mouffe’s interpretation of Carl Schmitt see the eighth chapter of The Return of the Political titled “Pluralism and Modern Democracy: Around Carl Schmitt”.

REFERENCES


A Curious Merger in the Search for a Democratic Political Community: Michael Oakeshott and Radical Democracy


RADICAL DEMOCRACY IN THE ANDES: 
INDIGENOUS PARTIES AND THE 
QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA* 

Donna Lee Van Cott


Donna Lee Van Cott teaches political science and Latin American studies at Tulane University. She is author of From Movements to Parties in Latin America: The Evolution of Ethnic Politics (Cambridge University Press, 2005), winner of the 2006 Best Book on Comparative Politics, American Political Science Association Organized Section on Race, Ethnicity, and Politics. She also is author of The Friendly Liquidation of the Past: The Politics of Diversity in Latin America (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), editor of Indigenous Peoples and Democracy in Latin America (St. Martin's Press, 1994), and is presently working on a book exploring the same themes as this working paper. In Fall 2005 she was a visiting fellow at the Kellogg Institute.

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ABSTRACT

I explore whether recently formed indigenous political parties in Ecuador and Bolivia are fulfilling their promise to improve the quality of local government by establishing institutions that promote intercultural cooperation and the participation of individuals and civil society groups. To the extent that such improvements have occurred, I seek to identify the conditions under which they succeed. I argue that under certain conditions even "least-likely cases" for the establishment of radical democratic models can produce positive changes in relations among hostile ethnic groups, shift resources toward underserved populations, and create spaces for citizens and civil society groups to deliberate public spending priorities. Such models are most likely to work when indigenous parties and their social movement sponsors are able to (1) maintain internal unity and solidarity; (2) develop distinct, complementary roles; (3) attract charismatic, talented mayors who are willing and able to work across ethnic lines; (4) reelect successful mayors; and (5) attract resources and technical support from external donors.

RESUMEN

Exploro si los partidos políticos indígenas recientemente formados en Ecuador y Bolivia están cumpliendo su promesa de mejorar la calidad del gobierno local a través del establecimiento de instituciones que promuevan la cooperación intercultural y la participación de los individuos y los grupos de la sociedad civil. En la medida en que estas mejoras hayan ocurrido, busco identificar las condiciones bajo las cuales ellas han tenido éxito. Sostengo que bajo ciertas condiciones aún los “casos más improbables” para el establecimiento de modelos democráticos radicales pueden producir cambios positivos en las relaciones entre grupos étnicos hostiles, orientar recursos hacia poblaciones desatendidas y crear espacios para que los ciudadanos y los grupos de la sociedad civil deliberen acerca de las prioridades de gasto público. Es más probable que estos modelos funcionen cuando los partidos políticos indígenas y los movimientos sociales que los respaldan están en condiciones de: (1) mantener la unidad interna y la solidaridad; (2) desarrollar roles sociales distintos y complementarios; (3) atraer alcaldes carismáticos y talentosos que están dispuestos y capacitados para trabajar cruzando las divisiones étnicas; (4) reeleger a los alcaldes exitosos; y (5) atraer recursos y apoyo técnico de parte de donantes externos.
In the 1990s, as South America’s party systems began to undergo serious crises, indigenous peoples’ social movement organizations formed electorally viable political parties for the first time. In Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, and Venezuela, candidates emphasizing an ethnically indigenous identity, representing parties affiliated with indigenous social movement organizations, gained a foothold in national legislatures and control of local and subnational governments. They have been most successful in Bolivia and Ecuador, where they not only dominate dozens of local governments but control significant blocs in Congress, and in 2005 and 2002, respectively, elected the country’s top executive.

Much has been written about the implications for democratic quality of the recent decline of Latin America’s traditional parties (Coppedge 1998; Mainwaring 1999; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; K. Roberts 2002). The failure of parties to reduce poverty and inequality, to protect citizens from crime and violence, to raise levels of economic development, and to protect human rights in the two decades since the shift from military regimes to elected civilian democracy has generated declines in public support for parties and for democracy itself (O’Donnell 2004: 46–51; UNDP 2004: 62). But we have yet to learn much about the impact of the new indigenous parties on the quality of democracy. They certainly have fulfilled their promise to indigenous constituents to improve their “descriptive representation”—that is, electing representatives that share the same ethnic and cultural characteristics (Mansbridge 2000: 100–101). Some indigenous party candidates and platforms also promised voters that they would provide a more participatory, intercultural model of democracy, particularly at the local level where they have captured municipal government. And they proposed that their alternative models should serve as a model for the world. For example, the Ecuadorian indigenous-movement-based party Pachakutik (Pachakutik Movement of Plurinational Unity) boasts that its goal is “the metamorphosis from utopia to reality” through the creation of “Alternative Local Governments” (Coordinadora de Gobiernos Locales Alternativos 2004: 3). As one of its coordinators explained to me:

We believe that we were the first, the pioneers. Now there are other experiences in Ecuador, but we were the pioneers with respect to what is a participatory, democratic government, and we defined various areas. This is not done as an experiment but rather as a real exercise of power in order to demonstrate to the
country and to the world what is possible, that it is possible to have other types of
democracy, where the society is taken into consideration. (Interview, Benito
Suarez, Quito, Ecuador, 21 June 2005)

Similarly, at its Fifth Congress, the Bolivian indigenous-movement-based party
Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement toward Socialism, or MAS) approved the
following principles, among others:

To postulate a true participatory democracy of consensus, respect and
recognition of the diverse social organizations, where the Communities and the
people find their liberation from all forms of poverty, misery and discrimination
without being subordinated or exploited...
To consider Bolivia to be a multinational and pluricultural State integrated
by living and existing together in mutual respect....
The Movement toward Socialism, expresses its profound commitment to
the development of a Communitarian Democracy, of consensus and Participation,
of social and economic content. This democracy must contain political
mechanisms that constitute channels for links between government and all
popular sectors.1

I seek to discover whether the new indigenous parties are fulfilling their promise to
improve the quality of local government by establishing institutions that promote
intercultural cooperation and the participation of individuals and civil society groups. To
the extent that such improvements have occurred, I seek to understand the conditions in
which indigenous party innovations succeed or fail.

RESEARCH DESIGN

My framework for evaluating the success of experiments in participatory,
intercultural democracy is derived from the rich debate in democratic theory concerning
alternative norms and processes that could significantly improve the quality of
democratic life. These alternatives usually are grouped under the heading “radical
democracy.” Although there is considerable variety among the proposals, most
emphasize greater opportunities for participation in public life of individuals, voluntary
associations, and social movements; institutions that promote public debate on public
policy issues; opportunities for civil society organizations and individual citizens to
participate in the monitoring of government activities; the creation of state or quasi-state
institutions representing identity groups as a complement to territorially based
representative institutions; measures to ensure that disadvantaged individuals and groups have the resources necessary to participate on a basis of greater equality with more advantaged groups; and the promotion of a more lively and free civil society. For radical democrats, improvements in democratic quality are those that increase the availability of these properties; the more properties available, the greater the democratic quality.

I apply the insights of this normative debate to comparative social science research of real-life cases in which Bolivian and Ecuadorian indigenous political parties attempted to realize some or all of the goals that radical democrats articulate. I combine the two approaches because traditional political science efforts to evaluate democratic quality (e.g., Dahl 1971; Copppedge, Alvarez, and Maldonado 2005; Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002; Munck and Verkuilen 2002; A. Roberts 2005), based on measurement of (mostly quantifiable) indicators of contestation and participation, are useful but insufficient. They typically fail to capture crucial information about diverse modes of participation beyond voting, to incorporate an assessment of the participation of civil society organizations/voluntary associations in public life, or to reveal and assess patterns of domination based on group membership. Despite the extensive amount of work produced on democratic quality, the literature lacks a consensus on an appropriate definition of democracy or the appropriate criteria for its assessment and measurement (Armony and Schamis 2005; Vargas Cullel 2004: 107). The insights of this literature tend to point to incremental institutional reforms, such as adjusting the formula for turning votes into seats or the relative power of executives and legislatures. However, given the profound problems with democracy in the ethnically divided, politically unstable, impoverished central Andean countries, improvements in democratic quality cannot rely on existing institutional designs and processes, which mainly have been copied from distinct contexts. We must look instead to radical, innovative alternatives that challenge the prevailing values and institutions that have consistently failed to provide conditions for meaningful citizenship. And we must expand our vision of democratization in developing regions like Latin America to encompass new possibilities. As Hagopian observes (2005: 321), existing paradigms of regime transition and democratization have failed to explain why democracies are doing so poorly—in Latin America, as well as in regions with longer democratic traditions. I concur with Leonardo Avritzer that our best
hope is to identify practices and institutions in society that have the potential for improving the quality of democracy, and

…to transfer democratic potentials that emerge at the societal level to the political arena through participatory designs. Without this second step through which informal publics become deliberative, problem-solving publics, democratization in Latin America will not be able to bridge the gap between democratic societal practices and a hybrid political society that resists its full democratization. Thus, deliberative publics become the central arena for completing democratization due to the way they manage to connect renovations within the public culture to institutional designs capable of transforming non-public and hybrid practices into democratic forms of decision making. (Avritzer 2002: 9–10)

The social science literature on municipal innovation tends to focus on causal variables related to economic and social structure, the role of the state, and transnational influences. To date such studies have shed little light on the key role of political parties as catalysts and transmission belts for experiments in alternative local government. An important exception is the much-studied participatory budgeting in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, which the Workers Party (PT) instituted in 1989 (Avritzer 2002; Baiocchi 2003, 2005). This fascinating case shares some similarities with the cases studied here: the leftist, anti-neoliberal orientation of the governing party and the focus on local government, particularly its budgeting process. Indeed, NGOs helping indigenous parties in Bolivia and Ecuador to design and implement participatory governance models explicitly offered the Porto Alegre case as a model. But there are significant differences that limit the relevance of comparisons, including the absence of a focus on intercultural participation in Porto Alegre; the size of the municipalities studied (Porto Alegre has a metropolitan area of almost 3 million people, whereas the Andean municipalities studied contain less than 100,000 persons); starkly different political and institutional environment (highly decentralized, federal Brazil, and unitary Bolivia and Ecuador); and the far higher level of economic and social development and greater availability of economic resources in Porto Alegre (Baiocchi 2001: 47, 65). Nevertheless, my agenda is similar to that of Gianpaolo Baiocchi, who applies Fung and Wright’s “empowered participatory government” model as a normative framework for evaluating the Workers’ Party’s radical democratic experiment in Porto Alegre (2003, 2005), and to that of Leonardo Avritzer, who constructs a theory of “participatory publics,” which he uses to
reveal the democratizing features of the Porto Alegre participatory budgeting experiment, as well as of citizen participation in electoral monitoring in Mexico (2002). I likewise draw from the radical democracy literature to construct an ideal-typical model of indigenous party goals and practices in the Andes that I use to evaluate the results of indigenous party experiments in participatory, intercultural democracy in local government in Bolivia and Ecuador. Like Baiocchi and Avritzer, I also use my cases to test the validity of normative democratic theory.

The philosophical literature on radical democracy also has limitations. It tends to be abstract and usually fails to offer concrete models applicable to real-world cases (Johnson 1998: 175–6; Fung and Wright 2003a; James 2004: 15). The few real-world examples chosen usually are taken from advanced industrialized societies (e.g., Cohen and Rogers 1995, 2003; James 2004: 3; Warren 2001) and philosophers often ignore divided societies, writing them off as impossible cases (James 2004: 15). This is unfortunate because ethnically divided developing countries are more in need than stable, institutionalized democracies of innovative solutions to address democratic stagnation or reversal. Moreover, Western democracies (and other struggling democratizing societies) might learn from developing-country examples, just as developing countries have learned from advanced industrialized society models (Armony and Schamis 2005: 126).

Because the quality of democracy in the central Andes is poor by any social science measure, the experiments studied are at most 10 years old, and the social and economic conditions are extremely adverse, we must keep our expectations for the results of these efforts modest. I define a “successful” experiment as one in which new participatory, deliberative, intercultural institutions are established and survive the transition from the founding administration to another, and in which these institutions are formally open to the participation of all citizens—individually, or collectively through membership in voluntary associations. This is, admittedly, a low standard for success, but it denotes an impressive achievement given the constraints on such reforms in the environment studied: high inequality and poverty, extreme party system fragmentation and electoral volatility, and longstanding interethnic hostility and mistrust. I concur with Abers, who avers, “[a]ny positive transformation will have contradictions, imperfections, and failures. The temptation is often either to focus on the inadequacies or to ignore them.
altogether” (2000: 18). Thus, she urges us to “appreciate modest gains, understanding them as windows of insight into better possibilities” (2000: 19). Judith Tendler sets a comparably low standard for success in her study of municipal reform in Ceará, Brazil, arguing that this provides “a more realistic portrayal of the typical development success story” (1997: 17). Similarly, in his study of the quality of public life in Spain, Robert Fishman examines whether a political society “affords citizens an engaging public arena within which they may contemplate, discuss if they wish, and ultimately choose among competing views, alternatives, and proposals,” rather than measuring substantive improvements in public policy or social justice (2004: 3). In this study of the Andes, “successful” experiments should be considered promising and suggestive, rather than replicable models. Thus, the outcome of interest is improvements in democratic quality in particular municipalities owing to the establishment of participatory, intercultural, deliberative institutions.

The factors determining the outcome are the conditions that enabled or impeded an indigenous party from serving as catalyst, designer, and executor of democratic innovation. Political parties merit particularly close scrutiny in any study of democratic quality: as key links between citizens and the state, and as potential transmission belts for the diffusion of local innovations to higher levels of government. In the Andes, some indigenous political parties are at the forefront of offering new visions of democracy. The conditions I identify vary both among these parties and within them. For example, whereas Ecuador’s Pachakutik has been responsible for the most successful experiments, several of its efforts have failed or been reversed; meanwhile, Bolivia’s Movimiento Indígena Pachakutik (Pachakutik Indigenous Movement, or MIP) has produced no improvement in democratic quality. I argue that a significant part of the variation in the relative success of indigenous parties’ efforts to improve democratic quality can be explained by: (1) the degree of organizational unity and solidarity in the local party apparatus, and in the national party structure more generally; (2) the successful development of distinct roles and the maintenance of harmonious relations between the indigenous party and its parent social movement organization; (3) the party’s ability to attract and cultivate charismatic mayoral candidates who can communicate effectively across ethnic boundaries; (4) the party’s ability to reelect such mayors and, thus, provide
the necessary political continuity for innovations to become institutionalized; and (5) the party’s ability to attract financial resources from NGOs and international donors that augment tiny municipal budgets.

Bolivia and Ecuador were chosen for study because they are the Latin American countries with the most electorally successful indigenous political parties in terms of geographic scope and levels of government occupied. Thus, they were most likely to provide a range of examples of municipal government and to offer variation in terms of outcomes. Both have struggled with the challenge of national economic, political, and social integration, owing to the physical barriers to communication and transportation presented by high mountain ranges and dense Amazon jungle. These geographic enclaves facilitated the relative isolation, until the 20th century, of indigenous cultures. As a result, both countries have a significant population that retains and expresses a distinct, non-nation-state identity, alternately expressed as originario, indígena, or campesino. An estimated 62.5% of Bolivians are indigenous and the national indigenous affairs office recognizes 37 distinct ethnic groups. Estimates of Ecuador’s indigenous population vary widely, ranging from 6.6 percent (from a 2001 census undertaken by the government’s statistical agency, SIISE) to 45 percent (estimated by the country’s main indigenous organizations and sympathetic anthropologists).

In both countries declining public support for democracy coincided with the emergence of viable ethnic parties, according to Latinobarometro surveys. Both countries provide a 10-year history of ethnic party activity and governance, beginning in 1995 in Bolivia and 1996 in Ecuador. Both have an indigenous-peoples’-movement-based political party with a consistent presence at the national level since 1997 and 1996, respectively. In Ecuador, this is the Movimiento Unido Plurinacional Pachakutik (United Plurinational Pachakutik Movement, or Pachakutik), which the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, or CONAIE) formed in 1996 in association with a variety of weaker popular movements. In Bolivia, a branch of an indigenous-peasant movement, the coca growers of Cochabamba, formed the Asamblea para la Soberanía de los Pueblos (Assembly for the Sovereignty of the Peoples, or ASP) in 1995. The portion of the ASP that best survived a 1999 split currently competes as the MAS. Both countries have an additional,
smaller indigenous political party that formed to compete with the first, and which has a more circumscribed regional base. In Ecuador, evangelical indigenous organizations associated with the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas Evangélicos (Ecuadorian Federation of Indigenous Evangelicals, or FEINE) formed the Movimiento Indígena Amauta Jatari (Amauta Jatari Indigenous Movement, or Amauta Jatari) in 1998 to compete with Pachakutik. In Bolivia, indigenous peasant leader Felipe Quispe, then secretary-general of a portion of the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (Unitary Syndical Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia, or CSUTCB), formed the Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti in 2002 to support his presidential aspirations. Both secondary indigenous parties have elected mayors and municipal council members; the MIP elected a handful of national legislators in 2002.

Notwithstanding many demographic, economic, geographic, and political similarities, the institutional context for municipal innovation varies between the two countries. In Bolivia, the Law of Popular Participation (LPP) created 311 municipal governments in 1995 (today 327), the majority in places that previously had not held local elections or received public spending. It created vigilance committees to allow representatives of some 13,000 “Territorial Base Organizations” (now called Community Organizations) to monitor local spending and public works management, and required local mayors and municipal councils to develop annual operating plans using a participatory planning methodology. Although, compared to Ecuador, Bolivian law provides a more rigid, mandatory municipal structure, there is room for the incorporation of traditional authorities and customs in decision-making processes (interviews, Filemon Choque, Antonio Iskandar, July 29, 2005). As José Blanes observes, some mayors have “appropriated the legal framework” of the LPP and initiated creative innovations that allow communities to stretch the scarce resources provided by “co-participation” revenues, and many of these are rooted in the strong socio-territorial identification that communities share (2003: 200). Traditional communities are redefining the LLP’s goals and using it “to strengthen the traditional roles of the communities and their leaders” (202). After protests from indigenous and other civil society groups, a 2004 Bolivian law allowed citizens’ groups (agrupaciones ciudadanos, or ACs) and indigenous peoples (pueblos indígenas, or PI) to participate in local elections without registering as political parties, breaking the partisan monopoly on
local political power. In the department of La Paz alone, 60 ACs and PIs participated in the 2004 municipal elections. Parties and groups representing indigenous constituencies are likely to incorporate local ethnic traditions into governance—for example, creating a role for traditional spiritual authorities in local decision making, or having traditional authorities (*mallkus*) serve a dual role as official representatives on vigilance committees (interview, Filemon Choque, July 26, 2005; Blanes 2000).

Municipal decentralization began in Ecuador after the transition to civilian elected rule in 1979 and accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s. Under the 1997 Special Law of Distribution, 15 percent of Ecuadorian state revenues are directed to Ecuador’s 219 cantons, compared to 20 percent under Bolivia’s 1994 LPP (Sánchez 2004: 83). Ecuador’s municipal regime is vague and flexible with respect to the budgetary process. The 2001 Law of Decentralization does not specify mechanisms for promoting citizen participation in decision making or oversight, allowing for greater innovation by local governments, as well as greater variation in experiences. Thus, participatory budgeting and citizen oversight institutions only exist in Ecuador where local authorities have taken the initiative to establish them, whereas (in theory) they exist in all Bolivian municipalities (Radcliffe 2001; Sánchez 2004: 84; Van Cott 2000). Only 35 percent of Ecuadorian municipalities have developed local development plans (Ojeda Segovia 2004: 109).

Focusing on the local level illuminates variations in the quality of democracy within countries, notwithstanding the existence of identical legal and institutional structures. It is here that indigenous parties have the longest history of government experience and there are fewer impediments to institutional innovation. In order to make the project more manageable, I chose to examine the operation of indigenous parties within selected subnational regions in each country: in Bolivia, the departments of La Paz and Cochabamba; in Ecuador, the provinces of Bolívar, Chimborazo, and Imbabura. La Paz and Chimborazo are the only subnational regions in each country where two distinct indigenous-movement-based parties elected mayors in local elections between 1995 and 2005. These are the regional strongholds of the weaker, more geographically circumscribed indigenous party. Choosing these two regions illuminates variations within and across indigenous parties within a relatively homogenous political space. Both subnational regions also possess high proportions of indigenous population: in Ecuador
Chimborazo has the highest in the country (49.3%) and La Paz has the second highest in Bolivia (77.5%). I included Cochabamba, another majority-indigenous department (74.31%), because it is the bastion of Bolivia’s most successful indigenous party, MAS, and the region where it has the longest experience controlling local government. Bolivia is a much larger country than Ecuador and its subnational regions contain many more municipalities (La Paz has 75, Cochabamba has 44). Therefore, I chose two additional Ecuadorian provinces in order to increase the number of municipalities in the data set. Bolivar and Imbabura both have relatively large indigenous populations (28.4% and 39.6%, respectively) and Pachakutik has had considerable electoral success in both provinces, electing mayors and congressional representatives. This increases the total number of Ecuadorian municipalities in the data set to 23 (see figure 1).

I begin by demonstrating how indigenous political parties rooted in Andean indigenous cultural traditions are offering a vision of radical democracy that closely mirrors the central principles and institutional innovations of the radical democracy literature, while offering their own distinct interpretations. The remainder of the paper is organized around the conditions specified above that impede or promote indigenous party efforts to improve democratic quality.
### Figure 1

**Geographic Scope of Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>BOLIVIA</th>
<th>ECUADOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>TOTAL DEPARTMENTS/PROVINCES (2004)</td>
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<td>TOTAL MUNICIPALITIES (2004)</td>
<td>327</td>
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### RADICAL DEMOCRACY

Radical democrats reject the minimalist, procedural definitions of democracy offered by most political scientists. They seek not only to dramatically improve the quality of contestation and participation and the protection of civil liberties, but also to improve the nature of civic life and the lives of citizens in substantive ways. This implies both the greater equalization of power and resources within a society and the uplifting of human beings as autonomous moral actors. Finally, radical democrats are committed to expanding the sphere of democracy beyond the state and to root it more in social life (see, e.g., Cohen and Rogers 1995: 239, 262; Hirst 1994: 12; Warren 2001). Indigenous
political parties claim to share these goals. They are allied with leftist ideologies and
movements that promote redistributive economic policies. They reject the sharp
distinction between the public sphere of government decision making and administration,
and the private sphere of family and voluntary organizations delineated by the Western,
liberal model of representative democracy. These spheres traditionally have been fused in
indigenous communities, where the same leaders often perform administrative, economic,
law enforcement, and spiritual roles, and families are the basic unit of politics. Some
indigenous parties even have adopted the jargon of radical democratic political theory. In
the capital of Ecuador’s Bolívar province, Guaranda, the local Pachakutik affiliate
included the following definition of “radical democracy” in its 2000 political platform:

Where the people effectively exercise social control and taking of decisions
concerning their history, present and future, guaranteeing thus the real
participation of civil society in the decisions, management, and execution of the
most important aspects of their own lives. (cited in Arevalo and Chela Amangandi
2001: 21; my translation)

Indigenous movements in South America over the past 25 years have developed a
common ideology of intercultural, participatory, transparent government that infuses
indigenous parties’ experiments in radical democracy. Most communities have legitimate
structures of self-government and their own customary methods of justice, dispute
resolution, leadership rotation, and collective decision making. According to the
indigenous ex-mayor of Guamote, “these forms of participation, apparently new, are
nothing more than the recuperation of ancestral forms of democratic practice among
indigenous peoples” (Pachakutik 1999: 66). Although such statements must be examined
critically, owing to the tendency of some indigenous leaders and their advocates to
essentialize, romanticize, and reinvent cultural histories for external consumption,
indigenous organizations and communities practice traditions rooted in indigenous
culture that may facilitate radical democratic experiments.

Scholarship on radical democracy can be divided loosely into work on
participatory democracy, associative democracy, and deliberative democracy, although
overlap exists among those categories. Participatory democrats seek to expand
opportunities for common citizens to take part in a variety of government decision-
making processes, particularly at the local level where it is more feasible for individuals
to play an active role. Thus, they share with Andean indigenous political parties the goal of making existing representative institutions, in which citizens participate mainly by voting, more open to opportunities for collective decision making involving individuals and civil society organizations, particularly those representing disadvantaged and excluded groups. Although political theorists working in the Liberal tradition usually define participation in terms of individuals, it is important to expand the definition because in the Andes indigenous peoples seek collective citizenship rights—alongside liberal individual rights, such as voting and free speech—and consider the autonomous participation of their community organizations to constitute effective participation. Such organizations have a high level of legitimacy and accountability to members and are crucial to the maintenance of ethnic identity.

The insights of associative democrats are important to an analysis of indigenous parties in Latin America because most are the electoral vehicles of social movement organizations or community associations. The indigenous vision of citizenship encompasses the participation of representatives of the indigenous community and higher-tier ethnic and political organizations in all aspects of government decision making, alongside individual participation as voters and through membership in these organizations. Associative democrats emphasize the failure of the state in advanced democracies to satisfy human needs, resolve political conflicts and social problems, and participate in global cooperative activities (Hirst 1994: 9; Warren 2001: 6). To fill this vacuum, civil society is increasingly called upon—or takes upon itself the responsibility—to perform some of these roles. Indeed, in many rural areas of the Andes, and in the teeming migrant-receiving shantytowns that encircle major cities, indigenous community organizations provide law and order and regulate economic and social life. In fact, the public jurisdiction of indigenous customary law has been recognized in all five Andean constitutions. In this context “customary law” (usos y costumbres or derecho consuetudinario) refers to the common practices used by a particular indigenous community or ethnic group to regulate its internal affairs, sanction proscribed behavior, afford mutual protection and assistance, and maintain a cohesive collective identity. What Latin American constitutions increasingly are recognizing is not a static body of specified indigenous norms but, rather, the public authority of indigenous self-governing
institutions to make and apply such norms. These rights are typically constrained by higher-order constitutional rights and international human rights norms (Van Cott 2006).

Associative democrats argue that civil society associations contribute “social capital,” which fosters trust and solidarity that may extend beyond the associations to society as a whole. High levels of trust and solidarity improve the quality and efficiency of democratic governance (Putnam 1993; Warren 2001: 74). Indigenous communities and organizations have ample stores of social capital because they are organized around strong collective identities forged through mutual suffering and self-defense. Social scientists note that Andean indigenous communities share a strong sense of community identity that is attached to a particular territory, and which is reinforced by local self-governing systems and a tradition of community cooperation to achieve collective goals (Baéz et al. 1999: 50–52). This has generated a stock of “Andean social capital,” they argue, based on norms of “reciprocity, complementarity, and redistribution” (51, my translation).

Associative democrats Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers argue that, under the conditions that they specify, associations improve democratic quality by making the system of interest representation more diverse and differentiated, allowing the maximum expression of interests that are poorly represented by parties and formal institutions (1995: 29). In addition, in some cases, they serve as instances of “alternative governance,”

that permit society to realize the important benefits of cooperation among member citizens. In providing a form of governance, associations figure more as problem-solvers than simply as representatives of their members to authoritative political decision-makers, pressuring those decision-makers on behalf of member interests. They help to formulate and execute public policies and take on quasi-public functions, which supplement or supplant the state’s more directly regulatory actions. (Cohen and Rogers 1995: 44)

Many indigenous organizations perform this “alternative governance” role. For example, Ecuador’s 25-year old Unión de Organizaciones Campesinos e Indígenas de Cotacachi (Union of Peasant and Indigenous Organizations of Cotacachi, or UNORCAC) functions like a “little municipality” by providing services to its members, maintaining its own technical management team of approximately 20 people, and serving as an operating arm for NGOs and international donors (Ortiz Crespo 2004: 104–6). The Bolivian and
Ecuadorian governments have formally recognized local indigenous spaces of self-government. In Ecuador, indigenous communities have been organized into *comunas* since the 1937 Ley de Comunas conferred special self-governing rights on these entities. Each *comuna* has a governing *cabildo*, which is elected annually in a public assembly (Baéz et al. 1999: 57). In Bolivia, the 1994 LPP gave legal standing and oversight authority to thousands of indigenous and campesino communities that had previously functioned informally (Van Cott 2000).

Mark Warren cautions, however, that associations are just as likely to promote illiberal values and practices that impair the quality of democracy (2001: 18). Many associations are advocacy groups, which form to promote narrow interests and not to create “alternative venues of governance” where opposing ideas gain equal attention (2001: 27). As “identity-based groups,” indigenous peoples’ movements are likely to “increase in-group solidarity … by demonizing out-groups” (Warren 2001: 35). Similarly, Szasz notes that social movements often employ methods that weaken democratic institutions by normalizing or legitimizing extra-institutional and sometimes extra-legal, even violent, direct actions (1995: 150). Therefore, we must not idealize indigenous cultures. The democratic potential of indigenous community social capital varies according to local historical conditions, leaving some areas with more horizontal, democratic, equitable relations while others are more marked by the opposite (Baéz et al. 1999: 50–52).

Some community members are less able to participate than others. In particular, women, less-educated members, members of less-dominant or less-numerous indigenous subgroups, and those considered “outsiders” have difficulty speaking in community fora, because they are silenced or lack the self-confidence to speak publicly (Abers 2000: 9). In Ecuador, *cabildos* are completely or predominantly male owing to lower levels of literacy among women, the opposition of husbands, women’s lack of free time after housework and child care, and sexist cultural norms. In the canton of Cotacachi, for example, female adult illiteracy is 27 percent, 10 percent higher than for adult men (Ortiz Crespo 2004: 59). The situation is worse in Bolivia, where female illiteracy rates are higher, particularly in rural areas. For example, in rural provinces of La Paz an estimated 45 percent of women are illiterate. Indigenous women almost never serve in leadership
roles, apart from auxiliary functions associated with domestic life that complement the positions of their husbands. Language is another barrier to equitable participation. If deliberation occurs in Spanish, those less proficient—particularly older and female community members—may be disadvantaged. Moreover, as Simmel observes, groups based on a “feeling of belongingness” are particularly threatened by any manifestation of internal disunity, especially if they consider themselves to be in a state of war against non-group members. Such groups do not tolerate dissent because they cannot afford to weaken the group unity they believe underpins their survival (1955: 93). This explains the tendency of indigenous communities—particularly those in close contact with nonindigenous antagonists, such as the coca growers of Bolivia—to enforce what outsiders consider to be authoritarian policies within social movement organizations and their electoral partners. For example, Andean indigenous parties often expel dissenting members who propose more conciliatory strategies toward adversaries. Expulsion of dissenters maintains unity and avoids giving opponents the perception of weakness (Simmel 1955: 96).

Deliberative democracy shares important norms with associative democracy because group members mainly associate through communication and face-to-face social interaction. But deliberative democracy requires a particular type of communication: reasoned argument among equal individuals who are predisposed toward cooperation, respect for others, and the possibility of being persuaded (Dryzek 2005: 220; Elster 1998: 8; James 2004: 6). Deliberative democrats argue that democratic quality improves when public policy decisions are made collectively and publicly following reasoned arguments, which are made by and to those affected by the decisions. Deliberation increases the availability and facilitates the exchange of information; organizes the collective talents of a large group of people who are capable of correcting the mistakes of others; forces citizens to make reasoned arguments that appeal to others, rather than simply voting for their own interests; legitimizes collective decision making as people feel that their own views were heard and recognize that collective decisions reflect the will of a majority; facilitates implementation, compliance, and monitoring, as citizens feel greater ownership of decisions; and improves the quality of citizens (Elster 1998: 8–11; Fearon 1998: 50).
Virtually all indigenous communities in the Andes have a tradition of deliberative assemblies where leaders are chosen, important decisions are made, and cultural identities and community solidarity are built and maintained (Baéz et al. 1999; Ortiz Crespo 2004: 70; interview, Alberto Yumbay, July 7, 2005). As Segundo Andrango, a Quichua Indian and coordinator of a USAID-funded NGO in Ecuador, observes:

There is a long tradition that the people govern themselves in these territories, these families. There they resolve their conflicts, they make accords and decisions. That is to say, there is a strong political participation and also exercise of democracy and governability, which doesn’t happen in an urban-mestizo neighborhood of western culture, where all are individuals. They [urban people] are neighbors [vecinos] but they are not citizens. This is the strength of [indigenous parties] Pachakutik and Amauta Jatari, this structure from below. (Interview, my translation, July 8, 2005)

Where a habit of public deliberation already is part of the local culture, deliberative democracy proposals are more likely to prosper (Fearon 1998: 58). Indigenous communities are particularly auspicious spaces because indigenous cultures promote consensus seeking as a means to strengthen community identity and solidarity against the threat of external oppression and forcible cultural change. Decisions typically are made in assemblies in which all actors (in many cases these are mainly male) have an opportunity to express their positions. Deliberations go on at length until the majority opinion becomes clear. In Cotacachi’s annual budget-planning assemblies, for example, decisions are more often taken by consensus than by vote (Ortiz Crespo 2004: 158). According to assembly president Patricia Espinosa,

decisions are made in the Assembly through the realization of diagnostics among the actors, adopting proposals and negotiated decisions and not through decisions of the majority or minority. This form of deliberating and resolving has an advantage: in a society that has a history of interethnic conflicts one doesn’t seek to deepen differences but rather to overcome them. Thus in the Assembly importance is given to listening to diverse opinions and tolerating discrepancies, and to a practice of dialogue and reconciliation. (Ortiz Crespo 2004: 160; my translation)

Although losers may grumble, there is strong pressure to go along with assembly decisions (interview, Gonzalo Guzman, June 22, 2005). In addition to social disapproval, dissenters may face material sanctions for failing to support community projects. This system of social control ensures that decisions are supported by the community and, thus,
enjoy greater legitimacy, which facilitates more effective implementation and monitoring of projects. The legitimacy of government decisions, moreover, is strengthened by their being embedded in cultural institutions. As the director of the Association of Municipalities of the Department of La Paz explains,

Some times there are problems of conflicts among authorities, but they have achieved the incorporation of ancestral cultures into public administration to some extent in the moments of municipal planning, their traditional authorities participate in the convocation of the people, they take part in deciding what projects to prioritize, the management of community resources. If someone commits an error they are punished using usos y costumbres [customary practices], so this permits that the culture is immersed in the government. This form of administration is empowering to both in a complementary way. (Interview, Filemon Choque, July 26, 2005).

Nevertheless, the literature on deliberative democracy does not offer much hope for the type of experiments in deliberative democracy that indigenous parties currently are undertaking because the necessary conditions for deliberative democracy usually are not available in ethnically divided, economically unequal societies, where rival groups may not be open to persuasion or willing to compromise identity- or resource-based demands (Dryzek 2005: 219–20). Members of disadvantaged groups seek “‘cathartic’ communication that unifies the group and demands respect from others” (220). Although these challenges exist, subordinate cultures that have developed a habit of deliberation and consensus seeking may draw on this cultural capital to offset them. They also have the potential to infuse the larger society with these values when their institutional innovations incorporate nonindigenous citizens and groups and gain national and international recognition for their greater efficiency and legitimacy, as has occurred in Ecuador.11

In addition, indigenous cultures in the Andes can use social and cultural capital to compensate for the scarce economic resources available to their local governments. Indigenous communities throughout Latin America have a tradition of contributing unpaid labor for community projects and public works. In the Andes this practice is called the *minga* (Baéz et al. 1999: 52; Ortiz Crespo 2004: 62, 96; interview, Abraham Borda, July 26, 2005). Such labor is generally supplied without resistance provided that the leaders convoking the *minga* are considered legitimate and all members participate,
including community leaders. With respect to Ecuador, Baéz et al. observe that approximately 80–90 percent of community members participate in the execution of public works projects, although the percentage tends to fall significantly with regard to administration and maintenance (1999: 52). Municipal resources are scarce throughout the rural Andes and municipal governments have little money to invest in community projects. In indigenous communities, authorities can induce community members to provide free labor for these projects, which stretches the money further by reducing labor costs.\(^\text{12}\)

In short, we can discern an ideal-typical model of indigenous-party-directed radical democracy that encompasses an emphasis on direct participation (as opposed to representation); the incorporation of voluntary associations into the spheres of government decision making, oversight, and implementation; the provision of spaces for public deliberation; and a call for economic redistribution. These are key themes in the contemporary theoretical literature on radical democracy. But the indigenous vision is distinct in that it puts greater emphasis on collective—as opposed to individual—participation that is rooted in shared cultural identity, and on promoting cross-cultural communication and cooperation in divided, highly unequal societies, where many radical democrats don’t believe democratic innovation is feasible. In contrast to Avritzer’s idea of “participatory publics,” which emphasizes the face-to-face interactions among individuals and keeping the sphere of public discussion independent from the state (2002: 39), indigenous parties emphasize collective representation and participation, and prefer to insert civil society organizations and voluntary associations directly into public policy-making spheres. Nevertheless, they share his emphasis on constructing stronger public spaces for deliberation, giving social movements privileged access to this space, and fusing Western institutional traditions with nonwestern cultural specificities (40–44, 56).
CONDITIONS THAT PROMOTE THE SUCCESS OF INDIGENOUS PARTIES’ RADICAL DEMOCRACY EXPERIMENTS

In this section I articulate my argument with respect to the role of five conditions that influence the relative success of indigenous parties in establishing radically democratic innovations. Because the space constraints of a working paper preclude a systematic analysis of the data, I provide anecdotal evidence to illustrate my argument.

The Degree of Organizational Unity in the Local Party Apparatus

Electoral politics typically becomes divisive when social movement organizations enter the electoral arena and struggles emerge over access to candidacies and salaried positions. Leaders of local indigenous organizations affiliated with indigenous parties often expect to select the party’s candidates and place their leaders in appointed government positions. Sometimes they butt heads with national or subnational leaders who prefer other candidates. In addition, splits occur within the local party organization when competing factions and personalities struggle over candidacies, often requiring national leaders to mediate. These internal struggles generate disunity, consume resources, and turn off voters. In the best of cases, base-level members will rise up and obligate their leaders to make peace (interviews, Segundo Andrango, July 8, 2005; Rafael Archondo, August 1, 2005).

Competition between indigenous parties also can sabotage participatory processes by dividing the indigenous population and emphasizing competition over cooperation. For example, in the Chimborazo municipality of Guamote, which is 93 percent indigenous, Pachakutik mayor Mariano Curicama established an Indigenous and Popular Parliament in 1997. The parliament is composed of 114 annually elected cabildo presidents. It works with a local development committee, which provides technical assistance and includes the participation of the 12 presidents of Guamote’s major social organizations. The parliament enjoyed considerable success until Curicama retired and Pachakutik mayor José Delgado took his place in 2000. Subsequently, the evangelical indigenous party Amauta Jatari elected its leader, Juan de Dios Roman, head of the parliament. Competition between Pachakutik and Amauta Jatari over control of the
municipality sunk the participatory project. The municipality refused to share information with the parliament, preventing it from carrying out its monitoring function. The situation continued after the 2004 elections, in which Dios Roman was elected mayor and Delgado head of the parliament (interview, Lucia Duran, June 24, 2005). Since that time the mayor and municipal council have monopolized decision making, with the exception of small amounts of money distributed to each parish (parroquia). The politicization of the indigenous movement and the disunity that party competition fostered in Guamote led indigenous social movement organizations that had once supported Pachakutik to distance themselves from the party (interviews, Emilio Guzniay, June 29, 2005; Jorge Leon, June 16, 2005; Yangol 2003).

The Ability of Indigenous Parties and Their Parent Social Movement Organizations to Develop Distinct Roles and Maintain Harmonious Relations

The four parties studied exhibit distinct relationships with their sponsoring indigenous social movement organizations, and these have changed as party organizations have matured. In Bolivia, relations between the coca growers’ federations and the MAS originally were symbiotic. When MAS first formed, there was little difference between the movement and the party—the latter was merely the political instrument of the former. In the party’s base in the coca-growing region of the Chapare of Cochabamba, and in rural areas of Oruro and Potosi where the campesino sindicato (union) is the main community organization, there is little differentiation between the social organization and the MAS—the union leaders simply perform additional political functions. Even at the national level, when MAS and coca federation leaders meet in assemblies it is difficult to distinguish party from movement representatives. The only clear distinction between the MAS and the campesino-indigenous movement occurs in urban areas and in the MAS congressional delegation. Both spaces include leaders of more diverse political and social sectors.

However, tensions have emerged between local social movement and national party leaders in Bolivia since the 2002 national elections when, in response to its unexpected second-place showing, the MAS began to construct a more formal party-style apparatus and increasingly to act according to the logic of a political party. Whereas in
1995 and 1999 it was the norm for *centrals*—the basic units of the coca growers’ movement—to choose their own local candidates, in 2004 higher-tier MAS leaders tried to impose them. Sometimes they succeeded, sometimes not. This was particularly the case where the MAS was expanding outside of its base to urban and more heterogeneous areas, where they face more competition and must form alliances with diverse popular and middle-class movements. In these cases it has been common since 2002 for national leaders to intervene to settle disputes, often at the expense of local peasant organizations. The shift to more partisan behavior has caused many militants to feel that the MAS has betrayed the original goals of the coca growers’ movement—to defend their territory and their right to grow coca leaf (interviews, Rafael Archondo, August 1, 2005; Abraham Borda, July 26, 2005; Fernando Mayorga, August 8, 2005; Pablo Regalsky, August 8, 2005).

A different set of problems occurs when indigenous parties gain office and fail to respond as expected to the demands of their social-movement partners and the latter’s base constituency. At the local level, some Pachakutik mayors have provoked the ire of local indigenous movement sponsors by spending money in urban, nonindigenous neighborhoods, rewarding nonindigenous groups in the Pachakutik electoral coalition with government jobs and development projects, and failing to obey the commands of local indigenous movement leaders (see the example of Guaranda, below). Conversely, if the party prioritizes indigenous interests, nonindigenous groups attack it for failing to represent the entire population. Baiocchi discovered the same tensions between the PT and its component social movements as the latter struggled for voice and influence within the party. Meanwhile, opponents of the PT in São Paulo criticized the party for privileging its constituent movements over the interests of the public at large. He articulates the problem this way:

> Without a broad-based participatory system that drew participants from outside organized movement sectors, the municipal government was open to the charge of “left patronage.” And without a clear system of rules for negotiating competing interests, the administration in time also came under attack from segments of the Party that accused the administration of “class treason” for attending to the interests of business in certain decisions. (Baiocchi 2003: 66)
Movement-party conflicts have dampened enthusiasm for electoral politics in both Ecuador and Bolivia. As indigenous movement leaders often point out, the organizations formed Pachakutik and the MAS to further the agenda of the indigenous movement, not the other way around (interview, Gilberto Talahua, Quito, June 23, 2005; CSUTCB 1996: 68–69).

Even where open conflict does not emerge, in both countries confusion exists over the distinct roles that the parties and movements should play. In Ecuador in particular, leaders of CONAIE and Pachakutik bicker publicly over the appropriate role of the other and struggle to monopolize political representation of the indigenous. A large part of the problem is that the same individuals cycle through the movement, the political party apparatus, and into the government in elected or appointed positions. This has the effect of blurring the boundaries between state and society, and between party and movement. Rebecca Abers (2000: 17) observed the same problem in her study of the PT in Brazil.

The Party’s Ability to Attract and Cultivate Charismatic Mayoral Candidates Who Can Communicate Effectively across Ethnic Boundaries

The quality of mayoral leadership is among the most important determinants of indigenous party success. Mayors of indigenous parties who are able to implement and gain public support for innovative models of government have two things in common: (1) substantial personal charisma; and (2) the capacity and willingness to communicate and negotiate effectively across ethnic divides. Those willing and able to reach out across ethnic and urban/rural divides have tended to be indigenous leaders with professional training who are comfortable in urban settings. That is, they are comfortable living in two worlds: that of the indigenous community, movement, and organization, as well as that of the urban, mestizo professional.

Pachakutik vice-mayor Washington Bazante describes the popular deceased indigenous mayor of Guaranda, Alberto Yumbay, emphasizing these qualities:

Mayor Yumbay was more active, more aglutinador (linking together) of the masses, more enterprising, he had another mística (mystical quality) in the work. … And he worked with the indigenous and mestizo sectors through mingas [voluntary collective labor], and he was always present in these works, he was with the government apparatus, he was a very charismatic man. He was a man
who had innate qualities of knowing how to approach the community, the collective. (interview, Washington Bazante, July 4, 2005)

Another example is Cotacachi indigenous mayor Auki Tituña, an economist, who lived in the urban part of the canton prior to entering politics. He had cultivated good relations with NGOs and government leaders prior to his election while working in various capacities with the national indigenous organization CONAIE. Thus, he has strong ties both to the indigenous movement and to key domestic and international actors, who have provided technical assistance and substantial economic aid (Guerrero 1999: 120). Ortiz Crespo argues that Tituña’s talents enabled him to fill the vacuum of political leadership in the canton:

Probably this tension between a social fabric that is strong but lacking agency and a clear political agenda left a vacuum that is filled by the presence of Mayor Auki Tituña, which unites in a quite original manner various characteristics of his leadership: his professional formation and management capacity, his discourse of indigenous identity, and his great capacity to negotiate with mestizo sectors within and outside the canton. (Crespo 2004: 193; my translation)

In short, successful mayors tend to personify the new indigenous governance model and its values of transparency, interculturality, active participation, and society-state partnerships. A mayor who can charm mestizos and international donors, while infusing local government with the legitimacy of indigenous traditional authority is the ideal.

As Judith Tendler ably argues, leadership is a difficult variable to operationalize and, on its own, an unsatisfying explanation for effective municipal governments (2004: 17–18). If charismatic leadership is required for success, and its availability is largely owing to luck, then such experiences do not offer transferable models, or even hope, for developments elsewhere. For that reason, although students of municipal reform commonly emphasize the importance of good leadership and attribute failure to its absence, she chose to pay it little attention in her study of Ceará, Brazil. Emphasizing leadership, she argues, “does not add up to much of a guide for action.” Moreover, some capable, charismatic leaders fail to launch effective programs and some programs survive the loss of a charismatic leader (Tendler 1997: 18). Nevertheless, because charismatic, cross-cultural leadership is a common feature of successful participatory, intercultural innovation in the countries studied, I elected to keep it in the mix. Given the scarcity of
professionally educated indigenous leaders who are able to credibly present an indigenous identity, appropriate leadership is an important explanation for successful municipal reform in the Andes.

The Party’s Capacity to Reelect Effective Mayors

In the absence of strong, established institutions, reelection enables mayors to nurture economic development and public works projects to fruition and, thus, instill public support for participatory processes. Reelection also provides more time to institutionalize innovations, giving citizens more time to get involved and to feel a sense of ownership, and making it more difficult for subsequent administrations to dismantle them (Ortiz Crespo 2004: 178). It also facilitates the institution-building efforts of NGOs. They don’t have to wait for 10 months or more for a new government to take office and appoint personnel, and it reduces the need for training programs that consume time and money.

The most notable example of a long-serving, successful indigenous mayor in South America is Auki Tituña, the Pachakutik mayor of Cotacachi, a small canton in the Ecuadorian province of Imbabura. Tituña was elected with 24.11 percent of the vote in 1996, reelected with 60.70 percent in 2000, and reelected again in 2004 with 55.49% (Anrango 2004: 57; Pallares 2002: 104–6; www.tse.gov.ec). These results demonstrate significant mestizo support, since indigenous people make up only 37% of the population and mestizos 62% (Ortiz Crespo 2004: 59). In contrast to prior public officials in Cotacachi, Tituña reached out to diverse social groups and got them to cooperate with each other (Baéz et al. 1999: 64; Ortiz Crespo 2004: 170). One month after taking office, with NGO and international support—more than 30 donor organizations worked in the canton between 1996 and 2002 (Ortiz Crespo 2004: 77)—Tituña initiated a series of annual cantonal assemblies, which now are institutionalized in municipal law. He established a Committee of Cantonal Management to represent civil society organizations, with 10 mesas (sectoral committees) under its direction, addressing such issues as environment and health. The Cantonal Assembly operates year round through permanent links between citizens groups and municipal officials. Tituña’s longevity enabled him to establish close ties to donors, to demonstrate substantive results, to
institutionalize in municipal law new participatory mechanisms, and to instill in the population new habits of participation.

Leadership continuity is an acute problem in Bolivia. Under the indirect electoral system governing local elections, municipal councilors elect the mayor. Because Bolivia’s party system is extremely fragmented, municipal councils usually lack a party with an absolute majority and ruling coalitions are highly volatile. However, MAS municipalities in the Chapare have enjoyed political stability because the party has had hegemonic control in the tropics since 1995 and several mayors have been re-elected. Chapare municipalities lack the political conflicts and frequent recalls and replacements of mayors that in other parts of Bolivia have delayed or prevented the execution of public works projects and the institutionalization of municipal structures established by the LPP (interviews, Rafael Archondo, August 1, 2005; Ivan Arias, August 1, 2005).

