EXPANDING EGALITARIAN VOICES

How Discursive Frameworks Resolve Contemporary Participation Gaps

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ABSTRACT

Democratic legitimacy depends on the equal consideration of its members as independent moral agents. Each citizen is guaranteed an equal opportunity to participate in the collective self-rule of the democratic community. Inequalities that emerge from political society must be justified according to this basic commitment to equality. Recent trends in political participation point to a worrying development regarding the foundational equality of impact. Large portions of democratic constituencies are retreating from the polls. Additionally, changes in political participation norms are increasingly captured by a narrowing social elite. Both of these trends place the legitimacy of our institutions into question.

The means of political engagement are evolving outside of the scope of accountable political institutions. Effective and equal representation requires that groups are included that would not normally be included by traditional means. Deliberative democracy offers a useful framework for the incorporation of these now marginalized viewpoints. This paper argues that, despite challenges, inclusive deliberative fora focused on political education can operate as the necessary egalitarian discursive institutions that promote minority viewpoints in the absence of large-scale participation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI – Artificial Intelligence

CA – Citizen Assemblies

EC – Engaged Citizenship

EU – European Union

JOCCA – Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action

SES – Socio-economic Status

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary democratic societies are facing a crisis of representation. Modern democratic constituencies are increasingly viewed as apathetic. Turnout has largely declined for several decades across Western countries. Those that do participate increasingly comprise of members of a growing social elite. Cumulative inherited advantages grant access to the social groups, values, and knowledge necessary to navigate increasingly complex political and social structures. These inequalities in participation threaten to undermine the equality and social trust that form the foundation of democratic stability.

This participation gap is also representative of shifts in participatory norms. Innovations in technology as well as global social policy have influenced the use of non-electoral methods of political expression at the expense of national legitimizing institutions. Such methods augment the relative political influence of individuals in ways that are not readily accountable to public interest. These developments threaten the equality of formal impact that justify our democratic social environments. To protect against the proliferation of unjustified political power, traditional political institutions must accommodate dissenting and marginalized voices to foster more egalitarian public representation.

Youth represent a key demographic that can instruct the normative shift toward greater inclusivity in public representative institutions. Their inherent epistemic position as new members of political communities warrant closer attention to their participatory needs. More specifically, by interpreting youth as a distinct marginalized class, this paper aims to present a defense for a shift in representative institutions to accommodate changes in participatory trends and reinforce egalitarian principles in contemporary democracies. Democratic societies can diminish unjustified participatory gaps by encouraging conscious political education through the development of deliberative representative institutions.

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The first chapter of this paper will present a detailed account of the moral and political injustice that participatory gaps present in democratic societies. Democratic states subsequently have an egalitarian interest in correcting these inequalities. The second chapter will cover the marginalized position that youth members hold in contemporary society. Formal political institutions do not adequately recognize the methods in which contemporary youth choose to express themselves as unique moral agents. It will then present a discursive model of representation that better accommodates marginalized positions in public opinion generation. Lastly, the third chapter of this paper will highlight the merits that deliberative accounts of democratic participation present in creating spaces for discursive representation. The objective of egalitarian democracy is the full inclusion of discrete democratic identities. Deliberative civic assemblies focused on conscious political education grant the equal space to do just that.

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CHAPTER 1

Democratic political legitimacy depends on the equal observance of the collective self-rule of individuals and associations. Democratic values insist that all members of the political community have equal footing in terms of access and influence over political institutions. This political equality is what ensures that resulting governments act in the best interest of the democratic community at large and that its constituents respect its decisions regardless of disagreement. This implies that those that participate in the public sphere feel efficacious in their equal political weight and that the government that results from such equal activity represents them equally. In other words, all cooperative citizens have an equal stake in the development and the production of a political system that works in the interest of everyone else around them.

This democratic political assumption of equality produces certain expectations on citizens. As independent moral agents, individual citizens should be free to participate in their democratic community as they see fit so long as they do not do so at the expense of the freedom of others. All members should be equally burdened in respecting the normatively equal moral and political claims of other citizens regardless of background or affiliation. Similarly, the extent of democratic action depends on individual interest rather than any direct unjustified coercion from the state. This freedom to participate is what grants weight to the choices and actions of citizens and ultimately grants legitimacy to the political institutions that individuals freely choose to bestow their consent or, conversely, voice their public discontent with the system.

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With this freedom in mind, it is expected that the perceived level of participation reflects a normal distribution of independent political interests. What we should expect to find in a free pluralistic democratic society is a broad range of activities and political commitments. It is the interaction between these diverse values and interests that comprises democratic activity and participation. As such, despite our commitments to equality, the freedom of association and expression naturally results in certain inequalities present in actual or perceived political activity. It is a given that certain classes of citizens, based on chosen life decisions or owing to their intrinsic status in society, operate with certain political disadvantages. Individuals may be inherently disadvantaged epistemically, materially, and/or socially. An example of this may be a couple deciding to raise a child together. There are certain social and political burdens involved in this decision, such as limited time, resources, and energy, that would influence their capacity to generally participate in public society. However, as this decision was largely freely chosen, and its consequences generally known we may say with confidence that such a couple taking said decision have not been morally harmed for pursuing their interests. Their political decision has led to justified inequalities in potential political participation when compared to their non-childrearing neighbors.

Democratic legitimacy doesn't require that we completely resolve these types of inequalities. So long as individuals are not overly burdened by the state and are given ample opportunities to pursue their versions of the good life, citizens should not have claims against their political communities to any injustice done. Ronald Dworkin's dependent conception of democracy claims that the role of democratic governance is the provision of substantive political decisions that are derived with the equal concern of all members of the community affected by those decisions (Dworkin 189). In this sense, political equality is an instrumental good for normative democratic governance. Inequality of horizontal political influence is justified by the protection of equal political impact and the provisions of substantive political

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justice that bestow individuals with negative rights. Political equality is thereby a means to facilitate the equal moral consideration necessary for the legitimacy of such decisions. Good democratic governance requires that all citizens should have equal capacity to partake in political activity and thus influence the political decisions that affect them. As long as citizens generally hold that they have adequate agency in political society the perceived inequalities across society can be justified. However, what happens when individuals do have claims that they are being unduly politically burdened?

Traditionally, democratic polities equalize normal inequalities in political influence, ensuring adequate political agency, via the universal political act of voting. Universal suffrage offers equal avenue for political impact. Each person only has one vote regardless of social background or economic advantage. The government works for all because it equally respects the input of all citizens. In theory, the action of voting thus is the direct consent of individuals in the fair and legitimate process of democratic collective decision making. This form of legitimacy, described by Chiocchetti as *electoral* authorization, is based on the universality of the franchise, the openness and fairness of political competition, the integrity of electoral procedures, the level of participation, and the characteristics of each electoral system (Chiocchetti 2017).

However, modern social trends point to the decline of reliability that voting represents in ensuring the egalitarian nature of our democratic societies. Principally, the presence of increasing participatory gaps presents a barrier to the ability of democracies to ensure the political equality of society. Not only are democratic constituencies in established democracies generally less active, what's more, declining voting trends are further manifesting along demographic lines. This gap refers to the difference in amount and type of political activity that is witnessed in normatively egalitarian advanced democracies. This proves to be a startling irony. As contemporary democratic societies continue to develop the

expression and voice of its constituents outside the public sphere it seemingly does so at the expense of its basic commitments to equality.

