Between Participation and Deliberation: Toward a New Standard for Assessing Democracy?

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Different Democracies

Defining what democracy means nowadays has become more problematic as several alternative democratic visions are being developed and contrasted in normative theory and political practice. On the one hand, some scholars seem to be content with a formal and minimal explanation of democracy (Sartori 1993, Dahl 1994). In this explanation, 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. Politics—understood in terms of a competition among private interests—designates the process of aggregating the preferences of citizens in choosing public officials and policies (Downs 1957, Sartori 1957, Dahl 1971). *Representative democracy* has been long identified with this conception.

On the other hand, different interpretations have emphasized the normative potential still present in liberal societies: according to them, democracy must be fed by achieving more, not less, democracy. Thus, the most relevant work for current democrats is that of either "democratizing" (Santos 2002) or "deepening democracy" (Fung and Wright 2003). Ordinary citizens ought to be brought back to the attention of democratic theory and, above all, to the center of the decision-making process: notions such as public participation, rational deliberation, and citizen empowerment should gain a renewed political appreciation (Rosenberg 2007; Dryzek 2009). These more radical perspectives—while showing some common normative elements—can be regarded as belonging to two distinct democratic traditions. Some of them interpret the principle of popular sovereignty in a radical fashion: they are committed to broaden participation in public decision-making. An authentically democratic order entails promoting the political involvement of people in arenas such as family, workplace, and civic associations as well as public institutions (Lynd 1965, Arnstein 1969, Pateman 1970, Bachrach 1975, Barber 1984). Though maintaining several conceptual differences, these democratic visions embody the same political ideal: the tenet that democratic legitimacy is exclusively based on an active and enduring participation of ordinary citizens. Consequently, this tradition can also be defined as *participatory democracy*.

On the contrary, some conceptions aim to stress the discursive quality of the democratic space in order to free it from cultural domination, power relations, and non-rational attitudes. Democracy is seen here as a domain of public discussion, dominated by "the unforced force of the better argument" (Habermas 1984) and leading to the common good. "[It] revolves around the

transformation rather than simply the aggregation of preferences" (Elster 1998, 3). These democratic paradigms attempt to put "public reasoning of free and equal citizens" (Cohen 1989; Benhabib 1996) back at the center of the political process. They favor an idea of democracy in which people address collective problems by deliberating together about how best to solve them: democracy is thus associated with the image of deliberation. In this case, a democratic order can be defined as legitimate insofar as it is the result of a reasoned agreement among all individuals. This political project is defined as *deliberative democracy.*

All these different traditions have contributed to expanding and deepening the meaning of democracy, enriching the political debate and offering new arrangements for democratic institutions. This research attempts to inquire whether—beyond the representative model—it is possible to envisage an alternative and stronger idea of democracy based on a common framework of participatory and deliberative norms: is democratic theory going toward a "participatory deliberative" model of legitimacy? In the first two sections, participatory and deliberative democratic conceptions are distinctively dealt with alongside their main characteristics. The third section compares their differences more closely, whereas the fourth focuses on their complementary features. The fifth section emphasizes the emerging political likeness between these two theoretical paradigms to investigate the potential rise of a specific participatory deliberative design of democracy. Finally, the last section proposes to single out a stronger normative standard for existing democracy by drawing on the characterizing aspects of this innovative participatory deliberative theorization.

Participatory Democracy

Over the past forty years, liberal societies have not only faced "undemocratic challenges" (e.g. no accountability between ruled and rulers; crisis of the party system) and "challengers" (e.g. economic, invisible elitist supremacy), but they have also been questioned by the public entry of new social actors demanding more radical rights (Melucci 1989) and participatory ideals of democracy (Lynd 1965, Arnstein 1969, Pateman 1970). This democratic era has diffusely experienced the political contention of so-called "new social movements" (Touraine 1978, Melucci 1985, Offe 1985, Della Porta e Diani 1997) claiming innovative and more inclusive democratic institutions. Beginning in the 1960s, participatory theorists and practitioners spelled out a conception of democracy based on the premise that citizens participating in collective decision-making on matters that affect their lives should be "an integral moral value of contemporary democratic theory" (Bachrach 1975, 52). For them—since any social relation is "political" in that it revolves around a structure of authority—increasing and extending the scope of participation and

political equality entails democratizing society. Society "can be seen as being composed of various political systems, the structure of authority of which has an important effect on the psychological qualities and attitudes of the individuals who interact with them; thus, for the operation of a democratic polity at national level, the necessary qualities in individuals can only be developed through the democratization of authority structures in all political systems" (Pateman 1970, 35). For this reason, "it is important that individuals take all the possible chances to participate" (Gbikpi 2005, 109). "Full participation" designates thus a process wherein "each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions" (Pateman 1970, 71).