In contrast, even wildly successful experiments can collapse if they are not allowed to take root. In Guaranda, indigenous leader Arturo Yumbay was elected mayor in 2000 representing Pachakutik. Yumbay instituted a Plan of Participatory Development by organizing urban and rural neighborhood organizations, unions, clubs, youths, and indigenous community organizations. With modest financial support from NGOs and foreign governments, Yumbay fostered participation by personally visiting all of the neighborhoods and convincing them to provide volunteer labor to make scarce resources stretch further (interview, Gonzalo Chela Morocho, June 21, 2005; Arevalo and Chela Amangandí 2001). After Yumbay died in a 2002 car accident, the incoming government ended many of his initiatives. The change in government was accompanied by a fierce struggle between supporters of the deceased mayor’s brother Alberto, who had the backing of the local Pachakutik organization and its indigenous movement sponsor, Federación Campesino de Bolívar-Runari (Bolívar-Runari Campesino Federation), and Pachakutik vice-mayor Alberto Coles, who legally assumed the mayor’s office upon the death of Yumbay over the objection of Pachakutik leaders. The local Pachakutik affiliate expelled Coles from the party but he remained in office and won re-election in 2004 with support from the leftist Izquierda Democrática (Democratic Left). According to Guaranda’s Pachakutik contingent, Coles reversed spending priorities to favor urban areas, in contrast to his predecessor’s greater balance between rural and urban needs.
According to Coles, he is trying to continue the participatory and transparency initiatives of his predecessor, but has had difficulty working with urban mestizos, who he says lack interest in collective labor, although under Yumbay, even urban professionals and mestizos participated in *mingas* with the mayor—collecting garbage during the night with community brigades, for example (interviews, Alberto Coles, July 5, 2005; Wilfredo Macas, July 5, 2005; Alberto Yumbay, July 7, 2005; *El Comercio* 2003).

**Indigenous Parties Must Attract External Resources**

As Giancarlo Baiocchi discovered in Porto Alegre, people will not invest hours of their time making reasoned arguments about public policy without a substantive payoff in a relatively short time (2001: 65). Such debate is particularly unlikely among impoverished populations in developing countries, who work long hours at arduous tasks and may have to travel some distance to attend a community meeting. Notwithstanding a strong culture of participatory, collective decision making, indigenous community members won’t participate in public policy making if they don’t see concrete results in the short term; without them, participation ceases (interview, Paula de la Puente, June 24, 2005). Porto Alegre had ample tax receipts to motivate citizen participation when the PT initiated its experiment in 1989 and early substantive rewards rapidly increased interest in participation (Baiocchi 2001: 65). In Bolivia and Ecuador, however, governments don’t have sufficient funds to design and support the creation of innovative municipal institutions and they lack the money to fund the development projects that attract sustained participation by community members. Thus, international donors working through NGOs are the main source of financing for indigenous parties’ innovative models. For example, Cotacachi, Ecuador, receives 46 percent of its $2.1 million average annual budget from external donors (Ortiz Crespo 2004: 183–4). International NGOs were working on participatory technologies long before indigenous parties gained office in Bolivia and Ecuador. In the mid-1990s, development NGOs were looking for spaces and actors to experiment with and took advantage of the opportunity to work with indigenous mayors, who shared their interest in promoting more participatory, transparent government with a strong economic development focus. European and North American NGOs also value the incorporation of intercultural practices into local democracy and
development as a means to confer greater legitimacy and sustainability (interviews, Fernando Garcia, June 17, 2005; Jorge Leon, June 16, 2005; Radcliffe 2001: 7–8). The availability of NGO technical support and funding influences the decisions of indigenous municipal leaders to adopt innovative institutional models. Several Ecuadorian mayors enlisted NGOs with whom they already had good working relationships to initiate their vision of participatory government (Larrea and Larrea 1999: 139).

The involvement of external donors carries risks. Their interests are not necessarily the same as the citizens they purport to serve. And they will eventually move on, leaving impoverished rural governments with the challenge of sustaining innovative institutions that are less able to provide the economic benefits that motivate citizen participation and deliberation. In fact, the European Union was preparing to pull out of Ecuador in 2005 because the country’s average annual income had exceeded the required level for development assistance (confidential interview, July 8, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Preliminary findings from this project confirm that political philosophers are correct: improving democratic quality in ethnically divided, unequal, impoverished countries is difficult. However, in the Andes indigenous political parties are mobilizing cultural and social capital to overcome some of these difficulties. These parties benefit from organic relations with multilayer networks of mature, deeply rooted indigenous movements that are increasingly connected to broader networks of popular and middle-class social movements. They offer a coherent alternative to elite-dominated democratic institutions that have failed to improve citizens’ lives in meaningful ways. They harness the capital of Andean indigenous cultures, which are more predisposed toward deliberation, consensus seeking, and the effective use of social control than are urban/mestizo cultures. The question remains whether they will be able to infuse these political values into the larger political culture. The diffusion of innovative democratic institutions will require a strategy that transcends the ambit of any one party or set of parties.

I have argued that under certain conditions even “least-likely cases” for the establishment of radical democratic models can produce positive changes in relations
among hostile ethnic groups, shift resources toward underserved populations, and create spaces for citizens and civil society groups to deliberate public spending priorities. Such models are most likely to work when indigenous parties and their social movement sponsors are able to maintain internal unity and solidarity and to develop distinct, complementary roles; when indigenous parties can attract charismatic, talented mayors who are willing and able to work across ethnic lines and to serve several consecutive terms in office; and when parties are able to attract resources and technical support from external donors. Owing to space constraints, I have not been able to examine here a number of other important factors. In future work I will pay more attention to variations between the two countries in the municipal legal frameworks that constrain indigenous parties’ choices, such as requirements that a certain portion of municipal revenues be spent on particular sectors (i.e., health or education) and the relative difficulty of reducing the size of the municipal staff, whose salaries tend to consume municipal budgets. Attention also will be paid to the local and national political contexts, particularly relations among parties. How does the configuration of political parties on local municipal councils affect the success of participatory, intercultural institutional innovations? Can national politicians from opposing parties sabotage local experiments by cutting off access to resources?

Social scientists and radical democrats should pay greater attention to the role of political parties as the architects and engines of innovative democracy-improving institutions. They are in a unique position to serve as transmission belts of ideas and methods between and within geographic levels of government, once they have earned public support and have established effective means of communication and coordination. In order to harness this potential, proposals to improve the region’s low democratic quality must not seek to circumvent the region’s ailing parties but, rather, to make them a central focus of reform and innovation.
ENDNOTES


2 For example, geographer Sarah Radcliffe (2001: 6) argues that the emergence of innovative municipal institutions in Ecuador is a result of “the addition of development agendas to local governments’ remit; transnational connections; multiculturalism; and alliances between previously autonomous sectors.” Political scientist John Cameron focuses on: “[t]he balance of power among different classes;” “[t]he impact of international and global political and economic forces on the balance of class power and state-society relations”; “[t]he degree of state autonomy from class forces”; “[t]he institutional design of the state”; and “[t]he political strategies of state officials” (Cameron n.d.: 72–73).

3 Fung and Wright (2003b) are notable exceptions; two of their cases are developing countries.

4 Most Bolivian Indians are Aymara (25%) or Quechua (31%) and are settled in the western highlands. The remaining 286,726 Indians live mainly in the eastern lowland departments (INE, 2001).

5 The Quichua are by far the largest language group with an estimated 1.3 million in the highland region. Many Quichua have migrated to the lowlands, where they also are the most numerous group (approximately 90,000 members). There are 17 distinct sub-groupings or “pueblos” within the Quichua group, according to the government indigenous affairs office. In the Amazon region, apart from the Quichua, there are 12 indigenous “nationalities” (Pallares 2002: 6).

6 In Bolivia, 64 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, “Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government” in 1996, but only 50 percent agreed in 2003. In Ecuador, affirmative responses to the same question fell from 52 percent to 46 percent during the same time period (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2005: 50).

7 Two minor indigenous parties—Eje Pachakuti and the Tupaj Katari Revolutionary Movement of Liberation, formed in 1992 and 1985, respectively—were in decline during the period studied and did not participate in the 2004 municipal elections. See Van Cott (2005).

8 For example, Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright advocate “empowered participatory governance” (EPG), which refers to a variety of experiments that “rely on the commitment and capacities of ordinary people to make sensible decisions through reasoned deliberations and [...] attempt to tie action to discussion” (2003b: 5).

9 In 2002 it managed a budget of approximately $500,000 (Ortiz Crespo 2004: 102).

10 As an anonymous reader of this article correctly points out, the term vecino is commonly translated as “neighbor,” but has a distinctly urban-mestizo connotation in this context.

11 Cotacachi mayor Auki Tituaña won the Dubai-Habitat prize from the United Nations, which recognizes mayors for transparency in government (Ortiz Crespo 2004: 124).

12 Although voluntary collective labor in South America typically is associated with indigenous cultures and it can be difficult to induce mestizo citizens to participate in such efforts, in urban neighborhoods in Porto Alegre the Workers’ Party was able to organize mutiroes—voluntary labor performed on weekends—in the early years of the
participatory budgeting experience (Bruce 2004: 42).

In Ecuador, for example, the Spanish government funds the government’s Alternative Municipal Government program. The Belgian, Cuban, Danish, Dutch, German, Japanese, Norwegian, Swiss, and US governments, as well as the European Union, the multilateral Indigenous Peoples Fund, the United Nations Development Program, the Corporación Andina de Fomento, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank, are major funders of municipal development projects in Bolivia and Ecuador, with foreign-based private foundations, such as CARE, Heifer Foundation, and the Esquel Foundation, providing smaller donations.
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Radical Democracy and Methodology in post-Marxist Maruyama Masao

Shuichi KAKUTA

Abstract:
Maruyama Masao (1914–1996) was a major political philosopher and democratic theorist of the 20th century in Japan. Main works of him were translated into English, Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics (1963), Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan (1974) and so on. Maruyama stayed at UC Berkeley in 1976 and 1983 as a special visiting professor. And the Center for Japanese Studies (CJS) at UC Berkeley has opened Maruyama Masao Seminar after his coming. Though there have been a vast number of studies about Maruyama in Japan, we have to look into the methodology of his study on the history of political thought more deeply. Maruyama had built up his methodology under the influence of European Marxism, Hegelian and Neo-Kantian philosophy, Max Weber and Karl Mannheim. Both the study of political thought and the criticism of orthodox Marxism were done by his idea, radical democracy and post-Marxism, and his methodology. This paper clarifies five points of the study of history of thought in Maruyama. 1. Tension between liberalism and democracy, 2. Independent and internal logic of development, 3. Dynamism, acceptance and modification, 4. Multiple dimensions, 5. Various possibilities of thought.

Introduction

There is a school of the social scientists in Japan that has considered Japanese society and its capitalistic economy as exceptional or peculiar. Another traditional school has considered that Japanese society and its economy had universal features shared with the rest of the world. Social scientists in Japan seem to have been schizophrenic on this point. They fail to conceive of the relationship between peculiarity and universal in the methodology. In addition, sometimes social scientists in Japan have been torn up into theory and feeling of the reality.

Maruyama Masao who was a major political thinker and democratic theorist of the 20th century in Japan (Barshay 2004), had pointed out these methodological divisions in the social scientists in Japan. These problems are related to democracy, methodology of the so-
cial science and Marxism in Japan.

Then I would like to focus on three themes that appear in Maruyama’s works. This essay is made up of my research notes.

The first of the three themes is on radical democracy in Maruyama. The first point means his intellectual position in a wide sense. Democracy as permanent revolution is a key point in understanding his thought and methodology.

The second is his research methodology for the history of thought. This point refers to his viewpoint as a researcher of the political thought in Japan.

The last is Marxism. This third theme is one of the applications of the second theme for Maruyama. From the first point, radical democracy, Marxism relates to socialism and democracy for him. Maruyama had been influenced by Marxist thinking in Japan, but he had never been a Marxist. He was a strong critic of Stalinist Marxism. Because of his methodology, Marxism was one of his research themes, and it might be said that it was “the object of knowledge” (H. Rickert) for him.

Naturally, the three themes are connected to each other. What is the proper relation of politics to science in a democracy? Why did Maruyama, as a post-Marxist thinker, pronounce a permanent revolution for democracy? How did the Maruyama’s methodological standpoint apply to Marxism, although he had never been a Marxist. These questions must be very interesting.

| Figure 1. Framework in this essay on Maruyama |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| (1) Democracy as permanent revolution |
| (2) Methodology of research of the history of thought in Japan |
| (3) Attitude for Marxism |

1. Radical Democracy as Permanent Revolution

(1) Liberalism and Democracy

Maruyama was known as a modernist in the broader sense of that term. A modernist is someone who believes in Modernism, who likes modernity and promotes the modernization of society. Is it true that Maruyama was a modernist? What then is the meaning of “radical” and the spiritual aristocracy in Maruyama’s words? And how are modernism, modernity and modernization related together?

Modernization of Japanese society had been necessary for the newly ruling class after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. There was a dilemma here. The ruling class in Meiji society under the Tennou-sei (Japanese emperor system) had to introduce several modern technologies and institutions of western world, and to improve the productive power of society. The institutional changes involved the conversion of people’s minds. But, for the sake of unification of state and the concentration of power, the ruling class needed to restore the old authority of the Tennou and the hierarchical orders under the Japanese emperor. The
system gave people some measure of freedom, especially in terms of private ownership, but it strongly restricted the human rights of the people. The nation state in modern Japan had to be an authoritarian society by means of traditional discourse. Sovereignty resided nominally in the Emperor, Tennou, but actually in a small number of higher politicians, military groups and high-ranking officials. Including these groups, the Japanese people must be the subjects of Tennou. The nationalism in prewar Japan meant statism, antiforeign sentiment and chauvinism. And this system and thought had been widened to the colonial empire. But it included ambivalence.

The process of modernization in Japan had a fundamental contradiction between the authoritarian statism as a strong means of uniting of the nation (nation had never meant people, because Japanese nation was a subject of Tennou) and producing a strong capitalist economy as a social basis and modernity of the society.

Several works of Maruyama concentrate on analyzing the structure of mind in prewar Japan (“Ultra-nationalism”). In the literal sense of approving the modernization in general of Japanese society, Maruyama had never been a modernist. His thought had never been modernism. That is why he strongly rejected the peculiar modernization in prewar Japan. After the war he said that his enemy had been the mind structure of Tennou-sei.

After World War II, Maruyama wrote several papers about modern society in general. In 1947, the year in which Japanese society’s democratization was the most important problem for the US occupation and Japanese people, Maruyama said that “we have been confronting the subject of democratic revolution which had never been accomplished by the Meiji Restoration.” (“Shu” vol.3, p.161) Furthermore it pressed people to confront with the problem of freedom again. He proceeded that those who would shoulder freedom were never the citizens whom liberal thinkers (after J.Locke) thought of, but they would be the many workers and small farmers in Japan. How were they able to acquire a new consciousness of ethics (in ibid.) For Maruyama, the important thing is the function of modern intellect and the mind of the people. The function of modern intellect comes down to understanding others as others and becoming other in and as oneself (“Gendai ni okeru Ningen to Seiji” 1961, in “Shu”, vol.9, p.44, cf.Barshay 2004, p.242-243)

Modernism for Maruyama is best understood, therefore, as a reaction to the traditional discourse of community and ethos of family. He had never been a modernist, because he understood the risks of the modernizing of society. There are two phases in the formation of a modern society. First, modernization means the reification (becoming impersonal) of personal relationships. But, second, it means that people have to make their own social system, like an institution, an organization and rules. These consciously man-made things are fictions. There has to be an awareness that institutions and rules are man-made, not some kind of absolute, and people must always try to prevent a fiction from turning into an end of itself and to keep fictions relative. The contradiction of modern society exists in the process of individualization and substantialization of the organization in our society. When people would come to disbelieve the democratic formation of their organization, fascism would come to them. It was a myth of the 20th century. (“Nikutai-Bungaku kara Nikutai-Seiji
made” 1949, in “Shu” vol. 4, “From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics”, in “Thought” ch. Ⅷ.)

At that time, Maruyama considered all experiences and theories in prewar and wartime of the world. He was well aware that the ideologies of liberalism, democracy and socialism in the modernization of Japanese society involved traditional patterns, a way of thinking and a daily behavior of ordinary people. Since the pre-modern relations of people were powerful in Japan, these ideologies tended to have never been mediated with the real way of thinking and behavior of people. Modern ideology and traditional ways of thinking coexisted with each other. “This is the problem of limit in highly purposeful and selective modernization. … Modernization implies ambivalent possibilities in a cultural and political domain…” (“Patterns of Individuation”, in English version, 1965, p. 493, in “Shu” vol. 9, p. 382)

Then, for Maruyama, modernization implies ambivalent possibilities. Modernization creates liberal relationships among people, but it limited them on the other side. In the sense, “nationalism must be rationalized in the same degree that democracy is irrationlized.” (“Nationalism in Japan” 1951, in “Shu” vol. 5, p. 75) The quotation means that irrational nationalism must be denounced, and democracy must become usual way of thinking of people.

Furthermore, he noticed that liberalism in the modern world has never been a classical one. It is too naïve to believe that formal liberty does correspond to real liberty. Fascism which rejected people’s freedom had been brought from formal liberty. Russian Bolshevism made a theory of vanguard which meant that a part of social group must lead other people. And it is a dilemma that under the name of freedom the liberty is forced to people, and the way of life is uniform among people (especially in USA).

On the whole, Maruyama noticed the ambivalence of democracy. Liberalism and democracy have a tension between them. Though liberalism is the opposite of statism, elitist liberalism and oligarchy is the opposite of democracy. Democracy tends to produce the dictatorship of the majority which means oppression of people’s liberty. Then liberal democratic society always has such a tension for Maruyama.

(2) Dynamism of Being and Doing

For Maruyama, liberty and democracy are both dynamic processes. That is, being liberal is done by doing to be liberal. Democracy is essentially done by doing to be democratized, too. The most important thing is that the institutions of liberty and democracy must always be checked on and criticized by people. People must always be cautious of reification of the institutions (they take as their highest purpose themselves) and look out for their functions.

Maruyama said that the dynamism of modern spirit has been borne by giving relative priority to the logic or value of doing rather than the logic or value of being. It turns the realism of concepts to nominalism, and it screens and tests all dogmas. (“Nihon no Shiso”, p. 156–157, in “Shu” vol. 7, p. 25–26)

While being or to be is the relationships of the people, like as kinship, race and their so-
cial rank (Mibun), doing or to do is the role and play of the people. While the former is fixed, the latter is moving and it is divided several into parts according of the internal functions. The so-called functional groups—company, political party, union and association—are essentially made by the logic of doing and they characterize the modern society.

Maruyama’s idea that the being has changed into the doing seems to be the same as Max Weber’s. Weber expressed it as the transition from Gemeinschaft (the community) to Gesellschaft (the society). For M. Weber, the community was a native relationship of human being. And it had changed to the society in which people act and trade with each other. So the relationship had been separated to several sides. Those behaviors are evaluated by doing something each other. Being is functional in human culture, especially in modern era.

But Maruyama’s idea of being and doing and their changing patterns include a special meaning. The transition from being to doing was perversed in prewar society in Japan. The perversion meant that absolute being subsumed all other being and doings of people. That is, for Maruyama, the logic of being and doing was a strong criterion for evaluating historical matters. Being refers to situation or state of affairs, such as family’s social standing (Ie-gara) and their assets (Shisan). In Japan, the traditional situation had become deeply rooted, to be more precise, the situation had been re-established after the Meiji Restoration. So that doing of people was separated each other. Though the logic of doing is originally a functional difference, under which the logic of being is strongly subsumed, people could not understand the mutual meanings of their doings, they could only do with each other in a small and narrow world. He named this phenomenon the octopus pot (‘Ta-kotsubo”) society. Where the voluntary formation of multiple groups and the autonomous communication of people has been limited, the social base of discussion and meeting has never matured.

I guess Maruyama may say that cultural values must be judged by themselves (being), while political and economic values must be judged by these functions (doing). In Japan, however, the value of doings used to be judged by being (not functional), the value of being used to be judged by the functional matters. He pointed it was “perversion”. And he raised the question by himself whether the conversion of politics into culture means the conservative position of him or not, he answered it and ended his assertion as following: “The most necessary thing in the intellectual world of modern Japan is that radical intellectual aristocratism should be linked interiorly with a radical democracy” (“Nihon no Shi-sou” 1959, p. 179. in “Shu” vol.8, p.44).

Insofar as democracy is an intellectual and spiritual concern, for Maruyama, it is a vital “fictions”. Without the efforts of people, democracy would remain a fictitious matter, and the reality (situation or being) of society would become an ideological affirmation of the established order, and it would kill democracy in its own name.

So the word “radical” means a permanent movement (“doings”). His aristocratism does not mean aristocrat. The bearer of aristocratism is not only intellectuals. The broad working masses including workers and farmers at the core carry the democratic thought for
their own sake and by themselves as their own spirits.

(3) Socialism

Now, I have to talk about what socialism meant for Maruyama. Though he wrote about Marxism as I will discuss later, he never talked much about socialism. From the viewpoint of Marxism, socialism was the opposite of capitalism. If capitalism was one of scientific words which specifies the economic basis of modern civil society, socialism must be a movement and form of thought that would overcome the capitalist system of society. To be sure socialism could be connected with statism and oligarchy, and it then tended to produce dictatorship in society. But in its own sense socialism is a negation of the capitalist economy. Socialism as a negation of capitalism can be bound with liberalism and democracy as an ideal thought and permanent movement.

For Maruyama, the relation between democracy and socialism was a pressing issue. The issue is how the masses acquire a new normative consciousness of the tension between freedom, liberty and democracy. If liberalism and democracy would become a permanent revolution, its goal would be the associated society for Maruyama. He said that “socialism is a road to enlarge democratization to the inside of production relationship” (1957, in “Shu” vol.6, p.356), and from its meaning democracy is newer than any socialism (1964, in “Shu” vol.9, p.174). In my opinion, the associated society including individuation and democratization in the individuation is not only any idea of socialist society, but also near of to the idea of Marx. Maruyama discussed with many thinkers. At a three-man talk in 1966, Maruyama said, “Saying sweepingly, the democratic institutions have come to strain the bourgeois system of rule. … At that time, the opposite of fascism, the principles of democratic institutions which have developed in the womb of bourgeois society would be exerted to the production relationship and the management form. This is socialism.” (“Zadan” vol.6, p.156.)

At a meeting in 1965, Maruyama stated “in the history of thought, socialism was born when democracy tried to break its limitation within capitalism, and socialism necessarily relates to democracy, but it could not be said that political democracy would be born on the basis of socialism. If we can think there is a different level between socialism and democracy, the connection of socialism and democracy is best.” (“Zadan” vol.5, p.135.)

When I close this first section, I would like to introduce another famous phrase of Maruyama: “As for my own choice in the matter: Rather than opt for the ‘reality’ of the empire of Japan, I’ll put my money on the ‘sham’ of postwar democracy.” (“Gendai Seiji no Shiso to Kodo”, 1964, p.585, in “Shu” vol.9, p.184)

Figure2: Three cores of Maruyama’s thought

| Democracy (vs. Oligarchy) | Liberalism | Socialism (vs. Capitalism) |

*The words in each parenthesis mean the opposite things of three cores.
2. The Method of Research of the History of Thought in Japan — five points

Maruyama specialized in the history of political and social thought. His object of study had been several forms of thoughts and their history, especially in Japan. Though he talked and wrote about his method, his research attitude was that of "jumping into the water". He had never written about the principles for the study of history of thought. It is therefore difficult for us to understand his research methodology for the history of thought. And he said research methodology for the history of thought must be pluralistic.

But I might say that there are five points of Maruyama's methodology.

First, while he might seem to control his passions and desires concerning his sense of value, he was fully aware of his standpoint. It was the tension between liberalism and democracy as I mentioned above. In his research of the history of thought the tension between liberalism and democracy set the basic tone. A typical example of this was the historical study of Japanese political thought. He extracted the tendency toward liberal thought in typical and traditional feudalism of Japan. And he studied the turning from exclusionism to the notion of an equal relationship among nation states. The formation of modern intellect in the process of modernization in Japan is the first point of his research methodology. This point had never changed.

The second point is that he studied the development of the independent and internal logic of thought. For example, he wrote that the question was how to turn from exclusionism to a modern notion of an equal relationship of nation states within established theory. In this sense thought develops an original position independently of the social structure, but it is not unrelated to the structure. The development of thought is not simple and has several possibilities, for Maruyama.

The categories of thinking refer to the given condition when man thinks about concrete things. Human thinking and doing have their original and historical conditions. These are not only our social environment, but also include the subject (human brain) as the patterns of thinking that have been accumulated in the history.

Then, for Maruyama, ideas and thoughts are not a reflection of the economic basis of society. The problem is to understand the autonomic and internal movement of thought and to try to understand it positively as a moment of change in the whole system of society as a concrete universal. For Maruyama, there does not exist a relation between economic basis and its superstructure in terms of a one-to-one meaning. Using this methodology Maruyama was able to write his famous essay, "Theory and Psychology of Ultra-nationalism" (1946, in "Shu" vol. 3). He described the main ideological factors and attempted any fundamental analysis of its intellectual structure. He grasped two main principles of "transfer of oppression" and "stunted-ness of power" (irresponsibility of power) in it. Thus he explained the origins and features of an ideology and a way of thinking.

At the same time, Maruyama emphasized that the history of thought is to be understood
in the context of social history, and the inner structure of consciousness and the principles of the subject of thought can not be understood without the relationship between the subject and the historical process of society. In short, Maruyama found the key of setting the historical context of thought in social history and the peculiar forms of mental development. Through setting the mediator, the idea of conditioned thought model, the idea of perspectives, between ideas and social basis, he could point out the so-called restriction of knowledge by social existence (Karl Mannheim, 1893–1947). He tried to grasp the dynamism of thought.

He wrote that it is a primary theme and the origin of interestingness of research of the history of thought to reproduce a past thought through so-called dialectic tension that exists between the restriction of oneself by history and the reconstruction of a historical object by oneself. (1961, “Shu” vol. 9, p. 72)

The third point concerns the dynamism, acceptance and modification of thought. When Maruyama considered the modernization of Japanese society, he noticed the close connection between the lengthways historical change, from traditional to modern, and the crosswise contact between the West (including China and Korea) and Japan. The problem is how to understand the acceptance and modification of thought itself. Maruyama introduced to the history of thought perspective, cultural change and cultural contact between different countries. He noted, “the introduction to intellectual history of this perspective … which includes the problem of translating words, necessarily involves the rejection of universalistic theories of historical stages of development.” (1978, “Shu” vol. 10, p. 343, Cf. Barshay 2004, p. 234)

He wrote about the tradition of thought and making use of it. Abstract theories and world views came to Japan from foreign countries. Although it is important to research their changes from the original when they entered Japan, if we use only the yardstick of deviation and degeneration, we will end up with a history of Japanese thought that is a history of total distortion and error. Several forms of thought were imported with a highly developed awareness. In the very process, the people or thinkers approached the problems of their day in their own subjective way. (Cf. 1961, “Shiso-shi no Kange-kata ni tsuite” in “Shu” vol. 9, “An Approach to the History of Thought.” in Asian Cultural Studies 5, p. 14–15.)

The fourth point, therefore, is the problem of thought having multiple dimensions. The dynamism of thought that Maruyama intended to grasp was the relationship between an awareness of the issues facing the times, inner reformation of thought and its influence on real lives.

The way of thinking and its categories are restricted by the patterns of tradition in a nation and its historical period, and they exist under given conditions as the lower level of our consciousness and semi-consciousness. Then Maruyama clarified that thought has multiple dimensions. Historical and social conditions, as mentioned above, entered into the subjects as the several patterns of thinking.

There are five levels of ideal forms. (1) The so-called “stratosphere”, the most abstract
and systemized theories and doctrines, (2) more comprehensive views and images of the world and life, (3) the levels of particular opinions and attitudes, (4) the feelings, moods and sentiments about life, (5) under-conscious awareness. (Cf. “Shu” vol.9, p.64)

Maruyama emphasized various dimensions of archaic Japanese consciousness in his later years. The words “prototype” “ancient substrate” and “the basso ostinato” mean what operates in it. Its effect was not to prevent change but to pattern it. In Maruyama, spiritual change in Japanese is apprehended in terms of an élan of succession without end, tsugitsugi to nariyoku ikioi in Japanese. (Cf. Barshay 2004, p.246) He had never changed his point of view and his methodology. On the contrary, this study was a result of his research.

The fifth, final point. Maruyama aimed at various possibilities of thought, derived from four points mentioned above.

He said that there was a stronger inertia in thoughts and ideas than in the institutions and organization of society. New ideas and forms of thought sometimes must be dressed in old clothes in order to smoothly enter the inside of people’s consciousness. Thought has its own origins and characteristics. This means that thought has its own original forms of development. A type of thought has to be understood in terms of its ambivalence at the starting point. We need to concentrate on the various factors and possibilities of a thought which are able to develop in any direction. (1961, “Shu” vol.9, p.77)

In terms of the autonomy, dynamism and multi-dimensionality of thoughts, the last point is a natural result. But, the various possibilities of thought do not mean there are no contradictions, ambivalences and conflicts among them.

Maruyama researched and wrote his works by using these five points of view. Naturally, according to the concrete theme he was treating at any given time, he used one of these points in particular.

As mentioned above, for Maruyama, the function of modern intellect comes down to understanding others as others and to become others in and as oneself. (1961, “Shu” vol.9, p.44, cf. Barshay 2004, p.242-243)

In my own view, this phrase is related to Hegel’s dialectic of Self and Others. In Hegel’s logic the dialectic meaning of relation has three dimensions. In the first dimension, something (Self) converts into others. It is alteration. In the second dimension, something opposes itself to others. It is an essential relationship. In the third dimension, something becomes others, which are not in fact others, it is in itself. Then a particular thing does not remain as itself. While it opposes itself to another particular thing, it becomes not only the other particular, but also it penetrates the others. In that sense, something or a peculiar thing has to be called universality, and particularity equals universality at the same time. The dialogue seems to be mysterious, it is true, but it is not only the way of understanding an organic body, like a society, but also the way of development of things for Hegel. And it is an important point that something has its own contradiction within itself.

Maruyama used to use the words of ambivalence, contradiction, dilemma and tension. What do these words mean? They say that thought has no contradiction in logic and
sense. But, for Maruyama, the function of modern intellect has its own multiple conflicts.

Furthermore, modern intellect had been introduced (imported) to Japan in the process of the modernization of society. So political and social thought in modern Japan have had three dimensions. One is what Maruyama named deep things of consciousness, second are the modernist minds, and third are several anti-modern thoughts.

Maruyama focused on the process of the modernization of consciousness. The most important thing for Maruyama is how consciousness of independent and free persons as the bearers of democracy had been made up in the process of modernization of Japanese society. This way is called the internal development of thought. The process necessarily involves several tensions, contradictions and ambivalences.

When Maruyama considered the process of development of consciousness, he never remained neutral. Because from his viewpoint, democracy as permanent revolution, it was important that how the modern intellect had been begun to bud, what is an obstacle of it, and to what the modern thought and mind had opposed. Sometimes the thought of a person has two sites. A sort of social thought too.

In connection to the ambivalence, contradictions of thoughts, I have to raise a question of the split into universal and particular. The ambivalence between universal and particular is one of the contradictions of thought. What are universal and particular in terms of thought?

If a kind of thought would assert its universality, all of another thought is particular. Maruyama wrote that the identification of the “universal” with what is “external” to Japan tends to become a sort of particularism in itself. As its reaction the emphasizing the inside appears (“Uchi” in Japanese). It means nativism which would be opposed to universalism (1977, “Shu” vol. 10, p. 264–265, cf. Barshay 2004, p. 234). It had appeared in prewar social science that the challenge of Japanese empire against the Western world was the conflict of particularism versus universalism.

For Maruyama, the universal does not exist in the external area or any model-country. Universal is the feeling and logic in which all of persons, cultures and nations have to be seen as same. Universal could be realized to be particular by its own mediation. The particular has to be mediated by the universal, though Maruyama denied the existence of universal. For him it seems that all things are individual and particular.

3. Marxism as an Object of Research of the History of Thought

What was Marxism for Maruyama, especially in terms of his thought, democracy as permanent revolution, and in terms of the methodology of the history of thought in Japan? As mentioned above, Marxism, as one of the forms of thought imported from abroad into Japan, had to be an object of research from the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge for Maruyama. Though he had been strongly influenced by prewar Marxism, especially during his younger period, he could remain a non-Marxist.
Maruyama’s reference to the “interesting ambivalence” (1983, “Shu” vol. 10, p. 85) in Japanese Marxism can be applied to the ambivalent relationship between him and Marxism too. What is the meaning of ambivalence in this case?

(1) The role of Marxism in prewar Japan

In one of Maruyama’s most famous works, the negation of the Tennou-sei as ideology, he taught that Tennou-sei as ideology had been one of his enemies in his own life. It is important to note that Tennou-sei ideology had a material power at the mass level. The problem was that it could have produced the mobilization, or rationalization, of the “irrational” primary attachment to family in the service of the state.” (Barshay 2004, p. 217) Marxists could not understand how Tennou-sei could “have taken hold of the Japanese people’s mode of behavior, way of life, and forms of thinking.” (ibid.) Although Karl Marx wrote that if a theory could have taken hold of the mass it has become a material power, Marxism had never come to be so in Japan.

We can understand the meaning of Marxism in the Japanese history of thought in Maruyama’s “Nihon no Shiso” (1961).

First, “Marxist philosophy and the interpretation of history held not only that … economy, law and politics were ineluctably linked, but that even the fields of literature and art had to be seen not in isolation but as linked mutually with them. By pointing out the common foundation from which the various aspects of the “superstructure” arise, Marxism may fairly be deemed the first world view (Weltanschauung in German) in modern Japan which compelled one intellectually to explicate the transformation of social systems in a total and coherent fashion.” (Barshay 2004, p. 202). “Marxism was a grand theory of modern idealism, which bore the name of materialism”, Maruyama said that its “methodology presented a startling freshness of vision as an integrating, systematic science” (1973, “Shu” vol. 12, p. 85-86) to Japanese who were mired in a precociously overspecialized academia.

Second, Maruyama recognized that Marxism as communism includes the universal values of humanism and democracy. (Cf., 1959, “Shu” vol. 8, p. 33) Marxism clarified the inseparable relationship between scholarship and thought. When scientists select something as valuable, they use their mental abilities. For Maruyama the most important notion was that true radicalism and its essence has the idea of humanity as human beings being the free creator of society which means that they have the ability to control themselves and their society just as they hope. (Cf., 1959, “Shu” vol. 8, p. 157) From these words he noticed one aspect of Marxism, the idea of human development.

(2) Criticism — Faith in Theory (Riron-Shinkou)

Maruyama argued that even though Marxism had good points, it also, on the other hand, or precisely for that reason, produced some points that needed to be criticized in Japan.

One of these is the faith in theory. It means fetishism of theory and thought. The fetishism of theory corresponds to the fetishism of institutions in society. Though the essence of modern spirit is to create the institutions of society, the institutions in Japan were ready-
made articles from the western world. Thus their spirit tended to be neglected. As a result, sometimes theory and concept are confused with reality.

The theory and duty of the theorist exist in dividing and putting in order the complicated and various realities from a particular value standard, for Maruyama. The ordered knowledge can not only wrap whole realities in itself, but also substitute for the realities. If someone would think that his theoretical position essentially could grasp whole realities, there would be no limitation of possibility for reality, and from that, on the contrary, theoretical irresponsibility for its own theory would appear.

If scholars were to place absolute trust in the theory, so-called fetishism of theory, it would be unavoidable either there would happen a self-consolation of revolution in social science, that is a mere revolution in the academic world, or the interpretation of the sacred books (for example, Marx’s “Capital”). (Cf. “Shu” vol. 7, p. 241)

(3) Universal and Particular

Thus a split between theory and reality had been developing. The autonomy, dynamism, multi-dimensions and multiple possibilities of thought had disappeared in Japanese Marxism. And that’s not all; as a consequence, Japanese Marxism had divided into a kind of particularism and universalism.

A Marxist thinker who identifies universal with what is external to Japan, for example with the western world or any model-country, tends to emphasize the particularity of Japanese society. They consider Japan as a society alienated from the universal. On the contrary, some thinkers considered Japan as a mere representation of the universal, for example of monopoly capitalism or something of that sort. They would stand on the perspective of universalism. But they can not understand the phenomenological forms of the universal in Japan. So the way of appearance of universal is any particularity. Universal arises amid historical particularity and also transcend any particularity.

Maruyama was a thinker broadly in the Japanese Marxian tradition, the Koza-ha (Lectures Faction) line. He holds the particularist perspective of the Koza-ha. But he held a stubborn perspective of universalism by stressing the common formation of free and independent persons in modern history. Then he could understand the conditions and limitations of thoughts in the formation of persons in a history of Japan. As Maruyama was an outstanding dialectician, he could understand the mediation of the universal and particular.

(4) Theory and Reality

Maruyama pointed out that there was a confusion of theory and reality in Marxism.

Because of fetishism of theory or a faith in theory, Marxism had never understood the reality of politics and society and it had never overcome a faith in actual feeling. From that points formulism and schematism had appeared in their way of thinking. As a result they neglected the irrational factor in the way of thinking and doing in real politics. Maruyama thought that they left an irrational action because of reductionism in theory. The closed system and perfectionism of theory sometimes produced terrorism or inhuman
action in real politics. It is a practical translation of its theory to real politics. We can find an example in real politics of history in communist countries and Jacobin democracy as its origin.

For Maruyama, political process is an accumulation of innumerable determinations. That is the second reason why an irrational moment enters in political process. There is a tension between an individual determination and a knowledge of law in society. An individual and personal determination can not be reduced to the universal. If we reduced, a sense of responsibility in politics would be deducted. There is a different between rationalism and pragmatism in the view of science for Maruyama.

(5) Anti-Stalinist Way of Thinking

An essay “A Critique of De-Stalinization” (1956) was one of famous essays of Maruyama. (Cf., “Shu” vol. 6, “Thought”, pp. 177–224).

Maruyama wrote in the essay that the consistent awareness of issue was to criticize De-Stalinization “from the point of method of knowledge in politics”. That means he tried to clarify the principal problems of Marx-Leninism, especially the so-called liberalization of thought. It stands to reason that he considered the problem from the standpoint of his methodology as has been mentioned in the second section of this paper. The conclusion of Maruyama’s essay was that the truth and historical meaning of Marxism would be in a position suitable for it on a stage of history of thought only by shaking off the dictatorship and compulsion of truth.

This problem exists in the epistemology of politics. Furthermore it must be considered under the common basis shared by Marxists and non-Marxists for extracting the common issue and political learning of a lesson. Then we have to notice the title of his essay. The essay did not try to criticize so-called Stalinism or Stalinist system, but to criticize a way of thinking in anti-Stalinist Marxism. Maruyama wrote that the essay would not criticize the principles of Marxism and the system of the Soviet Union and the people’s democracy, but it could separate out a way of thinking which seemed to exist among communists.

The Stalinist and other Marxists tend to consider the system of theory and party spirit as closed and perfect. Then they tend to put the minds and political means limited by the particular conditions in their world view, and tend to rationalize all of them by the necessity of political conflicts. Their disposition not only obstructed communication with other positions in scholarship, but also confronted the difficulties of self-control of political means. Maruyama, therefore, required them to separate out the peculiar logic of politics from their world view.

There was a way of thinking, the so-called base-reductionism in Marxism. Because of it Marxists rejected the effort of understanding the personalities of humanity, the way of human actions and their interaction. So they sometimes explained the reasons of concrete behavior of people in tremendously naïve and impractical ways. By a Marxist way of thinking, that is the manifestation of the essence, all things are tangible of an inborn and inherent one, they are explained by the logic of development of an organic body, and
moreover the logic of norms is a way of thinking about natural law. But, for Maruyama, by a dialectic way of thinking, the subject (Uchi) is changed by an external (Soto) shock, and the outside itself is changed by the movement and action of the inside.

By a reductionist way of thinking on history, thoughts are explained in one dimension, and they develop through a single line. The things that exist multi-dimensionally and are mutually determined are arranged by the stages of history that are founded upon the essence. So, an ideology in the following stage essentially absorbs and has passed through a previous one. For example, socialism as a form of thought passed through liberalism and democracy.

In short, Marxist way of thinking had tended to neglect or reject dynamism, multi-dimensionality, and the various possibilities of thoughts, including itself, which has been mentioned above in the second section of this paper.

Maruyama wrote that if the occurrence of the Stalin era is expressed in a tragedy it would lead us to a moral sentimentalism on the one side and to Machiavellianism in a popular sense on the other side.

(6) Hegel and Marx in Maruyama

Maruyama said many times that he had studied G. W. Hegel and he was influenced by Hegel’s philosophy, especially the reason of history, in his youth just as he was by Marxism. Maruyama explained the reason why he did not become a Marxist. First, his father was a journalist who was involved in factual details and did not believe in any grand theory. Second, Maruyama had studied neo-Kantian thought and empirical rationalism as well as Hegelian philosophy. He was unable to accept any social science founded upon a reflectionist epistemology. Maruyama had believed in the power of ideas, progressiveness and reason in human history derived from Hegel. Then he sympathized with Marxism. But, in my viewpoint, one of the reasons why he never went down the road toward Marxism, is that he could not find the rational foundation of dialectic.

In Hegel’s philosophy the truth of fact and the idea of practice are identified. Hegel thought he could grasp the whole of history in his encyclopedia (system of philosophy), and the absolute idea is the creator of whole of the world in Hegel’s philosophy. Marx criticized this conversion in Hegel’s system of philosophy. Marx could write his “Capital” and drafts for it based on his rational dialectic. Marx destroyed the fetishism of the typical system and construction of concepts in Hegel’s philosophy.

Maruyama criticized the thought of Hegelian Marxism in which “an analogous conflation (of fact and value) took place” (Barshay 2004, p. 208). In my view, Marxist remnants were responsible for the conflation of fact and value, theory and reality. Although Maruyama talked about Marxism, he had never written about the original texts of Marx. After Marx’s death, his successors had divided into Hegelian Marxists and positivist Marxists. As Maruyama wrote, Marxism (Marx’s stand too) is a materialism which dialectically does lift (“aufheben” in German) the antagonism between rational and positive, and it is a world view which practically (not in meditation) identify the thought of natural law with the

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thought of romantic. (Cf. “Shu” vol. 8, p. 123)

But finally from the standpoint of methodology, I have to point out that there is one great difference between Hegel-Marx and Maruyama. This is the difference between the substantivist view of concepts in Hegel-Marx and the nominalist idea in Maruyama. (Cf, “Shu” vol. 12, p. 46-47.)

Maruyama thought that modern spirit turned the substantivist view of concepts to nominalist view. (Cf. “Shu” vol. 8, p. 12) Surely, in the Middle Ages substantivist view of the universal was connected with the proof of existence of God, and modern empiricism was connected to the nominalism. But in the nominalist view, the universal does not exist, just only the individual and separate things exist. The universal is a mere means for explaining of phenomena. It exists in recognizing subject (person). It is understandable that Maruyama took a position of nominalism because he stood on modern intellect which doubts all of existence. But, as mentioned above, he understood a contradiction or ambivalence between the universal and the particular of things and thoughts. If the universal does not exist, he could not say so. In this final point, there exists a self-contradictory thought in Maruyama.

For Hegel and Marx both the individual and the universal exist, and the particular exists too as a mediator between individual and universal. The universal exists as one of particulars, especially as Marx clarified. Hegel and Marx thought the concepts are realistic. This is a negation of negation in the history of philosophical thought. Hegel overturned the philosophical standpoint again.

Conclusion

As a political thinker and democratic theorist, Maruyama concretized methodology of the history of thought by asserting pluralism in method. Though he had been influenced by German idealism, I. Kant, G. W. Hegel and Neo-Kantian, K. Marx, M. Weber, and western positivism, he had a unified personality as a researcher. So it is necessary for us to understand Maruyama’s several methodological resources. But he imagined democracy as a permanent revolution in postwar Japan. He carried through his idea, and at the same time from his standpoint he pointed out the limits of modern liberalism and socialism. Though he could hardly be called a Marxist, and criticized the lack of methodology in Marxism, he had always declared openly that he had been influenced by Marx and he participated in discussion with many Marxists. In this sense, from his ideas and methodology, we can say that he should be called a post-Marxist and Maruyama’s works must be considered as an intellectual heritage of Japan.

Footnotes:
1) Maruyama Masao (1914–1996) is a great historian and political scientist in Japan.
2) I would like to introduce English quotations from Maruyama that will be helpful for this pa-
per. The "vol." means the number of volume in "Maruyama Masao Shu" (1996).
(1) "What is seriously short of, and most needful for the intellectual world in modern Japan is radical intellectual aristocratism linked internally with radical democracy" isn’t it. (from Barshay 2004, p. 226) in "Shu", vol. 8, p. 44.
「現代日本の知的界けに足を欠き、もっとも要求されるのは、ラディカル（根拠的）な精神的貴族主義がラディカルな民主主義と内面的に結びつくことはないか」「『である』と『する』こと」1959年. 「日本の思想」1961年. p. 179)
(2) "The impact of Marxist methodology in the field of intellectual history in Japan was in a curious way ambivalent." Maruyama (1974) p. xxiii in "Shu", vol. 12, p. 85.
「思想史という領域においてマルクス主義の方法があたえられた衝撃は、日本ではきわめて興味深い両義性（ambivalence）を示した」（『日本政治思想史研究』英語版への序文. 1983年）
(3) "Anyone who has directly passed through Marxism, even if they became post-Marxian, could not ignore Marx. It is the same as in the field of research called history of thought."
in "Shu", vol. 10, p. 344.
「まともにマルクス主義をかいくぐった者は、マルクス以後派（post-marxist）ではあっても、マルクス無視派にはなりません。それは思想史という学問領域でも同じことです。」（『思想史の方法を模索して』1978年）
3) There have been a vast number of studies about Maruyama in Japan. This paper is not one of these studies about Maruyama, and is based only upon my limited notes. It is just a note of learning from Maruyama for the author who has specialized in comparative study of methodology between G. Hegel, K. Marx, C. Menger, G. Schmoller and M. Weber. See. Kakuta (2008a, b).
4) Sociology, for Weber, is a way of understanding human actions by their cultural mind.
5) He wrote about "civil society", mass society and the dilemma of "civil society". But Maruyama said, "I never call those people who are alienated from monopoly (capital) citizen. There is no substance of citizenship." "Gendai ni okeru Kakumei no Ronri", with Sato Noboru, 1961, "Zadan" vol. 4, p. 148.
6) In the English edition of "Thought," the word "production relationship" (Marxist word) was translated to "industrial organization" (modernist word). ("Thought", p. 286)
7) Tosaka Jun who was a famous philosopher in Japanese Marxism and died in prison for an ideological offence, said that Marxism had never spread among the masses like "Okesa-bushi", a traditional folk form of music and dancing in Japan.

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Bulletin to me.

References:

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ここではあらためて、パーシェイ教授をはじめ、パーシェイ教授を筆者に紹介してくださった後藤康夫さんと後藤宣代さん、ならびに関係の方々に厚くお礼を申し上げたい。
本稿の公刊にあたり、立命館大学「研究成果の国際的発信強化」の支援を得た。また、本研究成果の一部は基礎経済科学研究所2009年春季研究集会（於：阪南大学）で報告の机会を得て、同研究所機関誌『経済科学通信』（第120号、2009年9月、40-46ページ）に掲載されたことを付記する。
INTRODUCTION

John Gastil and Erik Olin Wright present Legislature by lot as a real utopia which would push a step further a long democratic tradition coming from Athens and revitalized by contemporary mini-publics at the end of the 20th century. A number of convincing arguments tend to demonstrate that this is a promising way of democratizing the political system. However, some questions should be raised. What kind of democracy is at stake: deliberative democracy, as most of the proponents of mini-publics advocate? Radical democracy, as induced by the frequent reference to Athens? A mixt between both—or even something quite different? What is the specific value of sortition? Although defending a mixt constitution and a complex vision of democracy, Aristotle famously wrote: “It is considered democratic that offices should be filled by lot, and oligarchic that they should be elective.” Jacques Rancière go in the same direction when he writes: “The scandal of democracy, and of the drawing of lots which is its essence, is to reveal […] that the government of societies cannot but rest in the last resort on its own contingency.” The political scientist Bernard Manin, in his seminal book on representative government, seems to share the same idea. This article advocates for a much more complex narrative. The idea that sortition in politics has sustained a trans-historical democratic logic is more a myth than a historical fact, as political sortition has been used in quite different functions along history.