Cases of social groups that operate at severe advantages are usually judged as being unjustifiable. These groups, known as 'marginalized ascriptive groups' are often excluded from broader political society due to immutable and often hereditary characteristics (Hobbs 344). The distinct social characteristics of such groups often make it easy to distinguish them from majority society. According to Harry Hobbs, their continued existence is irreconcilable from democracy's inherent egalitarian norms. While their political separation may be justified, as in a federal or consociational system due to considerations of autonomy, without certain institutional arrangements being present, their presence serves as a repudiation of democratic legitimacy.

Similar to the case of marginalized ascriptive groups, a continuously growing population of citizens are increasingly becoming alienated from political society. Democratic influence is increasingly becoming captured by higher socio-economic status. The number and variety of ways that people can influence government has shifted. As levels of voting are diminishing across established democracies, patterns of engagement and influence are shifting towards non-electoral methods. The gap increases as these new forms of participation generally require greater cognitive and resource demands (Dalton 11). Is this new shift in political participation something that should worry democracy or should democratic societies welcome the increased demands on its constituents as they become more reliable epistemic agents? Is the formal equality of impact via voting a sufficient standard to justify these new trends?

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The participation gap is largely a consequence of inherited social status and educational inequalities. According to Sidney Verba's civic voluntarism model (Dalton 9), citizens' expected levels of participation are influenced according to three primary factors; ability, interest, and social influence. Owing to differences in personal attitudes that encourage participation alongside politically relevant skills and connections to associations, we should observe individuals expressing themselves as a consequence of their independent individual characteristics. However, these factors are all largely a consequence of social status. Socio-economic status (SES) is defined by advantages in resources, attitudes, and social relationships (Dalton 42). Russel Dalton adds that many researchers 'describe social status as the "standard model" of political participation' (Dalton 9). If democracy is valued in its respect for individual freedoms, how can we seemingly accept a constituency whose expected level of participation is determined by characteristics outside of their control?

The shift in participation patterns is also due in large part to an unequal distribution of civic education. Citizen attitudes strongly influence participation patterns. Certain norms highly influence feelings of efficacy and government responsiveness (Dalton 116). The predominant norms that affect participation are attitudes concerning normative citizenship participation. These norms are acquired through our social participation and education, which are also largely a consequence of SES. Such values are found unevenly spread across populations and usually correlate with other demographical traits such as ethnicity, age, geographical location, etc. There has been a clear shift in participation norms away from a duty-based definition of citizenship toward one that is more engaged, expanding the scope of participation beyond formal political institutions. Dalton describes this new model as, *Engaged Citizenship (EC).* It includes participation in non-electoral activities such as membership in civil-society groups and political consumerism. It also incorporates the autonomy norms of monitoring government activity and considering the opinions of others

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(Dalton 113). This model of participation is more likely to be captured by those with higher SES that, owing to their increased resources, are exposed to the factors and norms of engaged citizenship at an earlier age (Dalton 119).

The civic voluntarism model that defines participation is thus a cumulative model. All of its factors are interrelated and often accumulate their effects over time. The process typically begins with formal educational attainment which is more strongly related to political participation than income or occupation (Dalton 123). This education then develops the fundamental cognitive and social skills necessary to acquire higher SES occupations and social relations. Access to these then offers exposure to certain citizen attitudes and norms that are directly related to participation. Thus, relating to this causal process, it can be said that early life experiences strongly predict patterns of adult political participation, not the presence of greater opportunities for adults to participate (Dalton 123).

It is clear that this increasing gap is unjustified. Based on the shifting pattern of participation towards socially determined non-electoral methods, this paper argues that participatory norms are becoming increasingly exclusionary. That being said, would the increase in expressive capacity of the privileged outweigh the cost incurred by the politically marginalized? The empirical argument from equality for inclusion is that good governance requires the inclusion of the greatest majority of people to fully understand the needs of the community (Dalton 5). However, if the population of those who participate increasingly narrows, favoring the already affluent and privileged, then government may not be able to fully address the needs of those who do not comprise the participatory class. Thus, the injustice present is that those who may need the most assistance are exactly the same who fall outside the boundaries of public will generation (Dalton 5).

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The three main implications of the shift away from institutionally regulated electoral expression are thus: weakening institutional legitimacy, diminishing social cohesion, and the moral injustice of democratic alienation.

Weakening Institutional Legitimacy

Established democratic institutions no longer sufficiently regulate and justify social inequality in political efficacy. Citizens are moving away from voting which implies that they either no longer view themselves as efficacious or that they don't perceive the government as sufficiently representative. Political expression is becoming more privatized and post-material which places limitations on the ability of government in intervening to restore political equality. The result is that the representative capacity of our institutions is eroding. Additionally, the social networks that once mobilized people to participate in elections and guided their voting choices have diminished (Dalton 171). Democratic communities may also be moving toward what Mark Bovens and Anchrit Wille have termed 'diploma democracy' (Dalton 172). There has been broad scale decline of public trust in politicians and institutions over the period that turnout has been on the decline.

The lack of equal political expression and inclusion leads to the increased presence of an isolated and alienated class who operate at epistemic disadvantages. Participation isn't just a political end but also a means toward strengthening the political capital of the democratic base. By participating in public institutions, individuals are exposed to the norms and values of democratic society that strengthen political efficacy. When democratic elitists claim that society would be better served under a technocracy or epistocracy, they are implying that the current limitations of democratic base are irreconcilable with good governance (Ahlstrom-Vij 199). However, it seems more likely that good governance is able to provide the stimulation

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for the advancement of democratic moral agents into normative political agents. Considering that political efficacy is largely a consequence of social resources and adequate socialization, democracy is best served by universalizing the participation of individuals rather than limiting the amount of the socially privileged.

What dictates the general efficacy of individual participation is not necessarily the access (real or representative) one has to formal institutions but rather the comprehensive nature of participation and the overlap of individual and communal identity. An individual will likely feel like an effective member of their political community when they can see that both their values are represented but also that when their values are not, that they can participate in public action to promote them. This increased democratic efficacy is commonly expressed in another form of democratic legitimacy, as direct citizen participation. This form is expressed in referendums, public consultations, access to elected representatives and public officials, and internal party democracy, or in more radical visions of assembly or council democracy (Chiocchetti 2017). The cumulative nature of participation suggests that without proper social frameworks in place to counterbalance inherited skills and resources, we can expect inequality to increase as participation continues to shift more towards non-electoral means. And our typical counterbalancing forces have largely disappeared, such as unions, duty-based norms, etc.

However, it is impossible to completely distance our interest from the institutional mechanism of voting as it formally captures democratic legitimacy. Willeck and Mendelberg state, “No act exemplifies self-governance more than the vote. The franchise has rightly been the focus of intense grassroots organizing for more than half the population and the starting point for liberation movements around the world,” (Willeck and Mendelberg 91). It is clear that voting offers a measurable expression of self-efficacy that is useful in regulating political impact. We seemingly cannot abandon voting as a mechanism; however, we can also not fully

depend on it either. There seems to still be a prima facie argument for the revision of our normative democratic institutions so as to capture a greater democratic character. The current gap largely stems from the failure of public institutions in extending the adequate resources into the proper socialization of communities. It is unlikely that the decline in voting represents a post-democratic conviction that democratic engagement is superfluous to good governance.