According to Lynd, participatory democracy proposes to accomplish two specific goals: "[…] that each individual takes part in all decisions affecting the quality and conduct of his/her life; and that society is arranged to promote the independence of human beings and to provide the means for their common participation" (Lynd 1965). This means that the participatory ideal can be interpreted as a design of *social inclusion*, which aims at institutionalizing a new democratic sovereignty relying on the dialectic between civil society and the political system (Santos 2002). Allegretti reaches the same conclusion in *Democrazia partecipativa. Esperienze e prospettive in Italia e in Europa* (2010), when describing participatory democracy as a dynamic and open-ended project based on a "game" of active confrontation between civil society and institutions. In this light, social movements are regarded as one of the most important vectors of political change and transformation. On the one hand, they "carry on conflicts and antagonistic practices, breaking the limits of the systems in which such acts occur" (Melucci 1985, 795): collective mobilizations contest dominant codes and discourses of society. On the other hand, they point at creating a new symbolic order, a new cultural hegemony offering different interpretations of the social universe: in this respect, movements aspire to establish innovative definitions of norms and public situations, to promote new ideas, issues and solutions, and finally to invent alternative institutions. Even more radically, Santos retains that "democracies must transform themselves in social movements, in the sense that State must transform itself in an [open] space of cultural experimentation" (Santos 2002, 51). In the same vein, Claude Lefort envisions modern democracy as an "empty place" (Lefort 2007) that possesses no definitive goals—or rather, it possesses many such goals but none can succeed "in being accepted as the incarnation of the people-as-one" (Cunningham 2002, 186). This is why participatory principles can best adhere to the dynamics of liberal society. They do not trace "a model of democratic life […] that maps out the external boundaries and internal procedures of democratic decision-making" (Martin 2009, 106), but rather strive to build an inclusive political formation, advancing an idea of "fugitive democracy" (Wolin 1996)—that is, a condition

permanently open to contention and change. Democracy is envisioned here as "a process of constant reinvention" (Little and Lloyd 2009, 205).

Participatory democracy is thus linked to a very strong notion of popular sovereignty, insomuch as it conceives of grassroots participation as a way to constitute, demolish, and reconstitute "the category of the people" (ibid., 5). In other words, this position does not simply assume "the fact" of the *demos* (as a pre-existing body with a shared identity) as the base for democratic politics. "It argues, instead, that the demos (the democratic 'we') is produced, albeit contingently, through democratic politics—when the excluded demand to be included" (ibid., 6). This means that radical democratic sovereignty substantiates an ongoing conflict between those politically included and those not for the "re-signification" of the boundaries and identity of demos itself (Rancière 2007). In this perspective, democracy becomes "a project concerned with the political potentialities of ordinary citizens"; with their capacity to become "political beings" (Wolin 1996, 31).

To synthesize, participatory approach addresses the "quantitative" dimension of mass democracy by emphasizing the political role of civil society. It intends to find out "how many people take part in how many political venues to make how many decisions" (Citroni 2010, 41). Accordingly, participatory theory embraces and promotes the political inclusion of all individuals aiming at the enlargement and radicalization of democratic citizenship.

Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative ideals have been diffused widely during the last few years and have received popular recognition and appreciation due to the mobilizations of the "Global Justice Movements (GJM)" (della Porta 2005; 2007). On the one hand, this fact has appeared to be very positive: precisely by virtue of the diffusion of political tasks and scientific studies on such a matter. On the other hand, it has also created several problems for scholars committed to conceptual clarification and rationalization of deliberative democracy. In this research, deliberative democracy essentially refers to the Anglo-American and European philosophical traditions based on Rawls and Habermas' works (Rawls 1984, 1993; Habermas 1984, 1992). Both Rawls and Habermas seem to express a common core in their assertions on deliberative democracy: according to them, "political choice, to be legitimate, must be the outcome of *deliberation about ends among free, equal, and rational agents*" (Elster 1998, 5). This implies that deliberative democracy "rests on argumentation, not only in the sense that it proceeds by argument, but also in the sense that it must be justified by argument"(ibid., 9). The expectation is manifestly to tie the exercise of power to the condition of public reasoning: to establish "all those conditions of communication under which there can come

into being a discursive formation of will and opinion […] and to generate communicative power" (Habermas 1992, 446, 452)—that is, an institutionalized impact of will and opinion on political power. In short, deliberative democracy realizes "the full and equal membership of all in the sovereign body responsible for authorizing the exercise of that power, and establishes the common reason and will of that body" (Elster 1998, 222).

Nevertheless, not all versions of deliberative democracy completely share the same normative features or pursue identical political goals: some are more theoretically selective and politically "elitist", others are more inclusive and participative. Schematically, it is possible to divide this view into two quasi alternative patterns that emphasize different norms of action and values. The first model, rooted in the Habermasian logic of communicative action (Habermas 1984), regards "arguing" (Elster 1998) as the only legitimate form of democratic communication and the idea of rational consensus as the only legitimate goal of democracy. Politics is thought of here as being a very exclusive and dispassionate activity, executed in the key institutions (i.e. legislatures, courts) of liberal democracy by means of rational discourse (Rawls 1993). By contrast, the second model is more theoretically flexible and inclusive: it retains that alternative forms of communication—such as greeting, rhetoric, storytelling, testimony, and humor (Young 1996; Sanders 1997)—as well as plural political objectives are socially desirable and democratically legitimate (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006, 2007; Bachtiger et al. 2010). From this perspective, politics does not exclusively refer to the the representative institutions and their elites, but rather it comprises the notions of public sphere (Habermas 1992), civil society (Young 2000), and social movements (Dryzek 1990, 2000). Thus, political contention also encompasses passionate struggles for power (Mansbridge 1996), conflict (Foucault 1977), agonism (Mouffe 2000), and public activism (Young 2001, Fung 2005).

These competitive deliberative paradigms have assumed several definitions in the literature over the past ten years. Some scholars have specifically distinguished the first from the second group of deliberative visions, pointing out their differing aspects. Deliberative theory has been divided into "liberal, constitutional and discursive" (Dryzek 2000), "deliberative and communicative" (Young 2000), "deliberative and agonist" (Mouffe 2000), "deliberative democracy and democratic deliberation" (Mansbridge 2007), "type one and type two" (Bachtiger et al. 2010), and finally "liberal deliberative and participatory deliberative" (della Porta 2010). This study prefers to define the first group as *classical* and the second as *radical*, for such a distinction provides both a clearer understanding and a more analytical evaluation. With this in mind, it is possible to build a conceptual scheme that summarizes the features of each model on the basis of six specific dimensions: i)*Sites of politics*: where does politics take place? ii)*Political acts*: what

acts are regarded as political? iii)*Forms of communication*: how do the styles of communication manifest themselves? iv)*Ends of democracy*: what are the ideals of democracy? v)*Public outcomes*: what results does the democratic process bring about? vi)*Democratic legitimacy*: what is the source of "ideal validity" (Habermas 1992) of a democratic order?

Tab. 1: Competitive Visions of Deliberative Democracy

	Classical	**Radical**
Sites of Politics	State institutions	State institutions, civil society
Political Acts	Conventional	Conventional and unconventional[1]
Forms of Communication	Dispassionate and rationality-oriented	Rational, emotional, and rhetoric-oriented
Ends of Democracy	Rational consensus	Plural and different[2]
Public Outcomes[3]	Discursive quality	Inclusion
Democratic Legitimacy	Top-down deliberation	Bottom-up participation

Comparing classical and radical democracy, one can understand how they embody two distinctive political principles. On the one hand, the classical vision privileges norms such as discursive quality, the top-down process of communication, and institutional conceptions of politics and political acts. On the other hand, the radical vision emphasizes values such as inclusion, bottom-up information-building process, and ideas of politics based on civil society and its unconventional repertories of action. The former stresses the principle of institutional deliberation, the latter that of social participation. Distinguishing between classical and radical versions of deliberative democracy is not a speculative exercise; on the contrary, it is a means to better understand how participatory and deliberative theories can be integrated in a practical manner.