I will defend four claims, two historical and two normative ones. The first historical claim, which will be central in this article, is that when analyzing the experiments that have taken place in the last decades, two waves have to be differentiated, based on partly different concrete devices, embodying different social dynamics and pointing towards different kinds of democracy. To a large extent, the rational of political sortition has changed from the first wave to the second one. The second historical claim is that the rational of the first wave of democratic innovations based on randomly selected mini-publics largely differs from the dynamic of political sortition in Athens, as it embodies a logic of deliberative democracy rather than a logic of self-government and radical democracy. Conversely, the second wave is more differentiated and more compatible with a Neo-Athenian perspective empowered sortition processes that have emerged during the second wave better capture the spirit of radical Athenian democratic traditions than consultative mini-publics. My third claim is normative: these empowered sortition processes are promising for a real
democratization of democracy. My last claim is that any proposal of a legislature by lot has to rely on this lesson when trying to defend a normatively convincing and politically realistic perspective.

In what follows, I will take a critical approach, which studies real democratic experiments (historical and present) to better understand the normative and political claims that come from society, rather than trying to assert pure philosophical principles. I will first describe the initial wave of experiments, composed by deliberative pools, citizen juries, and consensus conferences, that have used sortition in politics at the end of the 20th century. These experiments have been mostly top-down consultative mini-publics. They have complemented representative democracy with deliberative democracy, and the later has been differentiated from, or opposed to, radical democracy and social movements. These devices have been sort of what Europeans call “protected designations of origin (PDO)”: carefully designed, closely monitored and often patented by their inventors. I will briefly oppose this logic of deliberative democracy based upon randomly selected mini-publics to the logic of radical democracy and self-rule that characterized Athens.

In the second part, I will present the second wave of experiments. It has been much more plural than the first one. From citizen assemblies to Oregon citizens’ initiative, from the Students’ Association of Lausanne University to the Left-wing party Morena in Mexico, from the use of sortition between 2011 and 2016 by Occupy-like social movements such as the Syntagma place in Greece, 15.M in Spain or Nuit Debout in France to the new French President Macron’s political movement (“En Marche”), the devices have been hybridized and inventive, offering spaces for creative imagination to both practitioners and theoreticians. Most of them have been directly linked to some real decision making and may therefore be analyzed as empowered processes. They have been coupled to representative government, but also to direct democracy and to grassroots democracy. They often have articulated deliberative democracy with radical democracy.

In the third and conclusive part, drawing the conclusions of my analysis of the two waves of sortition experiments, I will develop my normative claims and explain why legislature by lot can be a crucial dimension a a radical democratization of democracy.

1. THE FIRST WAVE OF MODERN POLITICAL SORPTION: DELIBERATIVE MINI-PUBLICS

Over the last two decades, tools that bring selection by lot back into politics, such as citizen juries, consensus conferences and of deliberative polls, have spread to other countries and resulted in many new experiences. Thousands of citizen juries have been held around the world. Between hundred and fifty and several hundred consensus conferences have been held, nearly half of them in Denmark. Dozens of deliberative polls have been conducted in the United States and in all the world.

Citizen juries, deliberative pools, consensus conferences

These trends can only be understood in relation to the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s and a broader push for democratic change. The ideas of participatory democracy or self-

management began to inspire activists, finding an echo in the academic world. These themes built on old arguments about the elitist character of representative democracy and sounded the charge against the existing political system. However, random selection came to public attention only gradually. Its advocates were concerned with giving institutional expression to the critique of representative democracy but took a distance from radical left-wing tendencies that were modelled on the workers’ councils of 1905–1920. Sortition appealed to ordinary citizens, and its attraction increased as the fascination for vanguards began to wane. The title of one of the first volumes to defend the idea of broadly using selection by lot in politics, *After the Revolution?*, is thus quite revealing.10

The idea of selecting a small group of citizens to deliberate within a regulated procedural framework also ran counter to some of the grassroots democracy ideologies of the 1970s, which saw the general assembly as the highest embodiment of democracy. In this sense, deliberative polls, citizens’ juries, and consensus conferences are all part and parcel of a “deliberative turn” in participatory practices, as greater attention is being paid to the quality of debates and to the institutional tools that allow people to have their say on a balanced and egalitarian basis.

The idea of random selection in politics re-emerged separately in Germany, where Peter Dienel argued in 1969 for “planning cells” (*Planungszellen*), the first ones being tested out in the winter of 1972–3, and in the United States, where Ned Crosby created a similar structure in 1974 that he called the “citizen jury”.11 In 1988, James Fishkin invented “deliberative polling” and in 1994 experimented with it for the first time in Britain. All three of these men were political or social scientists, and because they had no initial support from a movement, party or institution, all three endeavored to found an institution that would disseminate, or indeed, commercialize the concept. All three moved quickly to patent it, even if Ned Crosby continued to work from a more activist perspective. Independently of these experiments, the *Teknologiradet* (Danish Board of Technology) decided in 1987 to open up consensus conferences to “lay” citizens, after a period during which they had been used in medical circles in the United States. Only in the late 1990s did political and academic figures begin to consider the consensus conference, the citizen jury and deliberative polling as largely convergent procedures, and the first moves were made to produce both conceptual and empirical hybrids.

Meanwhile, whereas the earliest conceptual justifications of random selection in politics had been closely tied to an experimental urge, a more theoretical process of reflection began to gather steam. From the 1990s on, three fast-developing currents independently helped to give theoretical nobility to these procedures, at first indirectly and then in more direct ways. One of these currents has based itself on the work of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas to theorize the practice of deliberative democracy in politics.12 The work and action of James Fishkin has been important to link deliberative democracy (whose main authors initially did not speak about random

selection) and sortition. The other trend of literature, central for consensus conferences, has concentrated on the vast realm of “technical democracy”, drawing theoretically on the social history of the sciences. On a less massive scale, a few books and articles that defend or indirectly legitimize the reintroduction of random selection in politics helped to further awaken interest in the subject, especially in English-speaking and French-speaking countries.

**Height common features**

Beyond their differences, eight features characterize these devices of the “first wave”.

(i) They constitute mini-publics, i.e. randomly selected representative samples, or at least “fair cross-section of the community”. Most often, they are composed through some kind of stratified random selection in order to increase their representativeness. 

(ii) Most of these experiments are top-down. Those who organize them are public authorities, or in some cases foundations, in collaboration with social scientists. They are not linked to social movements. They can even be opposed to grassroots democracy. 

(iii) These devices have been what Europeans call “protected designations of origin (PDO)”: carefully designed, closely monitored and often patented by their inventors. They function well, and are highly interesting for a scientific analysis of the ordinary deliberation between lay citizens. The dark side of the “protected designations of origin (PDO)” is that the political imagination of actors remains limited and the diffusion hindered. 

(iv) Most of these devices have been one-shot events. The number of institutions that have organized such mini-publics several times is quite reduced compared to those which have organized them once or twice. The only exception is the Teknologiradet (Danish Board of Technology) and its citizen conferences. But even in this case, the mini-public has not become part of the “constitution”: in Denmark, the experiments are nearly over now. 

(v) Random sortition is linked to a high quality deliberation. The mini-public is a place where a high quality deliberation can take place, with carefully balanced briefing materials, with intensive discussions in small groups and in general assembly, with facilitators helping an equal and inclusive discussion, and with the chance to question competing experts and politicians. 

(vi) Most of these devices are only consultative. They give a recommendation to public authorities, and/or provide them a counterfactual enlightened public opinion. They complement representative democracy. The aim is not to take decisions, but to improve the decision-making process with a device that enable a sophisticated deliberation of lay citizens. The mini-publics allow to know “what the public would think, had it a better


opportunity to consider the questions at issue”.  

(vii) The mini-public are not embedded in everyday social and political relations. Citizen have no link with each other, nor are they organized or mobilized. They discuss in an artificial institution. (viii) These devices are concrete embodiments of deliberative democracy. In most books of political theory, deliberative democracy is differentiated or even opposed to participatory democracy.

The contrast with Athens: representative sample vs. self-government of the people

The supporters of citizens juries, deliberative polls and consensus conferences generally consider that civic participation in politics is crucial for the good health of our political system. Even if we bracket the obvious and important differences in the social, political, economic and institutional contexts of modern democracies on the one hand, and of ancient Athens on the other, is it enough to diagnose a partial resurgence of the ideal of Athenian radical democracy?

The close link between sortition and democracy in Athens is well-known. Athens had a “mixed system” of aristocratic and democratic elements, and sortition was crucial for the second dimension. Each citizen could stand for selection by lot. This operated in three major types of institution. First, it served for the yearly constitution of the Boule, the main council of Athenian democracy. Second, most of the magistracies were filled by random selection. Finally, all the judges were selected by lot. Citizenship entailed the unalienable right to participate in the assembly and to become a juror and selection by lot became a routine activity. The kleroterion, the allotment “machine” most likely mentioned by Aristophanes as early as 393 BC, made the procedure quicker and more straightforward, while simultaneously protecting it from any attempts at manipulation.

In Athens, however, the link between random sortition and deliberation was complex. On the one hand, the Greeks theorized a form of public debate that would involve all citizens. Nevertheless, the concrete dynamic of deliberation was differentiated according to the institutions. In the people’s assembly, an essentially contradictory debate unfolded, wherein orators attempted to convince the audience: a practice conceptualized by Aristotle as rhetoric. Nonetheless, the public could actively express their feelings speaking loudly. The practices of the Boule were doubtless more interactive, whereas one-on-one political discussions took place in the various public spaces of the agora. In the courts, on the contrary, juries were required to form their opinion by listening to the various parties but without deliberating, as all discussion among jury members was prohibited.

The coupling of rotation of the functions of power with selection by lot became a highly rational procedure which was particularly effective in warding off the professionalization of political activity and the monopolization of power by experts in a realm cut off from the citizenry.

Of course, the Athenian city-state excluded women and slaves from political life, and used its strength to subjugate allied cities. Within those and other important limitations, however, the Athenian way of life revolved around political activity, and citizens participated on a highly egalitarian basis in comparison with other systems known to history. Nearly 70 per cent of citizens aged over thirty were *bouletai* at least once during their lifetimes, and a still higher proportion were called upon to be jurors. These institutions functioned as schools of democracy, in a society with a developed civic culture where face-to-face contact made mutual checking easy to achieve. Within the relatively narrow circle of citizens, power was largely exercised by the people.

A crucial difference opposes Athens use of sortition and contemporary practices: the representative sample. In Athens, sortition and the rapid rotation of offices enabled citizens to govern and be governed in turn. This is why, in classical political thought, random selection has been associated with democracy and elections with aristocracy. Compared to present representative democracy, Athens embodied an example of radical democracy. The contemporary use of random selection is quite different. The real likelihood of being selected for a citizen jury, a deliberative pool or a consensus conference is very low. The idea is to use sortition to select a microcosm of the citizenry, a group that has the same features and the same diversity as the citizenry, but on a smaller scale. A group of hundreds of randomly selected citizens tends to be statistically a representative sample of the citizenry as a whole. A smaller group of twelve to twenty five persons cannot be truly representative, but this “fair cross-section of the community” incorporates some of the people’s diversity. Both types of panels embody a specific kind of descriptive representation.

The notion of representative sample is familiar to twenty-first-century readers thanks to decades of its intensive use in statistics and opinion polls. This is why it seems “quite rational to see lotteries as a means to the end of descriptive representation”. However, the representative sample is a late 19th-century invention. It was first introduced in politics with the opinion polls in the 1930s, it only became an instrument for selecting trial juries at the end of the 1960s and the political mini-publics in the 1970s. There could be no relation between random selection and descriptive representation in Athens, as the idea that random selection statistically leads to a cross section of the population was not scientifically available at the time. Chance had not yet been scientifically “tamed”. Descriptive representation was important during the age of the French and North-American revolutions. Mirabeau argued that the assembly should be “for the nation what a scaled-down map is for its physical area; whether in part or in full, the copy should always have the same proportions as the original.” But because it was impossible to rely on the notion of a representative sample, promoters of descriptive representation ignored sortition and put forward other technical solutions. Mirabeau suggested the separate representation of different social groups.

22 Moses I. Finley, *The Invention of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 73ff.)
through what we could call today corporatist methods. The Anti-Federalists proposed small constituencies. 28

Bernard Manin 29 was the first to wonder why selection by lot disappeared from the political scene along with the modern revolutions. He gave a two-part answer. On the one hand, the founding fathers of the modern republics wanted an elective aristocracy rather than a democracy, and so it was logical that they should reject random selection. On the other hand, the theory of consent, deeply rooted in modern conceptions of natural law, had gained so much ground that it seemed difficult to legitimize any political authority not formally approved by the State’s citizens. These two arguments are important, but they do not tell the whole story. In particular, they fail to explain why radical minorities did not demand the use of selection by lot in politics, even though they campaigned for descriptive representation.

To understand these developments, one has to point to a number of other factors. We have to abandon the realm of “pure” political ideas and look at the way in which they take material shape through governance techniques and various tools and mechanisms. The lack of a statistical concept of representative sampling at the time of the French and American revolutions, when probability and statistics were already well established but not meld together, was a crucial reason why legislation by lot seemed doomed in modern democracies – as well as why those who upheld a descriptive conception of representation inevitably had to select other tools to advance their ideals. The sheer demographic and territorial size of modern republics seemed to forbid any serious consideration of political lotteries, since it could not allow all citizens to govern and be governed in turn.

Conversely, the present comeback of random selection is also related to representative sampling. Random selection as it is practiced in politics today is inseparably bound up with that concept. In modern democracy, the deliberation of a fair cross-section of the people is not the same as the people’s self-government. It gives anybody the same chance to be selected; but because this chance is very small, it does not allow all citizens to hold public office in turn. It leads instead to a mini-public, a counterfactual opinion that is representative of what the larger public opinion could think. John Adams wrote that the microcosmic representation he was claiming for “should think, feel, reason, and act” like the people. For contemporary deliberative democrats, the statistical similarity between “descriptive” representatives and the people is only a starting point. The mini-public has to deliberate, and during this process, it changes its mind. It begins to think somehow differently, and this is precisely the added value of deliberation. 30

2. THE SECOND WAVE: LIBERATING DEMOCRATIC IMAGINATION

The inventors of the first wave of deliberative mini-publics had hoped that these techniques would soon or eventually come into general use, but up to now they have had no standardized application on a large scale. This, according to Hans-Liudger Dienel, the leading expert on citizen juries in Germany, is partly due to the fact of the promoters’ concern to preserve the “purity” and seriousness of procedures: “I wonder whether the protagonists of deliberative democracy, with their societal approach, with their academic and ideological culture, might be a major obstacle for

28 Bernard Manin, Principles of Representative Government (ibid.).
29 Bernard Manin (ibid.).
mass application of citizens juries and other direct deliberative instruments. Do they, do we, really want to leave the niche and join new coalitions to see mass application of deliberative democratic tools?  

Another reason was the position of those who wanted to promote participatory democracy in politics and in the academy. They were more interested in other mechanisms and processes, such as Latin American participatory budgets, which were bound up with the social mobilization of subaltern classes or challenges to the existing order. Although advocates of participatory democracy have been attentive to the deliberative quality of new participatory procedures, they have thought of them mainly as instruments in the service of social change; they initially ignored or had a rather skeptical attitude towards mechanisms based on random selection, since by their very nature they give little scope for citizen mobilization and are mainly introduced top down.  

This situation has changed with a second wave of experiments relying on political sortition. This second wave has not replaced the first one: some of the experiments of the former begun very early, and the three “classical” devices of the later are still experimented. In addition, the second wave has taken advantage of the achievements and lessons of the first one: the techniques for organizing a good deliberation among lay citizens; the demonstration that these lay citizens can enter reasonable deliberation when organized in such conditions; the values of impartiality, epistemic diversity and democracy attached to political sortition; the increasing public legitimacy of this particular kind of democratic innovation, etc. Last but not least, some of the promoters of the first wave have also been very active in the second one. However, the second wave has much broaden the panorama. The numbers have increased and the types of experiments have diversified. Four main streams can be differentiated.  

Randomly selected mini-publics and direct democracy

The first direction of innovation tends to couple deliberative democracy, embodied by mini-publics selected by lot, and direct democracy. Citizen assemblies are the most well-known examples of this trend. The first experiment was the British Columbia citizen assembly (2004), followed by the Ontario experiment the year after. British Columbia became a source of inspiration for other regions. In November 2009, Iceland was profoundly shaken by the financial crisis. Huge social movements imposed new elections and a new deal between business and unions. A citizen assembly of 950 randomly selected individuals and a few hundred qualified persons was created. The assembly was tasked with identifying the most important points for constitutional reform. Iceland repeated the process with a new assembly, this time entirely selected by lot, before using universal suffrage to elect a kind of jury from among the population, composed of twenty-five ordinary citizens responsible for elaborating a new fundamental law based on the material produced by the previous assembly. This process has led to a dead-end due to the opposition of the new ruling parties. Another experiment, in Ireland, has been more successful. Following an initiative launched by a NGO movement, a citizens’ assembly of 150 individuals met in February 2009. Calling itself the Citizen Parliament, the group sought to make suggestions for constitutional

reform. It was met with significant response in the media. After the 2011 election, the new government accepted the idea supported by the majority of the different parties and organized a Constitutional Convention, 67 of whose 100 members were ordinary citizens randomly selected from the electoral register. The others were politicians, in order to avoid the negative pushback from political parties that had made the adoption of the proposals coming from the citizens’ assemblies in British Columbia or Ontario more difficult. From the work of the Convention emerged the proposal to legalize same-sex marriage, which was ultimately validated by a referendum in May 2015. One of the most ambitious attempts to combine deliberative and direct democracy was thus ultimately a great success. The process is being repeated in 2017-2018, this time about abortion and with a constituent committee entirely selected by lot. Other examples have been organized bottom-up, the most well-known being the G 1000 in Belgium.

In Oregon, one of the most interesting experiments with citizen juries has been conducted, called the Citizens’ Initiative Review. Following a grassroots movement calling for deliberative democracy to be reconciled with the existing forms of direct democracy, and benefiting from the expertise of Ned Crosby, the inventor of citizen juries, members of government from both sides of the aisle decided to institutionalize the use of randomly selected citizen panels. The Citizens’ Initiative Review was officially adopted in 2011. Its principle is the following: once a collection of signatures meets with success but before voting takes place, a panel of citizen voters is organized to debate and evaluate the ballot measure in question. The panel’s decision is then shared with citizens, as well as the informational material usually distributed (opinions from both an initiative’s supporters and opponents). With this kind of procedure, deliberative democracy does not short-circuit direct democracy but rather increases its rational component. Moreover, it should be noted that at the end of deliberations, the panels are forced to elaborate a majority position, rather than find consensus. The proposals submitted to the jury and the popular vote have ranged from a ballot seeking to introduce a mandatory minimum sentencing measure, officially designed to deter crime, to another legalizing medical marijuana dispensaries, passing through the legalization of non-tribal casinos and corporate tax reform. The evaluations that the procedure has received have been largely positive: overall, the quality of its deliberations has been touted, and the impact of the juries’ opinions on voting has been non-negligible.


Randomly selected mini-publics and participatory democracy

A second trend of innovations make use of randomly selected mini-publics within larger participatory dynamics. Randomly selected mini-publics have been combined with participatory budgeting. The citizen juries of Berlin, organized between 2001 and 2003, were one of the most interesting examples, where Peter Dienel’s planning cells have been hybridized in an interesting way (Peter Dienel himself was not satisfied with this innovation). In each of the capital’s 17 districts federally targeted for urban renewal, a sum of 500,000 euros was made freely available to a group of inhabitants for the support of local projects. They were composed half of people selected by lot from the list of residents, and half of citizens organized or active in their local area. They were given decision-making powers, and the local authority endeavored to follow their advice to the limits of its jurisdiction and the legislation then in force. The random method has also been used in the participatory budgets of other German and Spanish cities and in Pont-de-Clai (France) during the period 2001–2008. Since 2005, and with moderate success, the Chinese borough of Zeguo has even mixed the participatory budgeting taking place in the city of Wenling (an eastern Chinese city with a population of over one million inhabitants) with a version of the deliberative polls. Later, a quota was established to allow for the over-representation of entrepreneurs, so that this social class, important for local economic development, could wield more influence than its demographic weight would otherwise allow.

Randomly selected permanent councils within institutions and associations

Democratic imagination has been so prolific that it is in fact impossible to describe all of the different forms taken by the contemporary political use of random selection. Nonetheless, some important examples of a third trend making use of random selection in order to establish permanent councils within institutions or associations should be mentioned.

Following a cooperation with Jams Fishkin’s Stanford’s Center for Deliberative Democracy, Mongolia passed a law in 2017 which makes it compulsory to organize a deliberative poll before any constitutional amendment. On April 2017, the Mongolian parliament did just that when it brought together 669 randomly selected citizens from across the country to Ulaanbaatar for the first-ever national deliberative poll on the future of the Mongolian constitution. Although negatively affected by a number of procedural defects, this initiative could launch a new era of institutionalization at national level for one of the most well-known mini-publics.

A more bottom-up and original initiative took place in Switzerland. The Federation of Student Associations of the University of Lausanne, which enjoys institutional recognition and plays a significant role in the university’s operations, is organized around a statutory assembly.

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composed half of representatives from student associations and half of representatives supposed to speak on behalf of the Federation as a whole. Until 2011, the latter were elected. Lists were drafted by the youth chapters of the various political parties on campus and their debates were not aligned with those of the student association representatives, who were more likely to discuss the everyday problems of students than issues of partisan politics. In 2012, it was therefore decided that representatives would be randomly selected. Several variations were tried out but the general principle remained that a lottery was organized among students who voluntarily presented themselves. The first evaluations to emerge show that discussions within the Federation have become more peaceful and more constructive, but the presence of less politically informed students simultaneously strengthens the influence of the bureau, composed of more politicized volunteers who henceforth have no true political counterweight within the Federation.41

On a broader scale, in 1969 the French military welcomed the Conseil Supérieur de la Fonction Militaire, whose delegates are randomly selected following quotas that correspond to the various military corps. The council was design to create a consultative body that allowed soldiers to express their requests while avoiding any kind of politicization or union activity, both of which are legally prohibited in France within the armed forces. Since then, the designation procedure has been modified numerous times. In 2015, it was based on a combination of random selection from a group of volunteers (first step), followed by an election within this group (second step). The Conseil Supérieur de la Fonction Militaire is viewed as highly legitimate within the French armed forces and is a powerful interlocutor for the minister — much more powerful than its police equivalent, elected from trade union lists. In this case, random selection has helped to forge a representative body, to level the playing field between representatives of different ranks and to encourage discussions oriented towards the general well-being of soldiers. As the representatives do not enjoy any sort of individual legitimacy or power by virtue of being randomly selected, they tend to encourage a form of collective “legitimacy of humility” based on their impartiality and the quality of their deliberations.42

A number of other examples exist worldwide. In France, for example, since the middle of the 2010s, randomly selected citizen’s councils are compulsory in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, and Paris’ youth council is also selected by lot. Both Citizen’s councils and Paris’ youth council are advisory, but they are included in the law or at least official rules and are not more one shot events depending of the good will of the majority. However, in the absence of grassroots social movements that would push in favor of empowered mini-publics and verify whether they are well-organized and whether their recommendations produce real changes in public policies, the impact of such institutionalized randomly-selected bodies but still be reduced.

**Random selection in party politics**

A last trend makes use of sortition in order to select new kinds of representatives, instead of a mini-public. A series of experiments have used random selection in order to select party candidates in the frame of competitive party elections. A first experiment, inspired by the procedure of the deliberative poll, took place in 2006 in Marousi, a medium-sized town in the suburbs of Athens. 131 randomly chosen local citizens voted for who should be the mayoral candidate of

41 Maxime Mellina, Démocratiser la démocratie? Le tirage au sort de l’assemblée des délégué.e.s de la fédération des associations d’étudiant.e.s de l’UNIL (Master’s thesis in political science, Lausanne University, January 2016).
PASOK, the Greek Socialist Party. At the beginning of the 2010’, the local Metz chapter of the French Greens randomly selected its candidates for local and legislative elections.

It is ultimately in Mexico that the most ambitious form of random selection has been used to choose election candidates. The procedure was intensely discussed for several years in academic circles but also in politics. It was then proposed by the Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (Morena), the party of the former and future left-wing presidential candidate, Manuel López Obrador, and one of the opposition’s main political organizations. Morena decided to select two-thirds of its candidates for the legislative election on June 7th, 2015 by using a combination of election and lottery (the other third was reserved for external candidates who were not members of the party). In each electoral district, party supporters met in assemblies to elect 10 individuals (5 men and 5 women), from which the candidates were in turn selected using a giant lottery system. This experiment has already had a significant impact throughout Latin America’s second-largest country, allowing outsiders who would never have been selected to become candidates and, for some, members of the new parliament.

This mix of sortition and elections remembers the way in which a lot of electoral processes took place during the Middle-Age and Early modern period in Italian and other European communes, and at the beginning of the 19th century in Mexico. Conversely, there is no historical precedent for another innovation that introduce random selection in order to select members of party assemblies or central committees. In Spain, regional sections of the left-wing parties Izquierda Unida and Podemos also have introduced sortition within their internal procedures. In Andalusia, Izquierda Unida has randomly selected 15% of the delegates of its 2017 assembly. In Valencia and Murcia, Podemos has randomly selected 17.5% of the members of its standing committee, and the procedure should be extended to Baleares and Aragon. In France, 25% of the central committee of “République en marche!” (“Republic get started”), the new French President Macron’s political organization, were randomly selected among members in 2017. The radical left-wing political movement “Les Insoumis”, also used sortition in order to select among the members the 1200 delegates to its 2017 national convention, while smaller parties randomly selected their legislatives candidates or the members of their standing committees.

Selection by lot as a tool for radical democracy?

What are the main differences between the first and the second wave of experiments? A very serious challenge of randomly selected mini-publics concerns the tension between their deliberation and the wider public sphere. By definition, deliberative mini-publics aim to reach a counterfactual opinion of what public opinion could be – they are better informed and enjoy a reasonably satisfactory setting in which to be formulated -- that may well differ from wider popular opinion. Deliberation and participation may be presented as opposite models of democracy. This must not be the case, but some trade-offs are inevitable. A majority of deliberative mini-publics

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43 Mauro Buonocore, “Un weekend deliberativo all’ombra del Partenone” (Reset, 96, July-August 2006, pp. 6-8).
44 Yves Sintomer, From Radical to Deliberative Democracy?, ibid.
45 José Antonio Aguilar Rivera, “Las razones de la tómbola” (Nexos, 04/01/2015).
of the first wave did not have much impact on the wider public sphere and in the worst case scenario, the democratic deliberation of a small circle of randomly selected citizens could replace a deliberative democracy including all citizens.\(^{49}\) In such circumstances, deliberative mini-publics could be implicated in a kind of elitism, at the antipodes of radical Athenian democracy. This deliberative elitism would argue that the implication of lay citizens in politics could only ever take place within the managed arena of mini-publics, other forms of participation being suspected of contributing emotional and non-reasonable elements. The first wave of experiments were also top-down and consultative (and most often, they were only for one-shot experiments). This limited strongly their potential impact on social change. They have been successful in demonstrating the possibility of a reasonable deliberation among lay citizens – but they have not been efficacious in substantially changing the real life of citizens. Given that their existence has stemmed solely from the willingness of public authorities, it was unlikely that they could really be subversive with regard to power structures and massive injustice.\(^{50}\) Reasonable discussions in modest committees are not enough to impose positive change in a world where the structural resistance of dominant interests is enormous.

Had mini-publics not entered the second wave, their legitimacy would have remained weak. We needed these bodies to become more than “just talk.” This happened with the second wave, which has opened the floor to more dynamical experiments. Because they have been characterized by hybridizations, the political imagination of practitioners has been liberated. Often, concrete experiments have not been pure examples of deliberative democracy, and deliberation has not been perfect, but a lot of them have been empowered. This is a major difference with the first wave. In addition, random selection has also been advocated within social movements such as the 15. M in Spain, Syntagma square in Greece and Nuit debout in France. There are now real grassroots movements that reclaim “real democracy now” and include in this perspective the re-introduction of random selection in politics and even Legislature by lot. For many of activists who advocate the coming back of random selection in politics, such as Etienne Chouard in France or David Van Reybrouck in Belgium, the legitimacy of this device has to do with some radical democratic quality it is supposed to have. In some cases, as in Mongolia, the sortition device has been institutionalized and rulers now have to organize randomly selected muni-publics. This could lead to major breakthroughs: In 2006, Ségolène Royal – who was to become French Socialist Party candidate for the 2007 presidential elections – envisaged “popular scrutiny” of political leaders and a requirement that these should “regularly give an account of themselves to citizen juries selected by lot”.\(^{51}\) She lost the elections but had planned to revise the constitution and introduce sortition in case of success. Important is also the fact that sortition is no more a mere supplement to representative democracy. A number of experiments have coupled deliberative with direct or participatory democracy. It is also striking that random selection has been introduced within party politics in order to make it less elitist, but has at the same time been proposed as a new path to democratization in authoritarian contexts: the well-known Chinese intellectual Wang Shaoguang, one of the most prominent figure of the “New Left”, has advocated Legislature by lot instead

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51 Yves Sintomer, Le pouvoir au peuple (ibid.).
through Western-like elections in order to make China more democratic and its political system more representative.\textsuperscript{52}

According to many of the supporters of these deliberative instruments, the return of sortition in politics, after centuries of eclipse, implies that some of the ideals of ancient democracies are coming back. James Fishkin, who invented the deliberative poll, describes it as a “neo-Athenian solution” and even argues that “the key infirmities in modern democracy can find a constructive response in modern refinements and improvements in the two essential components of the ancient Athenian solution—random sampling and deliberation”.\textsuperscript{53} We have argued that random sampling was a modern invention, unknown at the time of Pericles, and that the first wave of mini-publics could seem at odd with radical democracy. However, relying of the second wave, and especially and those cases of empowered experiments, it seems now possible to reclaim the radical democratic imaginary that was coupled with sortition in the Athenian democracy. Table one summarizes the main features of political sortition in Athens and in the two waves of contemporary experiments.

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\textsuperscript{52} Shaoguang Wang, Democracy, Republic and Sortition: From Athens to Venice (in Chinese; Beijing: CITIC Press, 2018).

Table 1. Comparing political sortition in Athens and in the two waves of contemporary experiments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Athens</th>
<th>First wave of experiments</th>
<th>Second wave of experiments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main logic of the device</strong></td>
<td>Everyone takes turns to govern and be governed</td>
<td>Counterfactual deliberative public opinion</td>
<td>Various: counterfactual deliberative public opinion, selection of political representatives, of juries with decision-making power, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model of democracy</strong></td>
<td>Radical democracy</td>
<td>Deliberative democracy complementary to representative democracy</td>
<td>Deliberative democracy combined with representative, direct, participatory democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutions</strong></td>
<td>Council, tribunal, magistrates</td>
<td>Mini-publics</td>
<td>Mini-publics, representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where the initiative comes from</strong></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Top-down</td>
<td>Top-down and bottom-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relation to first inventors</strong></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Patented by the inventors</td>
<td>Hybridized by the practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutionalization</strong></td>
<td>Full institutionalization</td>
<td>Quite limited or no institutionalization, the use of sortition depends from the arbitrary of the public authority</td>
<td>Various. Complete institutionalization and compulsory use of sortition possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repetition in time</strong></td>
<td>Permanent institutions</td>
<td>One-shot</td>
<td>Various. Repetition possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link to decision-making process</strong></td>
<td>binding</td>
<td>Consultative</td>
<td>Various: consultative, binding, in between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link to deliberation</strong></td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Consubstantial</td>
<td>Consubstantial in mini-publics, no link for the selection of representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link to the notion of representative sample</strong></td>
<td>Inexistent</td>
<td>Consubstantial</td>
<td>Consubstantial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link to the ordinary social/political life</strong></td>
<td>Consubstantial</td>
<td>Disembedded</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: compilation by author
3. FROM MINI-PUBLICS TO THE LEGISLATURE BY LOT

In Switzerland, starting in 2015, a group of activists called “Génération nomination” has been preparing a citizen initiative that would propose to replace the lower chamber by a sortition chamber. Although it will probably not succeed, it shows that Legislature by lot is not only a proposal from theoreticians. This was also manifest in France with Nuit Debout, when Legislature by lot was considered as a natural and self-evident dimension of democracy. The invention of the Welfare state in the 19th and 20th century was the outcome of quite different actors: the revolutionary labor movement and statesmen such as the German chancellor Bismarck, churches who wanted more solidarity and businessmen who wanted to sell their products to their workers. The return of random selection in politics could follow a similar path. As grassroots NGOs and social movements make their voice heard, the perspective of transforming the political system and society becomes more credible, as organized citizens embedded in their social world are necessary to impose a real democratic changes. They could encounter theoreticians interested in democratic theory, entrepreneurs or scientists disgusted with corruption and short-term political games, and politicians in search of a new profile. The Ancients thought mixed government as coupling the virtues of democracy, aristocracy and monarchy. A sortition chamber could become part of a new kind of mixed government that would couple deliberative democracy with direct, participatory and representative democracy. When linked to social, economic and ecological changes, this new mix could be understood as part of a radical democratic turn.

However, as contemporary schemes based on random selection rely on representative samples and not upon the self-rule of citizens, legislature by lot should have specific features that differ from Athenian democracy. Gordon Gibson, the creator of British Columbia’s Citizen Assembly and former councilor of the Prime Minister, justified the experiment in the following manner: “We are... adding new elements to both representative and direct democracy. These new elements differ in detail but all share one thing in common. They add to the mix a new set of representatives, different from those we elect... The idea of deliberative democracy is essentially to import the public interest, as represented by random panels, as a muscular third force. The traditional representatives we elect are chosen by majority consensus, for an extended period, as professionals, with unlimited jurisdiction to act in our name. The new kinds we are talking about are chosen at random, for a short period, as lay citizens for specified and limited purposes.”

When widely used: for a sortition chamber, in party politics and in social movements, sortition could be even more significant by coupling strong participatory elements to the deliberative ones. It should contribute to the pluralization of the forms of democratic legitimacy. Focusing on a sortition chamber, and drawing the lessons of the two waves of experiments, I will conclude by highlighting some of its key features.

Randomly selected bodies should be institutionalized: their organization cannot be let to the arbitrary of rulers. These bodies should be empowered and have a real decision-making power: a counterfactual and merely consultative enlightened public opinion alone will not be able to really change the life of citizens. There will not be one perfect model which could apply everywhere: democratic innovations are always hybridized and highly influenced by the context and path-dependencies. To give an example: in a federal system, a sortition chamber should probably be a

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55 Pierre Rosanvallon, La contre-démocratie (ibid.).
third chamber. This is why the following lines wish to indicate more a direction rather than a rigid standard.

Legislature by lot empowers a random selection of the people and not the all citizenry; its concrete institutional design should take this crucial feature into account. First of all, experience shows that randomly selected mini-publics work much well when they have to focus on a specific issue rather than on general topics. This is why a sortition chamber should take the form proposed by David Owen and Graham Smith: As the Athenian popular courts, the sortition chamber should be a popular body of 6,000 citizens, and pools of members will be frequently randomly selected for participation in mini-publics working on concrete issues. The 6,000 body would itself be rotated on a regular basis of one to a few years.56

What would be the topics at stake? History shows that selection by lot have had a clear advantage over other forms of selection, including elections, when the imperative of impartiality is high (either because a conflict of interest is probable, such as in the case of an elected chamber reforming the electoral law, or because of massive tradeoffs and complex modeling of dynamic systems, such as those involved in long-term environmental policies). In modern democracies, elected officials, experts and organized interests have a strong tendency to defend particular interests. Conversely, legislature by lot will tend to recruit non-partisan people without career interests to defend, encouraged by the deliberative procedural rules to reach a judgment tending towards the public interest. In addition, when both representative and direct democratic have difficulties to represent the values at stake, legislature by lot is a good alternative. This is the case when it comes to dealing with the preservation of the ecosphere and living conditions for future generations. This is why a sortition chamber should have three main tasks: defining the rules of the political game, proposing solutions to highly controversial issues, such as the lesbian and gay marriage or abortion in Ireland, and legislating upon the long term.57 In order to increase the legitimacy of its most important decisions, it is probable that they should be validated by referendums at large: the coupling of a sortition chamber and direct democracy that has been experimented several times seems promising.

What would be the legitimacy of the sortition chamber? In addition to its impartiality, its democratic nature will be crucial. As Lynn Carson and Brian Martin put it, “The assumption behind random selection in politics is that just about anyone who wishes to be involved in decision-making is capable of making a useful contribution, and that the fairest way to ensure that everyone has such an opportunity is to give them an equal chance to be involved.”58 In addition, the deliberative quality of randomly selected mini-publics focusing on a specific issue is high, and usually much better than the one of elected chambers. Deliberation by lay citizens conducted in good conditions leads to reasonable results. A representative sample or a fair cross section of the people has epistemological advantages over representative government and committees of wise men: good deliberation must include diverse points of view, so that the range of arguments considered will be

56 David Owen and Graham Smith, “The circumstances of sortition” (in John Gastil and Erik Olin Wright (eds.), Legislature by Lot, ibid.).
58 Lynn Carson, Brian Martin, Random Selection in Politics (ibid., pp. 13–14).
broader and discussion will be more inclusive. Randomly-selected mini-publics have the advantage of being socially – and therefore epistemologically – richer than committees of experts or of political leaders, but also than publics where participants come purely from volunteers or from already organized civil society. This input is important in a world of increasing complexity. Last but not least, a specific kind of accountability will be developed in the sortition chamber. It is often claim that the advantage of election compared to sortition is that elected politicians are accountable to their constituency, when randomly selected citizens are not. In fact, this is far from evident, and not only because the real accountability of politicians is questionable. Sociological observation of contemporary mini-publics clearly shows that citizens who have been randomly selected feel to be strongly accountable. Firstly, to the public authority that initiates the process. Secondly, to each other: a distinctive feature of the mini-publics is that those who are perceived as speaking for a particular interests rather than for the common good are quickly marginalized; either they rectify their behavior, which happens in most cases, or their voice does not count anymore. Thirdly, citizens who take part in a mini-public feel accountable to the wider public that they represent. When dealing with the future of the ecosphere, a sortition chamber could bring a clear benefit compared to an elected one: when the later feels accountable to its electors (and in some cases to the donors who finance the elections), the former would more easily be accountable to future generations, a group that does not exist yet.

It would be naive to think that politics will just continue as usual, with minor changes compared to the previous century. Given the size of the recent financial crisis, the increasingly dire impasse produced by the current production model, and the massive disrepute into which institutional politics has fallen, preserving status quo is neither realistic nor adequate. Recent experiments show that legislature by lot could be part of a radical democratic renewal, and a key element to make such a change sustainable in the long run.

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In a condensed moment quite typical of the overstated bombast appropriate to a philosopher who was in his heart very much a metaphysician, Alfred North Whitehead once wrote that, “The creation of the world . . . is the victory of persuasion over force” (1933, 90). The metaphysics of Whitehead was a metaphysics of process, one variant of what I have called elsewhere a philosophy of transitions. If we can pay attention to Whitehead’s transitionalism long enough to ignore his metaphysical bombast, then we can perhaps bring into focus his emphasis on creation as a process. Focused in that way, what we have in this little sentence is a conception of the distinction between persuasion and force as processes, perhaps as kinds of doing or making. This raises immediately the question of what kinds of entities do the deeds of persuading or compelling. Seen in terms of actions of creation of political worlds, persuading and compelling are what we do to one another, or rather two distinct ways of politically interacting with one another. But who is the “we” here and how do “we” so act on, that is with or against, one another? Whitehead’s process-centered distinction between persuasion and force invites us to think about the locus of action in politics—that is, the sites and agencies through and in which processes of persuasion and compulsion are alternately played out. An exploration of this issue of the locus of politics raises crucial questions central for contemporary debates in democratic theory concerning the relative utility, and possible compatibility, of democratic radicalism and democratic liberalism.
A historical point of view would suggest, at least as a starting point, that there are a range of conceptual instrumentalities developed in the context of liberal democratic institutions and practices that have proven useful for the development and deployment of the distinction between persuasion and force. We might even say that this distinction, in concert with a range of other liberalism distinctions such as that between individuality and sociality, is central to all actually existing liberal societies, and as such constitutes a "basic insight" of the liberal tradition. In calling this insight "basic," I do not mean to suggest that it is sufficient for either liberal protections or for democratic energies, nor do I mean to imply that the distinction is often easy to make when confronted with difficult border cases. My claim is just that being able to hold some line, however tenuous and imperfect, between a politics that proceeds by deliberation and collaboration on the one hand and a politics that proceeds by compulsion on the other, is a necessary condition for democracy itself. It is the strength of liberalism to recognize and affirm this.

While some form of distinction between persuasion and force is operatively basic for every actually existing liberal democratic society, many contemporary theorists have sought to push democracy as a normative ideal well beyond the confines that liberal democratic theory would allow. One branch of development in that direction is a loosely related family of political theories which for the past few decades has proceeded under the banner of radical democracy. The "basic insight" of radical democratic theory, especially as a critical normative program, is that many of the core ideals of democracy have yet to be realized in any actually existing liberal democratic societies. Hence we need a radical critique of extant social forms in the name of a fuller and wider democratic achievement. Among these theories, a number of prominent offerings have sought to push democratic theory beyond the borders of liberalism by drawing on counter-liberal elements in other traditions of political theory. These counter-liberal elements often serve to functionally rub out the meaningfulness of a normative distinction between individuality and sociality, and thus by association the distinction between persuasion and force, as well as a range of other distinctions that are quilted through one another. The hope is that abandoning the family of quintessential liberal distinctions provides a radical reorientation for realizing political justice anew.

Few theorists agree with every aspect of the liberal and radical programs just glossed. But many theorists are impressed at the least by what I have attributed to both as their "basic" insights. This sets a challenge for contemporary democratic theory. If the above-featured basic insights of both liberal democratic theory and radical democratic theory are to be preserved, then contemporary democratic theorists need to develop versions of radical democracy that are consistent with some version of liberal democracy, and vice versa. One way to conceive of this challenge is to
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ask the following line of questions. Can we keep radical democratic theories liberal? Can radical democratic practices be developed in directions consonant with the best insights of liberal democratic practices? Can we have a democratic theory that is both radical and liberal?

To bring these questions into more precise focus, I shall here consider the compatibility of liberal democracy and radical democracy in terms of the more narrow issue of the conception of the political subject. Looking through the optic of the subject enables me to refocus the previous questions as follows. Is the liberal democratic subject of politics compatible with demands on social practice set in motion by radical democratic theory? Can the liberal democratic emphasis on an irreducible individuality be squared with the irreducible social plurality central to radical democracy? Can we have both the irreducible social antagonism of radical democratic theory and the initiative of individuality cherished by liberal democratic theory? I should hope so, but this is so is not easy to show. Indeed a fully affirmative response will be well beyond my scope here such that I shall confine myself to advancing the mere beginnings of an outline of a radical liberal democratic conception of the subject. To develop this idea, I shall proceed in two steps, taking up in turn the radical democratic theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and then the liberal democratic theory of John Dewey.

I choose Laclau and Mouffe on the one hand and Dewey on the other as my test cases because of the way in which these particular statements of radical democratic and liberal democratic theory resonate, both philosophically and politically. Philosophically, these perspectives share a whole constellation of anti-foundationalist or post-foundationalist commitments. Politically, they share an abiding and unrelenting commitment to pluralism as the terrain of politics. I see the latter in particular as a crucial space of agreement that separates both theoretical paradigms from those contemporary political theories that fail to fully confront the depth of conflict that pervades modern politics. Despite these crucial agreements, I shall be arguing, the full range of philosophical and political frames common to pragmatist democratic theory and neo-Marxist hegemony theory do not yet constitute answers to all of our most important political questions. The version of hegemony theory articulated by Laclau and Mouffe contrasts with pragmatist conceptions of radical democracy with respect to crucial questions over agency and purposiveness. Whereas pragmatist statements of political radicalism often involve a liberalism that seeks to affirm individuality, Laclau and Mouffe’s radicalism would seek to evacuate individuality from the work of politics. The effect in the latter case, I shall argue, is a reduction of political action to a kind of passive retreat before the negativity of an unanticipatable horizon. By offering a criticism of this particular aspect of this particular brand of radical democracy, my hope is to motivate a return to more pragmatic articulations of radical democratic politics that seek to make
explicit room for political action and interaction at sites where both sociability and individuality matter most. This could lead, I hope, to more liberal inflections of ideas of democracy’s radicality. It is in this spirit that I offer my second, and more positive, step, involving a pragmatist conception of a democracy that is both radical and liberal. Here I focus on the contributions of Dewey, though in the background of my discussion shall also be the work of William James. I shall be using Dewey to help show that the radical quality of democratic ideals should not be separated from a certain liberal ideal of individuality, which of course should not be confused with a misguided substantive theory of human nature that is often referred to (somewhat misleadingly I think) as liberal individualism. Dewey, in other words, helps us see the ineliminable role of individuality in a theory of radical democracy that is fully serious about the ineradicable social antagonism that is constitute of a deeply pluralistic politics.

I do not here aim to mount a complete argument against one brand of democratic theory and in favor of another. The theoretical impasses involved are too deep to be resolvable in any straightforward sense. And indeed part of my point is that a straightforward resolution is likely undesirable. My aim in what follows is only to illuminate some important resonances and dissonances between two contemporary approaches to democracy, so that liberal pragmatist theorists and neo-Marxist radical theorists may better understand the other view, and thereby better grip what is at stake in liberalism, in radicalism, and in democracy itself.

THE SHADOW OF THE SOCIAL IN LACLAU AND MOUFFE’S RADICAL DEMOCRACY

The starting point for Laclau and Mouffe’s reflections on the political is an uncompromising respect for the irreducible antagonism of social plurality. Their view is that conflict is an irreducible feature of each and every social formation. This represents an important point of contact between their theory of political hegemony and pragmatist theories of political pluralism. Indeed the work of Laclau and Mouffe is instructive in the context of my present comparison for the reason that it exhibits numerous affinities with pragmatist approaches to political philosophy. Laclau himself has remarked on this resonance. At a minimum, a number of resonances with pragmatism are audible in many of the centermost themes of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: anti-foundationalism, anti-apriorism, radical contingency, and the just-mentioned conception of politics as constituted on the basis of pluralistic dissensus.

These points of contact notwithstanding, I shall be arguing that there is a grating dissonance between pragmatist theory and hegemony theory with respect to the competing accounts of the political subject offered by
these two theoretical contexts. Insofar as their conception of the subject in Laclau and Mouffe’s has in recent years been increasingly informed by psychoanalytic notions, my primary negative contention in this section concerns the role of psychoanalysis with respect to theorizing the subject of a pluralist polity divided against itself. Whereas Laclau and Mouffe think that something like the psychoanalytic theory of the subject is entailed by their affirmation of political pluralism, it is pragmatism’s gambit to deny this contention. In order to make this argument, it first needs to be clarified why Laclau and Mouffe would decenter the political subject as they do. I proceed as follows. I begin with a discussion of their conception of social dislocation. This background notion will then be used to illuminate their well-known idea of political hegemony. I shall then move to a discussion of their conception of the vanished subject of political hegemonization.

For Laclau and Mouffe, the acknowledgment of pluralism is evinced in terms of an idea of the social as a register that can never be fully coherent with itself. That is to say, the social is a failed totality or a failed attempt to achieve unity. This failed totality is not just accidental, however. It is crucially constitutive of the social as such. Society, for constitutive reasons, can never be fully fixed by any utopian, or any totalitarian, political order. Society is, therefore, necessarily a terrain of partial fixity, unfixity, and failure at fixedness.4

Laclau and Mouffe’s arguments for the dislocatedness of the social can be reconstructed as proceeding according to the following three steps. First, society is marked by a constitutive exclusion. Second, society is therefore always confronted with that which it must exclude. Third, society therefore can never be fully fixed nor fully unfixed. (For the pragmatist transitionalist, the obvious corollary of all this is that the social is a constant moving target for those political acts seeking to either fix or unfix extant social formations.) Allow me to consider each step in turn.

The first step concerns the exclusions constitutive of the political. The relations constitutive of every social identity can only be constitutive if the entire relational (or social) space is closed—that is, if it has limits which are in principle identifiable. If this were not the case, we would define ourselves in terms of relations that are not a part of the social space, but this is impossible since those relations would become part of the social space as soon as they were symbolized. The general claim here is the non-controversial one that any system of relations presumes the limits of this system. A system can have limits only if it excludes what is on the outside of those limits.5 This implies a certain relation to that outside, namely a relation of necessary exclusion. But this raises a question: is that which is constitutively excluded an element within the social space or not? If it is not, then there can be no proper relation to the social system. If it is, then the relation is no longer exclusionary. The social
space is therefore always related to a constitutive outside which fixes the limits of society at the same time that it constantly unfixes them.