Diminishing Social Cohesion

This gap is being further exacerbated by macro trends. Two key macro level developments affect the socialization and thus the participation of democratic agents: globalization and the internet. Both influence the distribution of social, economic, and informational resources that influence political participation. These developments also influence the scope and scale of interactions between different social and political groups. The extent of these interactions then influences the interpretations of civic normative experience. Both contribute to the weakening of the traditional elements of socialization which guide our expectations of participation and representation (Parubchak 48).

It seems that current global trends point to the increase of unjustifiable inequality. Growing presence of migrants due to cosmopolitan commitments naturally means that demographic differences in comprehensive moral and political convictions are likely to increase among the population. Hanspieter Kriesi suggested that economic globalization generally increased social divisions between winners and losers. The shifting of demographics and the economic interdependence increases the moral duties we have with those outside our strict political communities. Political decisions and policies of states are no longer governed primarily by domestic democratic will which weakens the legitimacy of the democratic nation state. The increasing power of transnational corporations and private groups/actors weakens

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national egalitarian institutions (Dalton 2). All of these circumstances lead to the diminishing of national political efficacy.

Technological developments further the SES gap in political influence. New technologies strengthen the capacity of individuals to impart their will on society. Democratic institutions must be able to regulate such influence and continue to direct and channel political activity in a collective and democratic way. Innovations in mass communication have led to a breakdown of epistemic authority via unreliability of information, dissemination of bad faith reporting and the ease in which the truth can be distorted through the use of artificial intelligence (AI). This leads to the need to reestablish trust between fellow participants. Traditional societal and political barriers have been erased but we still have interests in promoting democratic values in the vacuum that emerges.

Democratic Alienation

While institutional balances ease the electoral difference between political groups, there remains a moral issue inherent in the distance in terms of democratic identity between members of minority communities and that of the majority. By parceling out autonomy statuses, what we are effectively doing is attaching an electoral band-aid over the moral injustice that is the exclusion of minority members from the generation and dissemination of democratic opinion. These representative solutions do not address the underlying issue of inclusion of minority members in the formation of the general democratic communal identity. Democracy, when interpreted as an egalitarian system, emboldens people to counterbalance the disproportionate influence of plutocracy but this requires that such average citizens be expected to raise their voices and influence the course of government (Dalton 185).

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One may argue that there is seemingly no moral issue given that these communities are politically protected and often choose to operate as distinct political bodies. However, we shall see that there are several considerations against this perceived balance of democratic interests. Although liberal democratic institutions nominally alleviate the power disparities between political groups through the presence of constitutional assurances of minority rights, there remains concerns as to the efficacy of such minority groups and their implied relationship to the democratic community as a whole. Other minority groups are thus even more susceptible. These groups may not have the same experience or knowledge to know how to properly take advantage of their rights. This puts them at an unequal footing as far as how they can operate within their larger political community. In other words, their ability to determine their relationship as a community within a community is hindered.

There is a republican moral issue of dominance present that these people are inherently subjugated due to their epistemic disadvantage to the good will of the majority, even if formally protected as a political class. This is because their connection to the political majority is intrinsically linked due to practical considerations and yet even if they could, they are not able to operate within the majority discourse in meaningful ways. Voting does not address this inherent inequality as it constrains minority opinion formation. Marginalized groups are unable to operate on equal footing to properly determine their status as independent moral agents, as required in a democratic system, because their relationship with their democratic peers in an institutional sense is unequal.

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Historical efforts to advance political protections on equal influence have not sufficiently transferred to society at large. Democracies have largely broadened the right to complain over time (Dalton 183). However, one can witness the development of that increased right mirrored by a widening participation gap. Robert Putnam and others have demonstrated the eroding life conditions of the working class as a consequence of social and political modernization (Dalton 186). These trends further exacerbate the presence of such marginalized groups where the relative agency of citizens is increasingly diminishing. It is clear that across the board, certain members of democratic nations are far more privileged in promoting their political will than others. As participation trends move further from egalitarian institutional means, what governs participation increasingly becomes the skills and resources determined by social class (Dalton 10)

Owing that membership in these groups is usually involuntary, there must be mechanisms in place to prevent further weakening of political agency. Regardless of institutional protections, these intrinsically marginalized groups are becoming more alienated due to trends in political participation. As such, the egalitarian nature of our democratic societies is diminishing (Dalton, 5). The lost productivity, life quality, and diminished societal contribution that follow from the opportunity gap is substantial (Dalton 213). These trends point to a moral injustice in the relationship between normative agents and institutions. This relationship is defined by unequal democratic identity, consciousness and agency.

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CHAPTER 2

In the previous chapter it was argued that the current gap witnessed in overall political participation is increasing. This gap is a consequence of an expansion of democratic activity being captured by a narrowing elite. One explanation is that democracy is incompatible with post-modern society. Complaints against democracy cite our societies becoming too large and complex to cater to the demands of discrete interests. Public opinion has become too divisive and our representative systems are not capable of accurately representing minority opinions (Gonzalez-Reyes 124). An increasing number of democratic citizens have grown apathetic and are increasingly relegating the public sphere to specialized politicians and epistemic elites. The following chapter refutes this idea and instead highlights the case of expanding the content of participatory representative structures to facilitate the reassimilation of alienated members back into the democratic fold.

Concerns about modern democratic backsliding often point to the disillusionment and institutional apathy permeating Western democracies. Studies have marked overall decline in party and grass-roots membership, electoral participation, and associative life; all markers of legitimate representative democracy. These trends have been particularly recorded among the youngest citizens (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 10). As participatory trends continue to shift, it is imperative that our representative institutions work to recapture the interest and agency of the less active and marginalized. Without adequate participation the voices that are represented become narrower and the democratic legitimacy of the representatives that govern comes into question. Similarly, such participatory gaps present a moral issue of the represented status of democratic citizens as equal members of collective will formation. A society that is unable to adequately capture the input of large populations of its constituents surely cannot be regarded as adequately democratic. So, the question thus

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presents itself, “how is it that our representative institutions more effectively encourage the participation and consent of its constituency?”

It is universally understood that for any functioning democracy its citizens must generally be seen to take an active interest in its collective will. However, not all will be equally as interested in doing so. To protect against the development of unjustified inequality among equal citizens, societies should normatively equally provide in the investment of its citizens in their capacities to carry out their function as equal participating members. In other words, the opportunities for individuals to develop the characteristics and material advantages that aid in their participation must be evenly distributed, or at least justly distributed according to some fair and legitimate framework. Some marginalized communities may be granted special status or privileges in order to satisfy this principle of equality of political participation. The strength of democracy is thus measured in its inclusivity in accommodating the broadest collection of individual and competing interests as possible.

At the crossroads of democracy’s interest in universality and partial inclusivity is the youth demographic. Considering the socially determinate nature of participation and the resulting gap produced, the state represents an important redistributive tool for the resources and educative opportunities that stimulate democratic values and activities. Young citizens are, intuitively, the primary agents of this redistributive potential. Their social status as direct recipients of formal socialization through schooling as well as their essentially diminished autonomy provides an obvious starting point for the equal promotion of democratic values regardless of social background. Similarly, their inherently paternalized status presents a greater duty of care to the state, specifically in respecting and nurturing their semi-autonomous status and development into fully agential democratic citizens. Youth represent both the socially burdened agents that inherit the social positions of their parents as well as

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the potential of democratic agents as equal self-authenticating moral agents. The normative power of democracy is transforming individuals from the prior to the latter. The youth of today will be the democratic agents and representatives of tomorrow.