Participation *or* Deliberation

With the crisis of the "hegemonic model of democracy" (Santos 2002, 23-28), which has cleverly been highlighted by a recent work of Crouch (*Post-Democrazia* 2003), new and alternative democratic interpretations have acquired political legitimacy and global popularity. In particular, two of these—based on the ideal of participation and deliberation respectively—have obtained significant intellectual recognitions (Bohman 1998, Dryzek 2000, Cohen and Fung 2004) and stimulated innovative practical experimentations over the past few decades (Baiocchi 2003, 45-76; Fung and Wright 2003, 3-42; della Porta 2009, 38-41, 73-99). These two radical democratic

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[1] For an evaluation on the distinction between conventional and unconventional political acts, see Cotta, della Porta, Morlino 2001, pp. 172-178.

[2] In particular, see: Dryzek, List 2003; Dryzek, Niemeyer 2006, pp. 638-646; Niemeyer, Dryzek 2007, pp. 502-508; Bachtiger et al. 2010, p. 36.

[3] For an elaboration on the different outcomes of radical and classical models of democracy, see Citroni 2010, pp. 41-42.

projects have grown from different traditions and address distinct failures of representative democracy.

Participatory and deliberative approaches, albeit both focused on radicalizing the ideals of democracy, appeared originally to involve distinct normative expectations and political goals. Arising from different geographical contexts—from South America and developing countries, the participatory project (Santos 2002, Allegretti 2009); from North America and Western Europe, the deliberative (Habermas 1992, Rawls 1993)—and oriented toward different "publics," participatory and deliberative theories seemed to be by no means compatible: neither philosophically nor politically. The former favored citizen participation and its increase as much as the latter emphasized the quality of politics and the public sphere. In short, participatory theory addresses the quantitative dimension of democracy, deliberative theory the qualitative (Citroni 2010, 34-45). For this reason, some political theorists argue that the values of participation and deliberation are mostly incompatible: "attempts to realize one undermine the other" (Hauptmann 2001, 412). More specifically, Cohen and Fung detect three potential tensions between participatory and deliberative paradigms, postulating a sort of trade-off. "1. Improving the quality of deliberation may come at a cost to public participation" (Cohen and Fung 2004, 27): whenever legislators have to engage in reasonable discussion and argumentation about policies, they are bound 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" (ibid.): popular initiatives and referendum, for example, allow voters to exercise more direct influence over legislation. 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. "3. More fundamentally, social complexity and scale limit the extent to which modern polities can be both deliberative and participatory" (ibid.): 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.

This is why—according to these theorists—deliberative and participatory democracy seem to be conceptually incompatible institutional designs and thence politically opposed to each other.

Participation *and* Deliberation

Despite these conceptual and practical tensions, those who believe that emphases on deliberation and participation pull in opposite political directions are in the minority among contemporary deliberative democrats. To confirm this, several converging comprehensions of these

paradigms have recently developed (Cohen and Fung 2004, Gbikpi 2005, Bobbio 2006, della Porta 2008 and 2010, Bifulco 2010). According to such interpretations, participatory and deliberative theories are more complementary than competitive in that "deliberation is a kind of participation or somehow essential to it" (Hauptmann 2001, 408). Gutmann and Thompson argue that citizens ought to deliberate in a wide variety of settings and that valuing their doing so is a natural extension of valuing "participation in politics" (Gutmann and Thompson 1996, 13). Participatory and deliberative democracy appear here as strictly interwoven normative projects: one can consider deliberation as a better and more circumscribed form of participation. In this sense, public decision-making in liberal democracies may truly become both more participatory and deliberative (Fung and Wright 2003, Rosenberg 2007). The participatory ideal establishes that all citizens take part in every collective arena directly affecting their lives: it supports "the constant participation of the ordinary man in the conduct of those parts of the structure of society with which he is directly concerned, and which he has therefore the best chance of understanding" (Cole 1920, 114). The deliberative ideal, instead, recommends that such decision-makings are based on public arguing among all those involved: it is in fact by argumentation that in the deliberative process participants persuade each other and arrive at a decision. This is why some scholars retain that deliberative theory constitutes the ideal fulfillment of participatory democracy. The former proposes to improve two key elements of the latter (Gbikpi 2005, 110-121): 1. the idea of equal political weight of citizens in decision-making—(*political equality*); and 2. that of expanding the domain of the political "to a wider range of social relations" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, p. XV)—(*"the political"*).