The second step involves recognizing society’s dislocatedness as the very possibility of the formation of any social system. The social space is fundamentally situated in relation to a negative or empty space outside of itself. Thus every social location is at the same time dislocated. The exclusion that makes the social space intelligible also constantly undermines the identity of that space itself. Thus, the conditions of the possibility of society as constituted by a fullness are the conditions of the necessity of society as constituted by an emptiness. This is the idea, to put it in terms with an undeniably Derridean resonance, that the conditions of the possibility of society are also simultaneously the conditions of its impossibility. Or, to put the point in terms that are perhaps more Lacanian, and to which I shall return below, there is a structural condition of negativity that is integral to any and every social positivity and which cannot but be experienced as a violent exclusion capable of radically tearing the entire fabric of social positivity by quietly unraveling its very core.

This brings us to the crucial third step. Since the social is marked by a constitutive exclusion, society can neither be fully fixed nor fully unfixed. This is a formal point. Consider if the social were fully fixed—were this so then the excluded elements constitutive of its limits of fixity would be nothing more than positive relations included within the larger social system that contains the fixed social system and its fixed elements of exclusion, and thus there could be no exclusion, and thus no limits or boundary to the social, and thus no coherence to the concept itself. We could run the same argument for a fully unfixed society. The inference is that society is always partially fixed as a system of difference. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy this point is stated in terms of the book’s crucial thesis that “the social itself has no essence” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 96). This is to say that the idea of society itself has no positive meaning but can only be a general field of difference. It follows that every social category is defined purely in terms of its social relations. But we should not move too quickly here or we may begin to redescribe society as a different form of positivity: as a synchronic totality in which a given system of differences is logically reconciled vis-à-vis a transcendental unity that is incarnate in the empirical set of differences (this is the defect of the socialized political economy of classical Marxism). Thus, every social category is defined purely relationally within a system of differences, but this system itself cannot be a logical totality in which each of these terms is reconciled with some term that stands above this system. The result is the rather brilliant insight that society is always being constructed by, but also, and this is the crucial point, as, the process of the negotiation of that which it constitutively excludes.

This crucial thesis concerning the impossibility of society, or failed social unicity, leads Laclau and Mouffe to draw the following conclusion
regarding political processes in which the social is constructed: “If the social does not manage to fix itself in the intelligible and instituted forms of a society, the social only exists, however, as an attempt to construct that impossible object” (1985, 112). Politics is the name of the never-ending attempts to (re)construct the mobile forms of sociality by way of new articulations of the essential center to which every social category refers. Political action always attempts to arrest the drift of society by universalizing a particular political value throughout society, and it does this by articulating particular values as nodal points to which the remainder of society is related. This, exactly, is the process of hegemonization. It is to be understood, crucially, as a process. That it is a process endears it to the pragmatist transitionalist.

Another Lacano-Marxist, albeit of a decidedly different stripe, helpfully explains the decisive contribution of Laclau and Mouffe. Slavoj Žižek writes:

> What creates and sustains the identity of a given ideological field beyond all possible variations of its positive content? Hegemony and Socialist Strategy delineates what is probably the definitive answer to this crucial question of the theory of ideology: the multitude of “floating signifiers,” of proto-ideological elements, is structured into a unified field through the intervention of a certain “nodal point” (the Lacanian point de capiton) which “quilts” them, stops their sliding and fixes their meaning. (1989, 87)

The antagonism characteristic of hegemonic politics is possible just to the extent that the social terrain in which it occurs is dislocated—that is, just to the extent that the nodal point fails to quilt the entirety of the social terrain (thus, a society can be more or less dislocated just like antagonism can be more or less prevalent). While antagonism is a political challenge to particular social representations, dislocation is the ontological social condition within which such a challenge is intelligible. To the extent that society is dislocated, it is always being politically reconstituted by being relocated around new axes, nodes, or quilting points. This, exactly, is the transitional process that Laclau and Mouffe bring into focus with their notion of hegemony, or what I think is better thought of in transitional terms as a process of hegemonization.

Žižek’s apt characterization of the core contribution of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy in psychoanalytic terms provides a warrant for bringing into clearer view the conception of the subject on which Laclau and Mouffe’s claims for social dislocation and political hegemonization would appear to rely. The key insight shared by Laclau and Mouffe’s hegemony theory and the Lacanian psychoanalysis upon which they have both increasingly come to rely concerns the role of negativity in the relation between the inside and the outside. In Laclau and Mouffe’s work, this relation figures as that between a constituted social positivity
and that which it constitutively excludes. In the Lacanian psychoanalytic theory of the subject, this figures as the relation between the registers of the symbolic and the Real. Both views hold that the socio-symbolic can never fully constitute itself as a unity. The socio-symbolic always exceeds itself because it is always constituted on the basis of a certain remainder that is a necessary effect of the production of any and every socio-symbolic unity. This remainder or excess of the symbolic is what Lacan refers to as “the Real”: the Real is the very limit of the symbolic (not “is at the limit” but “is the limit”). The Real is therefore, as Žižek wryly observes, the Lacanian correlate to hegemony theory’s conception of that which is constitutively excluded by society. The Real is just like the excluded Other in that it does not precede the socio-symbolic itself as its origin or condition of possibility, but is the oppositional remainder necessarily effected by the ongoing production of any socio-symbolic system.

According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, every constituted subject must negotiate, in a fully oppositional sense, the Real excess of its symbolic constitution. Such negotiation, however, cannot be mediated symbolically. For that would amount to including the Real within the symbolic. And this is precisely the function that the Real refuses. The Real is the negative or empty of the symbolic. Its negotiation on the basis of symbolic acts would involve the symbolic comprehension of the Real and so its dissipation qua Real. Constituted on the basis of a symbolic order that implies the presence of the Real, the subject is in a position of freedom, but only insofar as the subject must make a free decision in the face of the undecidability of the Real. In Lacan’s terminology, the subject thus emerges as the “subject of enunciation,” in contrast to the everyday socially mediated “subject of the statement.” The free subject of enunciation can emerge only as a lack that rips through the subject of the statement—the subject is constituted by the tearing of the Real in the extant positivity of the symbolic order. As I understand it, the central meaning of the Lacanian formulations of the subject as a lack is that the free subject always and only exists as an emptiness, or negativity, at the heart of the normal conscious subject. In a way that obviously resembles Freud’s idea of unconscious activity, this lack and this negativity occasionally emerges when the normal symbolic order is unexpectedly, and often traumatically, interrupted.

For Laclau and Mouffe, the Lacanian conception of the socio-symbolic is formally analogous to their own conception of social dislocation. Laclau, in his later work, deftly appropriates the Lacanian subject along exactly these lines: “Subject equals the pure form of the structure’s dislocation” (1990b, 60). This is, to be sure, and this is indeed my point, a negative definition of the subject. The subject’s subjectivity consists in its negativity, in its being constituted by social dislocation, which psychoanalytically figures as the possibility of the irruption of the Real into the socio-symbolic order of subjectivity itself. Here we come into contact
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with a conception of a subject that cannot act and a conception of an individuality that has no agency. The site that was the subject or the individual is now made to appear only wherever the Real unexpectedly and traumatically interrupts. Thus Laclau can assert the following:

The question of who or what transforms social relations is not pertinent. It’s not a question of “someone” or “something” producing an effect of transformation or articulation, as if its identity was somehow previous to this effect. . . . One cannot ask who the agent of hegemony is, but how someone becomes the subject through hegemonic articulation instead. (1990b, 210)

Lacanian psychoanalysis exposes the essentially fragmented nature of each and every social and cultural formation, but it does so only at the expense of also fracturing, and thereby disabling, the very possibility of subjective agency. What all of this results in is the idea that there is a lack of a place for individual agency in the hegemonic theory of political antagonism amidst social dislocation. This, of course, is no cause for great concern from the perspective of Laclau and Mouffe, insofar as the primary focus of their work concerns what we might call the ontological conditions of political transformation. But a concern with political ontology can easily overshadow other important concerns, for example, the role of individualizing agency in political transformation. And these other concerns are indeed all too often neglected by Laclau and Mouffe.

If my reading above is correct, then radical democratic hegemony theory clearly does not square well with liberal theories of democracy that seek to create sites for instrumentalities of individual agency amidst political transition. Thinking back to the two basic insights with which I began, we face at this juncture a decisive choice. We can either divest ourselves of liberalism (as too many radical theorists explicitly seek to do) or distract ourselves from radical political critique (as too many liberal theorists blithely do). But I wonder if there may yet be a third option. Perhaps at this point we come face to face with a crucial question that spurs us to develop a radical and liberal democratic politics. Can we affirm, without compromise, the full depth of political and social pluralism (in such forms as antagonism and dislocation) without thereby sacrificing the possibility of individual agency amidst political and social conflict?

THE LIGHT OF INDIVIDUALITY IN DEWEY’S VISION OF RADICAL DEMOCRACY

In shifting focus now from the neo-Marxist radical democratic theory of Laclau and Mouffe to Dewey’s pragmatist and liberal brand of democratic theory, I locate a precedent for my comparison in Cornel West’s suggestion that “[t]he emancipatory social experimentalism that sits at the center of prophetic pragmatic politics closely resembles the radical demo-
I have suggested above that the most important point of connection between pragmatist liberal democracy and neo-Marxist radical democracy concerns their shared emphasis on social and political pluralism or antagonism. Both view the terrain of the social and the corollary activity of the political as irreducibly, and deeply, divided against itself. Dewey, like Laclau and Mouffe, refused the essentialism inherent in any theory of democracy reliant upon social fixity. As such, both positions brook no compromise with the starting points of those versions of contemporary liberal political theory that posit consensus and agreement as the transcendental horizon of social forms that would countenance only restricted forms of pluralism, such as for instance reasonable pluralism. Sharing this much, pragmatist and hegemony approaches tend to emphasize radical contingency in politics and thus seek to avoid both resolutely foundationalist and covertly foundationalist perspectives. This is their most crucial point of radical contact. There are, as well, other crucial points of philosophical contact, including the abiding attention to contingency in each tradition.

But an unwavering respect for pluralism does not yet settle how we are to understand the political process of democratically negotiating the clash of opposed practices that is surely to erupt in any modern polity. Laclau and Mouffe’s radical democratic theory too often neglects important senses in which democracy relies upon individuality as a site of agency for freedom. In other words, from a pragmatist perspective Laclau and Mouffe go too far in their critique of the subject. In order to throw out the subject-centered individualism that would establish a point of social fixity beyond all political conflict, they throw out the subject itself and hence also any possibility for purposive political agency. What this move ignores is the possibility for an alternative framework through which we can better understand individuality without individualism, subjectivity as other than substance, and agency as not dependent upon a robust notion of autonomy.

For the pragmatist, uncompromising plurality need not obviate confident agency. The pragmatist’s wager is that we can preserve individuality, subjectivity, and agency as adverbial activities without reifying them in substantive entities that would seek to arrest the inevitable mobility of social conflicts. Or, to put the point differently, the acknowledgment of social dislocatedness and political antagonism need not entail the evacuation of individualizing agency as a site of the political mobilization of social difference. I shall argue that a philosophical reorientation of our conception of the subject in decidedly transitionalist terms is the crucial move for affirming the compatibility of the subject of purposive political agency and the ineliminable conflictuality of political antagonism.

I shall develop this positive side of my argument with reference to the radical democratic theory of the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, though I believe one could also do much the same with William James’s
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Dewey is perhaps the more convenient handle just insofar as the radicalism of his conception of democracy has been widely noted before. For instance, this has been recently discussed with particular acuteness by Richard J. Bernstein, for whom the radicalism of Deweyan democracy is to be located in its emphasis on the reciprocity, or interdigation, of democratic ends and means:

[Dewey] strongly objected to the idea that democratic ends can be achieved by nondemocratic means. . . . “Democratic ends” are never fixed or static; they are dynamic and integral to democratic processes. Democratic means are constitutive of democratic ends-in-view. . . . [A] democratic ethos demands flexibility and the acknowledgment of our fallibility about both means and ends. (2010, 79)

Bernstein is here right to characterize Dewey’s view of democracy as one in which the ends of self-governance are never fixed. Democratic processes of managing power are always in motion because they are also always up for grabs and always under contestation.

One way to characterize Dewey’s political radicalism would be to say that he out-radicalized Laclau and Mouffe avant la lettre, specifically in terms of his claim, central to Bernstein’s interpretation, that democratic ends and means are coproductive of one another. Both the pragmatist theory and the hegemony theory approaches can be seen as in agreement with respect to the inherent conflictuality and transitionality of democracy’s ends, but Dewey theorizes something that goes missing in Laclau and Mouffe, namely the ways in which democratic ends might be brought about by democratic means. The interdependence of means and ends that is so central to Dewey’s philosophical pragmatism figures in his pragmatist democratic theory in terms of, among other senses, an interdependence of individuality and sociality. Dewey, in other words, saves space for the political subject as the agential means of democratic politics in motion. Let us see how.

Bernstein unambiguously declares Dewey’s radicalism with his chapter’s title “John Dewey’s Vision of Radical Democracy.” There is solid precedent for this claim for Dewey’s radicalism in the fact that Dewey himself emphasized time and time again that the idea of democracy is itself a radically subversive idea amidst contemporary political realities. In a late essay titled “Democracy is Radical” Dewey forwarded the following strong claim on behalf of radicalism’s positive need for liberalism:

There is no opposition in standing for liberal democratic means combined with ends that are socially radical. There is not only no contradiction, but neither history nor human nature gives any reason for supposing that socially radical ends can be attained by any other than liberal democratic means. . . . The end of democracy is a radical end. . . . It is radical because it requires great change in existing social institutions, economic, legal, and cultural. A democratic liberalism that does not
recognize these things in thought and action is not awake to its own meaning and to what that meaning demands. (1937, 298–89)22

How exactly should we understand Dewey’s radicalism? What is radical about this understanding of liberal democracy beyond the insistence on the need for deep change? Bernstein quotes to excellent effect the following key italicized sentence from Dewey’s essay: “The fundamental principle of democracy is that the ends of freedom and individuality for all can be attained only by the means that accord with those ends” (1937, 299). This passage points us toward the central aspect of the radicalism in Dewey’s conception of democracy, namely its critique of defunct individualism in the name of heightened individuality. Dewey helps us see how liberal individuality need not rely upon liberal individualism. Critiques of the classical liberal fixation on the individual as an enclosed subject of agency and intelligence are by now well known. Dewey was himself instrumental in centering these critiques. But unlike many critics of the individualism at the heart of classical versions of liberalism, Dewey himself was explicit in retaining a strong emphasis on individuality as the heart of his radical democratic vision.

In draft notes for a late book manuscript, supposedly lost in 1947 but recently reassembled by Phillip Deen and republished by Southern Illinois University Press in 2012 under Dewey’s originally planned title Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy, we find an especially illustrative statement of the distinction operative here: “‘Individual,’ like ‘racial’ and ‘generic,’ is an adjective. And the adjectival force is itself derived from an adverbial force and function” (1947, 187). While Dewey’s specific concern here is with individuality, he describes in a footnote the more general philosophic tendency that finds expression throughout his treatment of a range of political, social, epistemic, aesthetic, and ethical concepts: “A surprisingly large number of fallacious philosophical views originate through conversion of qualities of activities (expressed linguistically by adverbs) into adjectives and then hypostatizing adjectival functions into nouns, the latter being then taken to stand for sheer entities. The ‘concept’ of ‘the individual’ constitutes one of the most harmful of these philosophic errors” (1947, 187n2). Dewey’s general point can be described under the rubric of the philosophy of transitions I referred to at the outset. Whereas thinkers like Whitehead, and also Dewey himself often enough, were wont to describe pragmatism’s transitionalism in terms of a metaphysics of process, it is also possible to cast this philosophical tidal shift in terms of a more modest methodology of process. According to this view, the Deweyan tendency to verb nouns (rendering the nominal into the adverbial and verbal) is not a claim about the real and true nature of things, but is rather a methodological move that amounts to an experimental hypothesis for looking at things in terms of time, event, activity, process, and transition. This methodological shift of emphasis enables
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Dewey to elaborate, and then put to work, a distinction between individuality as a quality of process and individualism as a substantive form.

One useful index of Dewey’s use of this contrast is offered by his short 1930 book *Individualism Old and New*. Written as a kind of cultural critical tract for the times when yet another golden age of accumulation was approaching its fateful nadir, Dewey’s arguments are prescient concerning the dangers of unbridled individualism. What is wrong with the old-fashioned classical individualism according to Dewey? The problem, according to Dewey, concerns not just ethical isolation, economic destabilization, and other familiar ills. Dewey went more radically to the root of the difficulties he was hoping to diagnose, and he located there an outworn philosophical picture of human nature according to which human action, reason, and emotion are conceptually cloistered within monadic subjects. Dewey wrote at the front end of the twentieth-century tidal shift in our conceptions of ourselves. Now that the tide has fully washed in we are in a good position to appreciate that the subject is always already an inter-subject, that humans are always already social, and that individuality and sociality are always already interdigitated. Taking these insights on board has encouraged us to understand action, reason, and emotion as not only the products of developmental processes that are inherently social but also as processes that are practically meaningful only within contexts that are always fully social. There is no such thing as reason apart from a community of rationality, no such thing as emotion apart from a community of sympathy, and no such thing as action apart from a social context of practice. But this now-familiar account of the social self counterposed to the individualistic self is only part of Dewey’s story.

Equally forceful in Dewey’s account, and too often absent from trendy contemporary critiques of individualism, is a plea on behalf of a reconstruction of liberalism that acknowledges the full moral and political import of liberal individuality. Thinking of Dewey’s book, indeed all of his political books from the 1920s and 1930s, as efforts in timely (but also untimely) cultural critique, we are in a position to understand that the point for Dewey was not just to criticize outmoded philosophical ideas but more centrally to develop concepts and practices adequate to our own age. Dewey was always in the first place a positive, or in his terminology a “reconstructive,” thinker who sought melioration. In this vein, Dewey wrote in *Individualism Old and New* that, “The problem of constructing a new individuality consonant with the objective conditions under which we live is the deepest problem of our times” (1930, 56). Living under the spell of old and broken ideas of individuality, it was Dewey’s claim that we need a new individuality. We need new concepts for new times: “There is no word which adequately expresses what is taking place” (1930, 58). Dewey’s proposal is a new conception of individuality in keeping with the times. It was Dewey’s claim that this con-
ception, and the practices invoking it, will need to take their lead from
the best cultural developments of the day. These include the new
psychology according to which selves are inherently individual and social
(1930, 81ff.), the development of modern science according to the familiar
Deweyan story (1930, 86ff.), an emphasis on more socialistic forms of
political and economic organization (1930, 90ff.), an embrace of regulated
forms of corporate-consumer capitalism that would be surprising to
many readers today (65ff.), and finally a reconceptualization of the role of
philosophers as cultural critics engaged in the crucial issues raised by
times of transition (1930, 107ff.).

Dewey expresses in these pages an unambiguous commitment to indi-
viduality as a process through which we can implement a range of politi-
cal values crucially instrumental for political transition: these include
creativity, initiative, energy, differentiation, transformation, and the very
practice of freedom itself. The pragmatist idea is that without a concep-
tion of individuality, it remains difficult for us to understand how we can
play a role in engaging the kinds of political transitions we find ourselves
in the midst of, perhaps the radical transitions most of all. To be sure, we
can offer abstract accounts of how transitions are effected and take place.
But the point concerns understanding in a self-conscious sense how we
might assume forms of freedom along those sites of individuality we
occasionally effect. Understanding freedom in this sense of individuality
need not involve a substantive concept of originary and substantial indi-
vidualism. We can instead get by with merely pragmatic notions of indi-
viduality as processes of individuation, and accordingly of those process-
es as facilitating the sorts of political values named above. In a 1940
address titled “Time and Individuality” Dewey captures all this very well
in a phrase that proponents of radical hegemony theory cannot but hear
as an invitation: “Individuality is the source of whatever is unpredictable
in the world” (1940, 111). The crucial difference is that Dewey embraced
the radical novelty that individuality can facilitate without falling into the
trap of thinking that individuality itself must thereby be unpredictable,
without purpose, and only a lack.

What Dewey helps us recognize is that a democratic conception of
individuality as a vector of political transformation need not be restricted
in its application to a substantive subject, such as the human individual.
What is important for individuality on a pragmatist view is the process of
individuation and the energetic agency involved therein (think, again, of
pragmatism as a philosophical methodology of transitions). It is crucial to
recognize that such processes of individuation can of course take place at
the site of separate persons, but they can also take place at sites of inter-
acting social groups and networked alliances of movement. What matters
in emphasizing individuality is the active process of differentiation. This
process is not as easily brought into focus when social theory takes as its
scale of focus an idea of social totalities, be these closed totalities as in
classical social theory (of both liberal and socialist varieties) or failed totalities (as is the case with the neo-Marxist theory canvassed above).

His reconstruction of individuality was just one of the many ways in which Dewey’s conception of democracy is radically subversive of the received tradition. What my argument is meant to suggest, then, is just that theories of radical democracy could stand to benefit from the kind of emphasis on individuality that is central to the liberal democratic visions of the classical pragmatists. If contemporary radical democratic theory is a theory of our sociality without any counterweight emphasis on our individuality, then these theories are lacking with respect to their articulation of the processes by which we might attain radical democratic ends. A crucial aspect of pragmatism’s radicalism is recognition that means and ends are interwoven—it’s all in the transitions. Contemporary theories of democracy that emphasize social ends without marking out a space for the transformative agency of individuality are therefore not nearly radical enough.

CONCLUSION: THE PLACE OF INDIVIDUALITY IN A RADICAL LIBERAL POLITICS

The explicit celebration of the lack of the political subject in various iterations of Lacano-Marxism is undeniable. Its contrast with the importance of individuality in Deweyan-Jamesian pragmatist theories of democracy could not be plainer. To be sure, these contrasting emphases are articulated on theoretical planes that are not always identical. Laclau and Mouffe write of the subject, Dewey and James of the individual and the personal. Thus it may be thought that there are important philosophical gaps between a theory of the subject and an account of individuality in virtue of which the separations I have identified are not so much substantive disagreements as they are instances of working through deeply divergent paradigms. For instance, perhaps the theory of the subject is more of an attempt to work out an account of the structure of desire in the political subject and the other an attempt to develop a normative conception of the conditions of political agency. If so, it might be thought, these two projects do not bear out disagreements of substance with one another so much as divergence of interest. Certainly this is true with respect to many aspects of each program. But with respect to the shared focus on political transition and transformation, certainly a central emphasis for both, there is enough of a shared terrain to positively identify the disagreements I have sought to draw attention to. The theory of the subject of political desire and an account of agency as individuality intersect wherever politics is in process. That may not be everywhere, but it is somewhere enough to locate disagreements among competing theoretical paradigms. To put the disagreement briefly, the psychoanalytic thematics that inform
Laclau and Mouffe’s conception of the political subject is at odds with the pragmatist core of Dewey’s and James’s conceptions of political individuality, for the former reduces the subject with respect to its actions and the latter takes individuality as the crucial site of innovative and novel agency.

What are we to make of this theoretical impasse? There is no reason to deny that theoretical claims for the dissipation of the subject are in a certain sense irresistible in times like ours—that is, times in which agency is often all too ethereal. And yet resisting these political conclusions may be important just insofar as it does matter very much how political change is effected and by whom. It matters especially, I should think, if it is we who are involved. Regarding the subject as reducible leavens us for the sort of complacent resignation that inevitably undermines the hopes we can otherwise invest in radical democratic practices of freedom. And that is a perspective which, were we to self-consciously adopt it for ourselves, would lead us to demoralized forms of nihilism and cynicism.

Allow me to briefly frame the crucial disagreement I have identified in light of broader agreements, so that we may finally see it in its fullest luster. It is my hunch that the gap between radical democratic hegemony theory and radical pragmatist democracy is most usefully seen as a function of perspective. Both are visions, albeit from different angles, of democratic political processes amidst deeply pluralistic conditions. While Laclau and Mouffe believe that antagonism is the form of politics appropriate to an unfixed society, the pragmatist would tend to want to argue this point from the other side by claiming that only insofar as our practices are antagonistic can society remain dislocated and open to destabilization. In one sense, then, all the pragmatist need advocate is looking at Laclau and Mouffe’s theoretical edifice from the opposite perspective: while the hegemony theorist looks at subjects as effects of social differentiation, the pragmatist theorist would suggest that we should also take seriously those perspectives according to which we can look at social differentiation as the product of the process of interactive individualities. Given these considerations, it appears as though one could articulate many of the pragmatist conceptions I am here invoking within a framework that would remain by and large consistent with that adopted by Laclau and Mouffe. Certainly such an articulation gains much from the conception of political pluralism developed in the context of hegemony theory, since that conception is clearly more sophisticated than the early and admittedly sometimes benign statements of social conflict offered by classical pragmatism. The acceptance of the inevitability of conflict, even when framed in the more sophisticated vocabulary of hegemony theory, does not entail the reduction of the political subject as a site for the agency of the democratization of political hegemonies. The political theory of hegemony needs this pragmatist insight just as pragmatist political
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theory gains much from the articulation of pluralism featured by hegemony theory.

So I hope it is clear that it is not my contention that the appraisals I have offered here can be expected to definitively settle a debate that remains far more generative when left open than when closed down. All I have sought to do here is to bring into focus some of the sharper disagreements among competing visions of radical democracy on offer today. Both approaches I have considered focus on the pragmatic construction of connections between a plurality of disparately organized social practices quilted through an evolving set of rallying points. Both approaches can agree that democracy depends upon an array of articulations through which democracy is practiced. But there is far less agreement concerning the specifics of how these radical democratic ends-view might be brought into being. I have argued that what goes missing in the work of contemporary radical democrats are those sites of individual initiative that are front and center in the pragmatist vision of radical liberal democracy. In concluding my discussion with the suggestion that the differences at issue here may merely be the results of taking two different perspectives on radical democratic processes, namely a perspective that foregrounds general considerations of social ontology versus a perspective that foregrounds the particular practices of individual initiative, it appears as if the contrasts I have been laboring over largely come down to a difference in emphasis. Such disagreements as these are probably best regarded as differences over where one chooses to place his or her hopes.

That said, it is absolutely crucial to recognize that in politics almost everything hinges on where we place our hopes. With this point, we recognize in its fullest light the crucial gap separating pragmatist theory and hegemony theory. Do we place hope in ourselves? Or do we place our hopes elsewhere? To the extent that we give our selves away, we give our confidence away. I cannot help but worry that the politics of psychoanalysis will always lend itself to a demoralized subject in the form of a patient who is perpetually unready to act. Psychoanalysis, it should be remembered, originated as a diagnostic tool and not as an energizer for political action. That said, the politics of pragmatism has, by contrast, been accused of brazenness, boldness, and excessive confidence. But confidence, we ought to remind ourselves, is excessive only when it is misplaced. We can affirm that appropriate confidence always, and I do mean always, has its place in politics. We should always pause before theoretical paradigms that facilitate a certain kind of blindness to our own crucial roles in the ongoing processes of democratic radicalization in which we find ourselves participant. From a pragmatist perspective that enrolls transitions as at the center of our political action, this particular form of blindness is irremediably debilitating for the reason that it involves the devastation of our confidence.
Allow me to return in closing to the themes with which I began. The pragmatist view I have been defending is both radical and liberal with respect to democracy. Consider the ramifications of pragmatism with respect to the questions broached at the outset of this essay concerning the compatibility of liberalism’s emphasis on such distinctions as that between persuasion and coercion and radicalism’s emphasis on the uncompromising pursuit of the eradication of injustices. The crucial pragmatist distinction between the active site of individuality and the passive locale of the individual shaped by his or her social environment can be seen to refract through an array of distinctions central to the history of liberal democratic political practices. Whitehead bombastically identified the quintessential liberal distinction between persuasion and force as a key to the very creation of a civilized world. Less bombastically, the pragmatist philosopher and liberal cultural critic Richard Rorty defines a liberal democratic society as one “whose ideals can be fulfilled by persuasion rather than force, by reform rather than revolution, by the free and open encounters of present linguistic and other practices with suggestions for new practices” (1989, 60). In elaborating a pragmatist reconstruction of the quintessential liberal distinction between persuasion and force, one notion that proves useful for contemporary liberal pragmatists like Rorty is a pragmatist conception of individuality without individualism, be it on the basis of Dewey’s work or otherwise. This idea helps us see that the difference between persuasion and force can be cast as a distinction between, on the one hand, processes of social activity that are coordinate in their individuating agency and, on the other hand, processes of social activity that act as relays for other processes that are being rendered passive and as such being rendered devoid of individuality. The depletion of individuality, construed crucially as a process, can be taken as a sign of political coercion, in distinction from democratic persuasion. In other words, whereas persuasion involves relations of coordination among sites of active individuality, coercion involves a relation between activity and passivity. Some common names for coercion in this sense include domination, oppression, and repression. Without a conception of individuality, it will be difficult to gain sight of, let alone make sense of, some of the most intractable instances of these many forms of coercion. Pragmatism is committed to the radical democratic project of weeding out each and every form of coercion where it is rooted most deeply, and yet it is committed to this as entirely consistent with the liberal democratic project of affirming individuality as a site of the freedom of political construction. This is because the pragmatist regards the democratic end of rooting out social injustice as interdependent with the democratic means of acts of individuality in pursuit of justice. Herein lies much of its cause for our confidence.
1. I develop a conception of pragmatist philosophy as a transitionalist philosophy in Colin Koopman, *Pragmatism as Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), though I would refuse to follow Whitehead's attempt to pitch transitionalism as a metaphysics.


3. It will be prudent to note at the outset that my primary focus here shall be on Laclau and Mouffe's coauthored *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (New York: Verso, 2001, 2nd ed., [1985]), though I shall also be drawing on more recent works individually authored by both. One should be wary of identifying the more recent positions of both, for there is much at stake in differences in their more recent work. Briefly, as I read them both, in his more recent work Laclau (see *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* [New York: Verso, 1990], *Emancipation(s)* [New York: Verso, 1996], and *On Populist Reason* [New York: Verso, 2005]) has assumed the task of developing and expanding the conceptual repertoire of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, while Mouffe (see *The Return of the Political* and *The Democratic Paradox* [New York: Verso, 2000]) has focused mostly on applying their theoretical edifice for a critique of prevailing conceptions of Western liberal democracy. In drawing on the more recent projects of both, I hope to make use only of those notions that I believe are already more or less implicit in the early jointly authored material, and as such would not be contested from the perspective of the theoretical position articulated there.

4. Laclau recently asserts that his “starting point” for political theory is neither “unicity” (rationalism of any variety, transcendental Cartesian-Kantian and immanent Spinozan-Hegelian) nor “multiplicity” (here Laclau refers to Alain Badiou, but the category obviously also applies more widely to postmodern particularists), but is what he calls “failed unicity,” or namely “finding in every identity the traces of its contingency” (Laclau 2004b, 325).

5. See Laclau, “Why do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?,” in *Emancipations(s)*, 37–38, and “Subject of Politics, Politics of the Subject,” in *Emancipations(s)*, 52.


8. This theme was ably exploited by Žižek in his influential argument that Laclau and Mouffe’s book “reinvented the Lacanian notion of the Real . . . [and] made it useful as a tool for social and ideological analysis” (1990, 249). The connection drawn by Žižek, and exploited by both Mouffe and Laclau, concerns the formal resonance of Lacan’s concept of the Real (the non-symbolizable traumatic remainder of any symbolic production) with Laclau and Mouffe’s concept of society (as constantly negotiating a space of necessary exclusion that is purely negative to the social system itself). As Žižek summarizes these formal features: “The socio-symbolic field is conceived as structured around a certain traumatic impossibility, around a certain fissure which cannot be symbolized” (1990, 249); “Symbolization as such is by definition structured around a certain central impossibility, a deadlock that is nothing but a structuring of this impossibility” (Žižek 1991, 47). I return to these resonances below.


11. In more recent work Laclau defines hegemony as “the process by which a particularity assumes the representation of a universality which is essentially incommensurable with it” (2004a, 127). Hegemony is the process by which a particular conception of a political ideal or signifier (e.g., “order” or “justice”) establishes itself as a universal conception that fulfills the broadest possible demands that this ideal can address. Take as an example a society that is in some state of disorder. In this society
“order” becomes the name for a general solution for all of the problems wrought by this disorder. Thus “order” is here an empty signifier or a negative ideal (a signifier without any positive content of its own). It is a signifier that names exactly what is absent in a given situation, the presence of which absence would fulfill a wide variety of perceived problems with the situation. In time, some discourse or conception of “order” establishes itself and fills the empty signifier with a particular content. This particular content thus stands to the society as fulfilling the wide variety of problems that characterize that society in its disordered state. Hegemony is the process by which a particular political project assumes the role of fulfilling non-particular or universal demands.

12. Laclau in later works notes that “antagonism is already a form of discursive inscription—that is, of mastery—of something more primary,” namely “dislocation” such that the move from the language of antagonism in Hegemony (1985) to that of dislocation in New Reflections (1990) can be described as a move “from the total representation inherent in the antagonistic relation to a general crisis of the space of representation” (2004b, 319). When the concept of dislocation first began to appear in Laclau’s work in New Reflections, he described it there as “a subversion of all determination” and “an all-embracing subversion of the space of representability in general” (1990, 79).


15. Filip Kovacevic explicates this theme in relation to both Lacan and Alain Badiou in terms that are helpful for the contrast I seek to draw here: “Being a subject means taking a step beyond the hustle and bustle of daily pragmatic interests by remaining faithful to the event of truth, that is, to the emergence and articulation of the different and the new” (Kovacevic 2003, 123). Bruce Fink writes that, “This enunciating subject . . . is not something which or someone who has some sort of permanent existence: it only appears when a propitious occasion presents itself. It is not some kind of underlying substance or substratum” (1995, 41). A key theme for both is that free subjectivity only exists as a confrontation with a non-symbolic excess.

16. In a similar spirit, Lacanian political theorist Alenka Župančič holds that “there is no subject or ‘hero’ of the act . . . . The subject is always pathological (in the Kantian sense of the word), determined by the Other, by the signifiers which precede him. At this level, the subject is reducible or ‘dispensable’” (2000, 103). But it is Žižek who offers, as per usual, the most provocative formulation of contemporary psychoanalytic political theory in claiming that, “For Lacan, a subject is in the last resort the name for this ‘empty gesture’ by means of which we freely assume what is imposed on us, the real of the death drive” (1991, 64).

17. See also recent work on connections between Dewey’s political theory and the theoretical edifices of Laclau and Mouffe: Hickman, “The Genesis of Democratic Norms: Some Insights from Classical Pragmatism,” in Democracy as Culture, edited by Sor-Hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), 21–30; Ryder and Koczanowicz, “Democratic Theory: Interests, Antagonisms and Dialogue” (presented at the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, March 2012, New York City); and Brendan Hogan, “Hegemony, Social Science, and Democracy,” this volume. On the whole, however, there is a decided deficit of comparative work looking at both pragmatist democratic theory and neo-Marxist hegemony theory.
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18. Mark Devenney argues that Laclau’s “identification with contingency, and thus with an essential value pluralism, distinguishes the radical democrat from the liberal” (2004, 137). This is exactly the sort of radical democratic claim I seek to contest here. My argument is that the emphasis on contingency and pluralism in radical democracy can be squared with some versions of liberal democracy. Devenney is clearly not thinking of the pragmatists amongst his menu of liberal theorists, but this is a mistake.


21. On the role of conflict in Dewey see Rogers (Undiscovered Dewey 158ff.) and on Dewey and power see Rogers (Undiscovered Dewey 213ff.).

22. I would like to thank Daniel Rinn for drawing my attention to the first part of this passage in the context of his important work on the relevance of Deweyan radicalism for Tom Hayden, Arnold Kaufman, and others involved in the U.S. New Student Left movement(s) of the 1960s.

23. I would like to thank Jacquelyn Ann Kegley and Chris Skowronski for their invitation to the conference in Opole out of which this volume grew. I would also like to thank my University of Oregon colleague Rocio Zambrana for her comments on an earlier draft. Finally, I thank both Sorin Radu Cucu and Ernesto Laclau for discussion of these matters with me many years ago in Buffalo when I first began thinking through these angles—needless to say, neither is personally implicated in anything I have written here.

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Assessing liberal and radical democracy and its political support: A comparative analysis at the subnational level of the Swiss cantons

Dlabac, Oliver

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Assessing Liberal and Radical Democracy and its Political Support

A Comparative Analysis at the Subnational Level of the Swiss Cantons

Oliver DLABAC*
Hans-Peter SCHAUB**

* Centre for Democracy Studies (University of Zurich), Switzerland; contact author: oliver.dlabac@zda.uzh.ch
** University of Bern, Institute of Political Science, Switzerland

Abstract: Whereas established democracies have been responding to public pressures for broader inclusion, grassroots participation as well as public accountability, existing measures of democracy rely almost exclusively on a liberal conceptualization of representative democracy. Most notably, they ignore another fundamental tradition of democratic thought: that of radical democracy, which strives for direct participation of all citizens in the public debate and in political decision-making. Drawing from classical liberal and radical views on what democratic institutions can or should accomplish, we construct a multidimensional measurement instrument which we devise specifically for the subnational level of the Swiss cantons. The resulting measures point to a dilemma of radical democracy, since participatory cantons are markedly less inclusive. Liberal democracies in turn are faced with a different dilemma: Citizens in liberal democracies are significantly less supportive of both their political institutions and their political community.

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1 This paper was written within the framework of the Swiss National Science Foundation’s project “Demokratiequalität in den Schweizer Kantonen” (project no. 100012-117661) which has been pursued by the authors under guidance of Prof. Dr. Adrian Vatter and Dr. Marc Bühlmann.
1. Introduction

With *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices* Russell Dalton (2004) has presented a deep probing analysis of the skepticism of most democratic citizens towards the pillars of representative democracy and its meaning for the future of democracy. Dalton finds that political support for politicians, political parties and political institutions has eroded not only in the U.S. but since the 1980s virtually in all advanced industrial democracies. In contrast to the authors of *The Crisis of Democracy* (Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki 1975) he does not consider established democracies as fundamentally challenged in their existence. In fact the “critical citizens” remain highly supportive of the democratic ideal (cf. Norris 1999a). While lower levels of political support do make governing more difficult, they also fuel demands for reforming representative democracy, with contemporary publics increasingly favoring direct democracy and new forms of associative democracy (Dalton 2004, 181–185).

In *Democracy Transformed?* (Cain, Dalton, and Scarrow 2003) several contributors document how in the last three decades political elites have responded to these popular pressures by political reforms, reforms that may lead to a broader inclusion of all affected, increased direct involvement of citizens and higher public accountability of representatives, possibly amounting to a fundamental transformation of democracy comparable to the creation of mass democracy in the early twentieth century. The volume closes with several questions to be investigated in comparative empirical analysis: Have recent reforms actually led to increased democratic quality? Are there democratic trade-offs, for instance between direct democracy and inclusion? And lastly: does ‘more democracy’ actually cure the present ills of representative democracy, namely the observed low levels of public support?

So far these questions have been addressed only in a speculative way (cf. Warren 2003; Dalton, Cain, and Scarrow 2003, 256–269). One central reason is that we still lack of empirical measures of democratic quality which would take these developments into account. Even if recent measures of democracy aim at assessing the gradual differences in the quality of established democracies, they have been criticized for relying all too readily on a minimal concept of liberal democracy, when taking measurement of freedom rights, separation of powers and competitive elections (Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 11; Pickel and Pickel 2006, 2

2 The diagnosis of eroding confidence in political parties and institutions has been questioned by Pippa Norris (2011, 73) on behalf of newer data for West European countries from 1998 until 2009. Instead she stresses the marked and persistent differences of levels between nations, while the fluctuations over time appear to be trendless (within this time period).
Yet specifying the object of reference – ‘quality of democracy’ – is a central step for developing a democracy index, as it has far-reaching consequences on operationalization and results. In fact the meaning of democracy has been highly debated in the entire history of democratic thought, leading to a tremendous variety of democratic theories (cf. Held 2006, 1–2; Schmidt 2010, 19–26, 289). Most notably, measures of democracy have ignored another fundamental tradition of democratic thought: the radical model of democracy (cf. Held 2006, 4–5). The radical democratic tradition, subsuming participatory and important deliberative theories, strives for extensive and direct participation of all people in the formation of the public opinion and in political decision-making (Barber 1984; Young 2000; Warren 2001). It is telling that measures of democratic quality regularly show implausible values for the Swiss referendum democracy (cf. Bühlmann et al. 2009, 457). Yet it is exactly this radical democratic thinking and its exemplification in the Swiss type of democracy that have been brought into play in recent constitutional debates and which lie at the heart of efforts to expand the political opportunities through political reforms (cf. Dalton 2004, 182).

Another reason is that it may be too early for making definite assessments of these reforms, as their multiple effects on democratic quality may be visible in the long term only (Dalton, Cain, and Scarrow 2003, 273; Dalton 2004, 187). Moreover, at the national level new political opportunities have often been introduced only halfheartedly, as is evident from the moderate progress with regard to party access to elections (Bowler, Carter, and Farrell 2003) or from the still restrictive usage of constitutional and legislative referenda (Scarrow 2003). The transformation of democracy is in effect better visible at subnational levels which in several countries have gained considerable autonomy, thereby bringing politics nearer to the citizens (Ansell and Gingrich 2003a). It is also at these levels, where the availability and use of constitutional and legislative referenda have increased the most – when considering the regional level this is primarily the case in Germany, Australia, the U.S. and Switzerland (Scarrow 2003, 49, 51; for Germany see Eder and Magin 2008).

We thus agree with the editors of Democracy Transformed? that minimalist definitions of democracy in the line of Joseph Schumpeter (1976 [1942]) – reducing the role of the citizens to produce a government by means of competitive elections – are insufficient for assessing the potential democratic transformations towards the ideals of participatory and associative democracy (Dalton, Cain, and Scarrow 2003, 256). We also share the conviction with Mark Warren (2003, 246) that “[i]t is possible in principle to develop multi-dimensional
assessments that connect the basic and still radical meaning of democracy as collective self-government to the highly complex forms emerging within the OECD countries.” What we propose is, however, to concentrate the efforts for such an ambitious undertaking to the subnational level, the place where democratic transformation is conceivably gaining its strongest momentum. Moreover, the need for developing such measures specifically for the subnational level becomes evident when simply applying existing democracy indices to the subnational level, as the resulting measures seem highly implausible (cf. Bühlmann et al. 2009).

In this paper we therefore construct an exemplary measurement instrument which we devise specifically for the case of the subnational level of the Swiss cantons. We believe that the Swiss cantons make for an ideal test field for a first subnational measurement instrument which is to account for liberal and radical views of democracy alike. The cantons of the Swiss federal state constitute distinct democracies with a long standing tradition of direct democracy, combined with a vibrant associational life and encompassing government coalitions (Vatter 2002; Freitag 2004). Besides, the tension between the liberal emphasis on representation and the radical preference for direct democracy is well in line with our guiding hypothesis. We hypothesize that this tension is meaningful in the context of the Swiss cantons in two ways, on the one hand for the historical and cultural contrast between the Latin and the German speaking cantons (cf. Kriesi and Wisler 1996; Stutzer 1999; Trechsel 2000, 23; Vatter 2002, 271, 319, 350, 418) and on the other hand for the antagonism present – by definition – in the institutions of every semi-direct democracy and thus of every Swiss canton.

We base our measurement concept on three central dimensions of democracy for each tradition. These dimensions are distilled from liberal and radical democratic theory respectively in sections 2 and 3. For each dimension we also deduce the related components which in turn are composed of several subcomponents. In section 4 we bring these liberal and radical dimensions together into a multidimensional measurement instrument of democratic qualities. In section 5 we present the resulting measures for the Swiss cantons. Section 6 is devoted to the question whether ‘more democracy’ does in fact induce higher levels of political support. A short conclusion is offered in section 7.

3 Sabine Kropp et al. (2008) have applied Tatu Vanhanen’s Index of Democratization to the German Länder and the Swiss cantons. Even if the index provides for (clearly arbitrary) additional points for referenda, several more participatory cantons even fail to reach a democratic minimum and appear as autocracies instead.
2. The Liberal Model of Democracy

The liberal model of democracy pursued here traces the tradition of protective⁴ liberal democracy: We start with the liberal constitutionalism of Locke, go on to the separation of powers of Montesquieu and Madison, and end with direct responsibility of government towards the electors following Bentham, James Mill and John Stuart Mill. These three dimensions have become the central tenets of theoretical and empirical research on democracy. The *liberal constitutionalism* is being studied in terms of freedom rights and aspects of the rule of law; with regard to the separation of powers, *horizontal accountability* is the central object of reference; and the control of representatives by voters is being discussed under the topic of *electoral accountability*. In the next three sections we will anchor these three dimensions in the liberal theory of democracy and briefly elaborate on the components of each dimension.

2.1. Liberal Constitutionalism

A starting point of the liberal tradition of democracy can be located in the concept of constitutionalism developed by Locke (1963 [1689]), meaning that state powers need to be legally circumscribed in order to secure individual freedom. In the following, we briefly describe the concepts of individual freedom and rule of law.

*Individual Freedom.* Throughout the liberal tradition of democracy we find calls for a whole set of individual *freedom rights*. In his contractual theory, Locke (1963 [1689]) emanated from a natural right to life, liberty and estate. Bentham (1960 [1776]; 1843 [1831]) and James Mill (1937 [1820]) justified freedoms of speech, press and association as remedy for corruption, whereas John Stuart Mill (1982 [1859]) stressed the right to an individual concept of life. Freedom rights, however, need not only be formally adopted but also effectively warranted (Beetham 2004). Freedom rights can only be secured to the extent that the rights and rules of democratic decision-making are also *followed and respected by the individual citizens*. Individual freedom also entails the liberal claim for a *limited scope of the state*. Bentham (1960 [1776]) and James Mill (1937 [1820]) provided for the classical liberal argument for the restriction of state regulation: Free transactions among self-interested individuals promote the utility of all citizens best.

⁴ For the purpose of a clearer distinction from the radical model of democracy, we do not draw on the theoretical stream of “developmental liberal democracy” which understands democracy as a school for promoting individual civic competences (for this distinction cf. Held 2006).
Rule of Law. Locke insisted on legal commitment of the authority, because “where law ends, tyranny begins” (1963 [1689], chap. 18). Montesquieu (1994 [1748]) pleaded for a positive system of laws setting inviolable limits to state action in order to depersonalize the state’s power structure and to limit arbitrariness and corruption. By making reference to inviolable natural laws, Locke and Montesquieu not only implied a formal, but also a substantive supremacy of the law. In liberal democracies, human rights and basic freedom rights are inviolable and must be put out of reach of majority decisions (O’Donnell 2004; Morlino 2004). Otherwise, democracies could turn into “tyrannies of the majority” (Tocqueville 2006 [1835]). Montesquieu (1994 [1748]) further introduced the principle of equality before the law into democratic theory. Rule of law demands equal access to the courts and equal treatment by the law (Beetham 2004).

2.2. Horizontal Accountability

Early on, conceptions of liberal democracy have been coupled to the idea of separation of powers in order to control the government and to ensure that the latter actually sticks to the rules of liberal constitutionalism. Contemporary research on democracy discusses these issues under the notion of horizontal accountability, thereby referring to a “network of relatively autonomous powers (i.e. other institutions) that can call into question, and eventually punish, improper ways of discharging the responsibilities of a given official” (O’Donnell 1994, 61). Accountability encompasses aspects of information, justification and sanction (Schedler 1999, 14-18).

Checks and Balances. According to Locke (1963 [1689]), only the separation of power between the executive and the legislative branch can secure the subordination of both powers to the law and avoid that they pursue own interests. Montesquieu (1994 [1748]) argued for a mixed constitution coupling the monarchic government to an institutional system, where constitutional powers must dispose of differing legal competences. These ‘checks and balances’ later formed a core piece in the Federalist Papers (Hamilton et al. 1788, Art. 47-51). Contemporary research on democracy stresses the need to restrain the executive power through a strong parliament (Beetham and Boyle 1995, 66-74) and a strong opposition (Altman and Pérez-Liñan 2002).

Judicial Independence. According to Montesquieu (1994 [1748], book XI, chap. 6), an independent judiciary is even more important for securing individual rights and preventing repression. Madison (Hamilton et al. 1788, Art. 47-51) called for a professional, politically independent court, deeming elections of judges and term limits to be inappropriate.
Independent Controlling Instances. The abuse of government power may be further contained if rule-making itself becomes the object of judiciary revision, in terms of a constitutional review (Hayek 1960). Furthermore, in order to prevent corruption and arbitrariness, the administration needs to be controlled through an independent administrative court. Other instances are audit agencies, counter corruption commissions, or an ombudsman (Diamond and Morlino 2005, xxi). Such agencies of protection are intended to secure individual freedoms of the citizens against the abuse of power (Beetham 2004, 68, 71).

2.3. Electoral Accountability
For Locke (1963 [1689], 308, 395), the state was a legal creation agreed on by the people, who conferred authority to the government for the purpose of pursuing the ends of the governed. According to Madison (Hamilton et al. 1788, no. 10), representation prevents the threat of a tyranny of the majority emanating from direct democracy: While people are driven by passions, representative institutions are the place for competent deliberation. The notion that government needs to be held directly accountable to the electorate was then introduced by the utilitarians. Secret and competitive elections are to ensure responsive law-making in order to maximize the public good (Bentham 1843 [1831], 47). Modern research on democracy treats this aspect of representation under the term of electoral accountability, understood as relations of accountability between rulers and voters (O’Donnell 2004).  