Following the logic of cumulative privileges, participatory gaps could be resolved with early childhood intervention. Intuitively then, to resolve issues of participatory gaps later in life, more should be invested in the equal democratic socialization of youth. Through formal education young people learn about democracy and participation and are likewise connected to social groups such as youth clubs and civic organizations. All of which offer diverse settings in which to acquire participatory experience (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 4). Catching these privileges early enough and ensuring that youth demographics are given adequate access to participatory experience and role models as well as democratic values should surely help qualify any resulting inequalities later in life. It would seem that the issue of participatory gaps is thus a moral distributive issue where resources are not sufficiently distributed equally. However, this may not be the case when one considers the full scope of youth inclusion in the public sphere.

The participatory paradox persists despite modern youth being the most educated in history. It seems that youth embody the developing participation gap presented in the previous chapter. They regularly vote at lower rates than other ages and are often perceived as politically apathetic. However, this perception is largely over-simplified. Research shows that young people often participate in non-conventional ways that are much harder to track than voting (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 3). So, like the general participation gap witnessed by Dalton, youth today, who comprise likely the most educated generation in history, are increasingly fleeing traditional participatory methods towards ones that are more expressive and embody distinct democratic values. The issue is not whether modern

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democratic agents are socialized adequately, but whether those agents are granted access to institutions that capture that cross-national shift in participatory norms.

The participatory paradox exists despite developed nations providing ample opportunities for youth engagement through traditional means. Similar to being the most educated demographic in history, youth in developed democratic societies may also be the most supported in history. The EU Reflection Group on Youth Participation set forth several objectives regarding their policy strategy to encourage youth participation. They cite, 'development of mechanisms for engaging in dialogue', 'supporting youth organizations', 'promoting under-represented groups in civil society', and 'supporting ways of learning to participate from an early age' (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 9). This positive approach is an example that there is clearly no lack in trying in promotion of youth participation. And while there seems to be no lack in opportunities for youth to do so, according to the same study, "few would claim that these opportunities have amplified the participation of young people" (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 7). There is clearly a need to refine these objectives to see which forms meet the demands of youth and the diversity of their interests.

How we interpret youth political participation can give us clues as to how we should structure democratic processes in general to ensure equity in participation. This challenge of identifying the best methods to encourage youth participation is largely a consequence of the increasing heterogeneity of this demographic. Both globalization and the internet have contributed immensely to the interconnection of diverse subjects. Similarly, institutions such as the European Union (EU) continue to expand their borders. This communication and interaction create greater burdens on our political representative systems that are tasked with accurately capturing the interests of increasingly diverse constituents. This challenge of

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diversity is witnessed in the distance between how institutions define participation and how most young people actually participate (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 4).

The EU Reflection Group on Youth Participation cites several sources of influence aiding the shift in values and attitudes of youth concerning participation. “Various phenomena such as migration and mobility, consumerism and individualization, economic crises are introducing new challenges” (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 15). The weakening of formal communal ties as well as the overemphasis of consumerism seem to foster a shift in participatory norms towards individualized and self-expressive modes. Rather than look to the local political community as an outlet of agency, young members instead turn to online sources of engagement. The consequences of these trends are that local political communities are losing their constituents.

Is there real cause for concern here, or are these participatory differences merely a matter of natural generational distinctions? Should we expect youth to become more engaged in traditional means as they settle down and mature? Traditional socialization theory points to answering in the affirmative. Traditional life choices such as full-time employment, having children, and getting married all influence participation as voting (Stoker and Jennings, 1995). Likewise, the assumption that youth are more interested in non-instutional means of participation is based in the absence of such personal constraints that allow for a broader interpretation and practice of participation (McAdam 70). However, if we are interested in reducing the gap between distinct forms of participation as influenced by contemporary macro level development one cannot assume that youth will just ‘grow out of it’. Youth participation should not be taken for granted when that age is exactly when participation is primarily determined. Additionally, there is the democratic imperative to receive input from everyone to represent general interests accurately. Democratic institutions should still take interest in the participation of youth as agents in their own right.

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What the generational differences of individuals points to is not necessarily that youth and adults are inherently different but rather there are certain social influences that prime individuals towards collectively defined interpretations of participation. Our institutions act as primers that demand of agents a certain form of behavior in order to participate collectively. The cost of entry of such participatory institutions is the acceptance of certain values and norms acts. However, this socialization is also conditioned by 'shifts in the political, social, and economic contexts at the community, nation-state, and international levels' (Owen 2). Ultimately, our relationship to such institutional norms is dependent on the exact political contexts that we find ourselves in at our most impressionable moments. Young adulthood proves to be such a time. The specific characteristics of pre-adult socialization thus exerts enduring effects on future political participation (Weiss 4). Our democratic institutions should be equipped to accommodate to these changing political influences. The participatory patterns that exist across populations grant us insight into how our institutions are able to facilitate that task.

The traditional elements of political socialization are waning. Political socialization is historically classified as 'an individual's learning of social patterns corresponding to his societal positions as mediated through various agencies of society' (Hyman 1959). These 'agencies' are normally the school, peers, family and media (Blais and Carty 1990). In recent decades the internet and, more importantly, social media, has emerged as an important fountain of social influence. While the more traditional agents are highly linked to social class (Weiss 5), the internet is not immediately as restricted. The influence of social media is characterized less by distinct boundaries between political and non-political behavior which lowers the cost of broad political engagement (Ekström and Shehata 2018). The political values in which individuals are exposed to are no longer limited by immediate proximity. They are able to absorb diverse influences of political norms and likewise engage in diverse

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settings. This radical exposure makes it much more difficult for public institutions to create and control uniform conditions of political socialization. The result is that newer generations' socialization is captured by a variety of influences with no guarantee that they converge on traditional duty-based norms of political participation. This is mirrored in Dalton's participatory gap in that higher social status individuals are not materially restricted in the scope of their participation via institutions or as narrowly influenced by them.

Youth are being emboldened through access to social media to be individual actors in their own right. However, there remains considerable distance between their heightened agency as independent authors and their consistent interpretation by institutions as less than fully autonomous agents. This distance pushes them to participate in primarily non-instutional forms of engagement. Participation is crucial to foster active citizenship, integrate individuals with their immediate political communities, and strengthen contributions to the development of democracy (reflection Group on Youth Participation 5). However, due to shifting influences on modes of engagement and their corresponding values, youth are less likely to contribute to those benefits of participation. The result of which is that they have less influence on decision-making and may not be considered sufficiently autonomous to participate (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 21). They are effectively marginalized. Although participation in democratic society can consist of much more than strict institutional participation, it is clear that without fostering communicative engagement between institutional and marginalized agents such participatory gaps between equal citizens cannot be addressed. To do so, young people can no longer be viewed as "citizens-in-training" but as actors in their own right.