With respect to the first point (*political equality*), Gbikpi argues that participatory democracy lacks a clear and efficacious criterion for evaluating political equality in decision-making. Echoing some vices of direct democracy, participatory theorists do not completely manage to clarify a functional logic alternative to that underlying the vote. Voting tends to still be the best way for choosing political alternatives and selecting representatives even in collective arenas such as civic organizations and the workplace (Pateman 1970). According to deliberative democrats, participatory theory falls short on developing a more dynamic and less artificial practice for promoting political equality. By resting on the vote, the inner logic of participatory democracy still seems "aggregative", even if here the "intensity" rather than quantity of interests appears more important. On the contrary, deliberative thought contributes to overcoming such a defect by introducing the notions of "rational argument" and "preference transformation." Deliberation is a process of public reasoning by means of which initial (and self-interested) preferences of participants are transformed to include all the different views and finally to lead to the common good. This public discussion, capable of modifying opinions and interests taken for granted, forms

the core of deliberative democracy. It seems to show the best manner to exercise power without recurring the vote: people take decisions appealing to the "force of the better arguments" (Habermas 1984). As decisions are made by convincing others through good and reasonable arguments, they are enacted by all participants: in this sense, deliberative democracy strives for rational consensus. Hence the superiority of deliberative over participatory democracy rises.

With respect to the second point (*"the political"*), Gbikpi contends that deliberative rather than participatory theory manages to extend the political domain to civil society and, in so doing, to politically empower the people. While participatory democracy aims to enlarge the field of the political by increasing the number of mutually separate collective arenas in which individuals can make decisions, deliberative democracy instead proposes to bridge such "separateness" by advancing the concept of the public sphere. This autonomous framework of social and institutional structures that facilitate free discussion among equal individuals allows people to enlarge and deepen their scope of political intervention. The public sphere refers to the impact of social movements on state and corporate policies. It functions as a space of social opposition and policy influence: in it, citizens "raise issues, publish information, opinions, […] criticize action and policies, and propose new policies and practices" (Young 2000, 173). In other words, the public sphere represents a favorable situation for the participation, association, and expression of people as long as it succeeds to tie political institutions (and their powers) to free and autonomous discussions of civil society. In short, it is "a site for the generation of public opinion" (Dryzek 2000, 55) directed to exercise "communicative power" on state institutions. Deliberative democrats regard the involvement of citizens in the public sphere "as a 'direct' participation in political decision-making" (Gbikpi 2005, 118). According to this, whoever partakes in deliberation in the public sphere is participating in the political process. Here "the political" manifests itself not only in semi-institutionalized and separate arenas (Pateman 1970, Bobbio 1984), but wherever this deliberation takes place and spreads. For this reason, deliberative theory provides a more extensive interpretation of the political domain.

Radical Deliberative means *Participatory* Democracy

To state that deliberative theory is partially complementary to participatory democracy and improves some of its limits does not affirm that a "participatory deliberative democracy" is already forming. In order to foresee this possibility, it is necessary to reconsider the classification of "competitive models of deliberative democracy" (see Tab. 1, 8) and decide which is more compatible with participatory ideals. Some "radical" deliberative democrats (Sanders 1998, Dryzek 2000, Young 2000) retain that "classical" versions of deliberative democracy (Habermas 1984,