Periodic Free Elections by Secret Ballot. Periodic elections are understood as a sanctioning mechanism leading rational representatives to take the will of the electorate into account in order to be reelected. Secret ballot is required if electoral preferences are to be expressed without compulsion and fear (Dahl 1998; Beetham 2004).

Competition. Bartolini (1999; 2000) distinguishes several dimensions of electoral competition necessary for democratic accountability. By definition, democratic elections call for the dimension of contestability, that is, the real possibility to enter the race with other participants. Second, the electoral vulnerability of incumbents makes the threat of potential electoral sanctions more effective. Arguably, a party, a coalition, or an incumbent feels

5 Newer concepts of representation encompass descriptive representation and responsiveness (Pitkin 1972). We consider descriptive representation rather as a radical concern and treat it in section 3.3. Responsiveness, understood as disposition of the political system to act according to the wishes of the citizens, can be regarded as an outcome dimension of democratic quality (Diamond and Morlino 2004; 2005). As our democracy measures focus not on outcomes, but on the preceding democratic structures and processes, we do not directly account for responsiveness (cf. Bühlmann, Merkel, and Weßels 2008, 7; Lauth 2004, 25).
vulnerable to the extent that the last/preceding race was close. The threat to the incumbents also depends on the importance of the offer, i.e. the weight of an alternative party or coalition (cf. Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002). A further dimension is electoral availability, i.e. the basic willingness of a voter to eventually modify her or his party choice.

**Clarity of Responsibility.** The evaluation of the incumbent government by the voters requires a clear attribution of responsibilities. Clarity of responsibility is undermined if the political system is characterized by a lack of voting cohesion within the governing party or by coalitions consisting of numerous parties (Powell and Whitten 1993, 399-400).

**Relative Governmental Autonomy.** Although relations of accountability between rulers and voters involve elections as sanctioning measure, they also presuppose a relative governmental autonomy once a government has been elected. In addition to the autonomy of the elected representatives from illegitimate interests (cf. Merkel 2004) and from other state levels, responsible government also involves independence from voters between elections (Pitkin 1972).

### 3. The Radical Model of Democracy

The most important theoretical foundations of the radical model of democracy are the participatory and some of the deliberative theories of democracy, as they have been subsumed under the term of “radical democracy” by Cohen and Fung (2004). However, predecessors of radical theories of democracy reach as far back as to the assembly democracy of ancient Athens, to Rousseau’s republicanism and to (neo-)Marxist theories of democracy (cf. Held 2006, 5, 187). Within the radical tradition, too, three central dimensions of democracy can be discerned: radical participation, public accountability, and inclusion.

#### 3.1. Radical Participation

From a radical democratic point of view, the citizens’ active involvement in politics and in the public life in general is crucial for the unfolding of their civic virtues and for their self-realization. Their individual political participation, thus, is valued for its own sake and even constitutes the main justification for a democratic system (Pateman 1970, 25, 43; see also Barber 1984, 117-162, 232; Macpherson 1977, 114-115). Radical theorists expect that the more competences and opportunities for serious involvement the citizens are granted, the...
more they will actually make use of them and participate. Hence the demands to institutionalize opportunities to participate which are as encompassing and diverse as possible (Pateman 1970; Barber 1984, 272).

**Extended Electoral Rights for the Citizens.** While radical democrats are skeptical towards the delegation of decision-making powers away from the citizens to representative bodies (Rousseau 1762, 235-239; Barber 1984, 145-147), they generally do acknowledge that a system of pure direct-democratic self-rule would be above the capacity of the citizens – hence the need for some delegation (e.g. Barber 1984, 267). In such cases, the citizens shall at least retain extensive powers to control and possibly sanction their delegates. Thus, members not only of the legislative, but also of the executive and of judicial bodies shall be elected in direct popular elections. To prevent those delegates from acting against the citizens’ will, the latter shall be granted rights to recall the former from office ahead of schedule.

**Citizens’ Rights to Directly Decide on Issues.** However, radical democrats maintain that the citizens need instruments to control the decisions on concrete issues directly, in a differentiated manner, and between elections; they must be conferred direct democratic rights to revise decisions by their delegates, and to set new topics on the agenda (Barber 1984, 281-289). It is only by this kind of direct participation that individuals turn into citizens (Barber 1984, 232) and a political system into a participatory democracy (Macpherson 1977, 112); only direct participation entails the immediate self-rule and the sovereignty of the people (cf. also Rousseau 1762). In addition to the most basic rights of popular initiative and popular referendum, more refined direct-democratic rights are also postulated.

**Utilization of Direct-Democratic Rights.** No matter how extensive the formal rights to direct participation in a democracy are, most of their value depends on the extent to which they are made use of. The participatory benefits of individual self-realization and of collective self-rule are supposedly realized to the extent that popular votes are actually held with some regularity.

**Local Self-Rule.** Real self-rule is most meaningful and can best be achieved in the domains on which individual citizens can exert the most direct influence and which concern them most directly: in their most proximate environment (Macpherson 1977, 108; Barber 1984, 267-273). That is why the extent of constitutional, fiscal and perceived autonomy of the local municipalities is seen to be of particular importance.
3.2. Public Accountability

From a radical point of view, the liberal instruments of horizontal and electoral accountability alone are not sufficient for ensuring maximal accountability and responsiveness of the representatives to the citizens; they have to be complemented by mechanisms of public accountability. Informal forms of participation and public discourse enable the society to continuously bring a broad sceptor of concerns into the political process, and to exert control and pressure on those governing (cf. Young 2000, 153, 173-177; Smulovitz and Peruzzotti 2000, 149, 151; Lauth 2004). Public accountability as conceptualized here also comprehends requirements needed to ensure that the citizens may exercise direct participatory rights in a thoughtful way.7

Transparency of Political Processes. One aspect which is central to the accountability of the rulers is the availability of information on the processes in the governmental institutions. The more transparent the debates and decisions in the parliament, the executive, and the courts are and the more actively the governmental institutions communicate about their activities, the better they fulfill their accountability duties toward the public and the more they facilitate a serious both-way discourse with the citizenry (cf. Beetham 1994, 37; Diamond and Morlino 2004; Schmitter 2005).

Media. The public debate which is an essential part of functioning public accountability mechanisms, however, involves not only the relations between government and citizens, but also those among citizens themselves. Independent and diversified media provide an arena for public debate which allows as multifaceted voices as possible to be expressed and which avoids the exclusion of potential participants (cf. Cohen 1989, 22-23; Voltmer 2000). Additionally, the media may assume an own accountability function as ‘watchdogs’ or ‘fourth estate’ critically evaluating the actions of decision-makers (cf. Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2006). The circumstances under which the media operate and the importance a democracy assigns to vivid media are, among else, mirrored by the media rights, such as the prohibition of censorship or the duty of the state to facilitate information diversity (cf. Beetham 1994, 39). However, the extent to which citizens effectively benefit from diverse media ultimately depends on the extent of their media use.

7 In the view of some deliberative theorists (e.g. Fishkin 1991; Offe and Preuss 1991), direct participatory rights for the citizenry may even be counterproductive, if they do not come along with an arena for sufficient information, reflection, and deliberation.
Extra-institutional Participation. Even though extra-institutional forms, such as demonstrations or strikes, in contrast to institutional participation, lack a legally defined sanctioning power, they are “far from ‘toothless’” in making manifest the preferences of the citizenry and holding those governing accountable (Smulovitz and Peruzzotti 2000, 151-152; Young 2001). Such forms of participation can unfold their power more unhamperedly if their free use is granted constitutional protection. But extra-institutional participation also materializes in a broader participative culture which is rooted in the individual citizens and in the civil society and the importance of which has often been stressed by radical democrats (Pateman 1970; Macpherson 1977, 98-114; Barber 1984, 264-266; cf. also Merkel 2004, 46-47). The higher the proportions of politically alert and interested citizens (cf. Fishkin 1991) and of members in civil society organizations are, the richer the public debate and the stronger the pressure on the representatives to act in an accountable way (Beetham 1994, 29-30; Young 2000, 153; Diamond and Morlino 2004, 25; Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2006, 10-12).

3.3. Inclusion
Another central claim of radical democratic theories is the extension of the demos (Schmidt 2010, 236-241). Each person concerned by a future decision is regarded as equally qualified and legitimate to participate in the making of this decision (cf. Rousseau 1762; Barber 1984, 225-229; Dahl 1998, 62-78). The differences between the individuals and groups of a society are not regarded as a point against political equality and inclusion, but, on the contrary, as diversity which benefits a rich public discourse and thereby the rationality of decisions (Dryzek 1990, 41-42; Young 2000, 81-120). Inclusion, in this view, enhances both the quality and the legitimacy of political decisions.

Equal Political Involvement. As the radical democratic claim for inclusion essentially rests on the assumption that all humans are fundamentally equal, it implies not only that those affected by a decision shall be included (cf. Goodin 2007), but that they shall all be equally included, no matter what their background is (Young 2000, 11; Cohen 1989, 22-23). Equal involvement certainly presupposes the broad assignment of equal political rights with the universal right to vote at its heart (cf. Wollstonecraft 2004 [1792]; Marx 1949 [1871]; Paxton et al. 2003). Beyond the formal assignment of equal political rights, radical democratic authors attach importance to the degree that equal participation independent from status or gender is effectively achieved (cf. Smith 2009, 20-22). Equal political involvement is facilitated if the state provides its citizens with a minimal amount of resources which allows
all of them to engage in independent political activity. This embraces both material and immaterial resources such as civic education (cf. Barber 1984; Dahl 1998, 79-80).

Inclusive Representation. To the extent that delegation of powers from citizens to elected bodies is necessary, inclusion also embraces the broad representation of different political and social groups in those bodies (e.g. Young 2000, 152). To begin with, this means that the representative organs should mirror the whole diversity of party preferences present in a society. In the context of the Swiss cantons, the unbiased representation of parties in parliament and the inclusiveness of the governing coalitions can be assessed. Besides, radical democrats also call for representation of the different population groups as defined by social criteria. They do so for essentially three reasons: First, the representation of social groups hints at the extent to which the democratic principle of political equality is actually realized in a society. Second, the inclusion even of marginal groups is seen as enriching the political discourse and enhancing the “social knowledge” of a representative body (Young 2000). Third, if the representatives come from all sections of the population, this may lower the barriers for the communication of the citizens with them and thus enhance the receptiveness of the governmental institutions (Arato 2006). Institutionally, an inclusive representation is furthered by an electoral system favorable to minorities which, by a proportional design, raises low hurdles for minor groups to be elected (cf. Lijphart 2004; Arato 2006).


In the preceding sections, we deduced six dimensions of democracy from liberal and radical theories of democracy, respectively, and further concretized them in several components and subcomponents. Table 1 gives an overview of the dimensions with their components and subcomponents. In this section, we will sketch how we bring together these six dimensions into a measurement instrument for the quality of democracy.

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8 What we are looking at here is not the equal distribution of resources, but only at whether all citizens are entitled to some minimal amount of publicly founded resources which can be regarded as necessary for engaging in independent political activity in the context of radical democratic theory (Rousseau 1762, 124-125; Pateman 1970, 22; cf. also Merkel 2004, 44-45).

9 Our conceptualization of the radical model of democracy does, in contrast, not adopt an argument which is put forth particularly by (neo-)Marxists and which holds that features like gender or education largely determine an individuals’ political preferences (e.g., Marx 1949 [1871]; cf. also Young 2000, 87-89, 147-148).
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<td>Professionalization</td>
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<td>Organizational independence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Independent controlling instances</td>
<td>Administrative jurisdiction</td>
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<td>Extra-institutional participation</td>
<td>Constitutional protection of extra-institutional participation rights</td>
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<td>Constitutional review</td>
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<td>Participative culture</td>
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<td>Agencies of protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electoral accountability</td>
<td>Free elections</td>
<td>Periodic free elections by secret ballot</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Equal political involvement</td>
<td>Universal and equal right to vote</td>
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<td>Equal participation</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Minimal amount of resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Electoral vulnerability of incumbents</td>
<td>Electoral vulnerability in government</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusive representation</td>
<td>Electoral system favorable to minorities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Electoral vulnerability in parliament</td>
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<td>Representation of parties in parliament</td>
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<td>Electoral availability</td>
<td>Willingness of modifying a party choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusiveness of the governing coalitions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clarity of responsibility</td>
<td>Government responsibility is clearly attributable</td>
<td></td>
<td>Proportional representation of socio-structural groups</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Conceptualization. The conceptualization of the quality of democracy we propose is innovative in that it takes into account the dimensions of the radical democratic tradition along with the established liberal dimensions. By basing the concept on a number of different dimensions, we obtain a multidimensional measurement instrument and thus follow a methodological suggestion by Pickel and Pickel (Pickel and Pickel 2006, 269; see also Bühlmann et al. 2008; Bühlmann, Merkel, and Weßels 2008). Our approach enables us to capture the qualities of pronouncedly liberal and radical democracies in a differentiated way.

We understand the six dimensions as abstract democratic functions. The latter may be realized by concrete, formal and informal institutional arrangements which are fit to their respective cultural and political context. These institutions appear on the lower levels of the measurement instrument. The structuring of the dimensions into components and subcomponents makes this instrument hierarchical. By consistently and successively deducing each subunit from its respective upper level from the very stage of conceptualization, we accommodate the methodological critique on existent measures of democracy; furthermore, the dangers of redundancy and conflation were avoided by defining the components and subcomponents in a mutually exclusive way (cf. Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 12-14).

Measurement. While the subcomponents are much more concrete than the overarching dimensions, we still regard them as ‘latent variables’ (cp. Bollen 1989, chap. 6; Treier and Jackman 2008) to be approximated by multiple indicators. Actual measurement was thus achieved by operationalizing each subcomponent through a number of quantifiable indicators (see Appendix for a list of all indicators used). In order to capture the fine variations in the quality of the single dimensions of democracy, not only formal institutions (‘rules in form’) were recorded, but also less formalized structural characteristics (‘rules in use’) of the cantonal democracies. In this context, it is important to note that there is some inherent trade-off between the two scientific objectives of differentiation and of parsimony. In our view, the goal to assess differences in the democratic qualities of well-established, culturally relatively close subnational democracies requires a rather fine-grained and complex instrument which also assesses to which degree and in which manner formal democratic institutions actually work in a given context (Bühlmann et al. 2008, 117; Bühlmann et al. 2009, 459).

10 We draw on the functional research strategy which Lauth (2004) suggests for intercultural comparisons of democracies: universal democratic functions may be realized by diverse, context-specific “functional equivalents”.
Our approach can be exemplified by our operationalization of the dimension of public accountability for the context of the Swiss cantons: the respective indicators include the legal enactment of the general rule that any governmental documents are freely accessible to the public and the legal rules on information duties for the public authorities, but also an indicator measuring the extent to which the sessions of the executive, the legislative and the judiciary bodies are actually open to the public. The media system’s contribution to a high-quality public accountability is measured, first, by the number and the spread of regional and local newspapers edited in a given canton and in a given year (media diversity); second, survey data are used to determine the cantonal levels of media use by the citizens; finally, an analysis of the relevant legal texts was conducted to measure the legal provisions for promoting information diversity and citizens’ access to the media. The third component in the dimension of public accountability, i.e. extra-institutional participation, was assessed based on the constitutional guarantees of freedoms to demonstrate and to strike, and on survey data reporting citizens’ membership rates in civil society organizations or their interest in politics.

These examples highlight that we relied on data of various kinds and from various sources (e.g., survey data and legal provisions). Such source variety, in our view, strengthens the validity of the results by reducing the danger of a systematic measurement bias (Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 15-16; Lauth 2004, 306-307). The same is true for the relatively high number of indicators: a total of 178 indicators have finally been included in our measurement instrument, thus ensuring that each subcomponent is measured by at least two indicators (see Appendix). Initially, even 371 indicators were assigned to the theoretically derived subcomponents and then scrutinized for dimensionalities by factor analysis. As could be expected, not all indicators within the same subcomponent actually loaded on the same factor. Particularly, proxy indicators relying on constitutional declarations often contrasted with indicators capturing ‘rules in use’. Due to the bias in data availability, it would be insensitive to rely on the factor on which the highest number of indicators loads. Instead, we pre-assessed the validity and reliability of the indicators based on qualitative considerations. Indicators gained from a more thorough and more encompassing analysis of laws and practices were put at the center of the validation process, while indicators of more peripheral or symbolic nature
were removed if necessary. In this way, 48 subcomponents were operationalized by a total of 178 indicators by calculating the respective factor-scores.\footnote{We used SPSS and calculated the factor-scores by the regression method based on a principal components factor analysis. Six of the forty-eight subcomponents were further divided into sub-subcomponents, which then were treated as the latent variables.}

It goes without saying that collecting the relevant data for this number of indicators required a large effort, all the more so because our data-set was constructed to cover all 26 cantons on a year-wise basis for 1979-2009. Partly, time series data could be drawn from secondary sources, but for many indicators primary data had to be collected. Coding of the primary data was conducted by defining exclusive coding categories. Where appropriate, dichotomous coding of indicators was avoided since even constitutional and legal provisions often exhibit gradual variation beyond the distinction ‘absent vs. present’ (cf. also Lauth 2004, 306).

Despite our efforts, it was not possible to find suitable data for all years of the research period. In these cases, we filled the gaps in the time series with extra- and interpolated data which we generated in two alternative ways: either we assigned the value documented for one year to the preceding and/or following years as well, thus creating periods with a constant value each; for other indicators, we relied on linear inter- and/or extrapolation, thus creating constant longitudinal trends. The choice which of these two inter-/extrapolation techniques was more appropriate was guided by careful substantive considerations for each specific indicator.\footnote{Substantive considerations influenced data coding also for a limited number of indicators where the secondary literature and our case-specific knowledge made us doubt the validity of values gained by schematic quantitative measurement, mainly for the two small cantons of Appenzell Ausserrhoden and Appenzell Innerrhoden which are special cases in several respects. For example, party structures are very weakly institutionalized in Ausserrhoden and Innerrhoden. Therefore, no exact data are available on the parliamentary seat shares of parties. For measuring electoral competition we took into account not only estimations of the seat shares of parties but also of professional associations and of non-partisan MPs since the latter two categories play a distinctive role in the politics of these two cantons.}

Due to limitations in space, we cannot display exact coding details for each indicator in this paper. However, the detailed codebook and the disaggregate data for each indicator shall be made accessible online at a later stage; for the time being, they are available from the authors upon request.

**Aggregation.** As for the aggregation of the subcomponents towards components and dimensions of democracy, we relied on our hierarchical theoretical conceptualization of democratic dimensions. We calculated the democratic measures by averaging the z-
standardized subordinated components which implies that each of these components enters our democratic measures with the same weight, according to our hierarchical set of normative criteria. Moreover averaging supposes additive relationships between democratic components, where a low score on one component can be made up with a higher score on another component.

In the same way the three z-standardized liberal dimensions were averaged into a liberal index of democratic quality. Such a meta-index facilitates theorizing and testing on liberal democracy. Theoretically we equally intended aggregating the radical dimensions into a radical index of democracy. Empirically, however, the next section will show that the Swiss cantons combine the radical dimensions in quite different ways. Two of the dimensions even exhibit a negative relationship. Consequently, in the case of the Swiss cantons the radical dimensions represent the optimal level of aggregation: By considering the liberal index of democracy along with the radical dimensions of democracy we account for the empirical multidimensionality of cantonal democracies, while at the same time keeping the number of democratic measures reasonably small (cp. Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 22-23).

Alternatively we also considered a factorizing aggregation strategy, repeating the procedure described above. From a democratic theoretical view, however, an unequal weighting of conceptually equivalent appears as problematic. This is most obvious when single components are excluded entirely as – in the case of the cantonal years under investigation – they do not load on the same factor. When we subsequently included such components with their proportional weight, the final results were very similar to the ones arising from the more transparent and more comprehensible averaging procedure. Whereas we treated the subcomponents as latent variables which are presumed in the dimension formed by empirically validated indicators, at higher levels of aggregation we think the theoretical concept tree is better seen as a hierarchical set of normative criteria, which cannot be validated empirically.

A more sophisticated strategy would theoretically deduce differentiated weighting schemes as well as define aggregation rules based on the theoretical relationships between democratic components (Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 23-27). While our constructed models of democracy intend to tap central dimensions and components of liberal and radical conceptions of democracy, it is beyond our ambition to theoretically justify particular relationships between democratic components, nor would we theoretically ascribe them differential weights. Lacking in encompassing and precise theories of how elements of liberal and radical democracy combine and interact, we instead decided to draw on additive aggregation.

Depending on the research question at hand one might also want to combine the six dimensions into an overall index of democratic quality. Such an overall index clearly stands in line with existing broader conceptualizations of democracy. Diamond and Morlino (2004; 2005), for instance, combine the following procedural dimensions: Rule of law, participation, competition, vertical accountability, and horizontal accountability. The aspects of freedom and equality are treated as substantial dimensions; responsiveness is
In order to facilitate comparisons over space and time, we then standardized all aggregated
democratic measures. Each democracy is located on a scale between zero and one, where zero
denotes the worst practice reported for any cantonal democracy between 1979 and 2009, and
one stands for the best practice ever achieved within this time span.

5. The Quality of Democracy in the Swiss Cantons

When applied to the Swiss cantons, the proposed measurement instrument discloses a large
diversity of the cantonal democracies. The variation over space and time is best illustrated by
the following radar charts, depicting the measures for the six aggregated dimensions of
democracy for each of the 26 cantons (figure 1). Within these radar charts the development
over time is indicated by the measurement points for 1979, 1994 and 2009, where we notice a
general increase of democratic qualities in most cantons. Several cantons show one-time
leaps with regard to liberal constitutionalism as they had their constitutions totally revised
lately. More incremental were improvements on horizontal accountability, public
accountability and inclusion, reflecting new regulations and political-societal developments.
With regard to electoral accountability we recorded some cantons catching up, while we
observe a slight convergence in terms of radical participation.

While high levels of radical participation is a characteristic feature of the Swiss subnational
democracies, the rising levels of public accountability and inclusion parallel much of the
expected democratic transformations in advanced industrial democracies (Cain, Dalton, and
Scarrow 2003). More peculiar to the subnational referendum democracies of Switzerland is
their profound expansion towards the liberal ideal of democracy in the last three decades. This
is certainly true for the improved horizontal accountability in most Swiss cantons which
reflects international trends favoring judicial independence, administrative jurisdiction,
constitutional review (cf. Cichowski and Stone Sweet 2003) and other protective agencies (i.e.
onbudsman, independent financial control; cf. Ansell and Gingrich 2003b). But also the
numerous constitutional reforms and the enhanced electoral accountability are an expression
of a remarkable democratic transformation taking place at the Swiss subnational level.

denoted as a result-oriented dimension. – See also the Democracy Barometer (Bühlmann, Merkel, and Weßels

16 While this observation is certainly plausible to some extent, it possibly also reflects a certain bias in our
selection of indicators, overstating more recent achievements while underexposing issues debated in past
decades.
Figure 1. Radar charts for the quality of democracy in the 26 Swiss cantons, 1979, 1994 and 2009
Figure 1. (Contd.)

Legend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Liberal constitutionalism</td>
<td>Status in 1979</td>
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<tr>
<td>HA</td>
<td>Horizontal accountability</td>
<td>Status in 1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>PA</td>
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<td>Status in 2009</td>
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<td>EA</td>
<td>Electoral accountability</td>
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<td>INC</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
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</table>

Notes: The origin stands for the lowest value achieved in the corresponding dimension which has ever been achieved by any canton between 1979 and 2009 (worst practice), the outer end of the axes for the highest ever achieved value (best practice). The cantons have been arranged according to their index value for liberal democracy (average of LC, HA, EA) in the year 2009.
When comparing the Swiss cantons in the cross-section we noticed that several cantons dispose of relatively high values along all three liberal dimensions, thus disposing of a high quality index of liberal democracy. In figure 1 we therefore sorted the cantonal democracies according to their liberal index in the year 2009. In contrast, the radical dimensions are combined in very different ways – there is no single canton with high values on all three radical dimensions. Even though radical democrats have often referred to the Swiss democracy at the subnational level (cf. Rousseau 1762; Barber 1988), we cannot find any corresponding prototype. Swiss reality further challenges the radical model of democracy as we find evidence for a democratic trade-off between radical participation and inclusion. Contrary to the radical critique to liberal democracy it is the more liberal democracies that prove to be more inclusive, while radical participation even seems to preclude democratic inclusion (figure 2).

**Figure 2. Degree of inclusion in liberal and participatory cantonal democracies, 2009**

![Graph showing degree of inclusion in liberal and participatory cantonal democracies, 2009](image)

*Notes: The regression lines are all based on significant coefficients (90%-level or higher), regardless of whether outliers (hollow circles) are considered or not (cp. dashed lines). Outliers were defined by |Dfbeta|>0.392 (Belsley, Kuh, and Welsch 1980). For reasons of readability the indices have been multiplied by 100.*

Even though the empirical evidence for the Swiss cantons points to a dilemma of radical democracy, we should not conclude that radical democracy must necessarily remain a hypothetical construct. We must, however, be cautious of expecting a concurrent expansion of radical democratic qualities whenever venturing radical democratic reforms. As our analysis corroborates earlier findings on the exclusionary character of more demanding channels of participation (Trechsel 1999, 564; Dalton, Cain, and Scarrow 2003, 263), it seems worthwhile to consider more accessible forms of public debate (televised democracy), less demanding modes of participation (e-democracy) or more direct forms of representation (deliberative mini-publics), or a mix thereof (Budge 1996; Fuchs 2007; Warren 2009).
6. Political Support in Liberal and Radical Democracies

The creation of mass democracy in the early twentieth century and now the political reforms in many advanced industrial democracies can be seen as a response of the political elite to a more critical and more demanding democratic public (Cain, Dalton, and Scarrow 2003). Then as now are such populist reforms usually guided by the Jeffersonian credo: The cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy. But does ‘more democracy’ really induce higher levels of public support?

Liberal democrats would in fact expect quite the contrary. The alleged crisis of the liberal democratic welfare state, for that matter, was initially seen as a result from an “overload with participants and demands” (Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki 1975, 12; Huntington 1981). The thesis of ‘overloaded government’ states that growing prosperity has fuelled public expectations and group demands, leading to an ever growing and ineffective welfare state and again to further popular pressure – a vicious circle which can be only broken by a firm political leadership which must respond less to popular demands (Brittan 1975; 1977; Nordhaus 1975; King 1976; Rose and Peters 1977; cf. Held 2006, 193). An influential leader of this current of thought was the neo-liberal democrat Friedrich Hayek (cf. Gamble 1996) who warned from the dynamics of mass democracy and its progressive displacement by the rule of oppressive state agents (Hayek 1978, 152–162).

Radical democrats in contrast generally embrace the Jeffersonian conviction. Instead of adhering to the neo-conservative thesis of the overloaded government they have rather followed the less prominent neo-Marxist thesis of a ‘legitimation crisis’: Citizen interests were compromised in capitalist democracies, thus requiring radical democratic reforms (Habermas 1973; Offe 1972). Participatory democrats of this time criticized thin democracy of the liberal type for alienating the citizens, while only a ‘strong democracy’ of a participatory type could strengthen citizenship and the political community (Barber 1984, 232). Additionally, radical participation was also seen as enabling “collective decisions to be more easily accepted by the individual” (Pateman 1970, 27). Radical democratic thought has also resisted the heralded triumph of liberal democracy after the collapse of soviet communism (cf. Fukuyama 1989), with deliberative theories in particular moving to the forefront of scholarly debate. Iris Young (2000, 128) for instance stresses the legitimizing function of participatory and inclusive-deliberative democracy. And while liberal theories of political trust seem to concentrate on limiting the risks of trust, Mark Warren (1999) discusses
deliberative democracy as a potential device for actually cultivating political relations of ‘warranted trust’.

Beyond this theoretical debate between liberal and radical democrats we also find several empirical comparative studies, arguing that ‘consensus democracy’ leads to higher political support as it maximizes the number of winners (Lijphart 1999, 286; Norris 1999b; 2011, chap. 10). But the findings from the international comparisons are flawed and are of little help for assessing how liberal and radical democracy affect political support, as they have lacked corresponding measures of democracy.

With the measures of liberal and radical qualities of the Swiss cantonal democracies at hand we are now in the unique position to test the respective claims of liberal and radical democrats by means of a comparative empirical analysis. Irrespective of the direction of the effects of liberal and radical qualities of democracy on political support it seems plausible that these two fundamental traditions of political thought might be of utmost relevance for explaining public support. Moreover the Swiss subnational laboratory of democracy is particularly well suited for causal inferences, as the cantons dispose of a large variation in the democratic measures of interest while moving within the bounds of a common federal constitution and sharing similar socioeconomic conditions (cf. Przeworski 1970). Even though we have not found full-fledged radical democracies in Switzerland, the cantonal variation allows us to test the partial effects of each radical dimension separately.

In our analysis we measure political support with the Selects (2003; 2007) survey items for institutional trust and community support at the cantonal level. We assume that individual political support is shaped by an individual’s values and socialization as well as by contextual cantonal characteristics, notably by the cantons democratic quality. We perform multilevel analyses, as it allows to reliably estimating individual and contextual effects within the same model (Snijders and Bosker 1999; Jones 1997). The data structure of the two surveys in 2003 and 2007 is reflected by embedding the individuals (level 1) in their canton (level 2) and these cantons within the respective year of the survey (level 3).

We proceeded stepwise. Before testing the effects of our democratic measures we specified individual models of institutional trust and community support (see appendix, table 5). We then added several indices of political performance and other control variables at the contextual level (not reported). Only the significant contextual variables were kept for the subsequent analyses on the effects of our democratic measures. In table 2 we report our
Table 2. Multilevel models of institutional trust – 25 cantons, 2003 and 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
<th>Model 7</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sigma^2_{\text{u0}}$ (intercept)</td>
<td>0.010*</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.018**</td>
<td>0.015*</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level: individuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sigma^2_{\text{e}}$ (residuals)</td>
<td>3.192***</td>
<td>3.202***</td>
<td>3.190***</td>
<td>3.191***</td>
<td>3.200***</td>
<td>3.193***</td>
<td>3.196***</td>
<td>3.192***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MODEL CHARACTERISTICS</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-2*loglikelihood</td>
<td>31284</td>
<td>30330</td>
<td>31289</td>
<td>31288</td>
<td>30813</td>
<td>31285</td>
<td>31282</td>
<td>29957</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of cantons</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of individuals</td>
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<td>7577</td>
<td>7820</td>
<td>7820</td>
<td>7698</td>
<td>7820</td>
<td>7487</td>
<td>7820</td>
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<td>NW</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>NW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excluded cantons</td>
<td>AI, NE</td>
<td>AI, NE</td>
<td>AI, NE</td>
<td>AI, NE</td>
<td>AI, NE</td>
<td>AI, NE</td>
<td>AI, NE</td>
<td>JU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** The dependent variable is the eleven-point scale for trust in cantonal authorities (0 = no trust; 10 = full trust). All contextual variables were previously mean centered. The estimates present unstandardized IGLS-regression coefficients and their standard errors (in parentheses) as computed in MLwiN. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

**Source:** SELECTS (2003; 2007; 2010) for individual data, Schaub and Dlabac (2012) for democracy measures, Bundesamt für Statistik (diverse Jahrgänge) and Bundesamt für Statistik and IPW Universität Bern (diverse Jahrgänge) for other contextual data.
models for individual institutional trust where each of our four measures of democracy are considered separately. As our observations are related to only 26 cantons we also check for the robustness of our findings. By means of bivariate scatterplots on the cantonal share of ‘trusting’ individuals (not reported) we identified the most influencing data-points\textsuperscript{17} as outliers to be excluded from analysis.

In all models we find a significant negative effect of the welfare state\textsuperscript{18}, giving at least partial support to the neo-liberal explanation for low levels of trust. However, in terms of democratic measures the robust significant negative effect of liberal democracy (model 2) gives strong support to the radical democratic view that liberal democracy alienates the citizens. We can also preclude a spurious correlation caused by a larger societal heterogeneity coinciding with liberal democracy, as the effect remains even when controlling for the effective number of parties (model 8). Yet claiming that ‘more democracy’ or radical democratic qualities would cure the ills of present liberal democracies would clearly be exaggerated: There is no single radical dimension showing significant positive effects on institutional trust. At least we do not find robust evidence for a similar corrosive effect as was found for liberal democracy.

Table 3 shows our models for individual community support. In contrast the previous models our ‘Latin culture’ variable as well as our output index of the welfare state remain insignificant with regard to community support. Instead we find a robust negative effect for our ‘lean government’ index.\textsuperscript{19} This result now supports the radical democratic reasoning that limiting the scope of the state is detrimental to the cultivation of a strong political community yet we would not want to overstate this interpretation. In terms of democratic measures the

\textsuperscript{17} [Dfbeta]\textgreater{}0.392 (Belsley, Kuh, and Welsch 1980).

\textsuperscript{18} In analogy to our democracy measures we calculated an (neo-Marxist) output index for the welfare state based on four indicators for the years 2003 and 2007: social expenditures, health expenditures and educational expenditures (canton and municipalities, per capita; Eidgenössische Finanzverwaltung diverse Jahrgänge); index for fiscal redistribution (available for 2006 only; Rotzinger 2010). The latter index compares income distribution before and after tax. Alternatively we found a positive effect for our (neo-liberal) output index of a lean government (cf. next footnote), yet the effect was only due to the so called ‘city-cantons’ Basel-Stadt and Genève (outliers). No effects were found for our (neo-liberal) outcome index of wealth (GDP, growth, full employment) and for our (neo-Marxist) outcome indices of social justice (income inequality, educational inequality).

\textsuperscript{19} The index is based on five indicators: tax revenue, state expenditures and administration expenditures (canton and municipalities, per capita; Eidgenössische Finanzverwaltung diverse Jahrgänge); public deficit in % of GDP and public debt per capita. The effect remains significant also when excluding the ‘city-cantons’ Basel-Stadt and Genève (outliers).
### Table 3. Multilevel models of community support – 25 cantons, 2003 and 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>FIXED PART</th>
<th>INDIVIDUAL LEVEL (common coefficients)</th>
<th>CONTEXTUAL LEVEL: CANTON (common coefficients)</th>
<th>VARIANCE COMPONENTS (RANDOM PART)</th>
<th>MODEL CHARACTERISTICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Democracy measures (mean values of last 10 years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Liberal democracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>-1.227*** (0.135)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.892*** (0.276)</td>
<td>-1.199*** (0.054)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>-1.203*** (0.136)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.608** (0.276)</td>
<td>-0.179*** (0.052)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>-1.239*** (0.137)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4</td>
<td>-1.229*** (0.137)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5</td>
<td>-1.226*** (0.136)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 6</td>
<td>-1.204*** (0.137)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 7</td>
<td>-1.216*** (0.134)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (=very attached)</td>
<td>1.142*** (0.135)</td>
<td>Constant (&gt;=rather attached)</td>
<td>1.127*** (0.136)</td>
<td>Liberal democracy</td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (&gt;=rather not attached)</td>
<td>3.112*** (0.147)</td>
<td>Constant (&gt;=rather not attached)</td>
<td>3.094*** (0.149)</td>
<td>Radical participation</td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference category (&gt;=not attached at all)</td>
<td>3.112*** (0.147)</td>
<td>Reference category (&gt;=not attached at all)</td>
<td>3.150*** (0.150)</td>
<td>Public accountability</td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lean government</td>
<td>-0.581** (0.248)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.743** (0.292)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population size (log)</td>
<td>-0.199*** (0.054)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.476* (0.297)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective number of parties (Laakso-Taagepera)</td>
<td>-0.197 (0.294)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.307 (0.209)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.743** (0.292)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.305 (0.320)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.161*** (0.053)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.172*** (0.347)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.195** (0.084)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level: years</td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
<td>Level: years</td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
<td>Lean government</td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level: cantons</td>
<td>0.065*** (0.021)</td>
<td>Level: cantons</td>
<td>0.054*** (0.019)</td>
<td>Population size (log)</td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No. of years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Effective number of parties (Laakso-Taagepera)</td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of cantons</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>No. of cantons</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of individuals</td>
<td>7820</td>
<td>No. of individuals</td>
<td>7820</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing canton</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Missing canton</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded cantons</td>
<td>AI, SO</td>
<td>Excluded cantons</td>
<td>AI, SO</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Logit transformed ordered proportional odds model for the four-point scale for attachment to the canton. All contextual variables were previously mean centered. The estimates present unstandardized PQL-regression coefficients and their standard errors (in parentheses) as computed in MLwiN. ***, p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: SELECTS (2003; 2007; 2010) for individual data, Schaub and Dlabac (2012) for democracy measures, Bundesamt für Statistik (diverse Jahrgänge) and Bundesamt für Statistik and IPW Universität Bern (diverse Jahrgänge) for other contextual data.
picture is the same as before: Liberal democracy turns out as the one robust variable with a corrosive effect on community support as well.

This corroborating result thus gives us further confidence for stating a general negative effect of liberal democracy on political support. Whereas in the preceding section we diagnosed a dilemma of radical democracy due to the empirical trade-off between radical participation and inclusion, now it is liberal democracy facing a dilemma: Citizens in liberal cantonal democracies are significantly less supportive of both their political institutions and their political community.

While to participatory democracies we recommended to improve inclusion by means of democratic innovations, liberal democracy seems to struggle with its public acceptance. If the liberal model of democracy is to be maintained, political elites are highly recommended to look for innovative ways of public accountability and justification which – again – would involve more accessible forms of public debate (televised democracy) or the selective use of deliberative mini-publics (Budge 1996; Fuchs 2007; Warren 2009)

7. Conclusions

Whereas established national and subnational democracies are probably witnessing a fundamental democratic transformation (Cain, Dalton, and Scarrow 2003), empirical democracy research is clearly lagging behind with establishing adequate measurement instruments in order to capture these trends. Pressing questions of democracy research could therefore be discussed only on a speculative base.

In this paper we thus presented an exemplary multidimensional measurement instrument for subnational democracies which is capable of assessing democratic transformations, be they liberal or radical in nature. Moreover, the democratic measures for the Swiss cantons proved valuable for addressing central questions of democracy research on an empirical base. First, we demonstrated how these trends led to a higher democratic quality at the subnational level of the Swiss cantons. Second, we found an empirical trade-off between radical participation and inclusion, which points to a possible dilemma of radical democracy. Third, the Jeffersonian dictum of ‘more democracy’ being the cure for the ills of democracy could not be substantiated in the case of the Swiss cantons. While radical qualities of democracy were of no harm to political support, they were not conducive to it either. More importantly, liberal
democracy is now facing a dilemma as it is corrosive to both institutional trust and community support.

Even if we offered some general ideas of how these two dilemmas could be dissolved, concrete reform recommendations for the Swiss cantons would need further qualitative assessments which would take our large amount of data as a starting point. It is also not our intention to decide whether inclusive liberal democracies with low political support are to be preferred against exclusive participatory democracies with an average political support. Instead we suggest that citizens of liberal and radical democracies alike reflect on their canton’s democratic qualities and its transformative potentials.


### Appendix

#### Table 4. Short definitions of the indicators used for measuring liberal and radical democracy\(^{20}\)

**Liberal Constitutionalism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual freedom</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_priv</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed protection of the privacy sphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_dign</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed protection of human dignity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_life</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed right to life, physical and psychic integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_info</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_data</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed protection against misuse of personal data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_mov</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_sciant</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed right to academic freedom and freedom of art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_opin</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of opinion (building, uttering, propagating, and receiving)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_bel</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of faith, conscience and creed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_home</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed protection of the sanctities of the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_est</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_prop</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed protection of property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_eco</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of trade and occupational choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_expro</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed restrictions to expropriation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for rights and rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_gr_re</td>
<td>Constitutionally codified duty to respect the rights of others when exercising one’s own basic liberties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_legdut</td>
<td>Explicit constitutional codification of everybody’s obligation to comply with his legal duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_oridsec</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of the state’s responsibility to protect the public security and order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- crime_rate_N</td>
<td>Number of convictions under the penal law, per 1000 inhabitants (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited scope of the state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual scope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Staatsko_od_N</td>
<td>Total public expenditures by canton and municipalities, in CHF per capita (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Verku_od_N</td>
<td>Cantonal (and municipal) expenditures for general administration and authorities, in CHF per capita (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- verwv_d_kgeom_od_N</td>
<td>Public employees of canton and municipalities together, per 100 inhabitants (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional provisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_check</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of a continuous assessment of public tasks for their necessity/Portability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_finvorb</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of conditional financing before adopting new public tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_taxhurd</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of institutional barriers for tax increases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rule of law**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supremacy of the law</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal supremacy of the law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_pr_hear</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of a right to a court hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_geovorb</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of legal proviso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_pr_persoan</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of the prohibition on retroactive legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_pr_judgm</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of a right for justified court ruling and instruction on the right to appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_willverb</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of the prohibition of arbitrariness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive supremacy of the law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_grr_restr</td>
<td>Constitutional restrictions of curtailing basic rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_grkm</td>
<td>Constitutional codification the commitment of public power and individuals to the basic rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality before the law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_pr_fair</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of the right for a fair (and equal) treatment in court hearings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_gratadv</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of the right for a free legal advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_pr_grat</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of the right of deprived people for free legal assistance and legal aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_disverb</td>
<td>Explicit constitutional prohibition of discriminating/benefiting certain groups with regard to the equality before the law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_rechtsgd</td>
<td>Explicit constitutional codification of a general equality before the law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of minorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting behavior favoring minorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MF_Frauen</td>
<td>Minority-friendliness of cantonal voting results at national polls regarding women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MF_Sprachminor</td>
<td>Minority-friendliness of cantonal voting results at national polls regarding language minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MF_Alte</td>
<td>Minority-friendliness of cantonal voting results at national polls regarding elderly people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MF_Behinderte</td>
<td>Minority-friendliness of cantonal voting results at national polls regarding handicapped people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MF_Auslaend</td>
<td>Minority-friendliness of cantonal voting results at national polls regarding foreigners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MF_Militaerverweig</td>
<td>Minority-friendliness of cantonal voting results at national polls regarding deniers of military service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MF_Junge_Stimmrecht</td>
<td>Minority-friendliness of cantonal voting results at national polls regarding the voting right of younger people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional provisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_lang</td>
<td>Constitutional guarantee of language freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_migprot</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of the protection of the rights of minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_tr_cohab</td>
<td>Constitutional guarantee of the freedom of the form of cohabitation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{20}\) The detailed codebook, the data and a method paper are available upon request (Schaub and Dlabac 2012).
### Horizontal Accountability

#### Strength of parliament versus government

| Independence |  |
|--------------|  |
| Eröffnung, N | Opening of the new legislature period by government (inverse) |
| Parlamentsdienst | Independent parliamentary secretariat resp. later parliamentary services |
| ist, Unver | Incompatibility of governmental and parliamentary mandate |

| Supervisory rights |  |
|-------------------|  |
| Akteneinsicht_AufsKomm | Insight in files by inspection commissions |
| Informationen | Information right of members of parliament explicitly codified |
| Akteninsicht_allgKomm | Inquiry and insight in files by general commissions |
| PUK | Possibility of inserting a (powerful) parliamentary fact finding commission legally provided |

| Legislative competencies |  |
|--------------------------|  |
| Legislative competencies of parliament |  |
| Reg_programm | Parliament treats government program |
| Parlinit | Possibility of parliamentary initiative |
| Fragestunde | Possibility of question time |

| Legislative competencies of government |  |
|----------------------------------------|  |
| Finanzbeihilfes_N | Financial competences of government (inverse) |
| Dinglichkeitsrecht_N | Right of urgent acts by government (inverse) |
| Notrecht_N | Right in state of emergency by government (inverse) |

#### Power sharing in parliament

| Power sharing regulations |  |
|---------------------------|  |
| kv_readings | Constitutionally defined number of readings before adoption of laws by parliament |
| minfrakrel_N | Number of members of parliament necessary for building a fraction, in relation to the number of seats in parliament (inverse) |

#### Strength of opposition in parliament

| Oppositionsstärke | Index of effective power of opposition parties versus governing parties in parliament (seat shares) |
| CoalitType2 | Coalition type of government (minority, surplus majority, minimal winning, hegemonial) |

#### Judicial independence

| Separation from government and parliament |  |
|------------------------------------------|  |
| Unvereinbar_KR | Incompatibility of mandate at the cantonal high court with parliamentary mandate |
| Funktionelle-Unabhängigkeit | Independence of courts/jurisdiction codified in constitution or law |
| Unvereinbar_RR | Incompatibility of mandate at the cantonal high court with government mandate |

| Personal independence |  |
|-----------------------|  |
| Unvereinbar_Anwalt | Incompatibility of mandate at the cantonal high court with mandate as advocate |
| Präsidentenwahl | Instance for confirming resp. electing the president of the cantonal high court |
| Unvereinbar_VR | Incompatibility of mandate at the cantonal high court with an administrative board mandate |
| Amtsdauer | Term of office of judges at the cantonal high court |
| Amtszeitbeschränkung_N | Limitation of term of office at the cantonal high court (inverse) |

| Professionalization |  |
|---------------------|  |
| Eignungsprüfung | Instance for controlling ability and eligibility of candidates for the cantonal high court |
| Wahlvorbereitung | Instance preparing elections |
| Aufsichtsorgan | Instance of superintendence |

| Organizational independence |  |
|-----------------------------|  |
| Budgetrecht | Own budget preparation through the courts |
| Verwaltungsaufmone | Constitutionally or legally codified right of autonomous administration of courts or jurisdiction |
| Antragsrecht_Parl | Right for applying for finances directly at the parliament |
| Anstellung_Kanzlei | Appointment of chancellery by highest cantonal court |

#### Independent controlling instances

| Administrative jurisdiction |  |
|-----------------------------|  |
| Verwaltungsgericht | Administrative court as ultimate authority in disputes concerning administrative law |
| Generalklausel | Efficacy of administrative court |
| VerwaltungsG_Jahre | Years since introduction of an administrative court |
| Rechtsweggarantie | Guaranteed recourse to the cantonal courts also in cases concerning federal administrative law |

| Constitutional review |  |
|-----------------------|  |
| Verfassungsgericht | Institutionalized constitutional court |
| VerfG_Index | Index of powers of courts regarding constitutional review |

| Agencies of protection |  |
|------------------------|  |
| Ombuds | Existence of a cantonal ombudsman |
| FK_Umfang | Scope of financial control |
| kv_fincont | Constitutionally guaranteed independence of financial control |
### Electoral Accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>secelec_parl</td>
<td>Secret ballot at elections of cantonal parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secelec_reg</td>
<td>Secret ballot at elections of cantonal government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Electoral vulnerability of incumbents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CompRegElec2</td>
<td>Difference between number of candidates and number of mandates in last total renewal elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampfwahl_Reg</td>
<td>More candidates than seats in last total renewal elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wett_reg_so</td>
<td>100% minus seat share of strongest party in government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wett_parl_se_N</td>
<td>Difference between largest and second largest party in parliament, in % of all seats (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wett_parl_so</td>
<td>100% minus seat share of strongest party in parliament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Electoral availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volatilitaet_se_year</td>
<td>Parliamentary volatility: Net change of seat shares of parties, standardized for the length of legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reg_stab2</td>
<td>Change in party composition of government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Clarity of responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reg_party_N</td>
<td>Number of governing parties (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spann_N</td>
<td>Range of party composition of governing coalition (inverse)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Relative governmental autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reglegisl</td>
<td>Term of office of government, in years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parllegisl</td>
<td>Term of office in parliament, in years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referendumsausschuss</td>
<td>No subsequent referendum possible in case of urgent acts, according to constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kv_transpint</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of an obligation of members of parliament to disclose interest bonds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kv_freemand</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of a free mandate for members of parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transfer_N</td>
<td>Total revenues received from the federal state, in CHF per capita (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gem_init_ref2_N</td>
<td>Right of initiative and referendum for single municipalities on cantonal laws (inverse)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Radical Participation