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Agency is a crucial concept in understanding participation as a continuous process. It is the capacity for one to exert their will and influence their surroundings. When applied to the political sphere, agency is normally measured through participation, namely decision making and influencing the decisions of others. What motivates individuals to continue to participate in legitimate political processes such as democratic voting is that such actions deliver a sense of control and influence and impart a sense of efficacy in one's capacity as a democratic agent (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 6). Participation thus involves a sense of efficacy which in turn presupposes a sense of inclusion. Without taking part in the legitimacy generating processes of democratic participation such as voting, youth are effectively discounted as equal moral and political agents. However, this is not to say necessarily that they lack agency or are not efficacious in their own right. While young people remain distant from conventional forms of democratic engagement they have still played a crucial role in civic movements over the last decade (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 6). Young people engage and respond to political stimuli in ways that are unique to their socialization.

The generational participation gap is thus two-fold. Firstly, the institutional vision of youth participation over privileges conventional forms of engagement and undervalues the weight of youth preferences, diminishing them to a case of lack of information. Young people generally prefer 'cultural and personal' forms of commitment as well as 'experience-based, expressive and horizontal' means of participation. These considerations are not traditionally compatible with institutional participation. Institutions typically fail to consider such types as genuine participation with young people type casted as "good citizens of tomorrow in training" who later develop "more mature" perspectives on participation (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 13). The strategies employed to facilitate youth participation thus exclude unconventional forms of participation. Secondly, many young people are generally distrustful of institutions and disillusioned with institutional participation settings (Reflection Group on

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Youth Participation 13). Rather than being unwilling to participate, young people feel that they are not sufficiently listened to by their representatives. The result of these misunderstandings and mistrust is that youth develop monolithic and simplified views of institutions, rejecting interventions by institutions and dialogue with politicians (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 13).

It is imperative that our social institutions recapture the participation of its youngest and most creative demographic. Pleyers and Karbach have suggested four interconnected ways to ameliorate this situation. First, new forms of participation and wider diversity must be recognized by institutions aiming to take youth representation seriously. The traditional concept of participation must be expanded to accommodate such diversity beyond conventional representative democracy. Second, to regain trust in institutions it is necessary to improve mutual understanding of the role of institutions and how new forms of participation can interact with traditional methods. Third, participation needs to be associated with 'empowerment and agency'. Finally, promotion of diverse approaches that could 'facilitate special handling of various categories of young people with specific challenges' (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 12). These reforms offer avenues of genuine inclusion and transparency to strengthen the representative elements of our contemporary democracies.

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Expanding Representation

This paper has argued that it is necessary to broaden the scope of political participation so as to foster youth agency in the face of an institutional participation gap. However, it remains unclear as to what this expanded participation would practically look like or how it would be incorporated into an institutional framework that is compatible with modern democracy as well as other important political considerations. The remainder of this

paper will explore what exactly this step might look like. Democracy is certainly not limited to any one formal system of participation and under the weight of shifting political dynamics it would seem that we are compelled to change the way that we conceive of typical democratic action.

Theories of participatory, deliberative, and counter-democracy all provide compelling alternatives to representative democracy that seemingly fit the participatory trends of contemporary youth. Participatory democracy involves 'direct influence on various processes' and can offer 'groups and non-governmnetal organizations the opportunity to challenge and deliver information' (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 14). Deliberative democracy promotes 'genuine collaboration between citizens and decision makers', while counter-democracy involves 'diverse forms of monitoring, protest and non-conventional practices' (Reflection Group on Youth Participation 14). All three point to current deficiencies in traditional representation oriented democratic types. The main components of these alternatives is the increasing influence and agency of individuals. These seem especially promising when considering the increased claims of minority groups to alternative mechanisms to voice their concerns (Young 2000). The question follows as such: how is it then that we create a representative system that can incorporate these alternative democratic forms? First, it is necessary that we define exactly what is meant by representation and how it should be normatively conceived of in an institutional sense.

How we define representation is crucial in constructing a system that benefits youth as unique autonomous agents. Nadia Urbinati defines political representation as 'a relationship in which both representatives and represented must have their autonomy safeguarded' (Fabrino Mandonca 120). It is a circular process that connects both the represented and the representatives through the expression of justifications concerning their interests, ideas and

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opinions. Such a connection, stimulated through the exchange of information or active communication, can be facilitated in a host of ways. Similarly, according to Urbinati, popular sovereignty is not captured only through electoral authorization. She claims that constituents should ideally continuously evaluate the behavior of representatives who in turn respond to the underlying principles and values expressed in an ensuing dialogue. This public opinion formation is what establishes sovereignty. (Fabrino Mandonca 120). So, in this sense, representation as a communicative process is the 'central piece' that establishes both partners as autonomous agents. An ensuing communicative representative system should thus promote public scrutiny, transparency and inclusivity.

Political participation in this sense serves in large part to offer accountability and opinion generation. In a traditional sense, communication and accountability is fostered through the direct influence by private citizens in selecting their representatives (Verba and Nie 1972). Later research on citizen engagement would primarily focus on electoral participation as the main arena of communicative accountability (Ekman and Emna 285). Pattie et al. (2004) would expand this definition to extend the communicative relationship to include other institutions or organizations beside direct political representatives. Additionally, according to Brady (1998), such actions must be 'observable, manifest, and voluntary' (Weiss 2). This observable, targeted expression of democratic will is what provides the consensus-based argument for democratic legitimacy. However, as we have seen with general youth engagement, this traditional definition cannot fully address the issue of alienation in current post-democratic participatory climates.

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Shifting away from an exclusive focus on political elites as sole representative agents, Toerell et al. provide a more comprehensive definition of political participation. They define such participation as 'encompassing actions or activities by ordinary citizens that in some way are directed toward influencing political outcomes in society' (Ekman and Amna 287). This definition is clearly much broader and can encompass a much wider array of political activities as part of normative communicative engagement. In this sense, political participation mirrors much more closely that of civic engagement. Civic engagement has been defined as a continuum of political action depending on whether the action takes places in the private or public sphere (Ekman 285). The private sphere represents actions such as helping one's neighbor or discussing politics with peers while the public sphere encompasses collective action and institutional participation. The concept of political participation thus similarly stretches to include novel non-institutional forms.

This private public divide no longer fits. As participation patterns become increasingly individualized and less connected to political and civic organizations, theories of political participation become increasingly stretched to accommodate new forms of non-political behavior. Such behavior is not easily captured by a distinction between conventional and unconventional (Weiss 3). Online participation is a commonly cited example (Gibson and Cantijoch 2013; Dayican 2014; Halupka 2014; Kristofferson et a., 2014; Weiss 2020). The object here is that many new forms of action may not be directly or clearly classified as 'political' participation, but they may still have significant impact on conventional types of political activities (Ekman and Amna 287). These 'latent' or 'pre-political' types reflect the multitude of activities that individuals participate in that, while falling outside the typical formal political domain, still carry political consequences (Ekman and Amna 288). A conception of institutional representation based off this understanding of participation would be hard to establish. Any representative system without direct communication between

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represented and representative proves inaccurate, unaccountable, and ultimately unsustainable. However, this is exactly what contemporary democracy is tasked with.

By interpreting political participation as latent, we can include a broader class of participants that had been previously essentially marginalized. As witnessed in participatory gaps, what is defined as 'manifest' participation is now typically captured by a social elite. By encompassing a wider interpretation of participation, institutional designers may be able to accommodate marginalized demographics that operate under distinct conditions that fall outside the norms of social and political capital. For instance, when agents are excluded from deliberative processes that prioritize rational communication. By extending the scope of participation, 'non-rational' agents may still be able to be counted in distinct ways. We may also be able to incentivize those on the periphery to participate in otherwise discounted forms of political engagement. Schudson's 'monitorial citizen' is such a type that is generally interested and capable of participating in direct forms but decides to refrain from conventional channels only choosing to participate when absolutely necessary (Ekman and Amna 288). By broadening the scope of 'conventional' participatory institutions, the cost of participation may be low enough to convince even the weariest of 'post-political' citizens.

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CHAPTER 3

In the previous section it was determined that to include the input of youth agents, as demanded by egalitarian principles, we must be willing to afford marginalized groups the institutional recognition of their 'latent' qualities of participation. Manifest forms of participation, typically recorded in voting behavior and political party membership, are being replaced by new forms. Protests, boycotting and political consumption are similarly being captured by the more educated and affluent. Latent or 'pre-political' participation cover ways in which political action do not formally relate to the political domain (Ekman and Amna 291). The challenge of our modern institutions is recognizing and incentivizing such participation in ways that grant legitimacy to the political mandate of governing institutions. For liberal democracies that receive legitimacy from the broad acceptance by its diverse membership, how do institutions attract members whose characteristic form of representation is not manifest? Given that these characteristics may be tracked along socio-economic or ethnic lines, tacit consensus is surely not sufficient for democratic legitimacy.

Due to increasing social inequality, people regularly retreat to the private sphere rather than express themselves and their interests publicly. While such retreat may be consistent with a right of equal participatory opportunity this does not justify all corresponding inequalities. Principles of political equality dictate that all citizens should be equally afforded sufficient opportunities to participate according to their communicative capacities, however, the interest in political equality does not find it necessary that all individuals are granted equal participation per say. Considerations of social and epistemic complexity rightfully reserve the deliberation of certain policy issues to a select number of representatives. Limited representation thus serves as both a necessary and preferable alternative to fully equal political participation. However, finding the normatively ideal form of representation to

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accurately capture the interests and identity of individuals remains a pertinent objective of egalitarian legitimacy.

As the representative potential of individuals wanes in developed democratic societies, there are calls for the unit of representation being expanded to discursive rather than solely descriptive units. The chief appeal of participatory theory in this respect is the creation of spaces that afford previously marginalized members a greater share of collective decision-making power (Zittel and Fuchs 9). A more engaged and collectively responsible constituency affords a greater degree of legitimacy to democratic decisions. However, the role of traditional political representative systems is decreasing as more individuals seek non-electoral means of political expression and influence. This flight further narrows the pool of decision makers that elections aggregate consent from. This does not conclude that voting systems no longer serve a purpose. Aggregate majoritarian politics continue to establish sufficiently democratic decisions in manageable and clearly defined ways that afford the formal equality necessary for democratic legitimacy. The question then is, why should we worry if people are choosing not to participate? Are there still pro tanto reasons why expanding discursive representation is a necessary element of democratic legitimacy? Not only will this paper conclude that expanding discursive representation is a positive element of democratic stability but that there are considerations of political equality that demand the establishment of increased discursive representative bodies for certain inherently marginalized communities.

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The power of democracy is its inclusive capacity to accommodate a wide range of interests in a dynamic and accountable political structure. Deliberative democratic institutions provide a framework in augmenting this transformative capacity. Deliberative institutions help participants understand issues as well as their own interests in the context of consensus

formation. This structured sharing of reasons and justifications minimizes conflict and fosters agreement (Bächtiger et al. 2018). However, the necessary capacity for mutual respect and reasonability based on the understanding of reasonable disagreement and the burdens of judgment (Williams 11). Such requirements may place too high of a burden on individuals which limits the scope of potential egalitarian commitments. Such expectations imply "bracketing" one's identity which unjustly disadvantages historically marginalized participants (Schneiderhan et al. 791). Additionally, socioeconomic and epistemic elite routinely determine what constitutes reasonable engagement. This threatens the equality of opportunity to participate for epistemically and financially marginalized communities. Deliberative institutions should thus ensure that their descriptive composition as well as deliberative content conform to principles of equality.

Pitkin's conceptualization of different types of representation provides an outline of how deliberative systems might better capture minority input. Pitkin (1967) identifies four types of representation: formalistic, descriptive, substantive, and symbolic. Formalistic representation refers to the arrangements of how representatives are elected to office and are later held accountable. Symbolic representation refers to the subjective meaning representation holds for constituents. Descriptive representation concerns the extent to which the composition of representative bodies mirrors the sociodemographic characteristics, interests, and experience of the general constituent population. And finally, substantive representation defines the action taken to advance constituent preferences in policy making. Attention to political equality must consider minority claims to representation of these types to fully address the scope of their disadvantages. Deliberative democracy offers a powerful account of these types of representation. It does so by privileging a wide and deep accountability approach. Its insistence on inclusivity guarantees symbolic and descriptive equality. Additionally, the capacity of civic assemblies and other deliberative bodies in

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directly, and legitimately, responding to formalistic and substantive issues offers a more comprehensive public accountability between elections.

Political equality demands that representation mirrors as closely as possible to the full inclusion of the underrepresented. Descriptive representation offers the clearest example of this inclusion by granting decision making capacity to members of specific identity groups. Although criticized as being a passive term, this concept still offers a visual test for the direct inclusion of a diverse community in representative spaces (Blome and Hartlapp 4). The presence of such groups implies that majority interests are inherently balanced and that the equality of access to political institutions is observed. However, even with a normatively balanced descriptively representative composition, such deliberative bodies may still facilitate homogenization rather than integration of marginalized viewpoints. Dryzek and Niemeyer (2007), argue that deliberative systems that solely concern their formation with individual representation are unable to capture the nuances of socially existent discourses. A group or discourse-oriented deliberation arguably would be more appropriate to deal with the constitutive multiplicity of selves. This is mirrored in deliberative frameworks that invite but do not fully include marginalized communities into deliberative practice either because the epistemic environment is catered to majority viewpoints or from lack of social trust (Gherghina et al. 86).

What should these microstructures look like? The chief goal of deliberative institutions is to reconcile diversity with normative procedural democracy. Egalitarian democracy views all participants as equal members, however, due to certain unjustified social and political inequalities, certain exceptions of universality must be considered to accommodate for all individuals equally. There must be a careful balance designed between universal distribution and corrective privileging. Such institutional features should primarily

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include but are not limited to: the provision of broad and diverse information by experts, accessibility of information for epistemically disadvantaged, robust facilitation and moderation, inclusion of a variety of deliberative formats, ample time to deliberate effectively, etc. (Blome and Hartlapp 7). Such normative features require the use of facilitators in creating the environment conducive for deliberation. The state as a neutral apparatus for substantive justice is the prime facilitator for such schemes.