**Extended electoral rights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>volkwahl</td>
<td>Years gone by since the introduction of direct popular election of cantonal executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regpraes_volkwahl</td>
<td>Election of the executive’s president in popular elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beratung_wahl</td>
<td>Institutionalized opportunity for the citizens to collectively deliberate on elections and candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recall_reg</td>
<td>Possibility to recall the cantonal executive from office ahead of time by a popular initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recall_parl</td>
<td>Possibility to recall the cantonal parliament from office ahead of time by a popular initiative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Direct-democratic rights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GIR</td>
<td>Index for the institutional openness of the popular statutory initiative, as proposed by Stutzer (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIR</td>
<td>Index for the institutional openness of the popular constitutional initiative, as proposed by Stutzer (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRR</td>
<td>Index for the institutional openness of the statutory referendum, as proposed by Stutzer (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRR</td>
<td>Index for the institutional openness of the fiscal referendum, as proposed by Stutzer (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verfahren_scope</td>
<td>Existence and scope of a popular right to propose a different order of votes, postponement of authorities’ projects, and/or revision of such projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beratung_sach</td>
<td>Institutionalized opportunity for the citizens to collectively deliberate on the issues put to popular vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRR</td>
<td>Index for the existence and institutional openness of the ‘constructive referendum’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Use of direct-democratic rights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>initot</td>
<td>Number of popular initiatives put to vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refcot</td>
<td>Number of referendums put to vote</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Local self-rule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>foed_tax_N</td>
<td>Size of municipal as compared to cantonal fiscal revenues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foed_schreiber</td>
<td>Degree of local autonomy as perceived and reported by the heads of municipal administrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kv_gembest</td>
<td>Constitutionally guaranteed right for the existing municipalities to continued existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kv_gemaut</td>
<td>Constitutional codification of municipal autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kv_gemfusion</td>
<td>Constitutional provisions concerning mergers of municipalities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transparency of political processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transparency of parliament and communication by authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_vernehmi Expeditious constitutional codification of the mechanism of consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_vengepr Legal enactment of the general rule that all governmental documents are freely accessible to the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ParPrtSecretSess_N Constitutionally codified duty of the authorities to inform the public about their activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ParPrtProt Provisions concerning the possibility of secret sessions or secret decisions on single agenda items by the parliament (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_publger Constitutional provisions concerning the public access to judicial proceedings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_publreg Constitutional provisions concerning the public access to government sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_infodiv Constitutionally codified public task to promote information diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_zensverb Constitutional codification of the prohibition of censorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_medfoerd Constitutionally codified public task to promote media access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- pressdiv Press diversity: Number of newspapers with self-contained, regular reporting on cantonal politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- presscompdist_ex Degree of press competition within the subcantonal districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Radio Share of survey respondents who use radio broadcasting for their opinion-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Zeitung Share of survey respondents who use newspapers for their opinion-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fernsehen Share of survey respondents who use television broadcasting for their opinion-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extra-institutional participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional protection of extra-institutional participation rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_frr_demo Constitutionally guaranteed freedom to demonstrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_frr_pet Constitutionally guaranteed right to petition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_frr_stri Constitutionally guaranteed right to strike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kv_frr_assoc Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mitglie Share of survey respondents who are member of at least one political or economic organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lesenews Share of survey respondents who use letters to the editor for their opinion-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interesse Share of survey respondents who state to be very interested in politics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal political involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal and equal right to vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stimmalterakt Age required for the right to vote and to elect (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ladyl1 Female suffrage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Audit_split Existence and scope of suffrage for foreign residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- T_Bildung_N Disproportionality of actual participation rates between groups of different education levels (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- T_Konkussion_N Disproportionality of actual participation rates between groups of different occupational statuses (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- T_turnout_v Turnout rate in cantonal popular votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- T_Geschlecht_N Disproportionality of actual participation rates between gender groups (inverse)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimal amount of resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_educ work Constitutionally guaranteed right to paid work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_educ dwell Constitutionally guaranteed right to housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_educ matrin Constitutionally guaranteed right to a minimal amount of material resources, in case of need to be provided by public funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_educ heal Constitutionally guaranteed rights to the protection and advancement of one’s health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights to education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_educ rights Constitutionally guaranteed right to (adequate) education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_educ quant Constitutionally codified public task to provide several educational services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_educ acc Constitutionally guaranteed right to an equal and easy access to the educational services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kw_educ grat Constitutionally guaranteed right to education free of charge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusive representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electoral system favorable to minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- thresho_N Effective threshold to get a seat in the cantonal parliament (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- propor3Reg Degree of proportionality of the electoral systems for parliamentary and governmental elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- parlmand Number of seats in the cantonal parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation of parties in parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- raie Rae index of parliamentary party fractionalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- reg_korkk Cumulated vote share (in parliamentary elections) of all parties represented in government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- kommunprop Average number of seats in parliamentary committees per party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportional representation of socio-structural groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Frauenprop_gov Share of female members in government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Frauenprop_par Share of female members in parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Durchschnittsalter_reg_parl_N Average age of the members of government and parliament (inverse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- disrep_prof_reg_parl N Disproportionality of the occupational groups’ representation in government and parliament (inverse)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Individual models of political support – 25 cantons, 2003 and 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIXED PART</th>
<th>Institutional trust</th>
<th>Community support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>6.503*** (0.132)</td>
<td>Constant (=very attached) -1.091*** (0.142)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Constant (&gt;=rather attached) 1.234*** (0.143)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Constant (&gt;=rather not attached) 3.188*** (0.156)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reference category (>=not attached at all)

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Political factors

| Electoral loser | -0.090** (0.043) | Electoral loser | -0.063 (0.047) |
| Left-right self-placement (right) | 0.083*** (0.023) | Left-right self-placement (right) | 0.156*** (0.025) |
| No frequent participation at national elections | -0.422*** (0.052) | No frequent participation at national elections | -0.432*** (0.055) |
| Political knowledge | -0.022 (0.021) | Political knowledge | 0.006 (0.022) |
| Political interest | 0.142*** (0.029) | Political interest | 0.338*** (0.031) |

Performance

Negative evaluation of state of the economy | -0.336*** (0.028) | Negative evaluation of state of the economy | -0.047 (0.030) |

Social capital

Trust in others | 0.131*** (0.009) | Trust in others | 0.027*** (0.009) |
| Member of organization or association | 0.160*** (0.055) | Member of organization or association | 0.134** (0.059) |

Cultural values

Post-materialist | -0.184*** (0.054) | Post-materialist | -0.279*** (0.057) |

Religious denomination

Catholic | 0.042 (0.092) | Catholic | 0.034 (0.098) |
| Protestant | 0.104 (0.092) | Protestant | 0.196** (0.099) |
| None | -0.244** (0.098) | None | -0.372** (0.105) |
| Other (reference group) |                  | Other (reference group) |                  |
| Church attendance several times a week | 0.289*** (0.069) | Church attendance several times a week | 0.064 (0.075) |

Social status

Does not get along with income | -0.331*** (0.080) | Does not get along with income | -0.172** (0.085) |
| Residential property | -0.112*** (0.043) | Residential property | 0.037 (0.047) |
| Level of education | -0.024 (0.025) | Level of education | -0.105*** (0.027) |

Demographics

Age | 0.003*** (0.001) | Age | 0.005*** (0.001) |
| Female | 0.149*** (0.044) | Female | 0.105** (0.047) |
| Municipality/agglomeration with more than 10’000 residents | 0.006 (0.048) | Municipality/agglomeration with more than 10’000 residents | 0.043 (0.051) |
| Living in canton for more than 10 years | -0.001 (0.060) | Living in canton for more than 10 years | 0.752*** (0.065) |

VARIANCE COMPONENTS (RANDOM PART)

Level: years

σ²_v0 (intercept) | 0.000 (0.000) | Level: years

σ²_u0 (intercept) | 0.160*** (0.040) | Level: years

Level: individuals

σ²_e (residuals) | 3.188*** (0.051) | Level: years

VARIANCE COMPONENTS (RANDOM PART)

Level: cantons

σ²_v0 (intercept) | 0.000 (0.000) | Level: year

σ²_u0 (intercept) | 0.175*** (0.044) | Level: year

Level: individuals

σ²_e (residuals) - | Level: year

MODEL CHARACTERISTICS

-2*loglikelihood: 31349 | -2*loglikelihood: -

No. of years / cantons / individuals 2 / 50 / 7820 | No. of years / cantons / individuals 2 / 50 / 7820

Missing canton NW | Missing canton NW

Notes: See tables 2 and 3 respectively. The scale for political knowledge and age were mean centered, the other continuous variables were transformed to normal scores.
HEGEMONY, RADICAL DEMOCRACY, POPULISM

By Rasmus Kleis Nielsen

110 Morningside Drive, #31 C
10027 New York, NY
USA

This paper has been accepted for publication in Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory and the final (edited, revised and typeset) version of this paper will be published in Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory, No. 13, 2006, All rights reserved. © Distinktion, year of publication. For more information please visit: www.distinktion.dk

Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (BA, MA) is a PhD Student at Columbia University, New York. He has published book reviews and articles in several academic journals, including Millenium, Tidsskriftet Politik, and Slagmark.
This article demonstrates what it means to construe Ernesto Laclau’s work as precisely political theory. By analysing his work in terms of the relations between ‘hegemony’ as a theory of the political, ‘radical democracy’ as a normative theory, and the ever-present but often overlooked element of ‘populism’ as a theory of a form of politics, it captures the full-fledged political character of his work (as opposed to simply moral theory). Though the article make a number of criticisms of the ways in which the three elements are elaborated and interlinked, especially through the imprecise notions of ‘the underdogs’ and ‘the underprivileged’, it also highlights the value of attempting to situate the act of political theorising in the world at hand by explicitly trying to identify an immanent form of politics thought in terms of a theory of the political and a normative theory, an act that will allow one to go beyond value-neutral political analysis, empty moral theory, or blind political strategising. Only together does these three elements make up properly political theory.
The constituent elements of Ernesto Laclau’s work as a political theorist can be summarised through a slight rewriting of the title of the book he and Chantal Mouffe published in 1985: Hegemony, radical democracy, and populism. My argument is that Laclau’s writings can be construed as an elaboration and interlinking of these three elements into one act of political theorising. Hegemony as a theory of the political. Radical democracy as a normative theory. Populism as a theory of a form of politics. If one does not want to conceive him simply as a thinker preoccupied with conceptual explorations of the ontological character of the political,\(^1\) someone positing a theory of what the good society could be,\(^2\) or a strategist arguing for the revival of a form of leftist populism,\(^3\) Laclau’s overall argument has to be assessed in terms of each of these elements and the way in which they mutually discipline each other in an intervention in the present world as it is characterised by historically specific combinations of exclusions and inequalities. The reading I advance here thus runs against the grain of widespread criticisms claiming that Laclau’s work lack a theorisation of normative issues. Even those contributions that explicitly recognise that he does indeed provides this, and analyse his work with reference to the relations between the theory of hegemony and radical democracy, have continually neglected the role the notion of ‘populism’ has played.

\* I would like to thank Ulrik Pram Gad, Jacqueline Vimo, and especially the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive criticism.

\(^1\) As when Townshend (2003) discuss him as the founder of ‘Essex school discourse theory’.

\(^2\) Warren (1996) can serve as an example of this approach.

\(^3\) See for instance Beverly (1997).
throughout his career as a form of politics that can relate the two in the world. They thereby miss something I want to highlight, namely Laclau’s attempt to situate the intervention made through an explicit identification of an immanent form of politics thought in terms of his theory of the political and his normative theory. This is something that distinguishes Laclau’s work from much else that goes under the name of political theory. The attempt to find a home in the world is what differentiates his act of political theorising from simply theorising the political, theorising the normative, or simply politicising. I find this full-fledged character of his work a contribution in itself, because it carves out a precise place of political – in opposition to simply moral – theory, even though I have reservations when it comes to the constituent elements (as I will make clear below). I focus first on the character of each of the three elements especially in their most recent formulations (Laclau, 2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2005c), and then discuss the force of the overall argument’s linkage of them into a single act of political theorising.

A theory of the political

At the most general level, the political, for Laclau, pertains to the constitution of social reality as never complete orders (2004: 325-326; 2005a: 117). These are the orders that Laclau call ‘discourses’, a term that only really identifies the object of reference if one abstracts from its conventional usage and accepts the inclusion of both material and ideational elements into the relational structuring of one particular order (2005a: 68). The precise contribution of his theory of hegemony is that it does not simply – like for

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4 Anna Marie Smith (1998: 1) rightly makes the point that Laclau and Mouffe’s work should be read ‘as political theory’, but her focus solely on the theory of hegemony and the theory of radical democracy crucially leaves out the key element of populism as a form of politics that connects the two. Torfing (1999) and the essays collected by Critchley and Marchart (2004) are other examples of this reading.
instance Lefort (1988) – assert *that* the political constitutes the social, but elaborates a theory of *how* this happens through struggles named ‘hegemonic’. The key to the theory of hegemony is its conception of the ontological character of the terrain of the political; the understanding of hegemonization; and how the whole processes is taken to be animated.⁵ I deal with each in turn.

Laclau presents the ontological premise for the political under the heading ‘constitutive heterogeneity’ (2004: 324; 2005a: 139-156). This refers to the appearance of elements that cannot be innocently represented in a separate space where they can simply be left aside, but which *appear* and are simultaneously irreconcilable as *being* within a particular existing order. They therefore exist only as the negativity that highlights the contingency of any positive orders and all identities stabilised within them. The appearance of heterogeneous elements equal the general ‘fact of dislocation’ by simultaneously demonstrating every order’s character of ‘failed unicity’ (2005c: 256) and the ‘deficient being’ (2005a: 86) of identities defined within it.

An example can illustrate the somewhat abstract argument. A refugee or migrant appears in a social order structured around a proto-Kantian notion of individuals as carriers of rights. Through the application of the category ‘illegal immigrant’ as it has been transferred from legal terminology to general usage by the new right, her appearance is registered, but her representation in the social order as being simultaneously who she appears to be in particular (from somewhere else), what she appears to be in general (an individual), and what this is within the order held to entail

⁵ Throughout the article, I follow Howarth (ex. 2004: 266) in applying to Laclau’s work the Heideggarian distinction between *ontological* questions dealing with the being of *any kind* of objects and relations (the ‘Seinsfrage’ of ‘the being of being’) and *ontic* questions dealing with the being of *particular* entities.
(being the carrier of certain rights), is denied at the level of being. She is an individual, but she is not what the order suggests being an individual normally entails. She therefore appears as a heterogeneous element that has no clear insertion in this social order. This element is represented as negativity (‘they are not like us’) through the denial of a positive identity that would challenge the order. Precisely due to this denial, her appearance problematise not only the order by demonstrating the contingent link between the notions of ‘individual’ and ‘carrier of rights’, but also thereby highlights the contingency of the identity of those within the order – if her rights as an individual can be denied, so can mine.

The political-theoretical importance of this notion is immediately apparent. Order is not only seen as faced with an excess of ideational and semantic contents that introduce an element of undecidability into every text, or with a multiplicity of fully constituted different identities and demands. It is – more radically – always faced with things, people and demands that appear though they have no representation as positive beings in an order their very appearance therefore problematise, even when they are excluded in attempts to stabilise it. This excludes the idea that everything either has its place or at least has a separate atomistic positive identity that can simply be given a place in an innocent way.

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6 Obviously, this does not entail that it has no consequences for her. As Jacqueline Vimo has rightly pointed out (personal communication), the pertinence of both my examples and the categories it illustrates is complicated by the increasing saliency of the wider transnational context (to the point where even legal rights are no longer exclusively rights-as-citizens, but supplemented by a set of rights as human beings). I will stick to national examples because they allow for a simpler illustration of an argument I believe remains valid even beyond whatever inadvertent ‘methodological nationalism’ may plague the work of Laclau.
With the ontological conception of the terrain of the political in place, the understanding of such attempts at generating order – through hegemonization – can be introduced. Precisely because the fact of heterogeneity mean that orders are always failed and identities within them always deficient, hegemony is never definitively established, but better understood as a process.

Thus conceived, hegemony is a process where ‘particular social demands [are] organized around particular points of dislocation [where] … one demand or group of demands assumes, without entirely giving up its particularity, the added function of representing the [positive order]’ (2004: 281, see also 2005a: 70). The quote identifies the key elements in the hegemonic operation. Presented in the order I will discuss them, they are: First, as the starting point, a group of different, particular demands. Then, secondly, the organisation of these around a particular that is invested with a relative universal meaning as signifying the order-as-such in opposition to that which is excluded. This then, thirdly, produce the representation of an antagonism, a particular point (as opposed to the general fact of) dislocation against which the moments within the order are equal. It also alerts us to what exactly it is that is hegemonized, which is not a preconstituted ‘society’, but instead a number of demands, an universal by a particular, and an order that is defined by this operation and its exclusionary side. Hegemonic processes do not operate in a given terrain, but produce something – like in Gramsci, hegemony is not simply about conquering the given, but about becoming the being. Hegemony is the political *par excellence* precisely because it does not operate purely *within* the social, but constitutes the social. The theoretical grasp of how this process works is what takes us beyond banal constructivism.
The fact of heterogeneity and the constant flux of the social in face of it means that there will always be a plethora of social demands, some being excluded from the social order, some represented within it, but still subject to deficient being (2005a: 73). Both are susceptible to inscription (or reinscription) in an alternative conception of the social, though already represented demands are often less easily so. Proponents of an existing order will typically – through institutional designs, etc – attempt to address appearing demands in differential ways, but, as discussed above, an order can never completely totalise the horizon of demands as such, and never completely fix the place of those demands it does represent. The first moment of a hegemonic operation is the attempt to link a specific series of such demands – some outside an existing order, perhaps also some from inside – together in a unity that would – if realised – produce an alternative order.\footnote{As opposed to fellow post-Althusserians Alain Badiou (2005) and Jacques Rancière (2001), Laclau therefore does not \textit{conceptually} exclude the established institutions of politics from the political – compare the account given here with the idea that politics should (Badiou) be thought at a distance from the order (of the state) or even (Rancière) as opposed to the order (of the police).}

Both existing and alternative orders are identical in the sense that they play a double role in terms of signification. One the one hand, the order makes it possible for each representation within it to appear as differentiated from other representations. At the same time, the order-as-order is distanced from that which is not simply yet another difference within it, but excluded as something other than itself. Vis-à-vis the excluded, all differential representations within the order are equivalent (in this sense, the order is present in every moment in it), but at the same time, insofar as they \textit{are} representations (in the plural), they are still different. How is this double character of the system represented in social reality? Laclau’s argument is that
One difference, without ceasing to be a particular difference, assumes the representation of the incommensurable totality [of the order]. In that way, its body is split between the particularity which it still is and the more universal signification of which it is a bearer.

(2005a: 70, see also 2004: 281)

This is the role of ‘relative universals’ in the argument – the radical investment of a tendentially empty meaning with a high potential for universal reach (like ‘justice’, ‘democracy’, ‘the people’, etc) into a particular that comes to represent simultaneously itself and the universal(s) invested into it. It thereby order the order as more than just related demands, but demands equivalent in a certain way in addition to being differential particulars. This is how a flag functions in nationalist discourse – it does not lose its differential symbolic meaning, nor does the demands it brings together, but in addition, it comes to represent the unity of the people-as-such against that and those excluded, and the demands it unite come to represent themselves as specifically popular demands. This is not an innocent operation, but a highly political one. Writes Laclau: ‘we are dealing not with a conceptual operation of finding an abstract common feature underlying all social grievances, but with a performative operation constituting a chain as such’ (2005a: 97). No matter the amount of empirical flags around, ‘the people’ as a notion ordering the social and as a political subjectivity does not pre-exist its constitution as a unity around a
particular invested with a significance that allows it to become the name of a universality that transcends its actual particular content.⁸

This allows for the introduction of the flip side of the particular-universal’s function. It also gives presence to a sutured inscription of dislocation in the form of an antagonism that gives negativity a presence in opposition to the positivity of the order (2004: 317-319). Antagonism gives dislocation a precise presence in the order by showing an exteriority that cannot be retrieved, only kept at bay or overcome. An example can illustrate the difference: The flag that is invested with the universal significance of the people is not antagonistically denied by the presence of ‘objective’ (juridical) nationals rejecting interpellation by nationalist discourse. They are, like those who appear under the rubriquet ‘illegal immigrants’ simply present as the absence of the full presence of the posited national unity. They are presented as heterogeneous to the order. What is ‘fully represented as a negative reverse’ (2005a: 139) of nationalist popular identity are those who are simultaneously ‘the Strangers’ and ‘the National-People’ – therefore the particular significance of ‘second-generation immigrants’ in new right nationalism. These can either be overcome (‘go back to where they come from’), kept apart (differentiated endlessly by being made the object of integration policies, police surveillance, the regulation of intimacy through rules concerning marriage, etc) or alternatively – in rare cases – be allowed to become part of the National-People by denying any differential identity they may have had (the obligatory singular stories of ‘the good immigrant’).

⁸This is the argument that is often made with reference to the term ‘empty signifier’ (Laclau 1996), a term that has generated considerable confusion (see the essays in Critchley and Marchart 2004), and which I have therefore avoided here.
Given that hegemony was from the outset theorised as a process in an unfixed terrain, the question remains – what animates this process? In the initial version of the argument, the answer seems to be nothing but internal contradictions within the orders and the constant flows back and forth between order and surplus – there is no conceptualisation of subjective agency.

Whenever we use the category of ‘subject’ in this text, we will do so in the sense of ‘subject positions’ within a discursive structure. Subjects cannot, therefore, be the origin of social relations – not even in the limited sense of being endowed with powers that render an experience possible – as all ‘experience’ depends on precise discursive conditions of possibility.

(Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 115)

This position is modified importantly in Laclau’s recent work. Though subjects as individuals are still rejected in favour of analysis of failed wholes, and subjectivity is still taken to be constituted through political practices, subjective experiences, which are precisely not taken to have precise discursive conditions of possibility, are seen as the elementary form in the building up of the social link. These experiences cross-cutting the borders established between order and heterogeneity are what are expressed as ‘social demands’ (2005a: 73; 2005b: 35). Social demands arise on the basis of the experience of something that cannot be satisfied through self-management, and is therefore directed at something else (this why the demands relevant here are social). Such demands can be more or less heterogeneous to the social order, ranging from those that arise within it and
are satisfied within it, over those that arise within and are not satisfied, to those that arise from heterogeneous elements outside. The introduction of demands as a theoretical category facilitates not only the reintroduction of what is *at stake* in politics beyond the symbolic structuring of society (which would sound rather abstract to most of those involved), but also opens up for a systematic inquiry into the dynamics of social transformation.9

One thing is to map the *form* taken by the signifying operations that lead to the radical investment of a universal like ‘the people’ into a particular, and how this contributes to the constitution of the social. Another is to understand the *force that explains* particular investments by subjects created through the ordering of specific demands – in other words, the step beyond discourse-descriptivism. Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis, Laclau has here introduced ‘affect’ as a theoretical category for explaining why particular investments are made (2004: 326). Subjects desiring to overcome their experience of their own deficient being will affectively invest objects with an excess of meaning that represent the fullness of being they long for. This can take either a private or a social-public form. Laclau describes the relation between the form of signification and the investment as follows:

> the object of investment can be contingent, but it is most certainly not indifferent – it cannot be changed at will. With this we reach a full explanation of what radical investment means: making an object the

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9 Crucially, Laclau does not delve into the question of where demands come from, and given the workings of the notion of heterogeneity in his work, it is difficult to imagine how it would be possible to address this question *theoretically* – analytically, however, nothing prevents one from profiting from sociological literature in the attempt to understand the relative structurality of a given context when one conducts concrete studies, something for instance Barros (2005) does with considerable analytical purchase.
embodiment of a mythical fullness. Affect (that is, enjoyment) is the very essence of investment.

(2005a: 115)\textsuperscript{10}

This is the affective dimension of the universal(s) a particular is brought to represent. It comes to exceed its own ontic particularity but still represents a lack in the sense that it is not the full universal it is posited to be – ‘the people’ is never a fully sutured community. It is, because of the affective investment made in it, a particular failed unity that marks those within it with deficient being – a deficiency that can be formulated as demands, connected with other demands, and start the whole dynamic process of constituting the social all over again. The combination of Christians demanding containment of other religions, people feeling that the EU denies their identities as nationals, or as citizens in a sovereign state, those attached to the welfare state who are alienated by incomprehensible technocratic Social Democrats, and those who find that immigration is a threat to their way of life does not automatically make up a new right constituency, but nor is it arbitrary that these particulars are linked through signifying operations conquering the flag as a symbol of national unity in opposition to the threatening Strange – an investment has been made in the representation of the sutured society, and it is this investment that those who want to oppose such a political movement have to work on.

\textsuperscript{10} In contrast to the earlier idea of ‘the subject as lack’ (Laclau 1990) which, given the idea of all being as deficient, almost amounted to a pleonasm, this new conceptualisation allows one to differentiated different levels that can be studied separately even if they are in reality intertwined – the failed unicity of a discourse is always matched by the deficient being of the subjects it define, these are, as Lacan have argued, driven by the desire to overcome this deficiency which they experience as a lack, but it is, qua the introduction of the concept of demand, only politically –as opposed to therapeutically – relevant when the lack and the desire to overcome it is turned towards society.
The introduction of demands and affect as theoretical categories allow Laclau to move away from the tendencies towards empty decisionism in his work of the mid-nineties, where hegemonic processes tended to be understood as animated by ‘the madness of the decision [as the] … blind spot in the structure … something totally heterogeneous with it … [which has] to supplement it’ (1996a: 55, partly reiterated in 2000). Where this conception seemed to suggest a somewhat apocalyptic extra-normative clash of discourses, the combination of the centrality given to contestable universals and their relation to affective investments seems to be better calibrated to bring into focus the normative dimension in even violently antagonistic political clashes, and opens up for a form of politics that recognises commonalities between at least parts of conflicting orders. How this plays out in Laclau’s political theory is defined by the theory of the political’s relation to a normative theory, to which I turn now, and a theory of a form of politics that I discuss in the penultimate part of the article.

11 Though the approach discussed above has proven empirically useful (see for instance Howarth & Torfing 2005 for a recent collection of analyses), problems remain. Even if one leaves aside the question of where demands come from, the theoretical grasp of power, persistence, and articulation seems insufficient. Affect may be one way of addressing the side of hegemony that Gramsci named ‘consent’, but the dimension of ‘coercion’ seems to have no theoretical place in Laclau’s work beyond the analytically somewhat imprecise catch-all phrase of the ‘unevenness’ of the social (2005a: 80). If explanation hinges on grasping how objects are made the embodiment of fullness, a whole plethora of social phenomena like control over and regulation of the (real and virtual) spaces of appearance, the legal regulation of certain forms of material or ideational linkage and investment, and so on seems to be of pre-eminent importance. Here, I share Zerilli’s (2004) and Smith’s (1998) scepticism as to the fruitfulness of Laclau’s move towards Lacan. The reintroduction of a concept of power could be one way to grasp this. Similar paths seem to be what should be explored if one wants to account for the persistence of certain orders over others. Finally, the key category of articulation, which with Laclau’s transfer of it from the ontic level in Althusser to the ontological level of the actual constitution of subjectivities and the social is of central importance, seems to be too broad and undifferentiated to offer much analytical leverage as to how relations are build in practice, when they are picked up when offered, why attempts at reaching out are so often incomprehensible to those addressed, and especially how the interplay between ideational and material forms of articulation play together.
A normative theory

The notion of radical democracy is perhaps more strongly associated with the work of Chantal Mouffe (for instance 2000), but it is also a notion that Laclau himself has returned to time and again (1996a; 2004; 2005a; 2005c). Now, Laclau primarily presents radical democracy as a ‘political project’ (2000: 82) and rejects the distinction between the normative and the descriptive that would typically be involved in presentations of radical democracy as having the ambitions commonly associated with normative theory, ambitions which are supposedly relatively independent of descriptive issues – universality, context-transcendence, ahistoricity, and so on. When dealing with this level, Laclau prefers to talk about ‘the ethical’ as ‘the moment in which, beyond any particularism, the universal speaks for itself” (2000: 80) – obviously, this moment of pure universality is not a moment that he will accept as accessible to human experience. As made clear above, Laclau insists that society consists only of particularities, some of which functions as failed universalities, but never as fully universal. As the universal aspirations are still part and parcel of the ontology of the political, the ethical moment is always hovering somewhere beyond our reach, but in practice has to be mediated by an investment in what he calls particular ‘normative orders’ (2000: 81). Even accepting that such investments (a) are – pace the theory of hegemony – political, (b) does not equal the ethical moment, (c) always involve historical particulars incommensurable with the universals, and therefore (d) never reach the lofty heights some traditions of normative theory aspire to, this does not change the fact that such investments are also still precisely normative as they involve judgements not only of facts, but also of value. Thus, in so far as radical democracy is not only a description of a normative phenomena, but also a
theoretical articulation of a particular normative investment, a specific mediation of the gap between the ethical and social reality that entails a valuation and distinction between what is and what ought to be, it can be construed as a normative theory, despite Laclau’s hesitations. It is particular, contextual, historical and does not provide purely external ‘grounds’ from which answers to ethical questions can be deduced, but it still plays the role of normative theory, of deciding, to put it bluntly, between good and bad.

From the outset, the link between the theory of hegemony and radical democracy has been understood as contingent (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 168). An anti-foundationalist theory cannot in itself provide an archē (foundational principle), and thereby stands opposed to a whole line of thought that has tried to reduce the normative question to the ontological one. This line, ultimately going back all the way to Plato, in the twentieth century ranging from Heidegger on the right to Gramsci on the left, has tried to found its normative dimension and its politics on principles fully derived from the ontological properties of something (the people in Heidegger, the proletariat in Gramsci). Not so with the theory of hegemony – it does not claim a necessary relation to radical democracy. Critchley (forthcoming) has, for instance, tried to link a similar conception of the political with a pre-archic normative theory in the form of Levinasian ethics as first philosophy. Laclau instead pursues a post-archic path by taking the fact of heterogeneity, hegemonization as the investment of universals into particulars, and the resulting constitution of subjectivities through the linkage of demands as the imaginary within which the theory of radical democracy is elaborated. This disciplining is not a one-way street, something which is underlined by the normative impulse that was involved in the
very elaboration of the ontological theory of hegemony on the basis of the belief that it may be ‘an useful instrument in the struggle for a radical, libertarian, and plural democracy’ (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 4). The theory of the political means that the pursuit of radical democracies in the world will always entail hegemonic processes. The normative theory tries to identify the traits that will allow one to identify hegemonic processes in the world as having a radically democratic thrust. It is not about telling concrete agents what society is the good society (emancipated, equal, etc), but about providing ways of ascertaining whether particular political struggles are good in the sense that they pursue radical democratic aspirations of emancipation(s), equality and so on.

Laclau presents radical democracy as a ‘general theory’ of the constituent ontological dimensions (and precisely not principles) of democracy. He argues that if one wants to avoid simply identifying it with particular sets of institutions and practices at the ontic level ‘democracy itself requires to be specified beyond any normative-institutional content’ (2004: 295). Though he explicitly highlights the obvious concrete importance of the ontic level and underlines that ‘the internal democratisation of liberal institutions on the basis of an unlimited application of universal rules is a first possible meaning of radical democracy’ (2005c: 259), the key parts of the normative theory are articulated in relation to ontological processes. As Laclau writes, he ‘do[es] not see democracy as a political regime … but [as] a dimension of politics which, as such, can be present in regimes which widely differs from each other.’ (2004: 310). Though ontic questions of institutions, redistribution and recognition are central to the workings of democracy,
Laclau maintains as his question the ontological, what is (in Heidegger’s somewhat cumbersome prose) the ‘being of being’ of democracy? In dealing with it, he radicalises Lefort’s (1988) theory of democracy as a symbolic form of society where the place of power is empty by shifting the referent of emptiness from a structural location to the production of types of identity. Given that this is, as theoretically elaborated in the theory of hegemony, always a process and never a given, the kernel of democracy is here also displaced from particular static states of being to becoming (and therefore emerge as post-archic). Democracy is about democratic politics, not the good society, but good political struggles. For Laclau, democratic processes have two traits. First, the identity of ‘the people’ has to be simultaneously present and empty in the sense that it is open for contestation. ‘The very possibility of democracy depends on the constitution of a democratic ‘people’ (2005a: 169; 2005c: 259). Secondly, for a people-identity to be a democratic people, the process has to be a self-reflexive one where those involved are aware of their particularity and ‘the undecidable character of this interaction, the impossibility of conceptually mastering the contingent forms in which it crystallises’ (2005c: 261). Here, Laclau is, if on a different level, in line with Tocqueville-inspired political scientists in underlining that the key to democracy is not

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12 The insistence that the dimensions of democracy has to be identified at the ontological and not the ontic level is the basis for the recurrent barbed remarks made by Laclau about Habermasian conceptions of democracy (ex 2004: 296-298), who he argues identifies democracy with particular ontic processes, and therefore collapse into ethnocentrism and sociological essentialism. The criticism does not seem entirely justified.

13 In line with my remarks above about power, control and resources in note 11, I find it important to maintain Lefort’s position as a central supplement to Laclau’s. The very possibility of democratically constituting political subjectivities depends on the structural locations of governmental power being empty as well as signifiers like ‘the people’ being recognised as contestable.

14 And of course this has an ontic – if somewhat unspecific – corollary: ‘Institutionalisation of uncertainty as the incorporation into democratic deliberations of actors who had been, so far, excluded from the process of decision-making’ (2004: 295).
institutions, but democrats (Putnam, 1993). This is the minimum level of democracy that radical democracy calls for, ‘reflexive democrats’ who recognise the political nature of the act of constituting contingent subjectivities, even as they engage in it – it calls for ‘fidelity to politics’.  

The starting point of the normative argument is thus the view that it is not just any construction of the people that will do if a social order is to be thought of as democratic. Democracy takes recognition of contingency and particularity on behalf of those involved in self-government. To qualify as radically democratic, democratic practices furthermore has to be involved in pursuing a radicalisation of the key elements of the old political imaginary of the Left that Laclau so often refers to – liberty (thought by Laclau in terms of emancipation(s)), equality, and solidarity. Contrary to criticisms to the opposite effect (Žižek 2000, Critchley 2004), it is not the case that Laclau does not provide a normative theory for making a democratic/undemocratic distinction, or a normative valuation, for that matter. Radical democracy as a political and normative imaginary is a theorisation of the emergence of a people that not only shows ‘fidelity to politics’ but also struggles for a certain normative order because it is deemed better than alternatives is precisely an attempt to allow one to do this. Identification with the theory of radical democracy thus serves like identification with any normative theory to offer a position of some discursive exteriority (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 154) relative to given orders. From such a position, where the normative stipulations exceed the descriptive order of facts, relations that are within those orders cast as being merely of difference or  

15 It is true that this minimum definition makes it possible to identify democratic elements in some regimes that would not normally be thought of as so as having such, but theoretical notions would be practically worthless if they did nothing but reiterated what we already believed – whether this is legitimate in particular cases is something I will leave out of my discussion here.
subordination can be articulated and recast as being relations of domination, oppression – or even antagonistic. It is through for instance the before-mentioned attempts to extend ‘universal rules’ shared by both liberal and radical democratic discourses that the situation of the ‘illegal immigrant’ mentioned above can be transformed from one of heterogeneity to an antagonistic frontier between those approving the right and those denying it, and thereby serve in a political attempt to reconstitute the social order – which is precisely what is happening in the United States right now. It is in such applications of radical democratic ideals relative to existing orders that the normative theory can achieve what Cook (2006: 4) claims post-structuralist and critical political theory needs to aim for: ‘a context-transcending ethical [normative] validity without violating their own anti-authoritarian impulse’. One part of politics is bordering on the extra-normative, such as clashes between (conservative) Right-wing belief in the universal value of hierarchy and a Left-wing belief in the universal value of equality. But it also involves a normative dimension precisely where context-transcending interventions can be made through investments in universals from the position of partly exterior normative discourses that lay claim to some of the same universal terms that the practice of politics circle around (justice, democracy, freedom, etc). Radical democracy provides one such point from which interventions can be made. The question is then whether the process-oriented argument works when put to use. I have two problems with the way it is presented here.

First, why would one necessarily conceive of ‘the people’ in singular (‘a’ in the quotation above)? It seems to leave radical democracy within the imaginary of a nation-state form of politics that often amounts to a both normatively and pragmatically problematic
‘misframing’ of politics (cf. Fraser 2005). The idea of popular sovereignty closely tied to notions like the people, the general will, and – a term Laclau in line with Gramsci uses – the collective will, is certainly an important strand in democratic thought, but so is the idea of the self-government of people. The history of ideas of democracy quite rightly insists that demos-kratos requires people, but does not agree as to whether it necessarily requires a people. A pursuit of the more plural tradition of multiple subjectivities along the lines of governance and transnationalism seems to be called for here, but will have to be left aside in this article.\textsuperscript{16}

I will instead focus on a second, and more fundamental problem: Laclau’s criteria for distinguishing between democratic and non-democratic constitutions of subjectivities seem to be insufficiently clearly articulated to provide a way of making the distinction. His position oscillates between two ideals of democracy that he does not reconcile theoretically. On the one hand, we have democracy as defined by ‘equality of citizens’ (2004: 297). On the other, we have democracy as entailing ‘positive discrimination’ to create ‘the elementary preconditions for participating in the public life of the community’ (2004: 296). Obviously, these tie into his radical democratic project too in the form of equality and solidarity. One dimension is about interacting as being equal in a certain (political and social) sense. The other is about being treated unequally to become (politically and socially) equal. Both are rightly seen as parts of what democracy means for those who want to go beyond purely negative liberties, and are dealt with in much normative theory. The central question remains how they are to be combined. Laclau explicitly recognises that there is a ‘tension between these two logics in the attempt to

\textsuperscript{16} In this respect, it is a bit of a shame that more than half of the people contributing to Laclau: a critical reader are closely associated with Laclau – more engagement with other strands of thoughts could maybe have forced his reply to move into previously unexplored territory.
build up a democratic society in a context of deep inequality’ (2004: 297). The problem is that he leaves this tension untouched through a vague reference to their mutual ‘complex articulations’ in concrete cases, and then go on to argue as if the outcome of such complex articulations where somehow already known by stating for instance that there is ‘no doubt that Jacobinism was a democratic movement, although it violated all the procedural rules Habermasians postulate [i.e. the first dimension of equality as citizens]’ (2004: 297). The real question is of course: why is there no doubt? Can the reasons be theoretically articulated at the level of abstraction where Laclau operates, for instance through the introduction of a notion of ‘democratic justice’ explicitly trying to link the two, such as the notions Nancy Fraser, Rainer Forst, or for that matter John Rawls, have elaborated? They try to deal with the key question of what ‘complex articulations’ of equality and inequality are normatively justifiable.

Instead of engaging with this question, Laclau takes recourse to the idea that precisely democratic (and therefore normatively justifiable) subjectivity is linked to the emergence of ‘the underdog as a political actor’ (2005c: 259). His discussion of Gramsci illustrates the importance of this category in his argument. Despite Gramsci’s notorious lack of explicit normative theorisation, as expressed in the collapse of the normative dimension into the political through the term ‘ethico-political’, Laclau asserts that ‘Gramsci’s vision of hegemony [is] … profoundly democratic, because it involves launching new historical subjects [‘underdogs’] into the historical arena’ (2005a: 168). Presumably, this is also the

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17 Where Mouffe (2000) in her discussion of the contributions made by Habermas and Rawls identifies the ‘democratic paradox’ in the constitutive tension between liberalism as rule of law, and democracy as popular sovereignty, Laclau here seems to identify the constitutive tension between liberalism as rule of law (equality as citizens), the social question (what it means to be equal in anything but a purely formal sense), and then relate it democracy (the emergence of the people).
argument for why Jacobinism is deemed democratic. Then again, the Sendero Luminoso in Peru also tried to launch new historical subjects into the arena, and hardly seems to be a democratic movement, even in what was a highly oppressive, exclusionary and unequal context. The central thing here is the intellectual reason why both Gramsci and Chariman Gonzalo did not have to confront the question of whether their practice would entail a normatively justifiable (democratically, for instance) form of historical subjectivity and political practice. They still relied on Marx’s notion of the proletariat as the universal class, a short-cut past normative theory through the mere *positing* of something that is in an *a priori* fashion taken to *ontologically* be the excluded underdog-as-such – a return to an archic form of justification that seems untenable in the light of criticism made by, amongst others, precisely Laclau. Interestingly enough, Laclau comes quite close to the argument behind all this – Marx’s position (1844: 123) that the proletariat is the universal class ‘because its sufferings are universal’, and that it in its political practice therefore ‘does not claim a particular redress, because the wrong which is done to it is not a particular wrong but wrong as such’. Laclau writes: ‘when we identify with the cause of the underdog … we do not identify with them as pure singularities, but “as exemplary species of the oppressed and of oppression in general”’ (2004: 310). I beg to differ. *Pace* Laclau’s own work and the first part of this article, accepting the point that there *are* no atomistic ‘pure singularities’ does not entail that the only alternative is *universalism* (‘in general’) – I think the process is better understood in Laclau’s own terms. Particular forms of oppression (racism, economic exploitation, patriarchy, etc) are *invested* with the tendentially universal meaning of oppression (‘in general’) without ever identifying oppression-as-such or exclusion-as-such.
In this light, I must say that ‘underdog’ does not seem to me to be perspicuous theoretical category. First: To categorise those excluded from orders (or oppressed) as ‘underdogs’ obscures first of all the central (if today rather banal) point that patterns of inclusion/exclusion do not necessarily converge in homogenising patterns – being white, male, unemployed and a convicted felon is a different combination of inclusions and exclusions than being Arab, female, housewife and an important activist in neighbourhood associations.\(^{18}\) There is no such thing as exclusion or oppression in general, only oppressions. Secondly: Laclau presents a theoretical framework that insists that inclusions always entail other exclusions, that equality (which entails a dimension of equivalence) always involves inequality (which similarly entails a dimension of difference) – as explained above. If this is precise, one cannot bring in the excluded or oppressed in toto – this idea is simply the reintroduction of the mirage of a fully reconciled society, something the theory of hegemony rejects as impossible. How can one then summarise democratic politics simply as the bringing in of previously excluded actors?

Instead, the challenge seems to be the question of which combinations of exclusions/inclusions and equalities/inequalities are normatively justifiable. Laclau recognises, addresses, but ultimately dodges the whole question of how one can judge such particular patterns involved in the emergence of a new political project democratic or not, let alone radically so. Once one leaves behind the idea of the proletariat (or the underdogs) as the universal class so central to Marxism as a normative project (and today lurking in the background of Žižek and Hardt & Negri’s work), Jacobinism, Gramscian

\(^{18}\) Something Laclau of all people is of course aware of – see for instance his remarks on multiple selves (2005a: 199).
communist politics (and Sendero Luminoso) like all other political struggles has to be seen not only as struggles for inclusion, but as pursuing historically specific combinations of inclusion and exclusion that attempt to introduce some actors at the expense of others. Any hegemony, also one pursued in radically democratic fashion, will be based on both coercion and consent, and the normative challenges are not so much which types of consent and inclusion are legitimate, but which types of coercion and exclusion are legitimate, who gets to decide that, and how. The possibility of precisely adjudicating between movements’ democratic and non-democratic dimensions without artificially separating their ideology from their practice seems to depend on a more explicit theoretical linkage between the two dimensions of democracy (equality and positive discrimination) than what Laclau offers. The importance of the undertheorised second dimension of positive discrimination for his argument in situations of inequality is clear when he (quite rightly, in my view) argues that the ‘social inequalities in the present world are deeper than anything that mere procedural agreements [can] supersede’ (2004: 296) because it raise the question of what normatively justifiable form of politics (that includes coercion) can lead to an outcome (that includes exclusion) that is also normatively justifiable. It is in the light of this challenge that Laclau’s link between his theory of the political, normative theory and the theory of a populist form of politics as formulated through the insistence that ‘radical democracy is always populist’ (2005c: 259) shall be considered in the last part of the article – first, however, I will take a closer look at the final element, the form of politics he identifies as populist.
A theory of a form of politics

Involved in the link between radical democracy and populism is the rejection of identifications of populism with a particular sociological constituency (marginalized rural groups), a precise ideological position (as opposed to nationalism, liberalism, etc) or the psychological foundation that crowd theorists like Taine, Le Bon, Tarde and MacDougall tried to give it. Using Freud’s introduction of the notion of ‘identification’ into discussions of crowds as a departure point from psychological reductionism, Laclau instead proposes that we see populism as a particular political logic (2005a: 117) – a form of politics.

Though populism of different political hues seems to be on the rise again in some parts of the world, the reason for studying precisely this phenomena is not simply its empirical interest – indeed, part of Laclau’s argument is that as a form of politics it has in many countries, especially the ‘overdeveloped’ West, been superseded by forms of politics that stand in the way of the constitution of ‘the people’. Think here parliamentarian and especially corporatist welfare states that differentiate and isolate demands and the particulars making them in the very process of addressing them. Instead, the centrality of populism in Laclau’s optic stems from its possible relation to the political emergence of the people as a transformative force, and therefore the relation it seems possible to establish between it, democracy and democratic politics (2005a: 74). Read in the light of his and Mouffé’s previous attempts to formulate ‘a new politics for the Left’, an imaginary alternative title of his most recent work would be Populism as Radical Democratic Strategy – the claim that radical democracy is always populist echoes his Marxist work in the seventies, where he argued that ‘there is no socialism
without populism’ (1977: 196). Laclau’s thirty years of writings on populism as a form of politics is central to his work as precisely a political theorist because it represents the theorisation of how the normative project imagined within the terrain of the theory of the political can find a home in the world – it is what moves his work beyond the elaboration of formal categories for empirical analysis and the development of a purely normative theory of the good society.

As a form of politics, populism follows a particular path through the steps discussed above as involved in hegemonic politics. A number of heterogeneous demands are brought together and linked. They achieve a collective identity through their differentiation from an antagonistic force represented in their discourse, namely the particular other of the ‘establishment’ that is taken to deny their demands. Finally, a particular demand, often signified by a leader, is affectively invested with the empty universal of the ‘people’ and comes to represent ‘the people’ in the ultimate move of the populist hegemonic operation (2005a: 116). The achievement of this marks the transformation of the populist political subject: ‘in order to have the people of populism … we need a plebs who claim to be the only legitimate populus – that is, a partiality which wants to function as the totality of the community’ (2005a: 81). The often-lamented ‘vagueness’ of populist discourse (as opposed to the finely differentiated positions within parliamentarian systems and establishment political discourse) thus stems from precisely the operation that brings ‘the people’ into being.
Now, both Laclau’s own work and the collection of analyses in Panizza (2005) demonstrates the considerable analytical purchase of this approach in contrast to traditional theories and their eclectic and often self-contradictory conceptualisations of populism. In terms of political theory, it is also clear what his perspective contributes in contrast to the simple **positing** of an ontological ‘proletariat’ and its struggle as ‘class war’ in Marxism – today reemergent in the idea of an ‘ontological multitude’ and its auto-justified fight against ‘Empire’ (Hardt & Negri, 2004: 221). If one leaves aside for a moment his appeal to the notion of the ‘underdogs’, Laclau’s theory of the political points to the contingency, coercion and exclusion involved in **any** processes producing subjectivites and thereby raise the normative question of how concrete forms of politics forming potentially transformative subjects can be justified – both question are silenced in these alternative accounts, both come together in the theory of a populist form of politics. The proletariat is simply there and simply socialist. The multitude is simply there, and simply fighting Empire. Because they are who they are, neither needs normativity or ethics. Paraphrasing Critchley’s (forthcoming) beautiful phrase, ‘ethics without politics is empty, politics without ethics is blind’, one can say that in these theories, politics is normatively blind because it takes as its starting point that it **does not need to see**, it has always-already **seen**. In contrast, Laclau minus the underdog insists that politics **sees itself as political and necessarily normative** and as having **never seen a priori**, because there are no one to see before their own political constitution. Contrary to what for instance Badiou (2005) seems to suggest, politics is never only back then and there, but here and now, and the involved has to see themselves as such to recognise what they are doing as political and normative and not just the unfolding of history. This
position is immensely valuable in itself because it insists on bringing together the political and the normative in the world as a form of politics. What I will dispute here is the link that Laclau given these insights wants to make between radical democracy and populism as a form of politics. I have two objections. The first ties in with my criticism of the notion of the ‘underdogs’ and pertains to the idea that those people (the plebs) ‘the people’ emerge from can be fruitfully understood as ‘the underprivileged’ (2005a: 81). The second concerns Laclau’s attempts to equate populism with the political as such.