Substantive egalitarian representation not only requires that marginalized members are included but also that they believe that their membership carries weight. Carol Pateman provides a concept of political efficacy that recognizes at the individual level a basic disposition in relation to the possibility of exerting political influence (Pateman 1970). This concept represents the subjective faith in one's own ability to influence political decision making and to make a difference in public life." (Zittel and Fuchs 12) When applied to a representative structure, deliberative efficacy is not present solely when groups are included or given enough information but that they believe that their inclusion is given equal consideration. However, what happens when individuals from marginalized groups are unable to operate under the strict conditions of deliberation? The theory of integrative democratization provides a potential solution. Institutional participation shapes goals and perceptions which affects efficacy. Institutional frameworks empower people through education, social and political practice. This view is reinforced in participation gaps that prove that those with higher education develop the efficacy necessary to navigate complex modern society (Verba and Nie 1972). Seemingly then, the solution to is to provide a wide and diverse selection of citizens, who otherwise would not have participated, the structured participatory opportunities to carry democratic experience over into their communities.

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So how do we ensure that members who are included feel like active and equal participants? Integrative democratic theory stresses the promotion of various types of participation that are coupled with legitimate policy outcomes (Zittel and Fuchs 23). In other words, expanding the scope and depth of deliberative activities is necessary to accommodate the broad interests of pluralistic societies. This can be achieved through the implementation of structured communication between deliberative microstructures that focus on collective opinion formation. Here, small groups of normatively representative bodies are tasked with formulating community opinions on a range of political and social issues including a range of different modes of political expression. It is imperative that these actions follow a weaker conceptualization of deliberation that focuses on cross-social communication and communal interpretation of political issues. The practices offer a more accessible, quotidian expression of political opinion that can be leveraged against majoritarian institutions as a form of democratic accountability (Gardner 470). Ideally then, collective opinions provide useful input for legislative bodies. Expanding participatory points of contact encourages a multiplicity of opinions and interests that would otherwise go unnoticed in traditional opinion formation institutions.

A common criticism against the implementation of deliberative institutions is the inability to scale such a process considering the vast complexity of contemporary politics. Modern democratic states, it is argued, are highly complex and necessarily specialized and over-professionalized to meet this complexity. Requiring large scale inclusion of an immeasurable diversity of opinions seems well beyond the capacity of contemporary states. Sartori (1987) summarizes this position by providing the proposition that the intensity of self-government is inversely related to the extent of territory, number of citizens, quantity of decisions, and complexity of problems faced (Zittel and Fuchs 38). While deliberative structures offer a promising alternative to elite dominated political activity by lowering the

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barrier of entrance into formal political structures, it is not certain this won't still privilege elite groups. The overspecialization of politics has alienated large proportions of constituents across Western democracies with many no longer considering politics as a subjectively important sphere of life (Deth 2000). In this sense, the deliberative process may suffer from elite capture and reinforce the status quo if marginalized members are generally unconcerned with participating in the first place.

For states with high social inequality it is imperative to structure political institutions according to principles of equality early and consistently. A clear obstacle to marginalized representation is skepticism in the role of public institutions in addressing historic inequalities. It is difficult to bring in marginalized communities if there is little social trust present across society. Persistent inequality can create a form of 'social trap' that diminishes societal support for redistributive reforms that aim at diminishing the effects of social inequality (Zittel and Fuchs 227). The role of the democratic state is thus to create institutions built and maintained on public trust so as to sustain an equitable level of social and political capital across socioeconomic boundaries. Such institutions should recruit and maintain participation of individuals at an early age as to deliberately facilitate the sustainment of public trust. Additionally, the equitable composition and mandate of such institutions should be publicly recognized.

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Innovative deliberative fora may supplement traditional representative democracy in promoting marginalized voices via opinion formation. There is a strong egalitarian reason to promote deliberative practices among as many and as diverse participatory fora as possible. Deliberative democracy's goal and requirement is to provide reasons and justifications of policy decisions between interlocutors (Brown 2018). In this sense, inclusive deliberation acts as a justificatory device between majority institutions and minority groups where they are.

Rather than enforcing strict guidelines between groups, deliberative structures can foster the inclusion of under-represented perspectives from within their recognized cultural and political spaces. The legitimacy of such conversations thus depends on its representative capacity and accuracy especially in considering the input of marginalized communities. Its capacity to do so depends on its ability to both descriptively include and transfer underrepresented opinion into publicly accessible information. To facilitate this, the unique participatory and communicative methods of such communities must be respected. Similarly, the deliberative conditions must be coauthored by both facilitators and participants.

Regardless of the egalitarian nature of the composition and behavior of a deliberative body, its effective output is only marginal if not also coupled alongside legitimate legislative institutions. Blome and Hartlapp summarize the variety of deliberative functions,

"Deliberative participatory institutions differ in the tasks they have. Some hold a clear mandate to formulate policy recommendations, whereas others are more loosely connected to the political system, e.g., when their function is to bring citizens' latent opinions to the fore" (Blome and Hartlapp 7).

The effectiveness of public deliberative bodies in producing a legitimate and effective output is dependent on how their deliberation is framed in relation to existing public institutions. Marginalized members are less likely to participate if their input is not expected to yield substantive results. Likewise, any deliberative body is not likely to successfully implement its policy goals if its recommendations do not have a clear purpose and address specific steps for other bodies to follow (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). The direction of legitimacy flows both ways as traditional institutions likely gain public trust when shown to take an active interest in the facilitation and implementation of public assembly recommendations. Although such efforts must be taken seriously as it is shown that failure to incorporate public input has a greater negative effect on public trust than simply not aiding in the formation of public assemblies to begin with.

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How can participation be motivated under modern conditions? Following the criteria set by Blome and Hartlapp, it is necessary that the descriptive integration, deliberative quality, and political coupling of deliberative bodies target the inclusion of marginalized youth in communal socially educative fora. Firstly, deliberative bodies must target the descriptive inclusion of youth as a vital source of egalitarian socialization. Youth inclusion is imperative to ensure that future democratic agents share in equal political participatory opportunities. The natural deliberative forum for youth is consistent with the educative socialization of integrative democracy. Learning procedural values of democratic participation from an early age level the epistemic and attitudinal playing field that contributes to unjustified socioeconomic inequality. Similarly, it embeds previously marginalized community via new generations into existing social groups that foster the development of fundamental values of democratic behavior.

Second, once included, the deliberative content of youth assemblies must incorporate unique methods of participation and innovation to accommodate individual expression. Not only does this limit the potential for paternalism from facilitators but it also grants spaces for underrepresented voices to contribute to public deliberation. Finally, deliberative educational spaces must be expressly situated in direct communication with public officials and explicitly consider social relationships from the lens of egalitarian justice. Any normative deliberative body concerned with egalitarian justice will naturally look to correct historical inegalitarian injustices.

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Contemporary Deliberative Cases

Current examples of deliberative bodies show promise in expanding inclusion to marginalized communities. Harris provides an overview of how Irish Civic Assemblies attempted to include broad public input in climate change policy deliberation. Apart from consisting in a randomly stratified selection process, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action (JOCCA) included input from non-governmental organizations, representative groups, advocacy groups, political parties, commercial entities, academics and individuals (Harris 681). This inclusion extended the deliberative connection between small-scale representative bodies to the public at large thus extending the reach of marginalized input. Another example of expanding inclusion follows the form of enclave deliberation that targets insular groups that otherwise would not participate in large scale deliberative methods. Youth parliaments are one such form where traditionally marginalized members are given an appropriately adapted and inclusive space to strengthen arguments prior to inclusion in more public fora (Harris 686). This helps to build capacity and efficacy within a cohort thus extending inclusivity to a wider, if indirect, extent.