The theoretical part of my problem with the idea of plebs as simply ‘the underprivileged’ is already laid out in my above discussion of the notion of the underdog that provides the key linkage between the normative project and the populist form of politics. Patterns of exclusion/inclusion and equality/inequality do not necessarily (or even often) coalesce in handy total dichotomies identifying two distinct groups as the privileged and the underprivileged. The very establishment of such a dichotomy seems to be involved in the populist political act, and like all such acts, it entails the constitution not of a new order of inclusion-as-such, but of a new combination of inclusion and exclusion. The notion of ‘the people’ have in Europe both historically and in the contemporary world worked in precisely this way, because it is not only differentiated from the establishment (populus/grandi), but also from the Stranger that nationalist discourse has brought back to haunt us together with the re-emergence of the people as a historical agent. The many changing incarnations of the Stranger (the Jew, the Gypsy, the German ‘Hun’, the second-generation immigrant) underlines that the universalist potential that lies in the concept ‘people’ (as humans – think: die Leute, les gens, folk, etc) is often replaced by the particularism of the people (das Volk, le peuple, folket, etc) –
which may still represent national *unity*, but definitely not an inclusive people the emergence of which amounts to the overcoming of unequal distributions of privilege. It is often only conceived of as an attempt to bring the *national people* onto the scene, and has historically often been used by political elites to manoeuvre this precise political subject against more radical projects striving for social change (see for instance Hansen & Jelstrup 2005). This use has to be kept in mind as a concrete counter-example to Gramsci’s dreams about a progressive national-popular and new idols of the left like Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales. Though the Latin American experience is partly different, history is ripe with examples of populisms at odds with radical democratic aspirations, and even those less so are also involved in coercion and exclusion. Just as Laclau does not hold that the identification of hegemony has any necessary links to the project of radical democracy, he also at one point writes that ‘there is no a priori guarantee that the ‘people’ as a historical actor will be constituted around a progressive identity (from the point of view of the Left)’ (2005a: 246). But the opposite link – which he makes – seems equally contingent (that radical democracy is *a priori* populist as suggested in the quotation above). As already discussed, the point that democracy involves *people* does not amount to it involving a political subject claiming to be *the* people. What would make a political subjectivity constituted around the investment of, say, ‘justice’ any less democratic than one constituted around the notion of ‘the people’? The defining traits of radical democratic politics seems to lie elsewhere, in the recognition of a subject’s own contingency and particularity, in the pursuit of emancipation(s), and in the precise combination of equality and inequality that its political projects deem valid.
The second problem arise from the following puzzling passage:

Does … the political [then] become synonymous with populism? Yes, in the sense in which I conceive this last notion. … the construction of the ‘people’ is the political act par excellence – as opposed to pure administration within a stable institutional framework

(2005a: 154)

This is an interpretation that seems to flatly contradict Laclau’s own introduction to the very same book (with which I align myself). Here, the argument is that ‘populism is, quite simply, a way of constructing the political’ (2005a: xi, my emphasis). In the latter reading, the opposition established in the quotation above between politics and pure administration is untenable, and the equivalence between populism and the political denied. This seems to be the necessary implication of the theory of hegemony – if political processes are ontologically primary and never complete, they cannot be thought of as opposed to any particular ontic form – there is no such thing as ‘pure administration’ that successfully extinguishes the political, even things that pass themselves off as purely social have political origins. If the theory of hegemony is precise, the political is an inescapable part of human existence. Another quote illustrates the importance of this difference:

‘in the dismissal of populism far more is involved than the relegation of a peripheral set of phenomena to the margins of social explanation. What is
involved in such a disdainful rejection is, I think, the dismissal of politics

tour court’

(2005a: x)

Here, two points can be disentangled in the light of the above. One is the truism that
democratic politics necessarily entails precisely politics. But if the political is an
ontological condition of human existence, denial of it can only amount to ideological
self-deception, not an actually effective dismissal.19 Radical democracy may require
‘fidelity to politics’, but not necessarily populism. Norval (2004) is an example of an
author that operates more or less within the ontological theory of the political that Laclau
has elaborated, sympathises with the notion of radical democracy, but still tries to insert
something between the rather stark dichotomy between institutional politics and anti-
establishment populist politics that Laclau seems to suggest. And with good reason, in
my view – the challenge seems to be to identify a form of politics that can be normatively
justified through self-disciplinaton around a project like radical democracy, can carry out
a hegemonic operation that will probably have to include the linkage of demands from
both within and outside existing social orders, and instigate change towards a social
ordering that is more democratic and just than the current. This may take a populist form,
but I doubt it, and the claim that it must is untenable.

19 Along the same line, the normative-political problem plaguing the Marxist tradition that Laclau &
Mouffe deconstructs (1985) is not that its theoretical dismissal of the independent importance of politics
and its inability to perceive it led to Marxist-inspired political practices (for instance revolution!) into
becoming apolitical – they were necessarily so. The problem is that it, along with the notion of the
universal class, prevented Marxism from developing a position that was radically democratic political,
because it did not show fidelity to politics and refused normative reflection on the process of the political.
A full act of political theorising

As noted in the introduction, the three elements of Laclau’s work discussed above are often presented as separate. Seen as such, the theory of hegemony appears purely analytical, radical democracy as simply another normative theory, and the argument for a populist form of politics as nothing but strategy. Each element has individual strengths and weaknesses, but the central point to be made here is that they together make up one act of political theory.

Their interlinkage can be summarised as follows: Given the historical starting point is not some abstract original position, but an empirical world entailing exclusions and inequalities maintained by a number of existing social orders that are not in themselves defined by immanent or structural logics that necessarily lead to any normatively preferable place, any project for change for the better must identify the potential and logics of change to be anything but empty speculation. The question then is ‘how is change possible?’

Laclau address this question by identifying hegemony as the process of (re)constituting the social order, the ontological logic and transformative potential of the political that is ever-present. The explicit motivation for the initial formulation of this theory was not simply the development of what it also is – an analytical concept – but an attempt to alert the Left to the logic of the political so that it could be put to use for normative purposes. While Laclau leaves behind the dialectical development of the forces of history, he reintroduces the emancipatory potential in history by insisting on its inescapable political dimension. If it is possible to think of emancipation(s) from

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20 In this light, a homology between the Frankfurt School and Laclau’s work emerge in the common ambition to identify a potential for change in the real world.
historical forms of oppression, it is because historical subjects overcome them through political struggles, not because history does due to self-contained immanent or internal logics. The question the development of this theory leads to, especially since it entailed the abolishment of the class essentialism that had made Marxism avoid explicitly normative theorising, is: ‘what changes’ are emancipatory changes?

The answer is theoretically specified in the normative idea of radical democracy. The development of the theory of hegemony as a potential tool for Leftist politics would not make much sense unless it is taken to be possible to distinguish between good and bad change from a certain normative-political position. The normative theory tries to furnish categories for precisely this distinction and the self-disciplin ation of a political project around it. It incorporates the fact of heterogeneity and the form of hegemonic politics into its very conception of the good society. Accepting heterogeneity, it radicalises deontological logics also pursued by other strands of thought in an argument about the primacy of democracy as open-ended and unfixed. It makes it possible to think that precisely democratic subjectivities can be constituted. I have argued here that the theory despite its merits (the recognition of the political in the form of heterogeneity, hegemony, and subjectivity) is still plagued by the lack of co-articulation of the two different dimensions of democracy it identifies (equality and the inequality of positive discrimination). A fleshing out of, for instance, a notion of democratic justice should be pursued to reach a level where more precise adjudications between democratic and nondemocratic subjectivities and projects are possible. But even given the accomplishment of such a task, the final question remains: ‘how can that normative change be pursued?’
Laclau suggests *populism* as the politics of a radical democratic project. Though the link is made to the notion of democracy and the emergence of the people, I have criticised this link on both historical and theoretical premises and argued that it is not a convincing part of the project. Even the ‘least populist’ version of a theory of a form of politics - the idea presented by him and Mouffe (1985: 182-183) as the linkage of anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-capitalist struggles into one radical democratic project still seems to me to avoid the question that the reconceptualisation of the formation of subjectivities around the notion of demands allow one to pose: how can a radical democratic project be constituted around demands from *both* included and excluded around some normative notion like justice that in some places span the political frontiers that separates them? This is where the future of a radical democratic form of politics that recognises the points I have made in part two and three above seem to lie.

What *despite* the problems identified remains an important contribution of Laclau’s political theorising, especially the recent focus on populism, is the underlying insistence that an act of political theorising entail all three elements. Against thinkers such as Rawls, who offers very little as to the political question of ‘how change’ and the politics question of ‘how *that* change’, and instead remains almost exclusively within the realm of a purely normative theory that is therefore unconditioned by ontology and worldly realities, or thinkers such as Gramsci, who offers a lot on those two questions, but nothing but simply appeals to the universal class when it comes to the normative question of ‘what change’, Laclau combines ontological, normative, and ontic questions in *one* act of political theorising. Even if it ultimately does not yet fully reach the heights it aspires to, it
therefore still manages to differentiate itself from normatively indifferent political science, abstract moral theorising, and unprincipled political strategising in an act that performatively shows, even if it does not fully explains, what it means when Laclau says that he speaks not as a philosopher, but ‘as a political theorist’ (1996b: 47). The meaning, merit, and problems of this is what I have sought to make clear here.

**Bibliography**


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Chapter Two
Performing radical democracy

Moya Lloyd

Power is not stable or static, but is remade at various junctures within everyday life; it constitutes our tenuous sense of common sense, and is ensconced as the prevailing epistemes of a culture. Moreover, social transformation occurs not merely by rallying mass numbers in favour of a cause, but precisely through the ways in which daily social relations are rearticulated, and new conceptual horizons opened up by anomalous and subversive practices (Butler 2000a: 14).

It may seem perplexing in a book exploring the politics of radical democracy to have two chapters devoted to the work of Judith Butler for she is hardly known as a democratic theorist. Indeed, a quick search through the indexes to all her single-authored books reveals the sum total of only one reference to democracy in all nine texts (2004a: 226). Even extending the remit a bit wider to include references to the writings of, say, radical democratic thinkers such as Laclau and Mouffe, fails to yield much more. They appear in the indexes of just two books (Excitable Speech and Bodies that Matter). Yet in this chapter, I will argue that Judith Butler is a radical democrat and that she develops her account of radical democracy, in part, out of a critical engagement with the work of Laclau and Mouffe, particularly that of Laclau. Moreover, to make my case, I will be drawing amongst other things on some of the very texts that appear to offer little indexical evidence of Butler’s interest in radical democracy. In part I am able to do so because the indexes to Butler’s books are highly
parsimonious: democracy – as both a theory and practice – appears more often than they suggest, though still not on the scale to warrant identifying any of her books as a piece of democratic theory per se. The more important factor, however, is that the concept that I suggest is central to Butler’s understanding of radical democracy, what I term universality-to-come (echoing, of course, Derrida’s idea of democracy-to-come), becomes increasingly salient in these writings over time.

There are two areas that concern me in this chapter; I have examined the broad terms of Butler’s discussions of radical democracy elsewhere (Lloyd 2007a and 2007b). The first relates to the idea of universality-to-come. I am interested here both in the contours of this concept and in how Butler differentiates her approach from that of Laclau, whose own contribution to advancing the debate on radical democracy has been identified by some commentators in terms of its concentration on the universal (Critchley and Marchart 2004: 4). The second area concerns the transfiguration of ‘daily social relations’ alluded to at the outset of the chapter. Here I focus on same-sex marriage. As an issue it illustrates very clearly, I propose, a deconstructive aporia at the heart of Butler’s account of radical democracy: a blindness to the state as a possible mechanism for universalisation that is in tension with Butler’s characterisation of radical democratic struggles as struggles to resignify the universal (and, most particularly, the human as a universal). As I demonstrate below, an account of radical democracy that does not conceive of the possibility of operating through the state in the advancement of democratic demands is an account that risks abstracting from, and thus neglecting, the specific contexts within which political contestation actually occurs. To contend a priori that the state cannot facilitate democratic demands is not a radical claim per se. The radicalism of any political strategy can
only be evaluated *in situ*. For this reason, I will argue, that it is necessary in the light of shifting political circumstances in the US to re-evaluate Butler’s assertion that radical sexual politics is best served by rejecting same-sex marriage.³

**Competing universalities**

Butler develops her account of radical democracy, as noted earlier, in part out of a critical engagement with the work of Laclau and Mouffe. Tellingly, she rejects Laclau and Mouffe’s emphasis in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) on the production of democratic identities as such; queries what she perceives to be their positing of transcendental ‘a priori conditions of political articulation itself (across all time and place)’ (2000c: 272) as the basis for democratisation; and worries about the hermeneutics of their reading of new social movements as pivotal to democracy. Where she does draw intellectual sustenance for her account of radical democracy is from Laclau’s discussion of universality, though as will become clear, hers is a qualified approval of his position.

Over the last thirty years or so, feminists, post-colonialists, communitarians, and poststructuralists have expended considerable energy endeavouring to demonstrate the limited and partial nature of what passes for the universal. The fall of Communism, rise of various nationalisms, and the shift towards multicultural politics (itself fed by the appearance of a constellation of different political movements representing diverse groups) have all contributed in various ways to the problematisation of the universal. Butler was once a vociferous critic of the universal, contending that it was not just ‘violent and exclusionary’ but also ‘totalizing’ (2004b: 339). Yet within only a few
years, she was arguing that an open-ended sense of universality was not only useful for but essential to the radical democratic transformation of society. It is not the reason for this apparent change of heart that concerns me here, though needless to say it should not be construed as signalling a return to old style notions of the universal as predicated on some pre-existing characteristic of humanity. It is how Butler characterises the relation between universality-to-come and radical democracy that is of interest.

In *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, Butler engages in a debate with Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek about, amongst other things, the status of the universal. Echoing Laclau (I will set aside Butler’s debate with Žižek on this occasion), Butler argues that the ‘open-endedness that is essential to democratization implies that the universal cannot be finally identified with any particular content, and that this incommensurability (for which we do not need the Real) is crucial to the futural possibilities of democratic contestation’ (2000b: 161). The unrealisability of the universal is precisely what keeps democracy alive. Democratic political struggles arise as a means both of contesting the exclusionary nature of particular universals and of endeavouring to render ‘key terms of liberalism’, as she puts it, ‘more inclusive, dynamic and more concrete’ (Butler 2000a: 13; see also Butler 1997a: 160 and 2001: 419). Such struggles are politically potent, then, when they compel a less exclusionary rearticulation of the fundamental assumptions of democracy itself. Butler thus shares with Laclau the idea of the impossibility of a fully realisable universalism – or to use different language, the incompletion of the universal. Significantly, she differentiates her account from Laclau’s in two ways.
First, she returns to Hegel to argue that ‘the relation of universality to its cultural articulation is insuperable’ (2000a: 24). The universal, she claims, is always already thoroughly cultural, shaped by the customary practices through which it is enacted – a ‘given syntax’ and ‘a certain set of cultural conventions’ (Butler 2000a: 35). She thus rejects Laclau’s conceptualisation of the universal as being formally empty. Rather the ‘universal in culture’, as she calls it, always depends on ‘decidedly less than universal conditions’ for its expression (Butler 1996: 44-5). Second, although seeming to endorse Laclau’s claim that it is the incommensurability between the particular and the universal that is central to democratisation, Butler distances herself from what she perceives to be his a priori assumption that the political field is divided between ‘modes of resistance that are particular and those that successfully make the claim to universality’ (Butler 2000b: 165). The point is not that she queries the inter-imbrication of universal and particular suggested by Laclau but that she rejects the idea that they are logically incompatible categories (Butler 2000b: 162). Here she draws on Linda Zerilli’s discussion of Joan Scott’s work on post-revolutionary French feminist politics to make her case (Zerilli 1998: 16).

When Scott explores the universal in relation to feminism, one of the paradoxes she identifies is that of a possible ‘undecidable coincidence of particular and universal’ within one idea; in this case the term ‘sexual difference’, which ‘can denote the particular in one political context and the universal in another’ (Butler 2000a: 33). It can thus stand for women’s specificity (a particularism) or for something that is common to all humanity (a universal). Examining the ‘particular in its particularity’ might reveal, in other words, that ‘a certain competing version of universality is intrinsic to the particular movement itself’ (Butler 2000b: 166). What sustains
democratisation for Butler is not a clash between universal and particular, as Laclau maintains but, in a context of deep pluralisation, a clash between particular cultural universals.

The inevitable question raised by this formulation is how best to mediate between competing universals? What kind of radical democratic politics is involved here? The short answer is one of ‘establishing practices of translation’ amongst conflicting universals so that a non-transcendental commonality can be forged (Butler 2000b: 167; see Lloyd 2007a for a fuller discussion). What does this involve? According to Butler, when a disenfranchised group make a universal demand they commit a performative contradiction: they lay claim to something (a right, an ontology) from which they are constitutively excluded (1996: 48). At that very moment, ‘an invocation that has no prior legitimacy can have the effect of challenging existing forms of legitimacy’, and open up a new, more universal, form (Butler 1997a:147; see also Rancière 1999). The limited reach of the existing universal is divulged and the universal is thus challenged. In appealing to the universal, the disenfranchised, that is, expose the extent to which the universal rests on particular, exclusionary assumptions about who qualifies as a person having the right to appeal to the universal.

It is not just that those demanding universal rights do not already have them; the real problem is that they are not recognized as possible subjects of said rights in the first place. They thus signify both the limit of the human and thus ‘the limit to universalizability’ (Butler 1996: 46). The ‘assertion of rights becomes’, for Butler therefore, ‘a way of intervening into the social and political process by which the human is articulated’ (2004a: 33); a way of challenging the norms defining who
counts as human. And so, a radical democratic politics, oriented towards universality-to-come, is intrinsically tied to ‘struggle[s] with the norm’ (Butler 2004a: 13): norms defining the human, norms establishing sex and sexual difference, norms defining whose life counts. By disrupting that which is settled and ‘known’, radical democratic politics opens up space to ‘rethink the possible’ (Butler 1999a: xx); to contest, in other words, the normative violence that determines who counts. (For more on normative violence see Lloyd 2007a.) What, however, is the relation between struggling with the norm and cultural translation?

The aim of cultural translation is neither to posit an alternative set of a priori universal assumptions about the human nor to attempt to assimilate the excluded to an existing (heteronormative, racially or ethnically framed) conception of the human. There is equally no point in endeavouring to impose a view of the universal on a culture resistant to it. Rather, cultural translation involves an encounter between competing conceptions of the universal, articulated in different languages, that produces a transformation in how the universal is thought. It is a difficult and laborious process. It requires that each of the competing universals ‘change in order to apprehend the other’ (Butler 2004a: 38), to give up some of their foundational assumptions. This, in turn, demands of radical democratic subjects if not a commitment to, then at least a willingness to undergo, epistemological uncertainty. Drawing inspiration from the work of Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa, Butler commends subjects to ‘put our own epistemological certainties into question, and through that risk and openness to another way of knowing and of living in the world to expand our capacity to imagine the human’. And, reading her at her most radical, democratic transformation for Butler can and will occur only when such subjects
‘exist[...] in the mode of translation, constant translation’ (Butler 2004a: 228); when they can let go of the comfort of knowing already what the human is – giving up, in other words, the limiting religious, racial or heteronormative frames that presently define the human in order to generate a wider, more uncertain, yet less restrictive conception (Butler 2004c: 89-91).

So, to sum up, radical democratic politics, for Butler: is inherently contestatory and dissonant; operates through practices of cultural translation designed to rework the universal ‘from myriad directions’ so that it becomes more capacious (Butler 2004a: 224); is staged through the appropriation of claims to equality, freedom, justice and rights by the disenfranchised; and is constitutively open-ended. Radical democratic universality is thus always a universality-to-come. Moreover, no a priori assumptions can be made either about the process or conditions of democratisation (articulating the universal and particular), or about its agents (new social movements). Democratisation is always already culturally articulated: dependent on historically embedded subjects and available political vernacular. For all the strengths of her account, however, when it comes to Butler’s discussion of specific examples of radical democratic politics at work, particularly with regard to sexual politics, she introduces a questionable a priori assumption of her own: that civil society is the only appropriate locus for radical democratisation and the production of universals-to-come. (For an exploration of the place of civil society in radical democratic thought see Martin, this volume).
Restaging the universal – demanding ‘love rights’

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that as a radical democrat Butler might be understood as arguing for the radicalisation of liberalism – that is, the extension of liberal notions of equality, freedom and so on to more and more areas of social life. I also hinted that she conceives of radical democratic politics in terms of everyday-ness. Finally, I suggested in the introduction to this chapter that democratic politics had been present in her work from at least Gender Trouble onwards. I now want to return to some of these claims. My first contention is that Butler does rather more than seek to democratise the explicit values of liberalism (liberty, equality, justice). In her efforts to argue for an extension of the norms that ‘sustain a viable life’ to all persons (Butler 2004a: 225) she argues for the necessity to democratise the ‘fundamental categories’ that organise cultural and social life so as to make them ‘more inclusive and more responsive to the full range of cultural populations’ (Butler 2004a: 223-4). This is what is required in order to instantiate a ‘radical democratic transformation’ of society (Butler, 2000b: 147). Although it is not possible to specify all the fundamental categories Butler has in mind in this statement, it ought to be clear from her work to date that it includes sex, gender and sexuality. Her critique of heteronormativity (begun in the essays leading to the publication of Gender Trouble and continued unabated since) should thus be read, I am suggesting, as an effort to democratise what is understood by sex and sexual difference. Similarly her interventions in the debate surrounding same-sex marriage should be understood as part of an endeavour to develop a more radically democratic formulation of intimate relations.
One of the third generation rights, or ‘love rights’ as Robert Wintemute terms them (2005), that has dominated much gay and lesbian campaigning across the globe has been that of same-sex marriage. This is certainly true of the United States where it has been at the forefront of debates within the gay, lesbian and queer movements since the 1990s. In what follows, I want to explore Butler’s somewhat late entry into this debate. Before I do so, however, a little context is appropriate.

In 1993 the Hawaii Supreme Court ruled, in the case of *Baehr v. Lewin*, that refusing to issue marriage licenses to members of the same sex seemed to be in violation of the equal protection clause of the state’s constitution. An evidentiary hearing was ordered at which the state was to be granted the opportunity to show that there were ‘compelling state interests’ in denying same-sex couples the right to marry. Before that hearing was over, not only had Congress passed and pro-gay President Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act (1996), which stipulated that ‘the word “marriage” means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife’ (‘DOMA’, in Baird and Rosenbaum 2004: 290) but the people of Hawaii had voted in favour of a constitutional amendment *prohibiting* same-sex marriage (1998). What was widely perceived to be a decision paving the way for the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Hawaii (*Baehr v. Lewin*) turned out to be the start of a battle that divided the gay, lesbian and queer movements as activists contended over whether state-sanctioned same-sex marriage was the right strategy to pursue.

Since then much has happened: the Massachusetts Supreme Court in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* (2003) ruled in favour of same-sex marriages, thus legalising them; in 2004 the mayor of San Francisco, Gavin Newsom, started
authorising same-sex marriages on the grounds that failure to do so was discriminatory under the terms of the Californian Constitution only to have his decision overturned that same year by the California Supreme Court (with some four thousand marriages voided as a consequence); and in 2006 President George W. Bush attempted, unsuccessfully, to fulfil his election promise to amend the US Constitution via the Marriage Protection Amendment. Had it succeeded, this amendment would have secured the heteronormativity of marriage in law.9

Given the characteristics of radical democracy outlined in the introduction to this book, from a theoretical perspective at least, one might expect a radical democrat – or, at least, a radical democrat who conceives of the expansion and contestation of rights as a radical move (and I will return to this below) – to embrace the campaign to extend the right to marry to gays and lesbians. First, it seeks to extend a universal right, indeed a human right, to a constituency denied it.10 The campaign for same-sex marriage might be understood, therefore, as not only endeavouring to secure equal civil and human rights for gays and lesbians but also as a means of contesting the nature of, and thus of rethinking, marriage and sexual citizenship in non-heteronormative terms. Next, the demand appears to involve a performative reconstitution of the demos. Just as in the case of Jeanne Deroin, the excluded (gays and lesbians) seize the very language of entitlement that de-recognizes them (in this case, that of marital entitlement) and claim to be covered by it, effecting what Butler terms a ‘performative contradiction’ (Butler 1996: 48). To paraphrase Rancière, we might say that gays and lesbians reveal themselves as necessarily included in the populous enjoying marital rights while being at the same time radically excluded from that populous. In the process, they restage it. Next, we might also read this campaign
as evidence of what Connolly calls ‘pluralist enactment’ (1995: xiv); that is, part of
the forging of a new pluralising identity. Here the demand for same-sex marriage is
one that disturbs established identities, challenging them to revise the terms of their
own self-recognition, and one that shatters the terms of normality that define the
current state of pluralist existence.

Moreover, with reference to Butler’s own discussion of universality, there seems to be
evidence to support the case that this campaign is a radically democratic one. Given
that the right to marry is predicated upon a heterosexual subject (and, even then, only
some heterosexual subjects), the campaign discloses the extent to which the
hegemonic universal is haunted by, indeed depends on, the particular. If the radical
democratisation of social relations involves the contestation and resignification of the
universal in a more inclusive manner, then the gay and lesbian demand to wed
appears to do precisely that: to extend a right to more and more people regardless of
sexual orientation. Too, there are competing universals at stake in the political debates
that have raged: between those who consider the universality of marriage rights as
indelibly tied not just to heterosexuality but to heteronormativity and those who see
the right to marry as a human right that ought to be open to all humans, including gay
and lesbian humans. It does not seem too far-fetched to contend that at issue in this
political spat is one of translation as Butler describes it: where translation discloses
the ‘alterity within the norm’ (1996: 50) and, in so doing, divulges the limited reach of
the universal. Yet, as Butler’s interventions in the debate around same-sex marriage
make clear, she is profoundly sceptical of it as a goal. First, I want to consider what it
was that was deemed problematic about same-sex marriage from a movement
perspective and second, how this squares with the account of radical democracy Butler articulates.

**The trouble with same-sex marriage**

The critics, many of them queer theorists and activists, who began developing their critique of same-sex marriage in the 1990s focused on a number of arguments, all of which Butler more or less reprises in her own work (see Warner 1999 chapter 3 by way of comparison). Before we consider them it is important, I think, to point out that these arguments were articulated as part of an immanent debate within the gay and lesbian movement, directed at those in its mainstream who had embraced same-sex marriage. As such, their purpose was to attempt to (re-)galvanise a more radical gay and lesbian and/or queer sexual politics. So, what was the gist of this movement-based rejection of same-sex marriage?

The first claim levelled was that the campaign sought to naturalise and thus to normalise marriage and, in so doing, was merely seeking to assimilate the ‘shiny, new gay citizen’ (Butler 2004b: 150) to an existing *straight* norm. Such assimilation reinforced another problematic feature of marriage: its construction as the necessary site for the attainment of particular rights and benefits: for instance, the rights to adopt, to inherit, to gain executive control of medical decision-making, to various tax advantages and to spousal support.11

Next, it was charged, the campaign was less to do with ‘recognition’ than with ‘regulation’, as Claudia Card comments (2007: 24; see also Butler 2004a: 102-30).
That is, because marriage is a state-sanctioned contract designed to organise intimate life it is never – and never can be – simply a private arrangement between two consenting adults. It requires, as Michael Warner, one of the foremost queer critics of same-sex marriage, points out ‘the recognition’, indeed enforceable recognition, ‘of a third party’ (1999: 117): the state (sometimes via one of the organs it authorises to conduct marriage ceremonies). Seeking to extend marriage to same-sex couples would thus further bolster the power of the state to police intimate life, in the process allowing it to determine who counts and, as just observed, who gets what in the way of privileges. Because marriage is a form of ‘selective legitimacy’, sanctifying ‘some couples at the expense of others’ (Warner 1999: 82; Card 1996), it is not only able to deny the legal benefits attaching to marriage to those who reject it but it also guarantees that the intimate relations of those who refuse marriage are less valued – less legitimate – than those of their married (gay or straight) peers (Butler 2000b: 175-6 and 2004a: 109). In this respect, same-sex marriage entails a failure of universalisation.

Perhaps the most trenchant criticism, however, had to do with the impact of the focus on same-sex marriage on gay and lesbian politics in general, and on queer politics in particular. As Warner notes, although the issue of same-sex marriage was raised in the 1970s, lesbian and gay groups did not make its legalisation central to their political demands until the 1990s. In fact, for the most part the movement regarded marriage as a deeply problematic institution: oppressive, patriarchal and a way of mainstreaming gays and lesbians (Ettelbrick [1989] 2004). Instead, it sought to find ways to affirm gay culture and identity and to validate alternative expressions of desire and of forms of relationship and family life. From the 1970s to the 1990s, as Warner remarks, what
dominated was ‘an ethical vision of queer politics centred on the need to resist the state regulation of sexuality’ (1999: 88; see Butler, 2000b: 176). This was an anti-nomian politics centred on politicising sexuality. And, of course, *Gender Trouble* can be seen as articulating this trend with its critique of heteronormative constructions of sex, gender, sexuality and desire. Focusing on questions of who may marry and, when allied to questions of kinship, of who is entitled to conceive and raise children (Butler 2004a: 130) as the mainstream lesbian and gay movement has done signals, therefore, that a major reorientation of gay and lesbian politics has taken place and one that troubles both Warner and, more recently, Butler.

As noted earlier, Butler reiterates the critique of same-sex marriage advocated by the likes of Ettelbrick and Warner. How, though, does this critique fit with her account of radical democracy? At best, it seems, same-sex marriage symbolises a ‘contested zone’ of gay and lesbian democratic politics (Butler 2000b: 161): one that divides the movement. Is there a policy, however, that from a queer perspective might capture more fully the radically universal and thus democratic potential of gay, lesbian and queer politics than same-sex marriage has done? Clearly, one fault-line in the marriage campaign identified by Butler (and others) concerns the yoking of marriage to a set of entitlements. One option she (like others) considers is thus to delink marriage and the said bundle of rights and privileges: to open up rights to adoption or reproductive technology to those in non-heteronormative and non-marital alliances (see also Card 2007 and Ferguson 2007). That way, marriage would not be the pre-condition for said privileges. Instead they would simply accrue to individuals independent of the type of relationship they were in.
The more important element of Butler’s argument in my view, however, concerns the site of democratic struggle. It is the fact that same-sex marriage is ‘a project of litigation’ (Warner 1999: 85) that bothers her. As the opening paragraph of *Antigone’s Claim* makes clear: Butler is resistant to ‘contemporary efforts to recast political opposition as legal plaint and to seek the legitimacy of the state in the espousal of [political] ... claims’ (2000e: 1). And same-sex marriage is no different. Her reasons are clear: litigation confers additional legitimacy and regulatory power on the state and leads to the view that the state is the ‘necessary venue for democratization itself’ (2000b: 176). This is why in contrast to some other queer critics, Butler I would suggest is critical not only of same-sex marriage but equally so of other forms of legal partnership arrangement: because they rest on state-approved and thence regulatory and normalising legal contracts (2004a: 109).

Against this juridical emphasis, she proposes that ‘the only possible route for a radical democratization of legitimating effects’ is to displace marriage and allow a ‘return to non-state-centred forms of alliance that augment the possibility for multiple forms on the level of culture and civil society’. It is, in other words, more radical and democratic to refuse marriage – indeed, to let the norm of marriage shrivel and die – and to support the alternative relationship (both intimate and kinship) forms that already exist in civil society. That way, she suggests, ‘the hope would be, from the point of view of performativity, that the discourse [of marriage] would eventually reveal its limited reach, avowed only as one practice among many that organize human sexual life’ (Butler 2000b: 177). This political stance reinforces the contention noted in the epigraph to this chapter: that radical democratic transformation is facilitated by the restaging of quotidian social relations, which themselves lead to the
emergence of ‘new conceptual horizons’. The presence of a multiplicity of non-marital relations in civil society itself suggests that there already exist alternative ways of thinking about – of conceptualising – sexuality, sexual alliances and kinship relations to the ideal touted by the pro-marriage lobby (gay and/or straight).

To wed or not to wed: that is the question

At the heart of Butler’s scepticism about same-sex marriage is the belief that this policy will not, indeed cannot, bring about social change in the sense of securing the democratisation of intimate relations. Central to this, as noted, is Butler’s critique of the place of the state in this campaign. In this section, however, I want to cast doubt on her interpretation of same-sex marriage given the way that the US political context has changed since the 1990s when the internecine debate concerning same-sex marriage emerged within the gay, lesbian and queer movement to now, towards the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, when the opposition to same-sex marriage from all quarters (including, in particular, conservative forces) has intensified; from a time when Michael Warner could write that ‘the only people arguing against gay marriage, it seems, are those homophobic dinosaurs – like [Representative Henry] Hyde, or Senator Jesse Helms, or the feminist philosopher Jean Bethke Elshtain’ (1999: 83) to a time when an increasing number of US states have acted – and are continuing to act – to ban same-sex marriage.¹²

The critique I advance will draw on Butler’s own theorisation of radical democracy. My purpose is not, however, to advocate same-sex marriage per se; I remain ambivalent about it as a radical political project. What I seek to expose, rather, is a
tension at the heart of Butler’s account of radical democracy with respect to the state, which compels her to view it *ipso facto* as a hindrance to democratisation, a position that consequently produces a certain disabling inattentiveness on her part to political context. In short, I will suggest, that Butler’s critique of same-sex marriage needs amending in the light of the political developments that have taken place since gays and lesbians first began demanding the right to marry. Not only has the ‘marriage issue has been used to reentrench homophobia’ since then but, as Claudia Card observes, it has given new life to the forces of conservatism determined to preserve the sanctity of heterosexual marriage (2007: 33). Before I consider same-sex marriage in terms of the current US political context, I need to demonstrate that the theoretical resources are present in Butler’s work to show that marriage is potentially resignifiable. I thus return to the idea of performative contradiction and the radical democratic potential that, according to Butler, inheres in it.

One of the examples that Butler cites, and cites frequently, is Paul Gilroy’s discussion in *The Black Atlantic* (1993) of the relation between slavery and modernity. Butler is interested in Gilroy’s Hegelian contention that, far from being excluded from modernity as so often claimed, the enslaved have been ‘able to appropriate essential concepts from the theoretical arsenal of modernity to fight for their rightful inclusion in the process’ (Butler 2001: 420) and, as such, historically slavery operated as a force of modernisation. As Butler parses it, when slaves took up the terms of modernity (equality, justice and so forth), they revised them, a process that had ‘radical consequences’ for the development of a non-ethnocentric understanding of modernity. From this she concludes, in an argument that proved pivotal to *Excitable Speech*, that the role of ‘reappropriation is to illustrate the vulnerability of these often
compromised terms to an unexpected progressive possibility’, the creation (in this particular case) of a ‘more radically democratic modernity’ (Butler 2001: 421, my emphasis; and Butler 1997a: 160-1).

For all its structural similarity to the case of slavery and modernity, however, Butler disallows same-sex marriage this radical outcome. Yet, gays and lesbians in demanding a right from which they have been constitutively excluded are performing a contradiction not dissimilar to that performed by slaves.13 Going further, in so doing they recompose the demos, extending its terms to include some of those conventionally denied entry to it. For all this, however, their performative contradiction apparently does not, in Butler’s eyes, produce the same kind of radical resignification that slaves effected with respect to the core ideals of modernity. Theirs opened up a different future for ideals like freedom, justice, and equality; theirs unsettled the polity (Butler 1997a: 161). By contrast, same-sex marriage she suggests does not. The question is why?

There is ample evidence throughout her work, and here Excitable Speech is exemplary, to demonstrate both that Butler regards rights discourse as having potentially radically democratising effects, because of its amenability to resignification, and yet sees the turning of such rights into justiciable or legal rules (their positivisation) as a problem.14 It appears as if the radical democratic moment in the restaging of rights discourse is the moment when a rhetorical or symbolic claim is made on specific rights. At such times, Butler interprets them admitting ‘a sense of difference and futurity’ into the polity (1997a: 161). By contrast, Butler views, almost without fail, the demand to have such rights recognised in law as an invitation to the
state to increase its regulatory and normalising powers and thus as working against
democratisation. This exposes, I propose, a tension in her account of radical
democracy. In the first instance, the appropriation and recycling of rights discourse
suggests the possible constitution of a newer, more-encompassing universal. Not so
the second instance, for state recognition of such rights, it seems, is not an appropriate
means of instating a universal. For the state is divisive: a means of policing and
controlling particular sectors of the population.

Given this, one might wonder what place rights (symbolic or legal) have in radical
democratic politics. In what sense(s), if any, is it sufficient simply to lay claim to a
particular right *without* the eventual prospect of that right being codified in some
way? Is it enough just to make a claim on legitimacy without requiring its conversion
into something enforceable? The plot only thickens when we recall that Butler is
opposed to marriage because it is the only way to access particular rights. She does
not, on this occasion at least, appear to doubt or to contest the need for such rights.
This only begs another question, however, that if rights (of adoption, inheritance and
so on) are to be meaningful politically then how are they to be secured, if not by the
state? And if, paradoxically, it is the state that is to guarantee these rights, then what is
it at such times that prevents it from fortifying its own power?

Let us assume, for a moment (and perhaps against our better judgement), that rights
have a place in radical democratic politics (see also Chambers 2004). In this context,
is there any way of viewing a right to same-sex marriage as contributing in a radical
democratic sense to the transformation of intimate alliances? That is, is there a way
that it might aid in the articulation of a more inclusive universal. Taking my lead from
Butler, I want to suggest there is. It concerns the way that positing a less exclusive universal requires struggle with the norm. I want to return, therefore, to the theme of heteronormativity, which Butler did so much to challenge in works such as *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*. I want to suggest that in reading same-sex marriage as operating simply to assimilate gays and lesbians to an existing norm, Butler downplays the extent to which same-sex marriage has the potential in the present context to contest – and resignify – the *heteronormativity* of that norm.

Heteronormativity is a regulatory practice made up of/operating through institutions, modes of understanding, norms and discourses that posits heterosexuality as natural to humanity. In this normative regime, sex, gender and desire are assumed to be connected in a specific way: that gender follows from sex and that desire follows from sex and gender. Clearly if any institution symbolises heteronormativity, it is marriage. Masculine man weds feminine woman in order to reproduce a version of the mommy-daddy-me family so beloved of psychoanalysis. It is evident that one of the effects of the demand for marriage between two people of the same sex in a context *where that is prohibited* is to expose the heteronormativity of marriage. It makes visible, that is, the fact that marriage is predicated on heterosexual norms and that so too are the benefits accruing to it (the rights mentioned so often above). To demand that gays and lesbians be allowed to marry partners of the same sex when same-sex marriage is largely impossible, as it is presently in the US (and where it may yet become unconstitutional), poses both a direct and, possibly, a necessary challenge to this normative gender order. It threatens to subvert it by divulging the heterosexual presumption underpinning marriage and, consequently, in making it visible opens it
up to deconstruction. The heterosexuality of marriage can no longer be tacitly assumed or taken for granted.\textsuperscript{15}

In Butler’s terms it is, of course, the very performativity of marriage that facilitates this process of subversion – the fact that the saying (‘I do’) is a doing but a saying and doing that are themselves always already citational (based on repetition). Recall that in her discussion of hate speech, it is the citationality of language that Butler regards as creating the space for a ‘counter-mobilization’ – when a term or practice is appropriated and made to resignify in mutinous fashion (1997a: 163). The call to legalise same-sex marriage – to resignify it beyond the heteronormative frame – is surely, given Butler’s terms, a potential example of a counter-mobilisation. If marriage is, after all, reiterable in an insurrectionary fashion, as Butler must allow given the parameters of her own theory (and as seemed to be the case when in a succession of two-minute ceremonies same-sex couples lined up to be married in San Francisco’s City Hall in February 2004), then what is to stop gay marriage in certain contexts contributing to the ‘democratic cultivation of alternative sexualities’ (Warner 1999: 90) that queer thinkers and activists like her press for? Why not draw a similar conclusion to conservative thinker, Stanley Kurtz when he argues that:

\begin{quote}
Once we say that gay couples have a right to have their commitments recognized by the state, it becomes next to impossible to deny that same right to polygamists, polyamorists, or even cohabiting relatives and friends. And once everyone’s relationship is recognized, marriage is gone, and only a system of flexible relationships is left (Kurtz cited in Ashbee, 2007: 102)?
\end{quote}
What if state recognition were to transfigure marriage into a system of flexible arrangements ‘linking two or three, or more individuals (however weakly and temporarily) in every conceivable combination of male and female’ (Kurtz cited in Ashbee, 2007: 102) then, perversely, might it not be the state itself that delivers (rather than hinders) the universalisation of ‘legitimating effects’ that Butler yearns for and the state that articulates a more encompassing universal?

The rub is, of course, that in the world of radical democracy there are no guaranteed outcomes or certainties of any kind. We thus cannot say for sure that same-sex marriage will contribute to a more radically democratic formulation of sex and sexual difference (cf. Butler 2000b: 147). But equally we cannot say that it will not contribute in this way. The best that can be deduced is that subversion of any kind only produces ‘the kind of effect that resists calculation’ (Butler 1993: 29; see also Lloyd, 2005a: 143-6; Chambers 2007b). What is important, however, and what Butler under-estimates, is the political context within which such allegedly subversive activity takes place.

**Conclusion**

We have seen in this chapter that Butler associates the project of radical democracy with the production of a more inclusive universal-to-come. When there is a prospect that this universal will be articulated through the state, when, that is, it appears that recognition is to be universalised through a framework of legal rights, Butler baulks at it. This is nowhere more apparent than in her evaluation of same-sex marriage as a political strategy. The problem, for her, concerns what it means to be legitimated by
the state. It is not just that one is, as a consequence, subject to selective legitimation (to borrow Warner’s phrase). It is not even that it makes marriage into the mechanism, *par excellence*, through which legitimacy will be conferred. It is simply the fact that the state does the legitimating. Here Butler assumes, in my view, that the state always already has an investment in practices of ‘social abjection’ (2004a: 112) whereby it instates hierarchies that divide the licit from the illicit; the legitimate from the illegitimate; where, in short, it establishes and maintains the conditions of cultural possibility and impossibility for gendered subjects. Some subjects become ‘intelligible’ within its terms; others remain – or are constituted as – unintelligible. I do not doubt that the state does this – on occasion, even on many occasions. What I question is whether this is all that it does and whether, as a consequence, daily social relations can only be radically reconfigured in a more democratic (universalising) direction in civil society as Butler surmises. After all, what is it about civil society that better guarantees – for surely, given that too is striated by power relations, it cannot fully guarantee – that the universals produced there will operate in a less regulatory, less normalising fashion than those articulated through the state?

If the goal of radical democracy is to struggle with norms that abject, discipline and regulate particular populations in order to recompose those norms in less violent ways, then surely that struggle should take place *wherever* those norms operate, including in and through the state. To maintain *a priori* and in advance that one site ought to be disavowed as a site of political intervention or democratisation seems to me to be highly problematic. The implication that ‘eliminating state-sanctioned marriage altogether’ (Chambers 2007b: 675) is more subversive of heteronormativity at the level of public policy than seeking same-sex marriage, as Butler implies, is fine
if we see marriage as intrinsically and irrevocably heteronormative whatever the context. If, however, we allow that marriage itself can be resignified (and as extensively as Kurtz implies), as I suggest Butler must given her own theoretical assumptions, then the case against the current state-oriented political campaign for same-sex marriage carries less weight.16

The fact is that both options – refusing marriage and contending for its legal resignification – represent competing ways of intervening in the political social and cultural practices through which humans are constituted. They are both modes of radical democratic struggle with norms. Determining which the more appropriate strategy is depends on the (contingent) political conditions of the day. Opposing same-sex marriage in order to re-radicalise gay and lesbian politics when there exists a broad consensus in its favour is very different to opposing it where the state and other institutions, including the church, have acted in concerted fashion to retrench the heteronormativity of marriage and where same-sex marriage is officially disallowed. The radicalism of same-sex marriage as a policy depends on the context in which it is articulated. That Butler appears not concede this in her comments on the state reveals a blind-spot in her theory in terms of the state’s possible role in restaging the universal-to-come; a blind-spot that leads her, moreover, to neglect the (shifting) circumstances in which democratic politics actually occurs.

Notes
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* Thanks are due to both Adrian Little and Sam Chambers for their excellent
comments on earlier versions of this chapter. You will both see where you have influenced me and where not!

1 By all of her books I mean all her single authored books from *Subjects of Desire* through to *Giving an Account of Oneself*. This excludes *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, the text Butler co-authored with Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek. The fact that it does not contain an index, of even the most economical kind, will serve as no defence here. *Contingency* is important to the development of Butler’s theory of radical democracy, not least since it is here that she sets out one of her more elaborated discussions of universality. It should not be read, however, as marking a break in her work – evidence perhaps of her conversion to radical democracy. The politics of everyday life has already been explored extensively in her earlier works.

2 There is one reference to *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* in *Excitable Speech* (Butler 1997a: 177 n. 3), with a further seventeen references to Laclau and Mouffe in *Bodies that Matter*, though in this latter case there are duplicate entries for Laclau and for Mouffe (since the text in question tends to be their jointly authored book, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*). In this case, the number of references might justifiably be halved.

3 Claudia Card who is, like Butler, fervently in favour of the deregulation of marriage notes, by contrast, that changes in the political scene since 2004 ‘may call for some modification in, or qualification or clarification of [her]... stance’ (2007: 32).

In addition to Zerilli, Butler also draws on Hegel and his idea of competing conceptions of universality. I have already explored Butler’s debt to Hegel at length elsewhere (Lloyd 2007a) so will not reprise those arguments here.

We might, of course, regard heteronormative sex and sexual difference as intrinsic to the liberal agenda; that, however, is part of another story for another time and place.

The first two generations are ‘basic rights’ and ‘sex rights’ (Wintemute 2005).

Much has been written about these topics. My account draws on the following: Warner, 1999; Card, 1996, 2007; Chambers 2003, 2007b; Baird and Rosenbaum 2004; Sullivan 2004; Ashbee 2007; Ferguson 2007; Robson 2007.

I am indebted to Samuel Chambers for this point. The key section of the proposed amendment (section 2) reads: ‘Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution, nor the constitution of any State, shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman.’ In the most recent attempt in 2006 to pass it the amendment failed to secure the necessary two-thirds majority in Congress.

The right to marry is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in article 16, section 1, where it states: ‘Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality, or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family.’ On same-sex marriage as a human right see Wintemute 2005 and Card 2007.

Further discussion of the menu of rights that attach to marriage can be found in Warner (1999): 118-9. See also Card 2007.

Florida is a case in point where moves are afoot to include a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage on the ballot in November 2008.
It is important, of course, not to overstate the parallels. For a brief consideration of the class dimensions of the campaign for gay marriage see Goldstein (‘Foreword’ to Graff 2004) and Warner (1999).

Resignification itself is neither inherently radical nor democratic. Rather it facilitates the development of a more radical democracy by unsettling existing norms and allowing for their recomposition.

This is explicitly not to say, however, that were same-sex marriage to be made legal that it would remain, by definition, a radical practice. Arguably, it is the demand for the right to marry that is radical (in particular contexts).

For an account of how marriage has been resignified historically see Graff 2004.
Conflict and Community: Radical Democracy and Associationalism

Adrian Little and James Martin

Department of Social Policy and Politics
Goldsmiths College
University of London
New Cross
London SE14 6NW
UK

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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the possibility of a radical democratic approach to associational theory. Drawing on the recent work of Chantal Mouffe it centers democratic theory around the impossibility of eradicating conflict in favour of consensus. This approach regards conflict and antagonism as not only possible but vital components in the formation of a democratic community. A radical democratic pluralism, therefore, foregrounds the variety of overlapping and contrasting communities (as opposed to a single, homogeneous community) in any social formation and seeks to account for their articulation in ‘agonistic’ rather than moral terms.

In many respects, Mouffe’s radical democratic approach parallels recent work on associative democracy. Associationalism seeks to decentralize democratic decision-making to lower-level, self-organised communities. However, unlike other theories seeking to contextualise democracy by bringing it closer to communal formations (e.g. communitarians) or those looking to decentralize power from the state by expanding and enhancing the role of civil society, Mouffe’s emphasis on conflict as ineradicable defeats any reliance upon settled notions of traditional, liberal or civic community. The ontological (rather than simply empirical) presence of power and antagonism eliminates the notion of a stable, fully-consensual basis to politics around which matters of public concern can be attended. The public sphere is conceived not as an island of consensus in a sea of private differences, nor the fuller expression of a pre-existing communal order, but is itself penetrated by conflict and difference.

In Mouffe’s agonistic approach to radical democracy, conflict and community are mutually related not antinomic. An approach to associationalism on such principles is at odds with certain other efforts at revitalizing the civil sphere. Currently popular notions such as ‘social capital’, ‘trust’ or civic-mindedness function as the fetishised currency of consensus, disguising their partiality and particularity behind a façade of evidently incontestable sameness. In such accounts, the pluralism of associationalist principles reduces to a subtle monism. By contrast, radical democracy accepts no such firm guarantee that a plurality of communities can be articulated around any unifying principle as such. The stability of associational orders arises from a hegemonic struggle to fix certain principles as parameters (e.g. equality, liberty, democracy, nation, etc). The value of associationalism from this perspective is that it opens up new sites of conflict for communities to interact and undermines any effort for a singular community to be mobilized as the ultimate container of all others.
INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the relationship between associative principles of democratic organisation and a ‘radical democratic’ political philosophy focused on the centrality of conflict in political community. Both these perspectives share a concern with the opening up of social and economic structures to pluralist organisation and increased democratic control. In each, current liberal democratic thought and practice are believed to be insufficiently responsive to a growing diversity in values and lifestyles within western populations. As a consequence both recommend a respatialisation of the political community, that is, to reorder the scale and direction of liberal democratic practices such that smaller organisational forms can generate a closer proximity of the public to the decisions of government, so that power flows ‘upwards’ from below rather than vice versa. This reflects a concern for diversified spaces of governance as opposed to hierarchically structured relations of government.

Importantly, associative theory highlights the role of self-governing communities in the administration of public welfare. Like many political theories of late, the ‘community’ is believed, because of its decreased scale, to permit (though not guarantee) a greater degree of informed participation by members in their own affairs and, as a consequence, a greater responsiveness to public feelings and choices about their services than do centralised states. Whilst we do not dispute this claim, we do wish to highlight another, important consequence of expanding pluralism: namely, the potential for increased expressions of difference and conflict over shared goods. This is not, we believe, a defect of pluralism so much as one of its advantages, one of which associative principles are able to make positive use.

There is, however, a tendency within political theory and science to assume that community and conflict are mutually incompatible. For some proponents of decentralising democratic powers to lower levels, or enhancing the role of ‘civil society’ in social and economic governance, conflict and antagonism must to a great extent be eliminated by consensus, or at very least a disposition towards achieving consensus (e.g. Habermas 1996; Barber 1984). Whilst agreements of various sorts are clearly important to sustaining communities and democratic structures, there is a danger that consensus is overvalued as the linchpin of democratic order. In many cases this contradicts the value of pluralism and democracy by foreclosing or severely delimiting the openness to difference that decentralising power enables. Our intention here is to map the relationship between associative democratic
principles and a radical democratic political philosophy that makes conflict and antagonism its starting point.

We begin by questioning the value of ‘grounding’ democracy on consensus. Efforts to achieve this grounding can be found in a variety of discussions promoting ‘social capital’ or cultivating norms of discourse in civil society. Rather than eradicate conflict and antagonism, we follow Chantal Mouffe’s lead in recognising power and conflict as the ontological condition of political association itself. This requires that we recognise the intrinsic ‘paradox of democracy’, that is, the ineliminable gap between democracy and liberty that drives democratic practices. We then move on to discuss a key concept in associative discourse, ‘community’. It is this concept above all that needs to be rethought if the radical democratic conception of pluralism is to have any purchase. Finally, we make some tentative connections between associative principles of democratic reform and radical democratic theory.

GROUNDING DEMOCRACY

Associative democracy involves the decentralisation of public services to a plurality of self-governing associations that are voluntarily generated and democratically accountable to their members (see Warren 2001; Hirst 1994, 1997; Carter 2002; Cohen and Rogers 1995). As Hirst presents it, associative forms of governance offer up the possibility of transcending dated liberal political institutions, with their deference to the centralised state as the sovereign body, replacing them with a revitalised civil society undertaking public tasks. Hirst presents a compelling picture of a renewed democratic order, one not restricted to passively legitimating central government legislation but permanently involved in the process of communicating public concerns to service providers and policy-makers. Indeed, Hirst defines democracy as a form of ‘communication’: ‘that is democracy as effective governance based upon an adequate flow of information from governed to governors, and the coordination of the implementation of policy through ongoing consultation with those affected’ (Hirst 1994: 35).

The suggestion that rescaling public institutions to a democratised civil society requires a rethinking of the values and practices of democracy itself is a common one. In contemporary political theory there is often a connection made between the locality, small-scale organisation and the effective functioning of institutions of democratic government. The recent revival of ‘civil society’, for instance, testifies to a perceived linkage between intermediary organisations and the potential for increased efficiency and legitimacy of public institutions
(Keane 1988, 1998; Cohen and Arato 1992; Putnam 1993, 2001; Barber 1984). This linkage relies upon an understanding of democracy as a practice in which cooperation and reciprocity rather than self-interest or competition is the principal theme. In some discourses, cooperation is given substance in notions of ‘trust’ or ‘social capital’—the ‘civic networks’, norms and various social behaviours that promote and embed cooperation—the accumulation of which enables agents (be they civic organisations, economic enterprises or social movements, etc.) to interact as partners in mutually beneficial arrangements (see Putnam 1993: Ch. 6; 2001). Social capital, like economic capital, becomes a currency that is accumulated and exchanged, metaphorically oiling the cogs of social interaction and smoothing the functioning of government. For others, devolving choice enables an increase in ‘communicative rationality’ and deliberative decision-making that increases the inclusivity and hence legitimacy of public decisions (see Young 2000; Habermas 1996; Cohen and Arato 1992).

Grounding democracy on notions such as communication or social capital, however, is open to the criticism that it overstates the effect of decontestation those notions are thought to entail. That is, it is assumed—indeed welcomed—that moral and political conflict is less likely to occur as democratic decisions become more transparent, less burdened by major organised interests with preformed agendas, and so on. Yet social capital or communicative norms are only factors in stabilising democratic relationships around certain values and norms, they do not constitute the democratic relationship itself. What they do, instead, is denote a set of agreed symbolic parameters and mutually affirming principles, a tendential moral space inside which democratic order can be sustained. As Rose (1999: 188) argues, the widespread recommendation to reinvigorate communities, associations, ‘networks’ and civil society, etc. constitute a ‘new “game of power”’ that he calls the ‘community-civility game’. In this game, the ‘community’ is a new site of ‘self-government’ where individuals are encouraged to align themselves with certain forms of ethical conduct that are neither imposed nor entirely spontaneous. The ‘civil network’ or community is presumed to have qualities of ‘natural’, intersubjective transparency that enables stable patterns of conduct where individuals ‘willfully subordinate’ themselves to shared ethical norms.

These ethical norms signify the boundaries of a supposed ‘consensus’. Yet, as with all notions of consensus or consensus-inducing factors (e.g. modernised industry, ethnic ties, cultural traditions, etc.), closer examination suggests the presence or potential for wide disagreement and the possibility of dynamic change. It is entirely possible, for example, that social and political agents may dispute the degree and effectiveness of communication (e.g. its
inclusivity, its fairness, etc.), or the degree of ‘sociability’ of social capital (e.g. the unequal distribution of capital, ‘preferential treatment’ in cooperative practices, etc). In short, the substance of consensus, where it exists, may easily and frequently become the object of disagreement and mutual hostility. Indeed, as non-state sites become the locus of what Rose calls technologies of ‘ethico-politics’ designed to encourage citizens to exercise ‘ethical self-governance’, ‘it is likely to be on the terrain of ethics that our most important disputes will have to be fought’ (Rose: 188).

This need not be a problem for democracy as such; conflict and disagreement are widely assumed to be a feature of a democratic order. Yet conflict is more likely to be regarded as destructive of democratic relationships if consensus is believed to be the essential ground of democracy. In this situation, those who are most vocal and oppositional to a prevailing consensus or who dispute the validity of certain of its social preconditions, tend to be treated as willfully undermining democracy and social order itself. Such voices are less likely to get a fair hearing because they are deemed to stand ‘outside’ the moral consensus or civic norms.

One answer to this problem is to reconceptualise the relationship between conflict, consensus and democracy. In a number of recent contributions, Chantal Mouffe (1993, 2000) has disputed the value of grounding democracy on relations of consensus at all. In her view, the importance of consensus has been vastly overstated and this has led to a diminished understanding of the political—as opposed to ‘rational’—dimension of democracy and a contraction of its radical potential. For Mouffe, modern liberal democracy consists of a ‘paradox’, a constitutive tension between two, ultimately contradictory, imperatives: the demand for individual liberty and the rule of law (the liberal imperative), and the demand for popular sovereignty and equality (the democratic imperative) (Mouffe 2000: 2-5). She argues that although they may be combined, liberalism and democracy can never be fully reconciled for the logic of one negates that of the other. The only possible consequence is a perpetual reformulation of the relationship between the two, a shifting of the frontier that divides them. This is effectively what debates about the relationship between liberty and equality essentially are, and such debates are the cornerstone of political argument.

However, Mouffe points out that much of modern democratic theory seeks to overcome this constitutive tension, to erase its unsettling presence by grounding liberal democratic practices on supposedly apolitical, sometimes rationalist assumptions. Appeals to a rational moral consensus in Habermas’ theory of communicative ethics or the narrowing down of agreement
to an ‘overlapping consensus’ in Rawls’s political philosophy are key examples of this tendency (see Mouffe 2000: Ch. 1; 1993: Ch. 3). What these thinkers do is to drastically limit the potential for moral conflict and political contest by searching for universal principles on which every rational individual can agree. In so doing, the scope and boundaries of public space is deemed to be agreed and disagreements can be contained within a pre-set consensus. This, however, smooths over the constitutive gap between liberalism and democracy. Such efforts, argues Mouffe, can only ever result in the marginalisation of groups and individuals who offer up radically different moral views in which the boundaries and scope of public space are viewed in radically different ways. The cost of consensus, therefore, is the loss of a genuine and deep pluralism.

Mouffe, by contrast, recommends an acceptance by democratic theorists of the ineradicable presence of conflict, division and antagonism in political life (1993: 1-8). In her view pluralism represents an ‘axiological principle’ not simply an empirical fact (2000: 19): it is not that people happen to disagree on issues which they might otherwise be expected to agree; rather, social and political identities are themselves produced through difference and acts of differentiation. It is not possible, therefore, to have a multiplicity of different points of view and values without some degree of conflict and division. Social identities are forged through operations of power and subordination, the traces of which are often visible in a group’s self-conception and its public representation. When making appeals for recognition or demands for rights—that is, when defining the ‘objectivity’ of their own identity—groups typically specify ‘antagonists’ that purportedly limit the full expression of their identity, whether these be other groups, alternative value systems or ‘social ills’ (see Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 122-34; Laclau 1996). For Mouffe (and Laclau) it is this ‘blockage’ negating a group’s experience of its identity that simultaneously generates its agency (see Laclau 1990). By enforcing a closure upon its otherwise intrinsic heterogeneity, antagonism orients groups in different, sometimes radically incommensurable ways to public space. Reciprocity and hostility are therefore inextricably linked; and rivalry and violence are an ‘ever-present possibility’. These antagonisms and traces of power at the heart of human sociability—what Mouffe calls its ‘dissociating impulse’ (2000: 131)—are what certain theorists deny in their search for ‘neutral’ or ‘universal’ principles. If, however, democracy is not to be grounded on a rational consensus but is to be open to the conflictual pluralism she claims is fundamentally ineradicable, how is this to be achieved?
Mouffe’s answer is to recommend the transformation of antagonisms into ‘agonism’ (2000: Ch. 4). Democracy does need to be stabilised in some way for effective deliberation and choice to occur at all. But rather than eliminate difference and antagonism by appealing to the common currency of consensus, antagonistic differences must be domesticated or rendered less destructive than they might otherwise be. This involves building democracy around the treatment of certain antagonists as ‘adversaries’ or ‘legitimate opponents’ (Mouffe 2000: 102). As Mouffe herself puts it:

An adversary is an enemy, one with whom we have some common ground because we have a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy: liberty and equality (Ibid).

We cannot assume the same substantive values or commitments amongst different individuals and social groups, but we can agree that our commitment to common ‘ethico-political principles’ places us on a shared terrain. This is a consensus of sorts, but a ‘conflictual consensus’ (Ibid: 103), one that begins, pragmatically, from the fact of our difference not our sameness. The paradox of democracy rules out in principle the idea that differences can be harmonised such that the parameters of the public sphere can be set once and for all. Rather, we should expect adversaries continually to promote different, sometimes deeply challenging views of the way in which democratic equality and individual liberty can be reconciled. In so far as we can agree that our adversaries have not become our antagonists (that is, seek to eliminate us from the democratic terrain altogether) then we may proceed to accept their legitimacy as opponents.

An agonistic model of democratic pluralism, then, grounds democracy on a pragmatic political rather than a rational moral basis: it begins with the presumption of difference and conflict over the boundaries of the political community itself, and views consensus not as utterly impossible or illegitimate but as an inappropriate first principle in light of the paradoxical character of democracy. What consensus there is arrives as the outcome of efforts to define the parameters of legitimate conflict, not as a principle of reason. It is also highly vulnerable to alternative reorderings and is, therefore, plausibly an object of conflict itself. Ultimately, liberal democratic values can only be grounded in political action itself and must therefore be continually defined, supported and defended by those who uphold them. This perspective suggests that the dynamism of democracy lies in the propensity for change that it encapsulates.
With Mouffe’s agonistic model of pluralism in mind, what possibilities do associative principles offer for radical democratic theory? The essential advantage of associative democracy is, of course, its practical reconfiguration of power in a pluralistic manner. By dispersing power from the centre, central state powers require only a minimal degree of consensus over their functions; the actual provision of public services does not require total ‘national agreement’ and can therefore be delivered in a variety of ways from a number of sources. By ‘publicizing the private sphere’, Hirst’s model removes the possibility of a single public sector being the site of conflict between competing parties and interest groups. However, the dispersal and fragmentation of power also decentres and fragments conflict; it does not eliminate it. Rather than being centred in a single national community, democratic conflict is scattered across a multiplicity of communities. It is essential, therefore, that we survey the role and status of community in associative democracy.

COMMUNITY

One of the most contested concepts articulated in many associationist discourses and related theories of civil society is community. This is problematic on a basic level because of the multiplicity of usages of the term community and the different interpretations of what the appeal to community entails. Elizabeth Frazer notes how there is a slippage between the idea of community as a particular type of entity (the local community, the international community, the gay community and so on) and the notion of community as an expression of a particular set of values such as trust, mutuality, voluntarism, and so on (Frazer 1999). Thus there is often a lack of clarity about what the concept of community actually refers to (Little 2002a). In its less sophisticated form the advocacy of community is little more than a strategy for rebutting liberal individualism, whilst avoiding difficult questions about the role of the state in social organisation. Here the appeal to community tends to be constructing upon a romantic fiction of the traditional community that has supposedly been uprooted in contemporary societies and which needs to be regenerated. This is the view of ‘community as safety’ in which it becomes the mode of grounding individuals in an insecure world (Bauman 2001). In the view of John Gray this amounts to the replacement of one fiction (the abstract individual) with another (the myth of the homogeneous community) and this is ‘what community is not’ (Gray 1998). In the light of these problems it is important to clarify the role of community in associationist theory and identify the ways in which it can both vindicate and undermine the political principles of associationalism.
In Hirst’s *Associative Democracy* (1994) the relationship between community and associationalism is articulated in terms of the differentiation between communities of choice and communities of fate. Hirst wisely steer clear of the simple rhetoric of community for the primary reason that he wants to reinforce individual freedoms rather than override them with the stronger claims of community. He suggests that association furthers individual freedom in terms of empowering individuals to attain a degree of governance over a particular interest they have and in enabling them to further develop as individuals. In this sense ‘associationalism can be said to be about the pursuit of individuation, and its distinctive contention is that this is more effectively accomplished by cooperative rather than by purely private individual action’ (Hirst 1994: 50). The important point to recognise in Hirst’s thesis is that the associations to which he alludes must be regarded as ‘communities of choice’ if they are to fulfil the role he allots to them. In other words associations can be regarded as communities only as long as membership of these bodies is voluntary and that there is a right of exit (Hirst 1994: 51). Hirst is explicit about the implications of this position for community: ‘communities in an individualistic society must accept that - in form - they are no different from a railway season-ticket holders’ association’ (Hirst 1994: 52). This is a rather minimalist conception of community. It is based on communitarian values rather than the particular nature of the community entity but those values are reduced in Hirst’s thesis to thin, universal liberal values. This begs the question of why Hirst bothers to use the concept of community at all. His understanding of communities of choice suggests that they are bound together by no stronger values than a basic association which individuals may be members of for purely selfish, instrumental reasons (e.g. that they have less power as an individual railway season-ticket holder than they have when they become members of a collective group formed around the same interests). This construction of community doesn’t suppose relations of altruism or obligation between members; what seems more important to Hirst is that individuals can leave communities rather than the actual bonds and behaviour that holds them together.

Hirst is aware that these bonds of community seem somewhat limited in the loyalty and commitment they command from their members. However he refutes the Schmittian criticism that these bonds are insufficiently strong to command support when communities come under threat. For Hirst, the kinds of threats that Schmitt identified in the 1930s do not prevail in contemporary societies and, even if they did, the members of pluralist communities of choice would coalesce around the common purposes required by the state when such threats
emerged. This shows considerable optimism about the commensurability of communities when the polity is faced with external threat and fails to recognise that the very principles and beliefs which separate different communities of choice may well be reflected in the conflicts that emerge between different states. Thus the fact that a society may face external threat does not override the fact that some communities or associations within a society may sympathise more with the external threat than the society in which they live. There is no guarantee that different communities and associations will coalesce against external forces; in many respects such conflicts may make the differences between these groups all the more apparent.

Hirst is aware of the criticism that communities can represent a threat from within a society and that the associational model can be accused of being too weak to contain the kinds of conflict that may erupt between different communities. However his refutation of this criticism is not wholly convincing. He describes the critical position as one where it is assumed that ‘in a multicultural society of conflicting identities, of communities as identities, the public sphere and the freedoms of civil society become nothing more than a medium for different groups to seek to capture the public power for their own purposes’ (Hirst 1994: 53). Here Hirst is disingenuous in assuming that the recognition of incommensurable value pluralism leads to a position where the critic must assume that communities provide all-encompassing identities for their members. However there is no reason why this should be the case. If we accept that all individuals are members of a multiplicity of communities then it becomes impossible for a community to merely provide identity for anyone in a prescriptive fashion. The point is that these communities may be in conflictual relations with one another but in no way should they be regarded as definitively constructing the identities of their members. Moreover there is no reason to suppose as Hirst does that these different communities have to be seen as pursuing ‘public power for their own purposes’. On the contrary, what make them different from one another may be issues of basic cultural practice for example, and the fact that disputes are played out in the public sphere does not necessarily entail the pursuit of public power to further specific ends.

From this perspective the recognition that there may be incommensurable value pluralism within a society does not necessitate the Hobbesian rationality that Hirst imputes to such an approach. In short, there is no reason why the recognition of conflict and difference, and the potentially irreconcilable nature of conflicts, should lead us down the path a prescriptive multiculturalism which is founded on the belief that all communities are ‘communities of fate’ nor does it necessarily imply an all-powerful state. Hirst is right to reject the belief that
individuals are somehow ‘trapped in communities they cannot leave and unaware that exit is possible’ (Hirst 1994: 54) but this does not mean that all communal identities are matters of a pure autonomous, rational individual choice. In short, Hirst attempts to circumvent issues of conflict and contestation by focusing on the voluntary nature of communal relations and the right of exit. Unfortunately this fails to grapple with the fact that different groups may hold incommensurable positions; the right of group members to exit from their communities does not get around the reality that the views of different sub-state communities may be irreconcilable. In this sense there does not appear to be any strong reason to believe that Hirst’s associationalism is capable of overcoming the conflict that can emerge from value pluralism. Such conflicts will frequently be rooted in disagreement about fundamental cultural issues and not merely the issues of property and taxation that Hirst (1994: 51) identifies. Therefore there is a need to recognise that not all conflicts between groups focus on issues of distribution as associationists such as Cohen and Rogers and Hirst imply; we must understand that whilst socially given sources of identity do not lead inevitably to communities of fate, they do contribute to social identity and may be the source of some of our cultural beliefs (Carter 2002: 237).

The danger then in associative democratic theories is that associations, conceived as communities of choice, come to represent a mechanism for avoidance of political dispute. Associationalists like Hirst are very well aware of the limitations of the fiction of community in many orthodox communitarian theories (Gray 1998; Little 2002a). The problem in the latter is the construction of the essentialist community as a means of overcoming the multiplicity of differences within contemporary societies. For Hirst, this manifests itself in the pursuit of ‘communities of fate’ as prescriptive providers of identity. He is right that such approaches promote political closure and deny individual autonomy. In order to avoid these pitfalls however, he substitutes ‘communities of choice’ which would be predicated upon a thin set of common values such as individual freedom, toleration of difference and a commitment to social justice. However, as Carter suggests, these prescriptions for thin shared values are perhaps not as narrow as associationists would have us believe. Thus the values which they promote require ‘consensus on full racial and gender equality, on provision of generous welfare, and on the need to sacrifice economic gain to the maintenance of the environment’ (Carter 2002: 241). Clearly these suppositions are sources of conflict in contemporary politics and there is little reason to suppose that the empowerment of associations would somehow do away with dispute over these tenets of social justice. Indeed these are much more substantive, thick claims around which to found democratic regimes.
than more universalist (and more problematic) thin liberal conceptions of justice such as that of Rawls. To this end, rather than promoting the applicability of associationalism by cloaking it behind an unconvincing argument that it is based on a thin set of values, its advocates should recognise that using ‘associations as channels to radical democracy and social justice would surely require clear commitment to egalitarianism and extensive state action’ (Carter 2002: 244). From a radical democratic perspective associative democrats should also recognise that those principles are the source of political disagreement and that we cannot presuppose anyone’s commitment to them. Radical democracy implies a need to re-engage ‘the political’ in the establishment of core principles: associative democracy tries to presuppose some of those principles a priori before associational political engagement begins. To this end it is important to identify the arguments that differentiate radical democracy from associationist approaches and, in particular, to examine the arguments of those theorists of radical democracy such as Mouffe (2000) who also retain a strong role for community.

**RADICAL DEMOCRACY AND ASSOCIATIVE PRINCIPLES**

Approaching associative principles through radical democratic theory involves accepting the potential for conflict and antagonism even when the venue of public debate and decision has been disaggregated into a plurality of self-governing associations. This point is not simply the banal warning that on occasion people might disagree about how best to organise services or spend public funds. That would assume disagreement is a secondary consequence within the context of a wider consensus. Rather, radical democracy (as it is presented by Mouffe) implies that the pluralised realm of ‘public responsibility’ is itself the site and object of contestation. And it is this ‘dissociating impulse’ that associative democracy needs to take on board. For under associative principles, contestation is likely to occur within, between and across the associations charged with undertaking public functions.

For example, associations will themselves be contested as the proper scope and mode of delivery will be disputed by members, both with each other and between the association and the regulatory state. The extent to which a public function is being properly discharged, the degree to which that function accords with the communal values and objectives of an associative community and the right for minority opinions within the community to influence decision-making are all issues open to dispute. Such disputes are likely to carry intense significance as opinions and beliefs may well be linked to the allocation of funds and thus the mobilisation of ‘identity’ claims will have ‘material’ consequences. Likewise, individuals are
likely to be members of a number of associative communities whose internal principles are not always going to overlap harmoniously. For example, educational associations may be organised along certain principles, such as the centrality of religious commitment, that are not equally respected in forms of economic or health association. Whilst it is plausible to assume that overlapping might not create immense difficulties of practical governance, the uneven mapping of group respect and associative organisation can generate resentments as communal values are reinforced by public finances and the added ‘authority’ of public responsibility. Finally, the overarching role of the state as guarantor of minimal public standards ensures that it remains central to the mobilisation of influence. As Hirst reminds us, associations can function as a counterweight to hierarchical management and bureaucratic control, but that necessarily entails disputes about the proper scope and function of the state. The threat of state institutions being ‘captured’ by certain interests may diminish under associative democracy, but it does not disappear.

Thus associative democracy multiplies the sites of conflict and resistance over public space by pluralising and democratising the organisation of the public sector. For some critics of associative principles, however, this potential for dissonance within an associative system is a sign of its inherent deficiency. Marc Stears (1999), for instance, has argued that associative welfare provision entails two problems: the loss of ‘objective’ public ‘needs’ to the more ‘subjective preferences’ of consumers, and the rise of inequalities between associations as delivery varies according to variations in preferences. Hirst’s reponse (Hirst 1999) is that the distinction between ‘needs’ and ‘preferences’ cannot be easily sustained in an increasingly diverse culture where needs and standards of provision vary. Nor are inequalities in provision devastating if understood as inequalities within certain already-agreed standards and in light of different patterns of demand. Like all forms of welfare provision, failures may occur. Yet the advantage of associative democracy is that it ‘ensures the survival of difference’ (Ibid: 595).

Hirst’s defence against Stears’ criticism underscores the crucial point that associative principles effectively redefine our understanding of the ‘publicness’ of public goods. No longer understood exclusively as standardisation, or what Hindess (2001) calls the ‘assumption of uniformity’ common to modern democratic states, the public sector is to be infused with a sense of its intrinsic variability. Associative provision of welfare, therefore, involves a redefinition of (certain) inequalities as positive signs of difference. Yet differences are rarely viewed so benignly. Rather, difference is often contested as a failure of public
responsibility, the inability of appointed officials to discharge their function, or the consequence of insufficient funding, etc. To adequately face the potential for these claims to undermine the effectiveness of associative organisation, we would suggest, it is necessary to supplement associative principles with an agonistic theory of democracy designed to negotiate the difference between ‘enemies’ and ‘adversaries’.

This is not the place to outline in detail the full, practical implications of conjoining associative and radical democratic principles. However, Rose’s claim, noted earlier, that ‘it is likely to be on the terrain of ethics that our most important disputes will have to be fought’ (Rose: 188) gives us a clue to how we might begin. For ethics refers us, not to some overarching Good (the object of Moral concern), but to conduct oriented towards moral behaviour. It is precisely the terrain of ethics that Rose suggests forms the object of the ‘community-civility game’. The trouble with many of these efforts to recast governance by ‘technically managing’ individual conduct through the community is that talk of ethics too easily becomes ‘merely a recoding of strategies of social discipline and morality’ (Rose 1999: 192). Rose criticizes Putnam and Etzioni for ‘failing to diagnose [in their approach to community] the power relations in the struggles over cultural diversity and the validity of certain forms of life’ (Ibid: 194). To their approach he counterposes the argument that ‘communities can be imagined and enacted as mobile, as spaces of indeterminacy, of becoming’ (Ibid: 195). Conceived that way, communities can be understood as the basis of a creative and fluid politics in which alternative ways of seeing and acting, dissonance and resistance, are the currency of democratic life, rather than the stability-inducing substance of social capital and civic norms.

Such a view contrasts with the self-conceptions of many communities, particularly (though not exclusively) ‘communities of fate’. The advantage of associative democracy however is that, potentially, it institutionalises an arrangement whereby communities themselves are dislodged from any sense of the fixedness or closure of their communal values. By exposing communities to conflicts of values over the scope and character of their public functions, their responsibilities to others and so forth, associative democracy permits civic norms and other expressions of consensus to be contested and negotiated.

This, of course, is to disrupt the entire notion of a democratic order as a stable, grounded system upon which differences can be rationally settled. But that does not mean effective governance cannot be achieved. If the conflicts between and across communities are to be
accepted as legitimate expressions of difference, then our task is to ensure that difference does not escalate into destructive hostility and social disorder. As Mouffe points out in her discussion of an ‘ethics of democracy’ (2000: 129-40) once we accept that alterity cannot be entirely absorbed into procedures of deliberation (or, for that matter, social capital and civic norms) and so neutralised, the fragility of democracy comes to the fore. But democracy is not simply some postmodern jamboree in which differences co-exist harmoniously. It involves ‘acts of decision’, not only in the sense of executive choices over policy but, more profoundly, the implicit assumption of certain parameters to policy choices, to the degree and extent of debate, etc. Such decisions are themselves political: they invoke a contestable version of the public good by accepting some differences to the exclusion of others. It is not possible, she argues, to escape from this intrinsic exclusivity and so the only viable option is to promote an ethics that recognises the fragility of democracy and undergirds institutional arrangements with an awareness of the legitimacy of dissent, contestation and difference.

CONCLUSION

In so far as associative principles frame democracy as a practice responsive to the inherently diverse and potentially antagonistic nature of human communities, it provides a promising institutional form to an ethics of democracy. Mouffe herself has endorsed associative democracy as an arrangement compatible with the radical pluralism she recommends (Mouffe 1993: 98-100). Rather than justify devolved associations in terms of the stable, consensual order of agreed values they bring to democracy, a radical democratic political theory allows us to see associative principles as disruptive of efforts to close public space around communities. By dispersing conflict across a pluralised space and permitting communities to vent the ‘dissociative impulse’ in more creative ways, associative principles permit us to live with the paradox of democracy.
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Over the past generation, radical-democratic ideas have reemerged as an important intellectual and political force. This reemergence reflects a combination of skepticism about the regulatory capacities of national governments and concerns about the capacity of conventional democracies to engage the energies of ordinary citizens. By “conventional democracies,” we mean systems of competitive representation, in which citizens are endowed with political rights, including the rights of speech, association, and suffrage; citizens advance their interests by exercising their political rights, in particular by voting for representatives in regular elections; elections are organized by competing political parties; and electoral victory means control of government, which gives winning candidates the authority to shape public policy through legislation and control over administration.

Arguably, any mass democracy must be organized at least in part as a system of competitive representation. Radical democrats acknowledge this basic fact of political life, but seek a fuller realization of democratic values than competitive representation itself can attain.

In particular, radical-democratic ideas join two strands of democratic thought. First, with Rousseau, radical democrats are committed to broader participation in public decision-making. Citizens should have greater direct roles in public choices or at least engage more deeply with substantive political issues and be assured
that officials will be responsive to their concerns and judgments. Second, radical democrats emphasize deliberation. Instead of a politics of power and interest, radical democrats favor a more deliberative democracy in which citizens address public problems by reasoning together about how best to solve them—in which no force is at work, as Jürgen Habermas (1975: 108) said, “except that of the better argument”.¹ The ambitious aim of a deliberative democracy, in short, is to shift from bargaining, interest aggregation, and power to the common reason of equal citizens as a dominant force in democratic life (Cohen 1989, 1996; Cohen and Sabel 1997, 2003; Fung 2003, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Fung and Wright 2003; Fung et al. 2000, 2001).

But while many radical democrats endorse participation and deliberation in a single breath, these two strands of the democratic project grow from different traditions and address distinct failures of competitive representation. Our aim here is to clarify the relationship of these different strands, explore the tensions between them, and sketch some possibilities for reconciliation. We start by showing how participation and deliberation might address three limitations of competitive representation.² Then we present some tensions between deliberation and participation, and offer two strategies for blunting these tensions. We conclude by outlining the unsolved difficulties that must be met in order to advance a radical-democratic project.

Before getting started, we should mention that some radical democrats argue that a more participatory and deliberative democracy would be better at solving practical problems than systems of competitive representation: better, because of advantages in identifying problems, collaborating in their resolution, testing solutions to see if they are well-tailored to local circumstance, and disciplining solutions by reference to solutions adopted elsewhere. Our focus here is on normative matters, but nothing we say is intended to dispute this proposition about practical advantages. Suffice to say that if a more radical democracy is not at least reasonably good at addressing regulatory problems, then its normative virtues are of limited interest.

Democratic Deficits of Competitive Representation

Radical-democratic criticisms of systems of competitive representation focus on three political values: responsibility, equality, and autonomy.

1. Responsibility. “As soon as public business ceases to be the citizens’ principal business, and they prefer to serve with their purse rather than with their person, the

¹ In this passage, Habermas is not describing an idealized democracy, but a hypothetical situation suited to the justification of norms.

² In reading the other contributions to this debate, we are reminded of the importance of distinguishing participation from deliberation. Other contributors seem to conflate the two, though Loïc Blondiaux rightly observes that there is an interesting question about the relationship between discussion of deliberative democracy—a topic in political theory for the past 15 years—and an older literature on participatory democracy.
state is already close to ruin”.3 Here, Rousseau expresses the idea that the balance of reasons sometimes speaks strongly in favor of performing a task oneself rather than delegating it. For example, countries should fight wars with their own citizens rather than mercenaries or surrogates because the task is of great importance, its performance (both initiation and execution) demands judgment, and the consequences of misjudgment are so serious.

Similarly, radical democrats worry about relying excessively upon representatives to make consequential political choices. Competitive representation, to be sure, provides opportunities for citizens to judge for themselves the merits of alternative laws and policies and hold representatives accountable in light of those judgments. But because representation is a very limited tool for ensuring official accountability, citizens will be strongly tempted to leave the hard work of substantive policy judgment to professional politicians. The capacities of citizens may in turn atrophy. Lacking democratic skills and habits, they may refrain from judging public business except under dire circumstances, and then judge poorly.

2. Equality. A great achievement of modern representative democracy was to bring the idea that people should be treated as having equal importance in the processes of collective decision-making to bear on the political institutions of a modern state. One implication—formal political equality—is that suffrage rights, for example, should not depend on property qualifications, gender, race, or social status. But even with these conditions in place, social and economic inequalities shape opportunities for political influence within systems of competitive representation.

Economic advantage is one important source of political advantage. In addition, because it is easier to mobilize small groups of individuals than large ones, competitive representation tends to favor concentrated interests (in which few actors gain large benefits on some policy question) over diffuse one (where many actors gain small benefits). Finally, in newly-democratized countries with long histories of authoritarian government and hierarchical public culture, the new electoral vestments may merely reproduce and reauthorize the authoritarian past (Avritzer 2002).

Radical democrats have recommended participation and deliberation to increase political equality: deliberation, because it blunts the power of greater resources with the force of better arguments; participation, because shifting the basis of political contestation from organized money to organized people is the most promising antidote to the influence conferred by wealth. Similarly, expanding and deepening citizen participation may be the most promising strategy for challenging the inequalities that stem from asymmetric concentration of interests and from traditional social and political hierarchies.

3. Political Autonomy. A third objection is that systems of competitive representation fail to realize a central democratic ambition: to foster political autonomy by enabling

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people to live by rules that they make for themselves. Although a pluralist democracy cannot hope to achieve political consensus, a kind of self-government remains possible, and competitive representation falls far short of it. In systems of competitive representation, political outcomes result from differential capacities to mobilize popular constituencies, from balances of interest backed by voters or money, from the complex deals of legislative law-making, or from narrow interests capturing the portions of government that most concern them. At its best, the process reflects fair bargaining among competing interests, not an ideal of self-government.

In a deliberative democracy, in contrast, laws and policies result from processes in which citizens defend solutions to common problems on the basis of what are generally acknowledged as relevant reasons. The reasons express such widely shared democratic values as fairness, liberty, equal opportunity, public safety, and the common good. To be sure, citizens will interpret the content of those considerations differently, and assign them different weights—and also, of course, disagree on matters of fact. In the allocation of scarce resources, different citizens might, for example, assign different importance to advantaging the least advantaged, advantaging those who would benefit most from the resources, and assuring equal chances for access to the resources; there will be disagreements over acceptable levels of risk, and about when assurances of freedom of expression are excessively damaging to the equal standing of citizens.

While deliberative democrats emphasize the importance of reasons, they do not expect self- and group-interest to disappear as political forces. Instead, they aim to ensure that political argument and appeals to interests are framed by considerations such as fairness, equality, and common advantage. When citizens take these political values seriously, political decisions are not simply a product of power and interest; even citizens whose views do not win out can see that the decisions are supported by good reasons. As a result, members can—despite disagreement—all regard their conduct as guided, in general terms, by their own reason. Establishing such

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4 As should be evident from the text, our conception of deliberation is not the same as what Katharina Holzinger calls “arguing” in her contribution to this debate. For example, “contradicting” and “insisting” are, as she says, forms of arguing. But they do not involve giving reasons and are therefore not part of deliberation. That said, we agree with one thesis in Holzinger’s paper—namely, that when interests conflict, the resolution of the conflict typically will involve deliberation and bargaining, among other things. We do not, however, accept the stronger, instrumentalist thesis in her paper, that when interests conflict arguing serves as a means for bargaining. Deliberation might instead set the bounds for reasonable outcomes within which bargaining operates (deliberation might, for example, take us to a reasonable segment of the Pareto frontier, within which bargaining selects an outcome). Exploring this disagreement about the place and relative political importance of reason, interests, and power—a very old and deep disagreement in social science and in life—will require the kind of “programme de recherche” that Loïc Blondiaux sketches in his essay. For some efforts at such exploration, see Fung and Wright (2003).
political deliberation would realize an ideal of self-government under conditions of pluralism.

Tensions Between Participation and Deliberation

So democratic values arguably provide a case for a more participatory and deliberative democracy. But participation and deliberation are distinct ideas, and may even pull in opposite directions (Cp Ackermann & Fishkin 2004: 289-301).

1. Improving the quality of deliberation may come at a cost to public participation. Suppose, for example, that legislators, regulators, and judges embrace a deliberative form of decision-making. Instead of seeking to advance the interests of their constituents or maximize their prospects of re-election, for example, legislators would engage in reasonable discussion and argumentation about policies. Judges could, for example, require explicit attention to reasons in legislative and administrative decision-making. But doing so might require decision-makers to insulate themselves from less informed and less reasonable public sentiment.

2. Conversely, expanding participation—either numbers of people, or the range of issues under direct popular control—may diminish the quality of deliberation. Popular initiatives and referenda and devices such as the recall, for example, allow voters to exercise more direct and precisely targeted influence over legislation, policy questions, and even elected officials. But far from improving deliberation, such measures—by requiring a yes/no vote on a well-defined proposition—may discourage reasoned discussion in creating legislation (Papadopoulos 1995: 289-301; Ellis 2002). And even bringing people together to discuss specific laws and policies may—with the wrong mix of people, or lack of commitment to addressing a common problem—diminish deliberation, as discussion dissolves into posturing, recrimination, and manipulation.

3. More fundamentally, social complexity and scale limit the extent to which modern polities can be both deliberative and participatory. Deliberation depends on participants with sufficient knowledge and interest about the substantive issues under consideration. But on any issue, the number of individuals with such knowledge and interest is bound to be small (relative to the size of the polity), and so the quality of deliberation declines with the scope of participation. Of course, knowledge and interest are not fixed, and deliberation may improve both. Still, time and resource constraints make it undesirable for any particular area of public governance to be both fully deliberative and inclusively participatory. If everyone were capable of deliberating about economic policies on a par with the members of the Federal Reserve Board, surely other important areas of concern—education, environment, and foreign policy—would suffer
from inattention. Every community faces many dozens of pressing public issues, so participatory deliberation on any particular issue can at best include directly only a small fraction of the total polity.

Possibilities of Participatory Deliberation

Despite this fundamental constraint, public decision-making in liberal democracies could become both more participatory and deliberative. The degree to which deliberation and participation are combined or traded-off depends in part on institutional setting. The challenge facing radical democrats, then, is to devise reforms that can incorporate both. Radical democrats have two broad strategies for accommodating them. The first aims to broaden deliberative participation, but—concerned in part with the integrity of broad deliberation—leaves it with only attenuated effects on the exercise of power. The second aims to create high quality deliberative participation with more direct impact on the exercise of power, but leaves that participation with limited scope.

Mediated (Indirect) Society-Wide Deliberation

One strategy would foster widespread participation in deliberation on public issues. We might, for example, aim to join deliberation with mass democracy by promoting citizen deliberation on political matters in what Habermas calls the “informal public sphere,” constituted by “culturally mobilized publics” in “the associations of civil society.” (Habermas 1996: 301) Deliberations here are crucial to just and effective governance, for it is only in this public sphere that free, undistorted discussion about society’s values and goals can take place. Moreover, these deliberations are potentially fully participatory, for they take place through structures of numerous, open secondary associations and social movements: the essential ingredients are basic liberties, a diverse and independent media, vibrant, independent civil associations, and political parties that help to focus public debate.

This approach to joining participation and deliberation addresses the three limits of competitive representation. Individuals participate in public debates through associations, and so deliberate themselves, however informally, on the substance of political issues. Moreover, elevating the place of informal public discussion in political decision-making increases political equality because the public sphere—in contrast to the arenas of state and economy—is less vulnerable to the influence of monetary and other unequally-distributed, “non-communicative” sources of power. Finally, to the extent that free public reasoning shapes opinion and guides collective decisions, the deliberative public sphere increases self-government.
Public communicative power is, however, necessarily indirect in its political impact. Much of the attractiveness of this view, then, hinges first upon his characterization of discourse in the public sphere as deliberative and then upon the strength of the links between deliberations in the informal public sphere and the authoritative decisions of legislative bodies and administrative agencies. If public discussion itself is subject to the exercise of non-communicative power—money, status, and the like—then these discussions do little to address the problems of political inequality and absence of self-government in competitive representation. Moreover, because public deliberation and public policy are only loosely linked, participatory deliberation may have little impact on decisions by formal institutions. Citizen participation in the informal public sphere, then, may be of limited political relevance (Ackermann & Fishkin 2002: 129-152).

Direct Participatory Deliberation

An alternative radical-democratic approach builds on the distinctive practical competence that citizens possess as users of public services, subjects of public policy and regulation, or residents who have contextual knowledge of their neighborhoods and ecosystems. The idea is to draw on these competencies by bringing ordinary citizens into deliberations over certain public issues.

Typically, such strategies create opportunities for limited numbers of citizens to deliberate with one another or with officials to improve the quality of some public decision, perhaps by injecting local knowledge, new perspectives, excluded interests, or enhancing public accountability.

One approach randomly selects small groups of citizens to deliberate on general political issues such as laws and public policies. Citizen juries in the United States and planning cells in Germany, for example, empanel small groups (12-40) of randomly selected citizens to discuss issues such as agriculture, health policy, and local development issues (Abelson et al 2003: 239-251; Crosby 1995: 157-174; Smith & Wales 1999: 295-308; Gastil 2000). James Fishkin and his colleagues at the Center for Deliberative Polling have sponsored larger gatherings of several hundred citizens to deliberate upon various issues such as the adoption of the Euro in Denmark, public utility policy in Texas, and U.S. foreign policy. Citizens Juries, Planning Cells, and Deliberative Polls function as advisory bodies whose impact—to the extent that they have impact—comes

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5 Similar observations apply to Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin’s recent proposal for a “deliberation day” in the United States. Here, the deliberation is formalized, and in a way inclusive—they propose that everyone be invited to attend formal deliberative meetings held in advance of elections. Once more, the political impact of these deliberations is mediated through the structure of campaigns, elections, lawmaking, and administration.
from their ability to alter public opinion or change the minds of public officials.

Another strategy convenes groups of citizens to deliberate and develop solutions to particular problems of public concern. We have described such strategies elsewhere as Directly-Deliberative Polyarchy (DDP) and Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG), and will simply refer to them here as participatory-deliberative arrangements. Such arrangements differ from political juries in two main ways. Whereas political juries usually consider general issues such as economic, health care, or crime policy, these deliberations aim to address more specific problems such as the management of an ecosystem, the operation of a public school or school district, crime in a neighborhood, or a city’s allocation of resources across projects and neighborhoods. Whereas political juries recruit impartial and disinterested citizens by randomly selecting them, participatory-deliberative arrangements recruit participants with strong interests in the problems under deliberation.

Because of the specificity of these arrangements, citizens may well enjoy advantages in knowledge and experience over officials. In Chicago, for example, residents deliberate regularly with police officers in each neighborhood to set priorities on addressing issues of public safety. And in Porto Alegre, Brazil citizens meet regularly at the neighborhood level to agree upon priorities for public investment (for example, street paving, sanitation, and housing); the capital portion of the city’s budget is produced by aggregating the priorities that emerge from those deliberations (Baiocchi 2003: 47-76; De Sousa Santos 1998: 461-510; Abers 2000).

The proliferation of directly-deliberative institutions—in areas such as education, social services, ecosystems, community development, and health services—fosters political responsibility by creating opportunities for ordinary citizens to articulate directly their perspectives, needs, and judgments. Such opportunities, however, face two limits. Unlike classical forms of direct democracy, it is unimaginable that any deliberative arrangement would enable (i) every citizen to participate in any particular area of public governance, or (ii) any citizen to participate in every area of public governance. In Chicago, for example some 4,000 residents serve on Local School Councils at any given moment and ten percent of adults say they have participated in community policing meetings. A more feasible contemporary ideal is that democratic governments offer opportunities for any citizen to participate in direct deliberations, and at the same time that those who do participate are in networks with other citizens with whom they informally confer, even if those others are not directly involved in decision-making.

Participatory-deliberative arrangements contribute to political equality by increasing the role of popular mobilization and deliberation in political decision-making. In Chicago’s community policing program, for example, participation
rates in low-income neighborhoods are much higher than those in wealthy neighborhoods. Similarly, poor people are substantially over-represented in both the budgeting institutions of Porto Alegre and local development and planning initiatives in Kerala, India. Directly-democratic arrangements that address problems of particular urgency to disadvantaged citizens can invert the usual participation bias that favors wealthy, well-educated, and high-status individuals in institutions. Such arrangements, however, also create large potential political inequalities. If systematic and enduring differences—in deliberative capabilities, disposable resources, or demographic factors—separate those who participate from those who do not, decisions generated by participatory-deliberative arrangements will likely serve the interests of participants at the expense of others.

Consider finally the value of self-government. Participatory-deliberative institutions foster self-government by subjecting the policies and actions of agencies such as these to a rule of common reason. When some policy or prior decision is judged in collective deliberation to be unreasonable or unwise, they change it. When that policy turns out to be reasonable upon reflection, its justification is made publicly manifest. These contributions to self-government are, however, limited by the scope of these institutions. Most participatory-deliberative governance efforts aim to solve local or administrative planning problems and do not extend to more general concerns such as wealth distribution, the scope of rights, or national political priorities.

**Open Questions (and Ways Forward)**

Achieving both participation and deliberation is complicated. In our view, participatory-deliberative arrangements represent the most promising path toward the ends of radical democracy. But two large challenges lie on that path.

The first concerns the relationship between competitive representation and participatory-deliberative arrangements (Magnette, unpublished). Participatory-deliberative arrangements make it possible to address practical problems that seem recalcitrant to treatment by conventional political institutions. But those arrangements are not a wholesale replacement of conventional political institutions: they have limited scope and limited numbers of direct participants. Does this observation leave us with the conclusion that radical democracy is simply competitive representation plus some participatory-deliberative arrangements?

No. Participatory-deliberative arrangements and competitive representation can be transformed and linked so that each strengthens the other. If such arrangements became a common form of local and administrative problem-solving, the role of legislatures and centralized public agencies would shift from
directly solving a range of social problems to supporting the efforts of many participatory deliberations, maintaining their democratic integrity, and ensuring their coordination. Conversely, those who participate directly in these new deliberative arrangements would form a highly informed, mobilized, and active base that would enhance the mandate and legitimacy of elected representatives and other officials.\(^6\)

The second challenge is to extend the scope of radical democracy. Can participatory deliberation help democratize large-scale decisions—such as war and peace, health insurance, public pensions, and the distribution of wealth—that hinge on political values and public priorities? One way to address these larger questions is to connect the disciplined, practical, participatory deliberations about solving particular problems—say, efforts to reduce asthma rates in a low-income community—to the wider public sphere of debate and opinion formation—about the costs of health care, access to it, and the importance of health relative to other basic goods. Participants in direct deliberations are informed by the dispersed discussions in the informal public sphere, and those more focused deliberations in turn invest public discussion with a practicality it might otherwise lack. The ambitious hope is that citizens who participate in constructing solutions to concrete problems in local public life may in turn engage more deeply in informal deliberation in the wider public sphere and in formal political institutions as well.\(^7\)

In the end, then, radical democracy has the possibility promise of being a distinctive form of democracy, in which the informal public sphere and the formal system of competitive representation are transformed by their connections with participatory-deliberative arrangements for solving problems. Whether it will deliver on that promise remains, of course, a very open question.

\(^6\) Christian Hunold’s illuminating contribution to this symposium—focused on standards for siting hazardous waste facilities—is insufficiently attentive, in our view, to these issues about the relationship between particular local deliberations and the background political setting. We are skeptical about the project of setting out criteria of justice and democracy that local deliberations of particular policy issues need to meet, in abstraction from the larger social and political setting of those deliberations. That said, we agree with Hunold that the stakes in siting decisions are not purely locational.

\(^7\) Efforts along these lines might blur the distinction between formal and informal public discussion. For example, United States Senators Orrin Hatch and Ron Wyden have proposed creating and funding a national conversation around health care priorities—potentially involving thousands of community-level community forums, national televised town meetings, and electronic dialogue—as part of the “Health Care that Works for All Americans Act.” These community-level discussions around larger national questions might utilize methods such as citizen juries, electronic town meetings, and deliberative polls. See Senate Bill 581, 108th Congress, 1st Session. Short Title: “Health Care That Works for All Americans Act of 2003”
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Délibération et discussion

Bernard Manin, Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris et New York University,
E-mail: bernard.manin@nyu.edu

La délibération collective ne se réduit pas à la discussion argumentée. Des individus peuvent discuter et argumenter entre eux sans que, pour autant, se déroule une délibération satisfaisante. Inversement, la délibération collective peut être favorisée par des discours tenus devant un auditoire ne discutant pas avec les orateurs. Telles sont les thèses que cet article se propose d’établir.

L’expérience montre que, parfois, des individus discutent et argumentent entre eux pour se former une opinion ou prendre une décision sur un sujet donné, sans que l’on observe dans les opinions ainsi formées les transformations désirables en général attendues de la délibération. Mais d’autres expériences montrent aussi qu’après une délibération collective, les individus changent leurs opinions dans un sens bénéfique, ces opinions devenant, en particulier, mieux informées. Dans ces expériences-ci, un animateur ordonne la discussion. Et la délibération inclut aussi la lecture de documents et l’audition de personnalités qualifiées, deux formes de communication qui ne relèvent pas de la discussion proprement dite, en ce qu’elles ne sont pas interactives.