Citizen Assemblies (CAs) not only provide additional descriptive representation, but also offer the space and time to deliberate to a more extensive degree. Krznaric (2020) argues that CAs move opinion formation and decision-making beyond 'short termism'. They do so by offering more time for 'slow thinking' (Harris 680). Compared to parliamentary committees, CAs achieve higher epistemic standards when facing multi-faceted issues (Suiter et al. 641). CAs thus offer a potential avenue for addressing certain topics that would normally fall outside the domain of institutional participatory frameworks. Incorporating several forms of CAs into the wider deliberative system would facilitate the promotion of a more inclusive and representative institutional division of labor (Suiter et al 642).

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Despite the promising elements of CAs, there are still limitations regarding general deliberative institutional design. The primary argument against broadening the inclusion of individuals regardless of appeals to justice is that certain design elements of deliberative bodies will only ever work with high levels of facilitation or participation by the more educated. When studying the case of Hungarian and Roma minority inclusion in Romanian CAs, Ghergina et al. found that the proportion of educated urban participants was higher than the national average despite random selection methods. This further exacerbated the representation of the Romanian majority in subsequent deliberation (Gherghina et al., 2023, p. 84). Similarly, Ahlstrom-Vij parrots the 'ocean of findings about political ignorance' to conclude that, at least in the American case, the general democratic public is simply not capable of contributing to public deliberative systems and are more likely to track majority opinion (Ahlstrom-Vij 199).

There are also practical and political limitation to consider regarding broad public deliberation. Gherghina et al. conclude that when presented with the opportunity to deliberate alongside the proportional representative body, minority groups often either can't fully participate or choose not to due to political considerations. Hungarian ethnic minorities were limited in their capacity to express their group interests in Constitutional Forums due to the simple fact that these forums were facilitated using the Romanian language and the Hungarian populations are taught almost exclusively Hungarian and therefore lack the linguistic proficiency to participate in any extensive capacity Gherghina et al., 2023, p. 86). When limited to representative groups that handle deliberation on their group's behalf, Roma representatives largely excluded themselves from topics that did not directly pertain to their group's formal interests. Clearly they felt that participation in such deliberative bodies did not directly appeal to the political interests of their communities(Gherghina et al., 2023, p. 86). In the cases of severely fractured societies, some group members may even be hesitant to

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participate out of fear of political reprisal or social pressure not to (Ahlstrom-Vij, 2012, p. 204).

How do current large scale deliberative initiatives fare in addressing representative gaps? Blome and Hartlapp provide an insightful analysis on how national participatory fora in Western democracies have attempted to do implement deliberative civic assemblies. They looked at four recent cases in France and Germany (the Grand Débat National, Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat, Bürgerrat Deutschlands Rolle in der Welt, and the Bürgerrat Klima) and measured them along their three primary criteria of representation: descriptive representation in composition, deliberative quality, and coupling to politics (Blome and Hartlapp 1). The first, descriptive representation, call for the composition of deliberative bodies to mirror society in terms of primary social markers such as gender, class, ethnic minorities, and age. The second, deliberative quality, denotes the capacity of public deliberation to include the perspectives of the underrepresented, integrate unrecognized expertise, encourage learning, and form wide consensus. The third, political coupling, emphasizes the connection between the deliberative body and existing democratic systems. Such connections must include a clear mandate and have follow-procedures that foster responsiveness and transparency (Blome and Harlapp 6).

In all four cases, they found that significant gaps continued especially for youth and lower socio-economic participants. Not only did these assemblies not properly include a sufficiently diverse membership, but the subsequent deliberation was not given sufficient time to conclude properly. The resulting policy recommendations were also not fully incorporated by corresponding legislatures (Blome and Hartlapp 17). These cases show that high profile efforts to accommodate public deliberation in national contexts still suffer from representative limitations.

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Despite limitations to deliberative design on a national scale, certain methods are proving extremely promising under different contexts. The implementation of 'active learning' being included in deliberative design on a larger scale may bridge these previously damaging limitations. Studies show that when performed under the model of 'active learning' deliberative participation among youth across social boundaries increases (Willeck and Mendelberg, 2022, p. 104). Active learning consists of the use of critical pedagogy, experiential learning, and meaningful service learning in an open classroom environment (Campbell 2006, Kahne & Sporte 2008, Kahne et al. 2013, Nelsen 2019). Generally speaking, it is the use of civic education to target and balance historical educative inequalities. In this sense, active learning is very similar to the attempt of deliberative CAs in fostering community development and integration along the sharing of unique perspectives within deliberative frameworks explicitly targeting relational injustices. Gherghina et al. highlight the use 'active resistance' as a similar approach to building social trust and capital across ascriptive social groups. Such deliberative design 'goes beyond' the short termism of electoral cycles and explicitly address the 'economic and psychological costs' of political participation by marginalized communities that decide to participate (Gherghina et al., 2023, p. 81).

When given the means and freedom to design their own political communities, marginalized members can certainly step up to the challenges of normative deliberative democracy. Sergio Barbosa offers an extremely promising case study of the deliberative capacity of marginalized members in enclave environments. He studied the participation of youth aged 15 to 30 within the COMUNIX community school in Portugal and Spain. This school offered a novel design stimulating experiential exchange through informal learning hosted across various mediums with the aim of developing critical consciousness of students within the intervention into common lands (Barbosa 174). It was studied by Barbosa for the following reasons:

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"(1) it facilitated capacities to collectively tackle problems that would otherwise be insurmountable regarding forest educational pedagogies (Hespanha, 2017; Serra et al., 2016); (2) it bolstered community and social ties between a very differentiated cohort of population—local commoners and youth generation (Quartieri, 2018); and (3) it was a pedagogical proposal to build youth connection into common lands (Serra et al., 2019). In sum, this initiative revealed a sense of youth belonging that absorbs the diversity of the skills and aspirations of all common lands' commoners while providing a high degree of autonomy thorough the engagement of communal knowledge by young participants." (Barbosa, p. 173)

The case offers insight into the potential of facilitating deliberation when the means of communication are catered specifically to the subjects in question. More specifically, by allowing youth to incorporate social media and various online platforms into their repertoire of communication they were able to maintain high-level interaction on digital channels that extended beyond the formal deliberative environment. The deliberation process connected the knowledge acquired through the educational activities to their social frameworks and directly expanded both individual and communal social capital (Abers and Keck, 2009).

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CONCLUSION

Democratic legitimacy requires equal political participation, however, the presence of unjustified participatory gaps prevent the equal consideration of democratic agents. Declining voter turnout and SES-based disparities in political engagement weaken democratic trust and cohesion. Institutions must incorporate new methods of political expression into publicly accountable spaces to ensure inclusive participation.

The youth demographic has become symbolic of the shifting participation patterns witnessed by contemporary society. Despite being well-educated, youth are seen as apathetic due to low formal engagement. This is largely a consequence of their latent political activity being ignored. Shifting representative methods from aggregative to discursive systems offer the opportunity to include these non-electoral methods of expression.

Deliberative institutional frameworks offer the greatest potential for the inclusion of unique methods of engagement into a collective and fair system of public opinion generation. Initiatives such as civic assemblies and youth parliaments can promote marginalized voices, fostering democratic engagement and public trust. Although these processes may still be contingent on unique contextual issues and thus difficult to expand at scale, the insights offered by their methods grant a window into the direction public institutions must take to revitalize democratic stability and normative legitimacy.

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