Cohen 1989, Rawls 1993, Elster 1998) are not sufficiently oriented to promote the values of citizen participation and social inclusion. The classical conception chiefly concentrates on the quality of the public sphere and political discourses, neglecting to explore the extent of potential exclusion and elitism stemming from deliberative arrangements. To conceive of democratic process as an "ideal speech situation" (Habermas 1984) in which free and equal citizens publicly reason and make rational decisions implies denying the existence of gaps in political, economic, and socio-cultural resources among individuals. Not everybody is able to take part in discussions based on "rational arguments" and leading to the "common good." According to radical pluralists such as Connolly (1991), Honig (1993), and Mouffe (2000) and difference democrats such as Fraser (1997), Sanders (1998), and Young (2000), the deliberative public sphere is not completely open to the experiences and perspectives of marginalized and oppressed groups. "Free and equal" citizens have historically consisted of "bourgeoisie white men"—that is, politically dominant groups. As Fraser put it: "[…] the view that women and blacks were excluded from 'the public sphere' turns out to be ideological; it rests on a class—and gender—biased notion of publicity, one that accepts at face value the bourgeois public was never *the* public" (Fraser 1997, 75). In this sense, existing deliberations risk equating the common good with the interests of the more powerful, thus side-lining legitimate concerns of the marginalized. Radical pluralists and difference democrats are hostile to consensus and in part distrustful of deliberation, for "consensus decision-making" can conceal informal oppression "under the guise of concern for all by disallowing dissent" (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006, 637). In this respect, classical deliberative democracy shows an institutional design that is politically, socially, and culturally exclusive. It does not embrace an innovative and strong idea of popular sovereignty and thence is very far from all participatory theories: deliberation appears here to not be compatible with participation. Classical deliberative democracy is still alternative to participatory democracy.

On the contrary, radical deliberative conceptions dampen the selectivity of rational deliberation by stressing the dimensions of social inclusiveness, political pluralism, and public activism. In other words, they seem to approach participatory ideals that encourage a more powerful notion of democratic citizenship. On the one hand, these deliberative positions point at overcoming the elitist characters of deliberation by deepening the concept of "political equality;" on the other hand, they propose to redefine the category of "the political" in more extensive yet politically efficacious terms. Regarding the first aspect (*political equality*), radical deliberative theorists affirm that rational argument cannot be the exclusive device of democratic decision-making. Besides deliberation, democracy ought to favor rhetoric, humor, emotion, testimony, and storytelling as forms of public communication. In this way, marginalized and non-dominant groups could take part

in the public sphere with the same legitimacy of "polite, orderly, dispassionate, gentlemanly" (Young 2000, 49) groups and have an equal power in influencing collective choices. If the particular view of dominant groups is always hegemonic but disguised in the name of the "common good," allowing for other perspectives means further "democratizing" the political space and enlarging the content of public interest. No appeals to unity and rational consensus can ever be considered legitimate: goals of democracy are plural and different, and correspond to the variety of interests and perspectives profuse in civil society. In this respect, radical deliberative visions appear very similar to participatory democracy.

Concerning the second aspect (*"the political"*), supporters of a more radical democracy hold either that deliberation in the public sphere is by no means a political act or that it is not a completely sufficient political act. According to the former, such communicative actions do not have anything to do with politics, which must be understood either as a public struggle for power between opposing groups (Mouffe 2005) or as constituent power directly transforming existing democracy (Hardt and Negri 2002) Civil society along with rational deliberation are weak concepts that are unable to grasp and concretely intervene on economic, social, and cultural inequalities. Instead of these categories, new political projects for radicalizing democracy should incorporate the concepts of "multitude" (Negri 2003, Hardt and Negri 2005), conflict, and "agonism" (Mouffe 2000, 2005). The second group of radical democracy followers does not refuse the idea of deliberation, but regards such a communicative act as an insufficient political means to challenge state institutions and social powers. For them, the public sphere is not only a desirable and peaceful place for expressing good reasons and arguments, but also a conflictual site for promoting dissent, activism, and protest. The history of democratization demonstrates that pressures for greater democracy almost always emanate from "oppositional" rather than deliberative civil society (Cohen and Arato 1992, Fraser 1997, Tarrow 1998, Dryzek 2000, Young 2000 and 2001). The proliferation of collective actions such as sit-ins, strikes, radical demonstrations, and urban riots "can create fear of political instability and so draw forth a governmental response" (Dryzek 2000, 101): such conflictual acts often affect corporations and state institutions and, in so doing, aim to contest dominant political visions. In these interpretations, both deliberation and contestation are fundamental parts of the"political power" of civil society. In other words, radical deliberative approaches widen the content of "the political" to deliberation in the public sphere as well as to struggles for power, conflict, agonism, and activism.

Focusing on the concepts of "political equality" (1) and "the political" (2), which represent the two complementary features of participatory and deliberative theory, one can observe how "radical" deliberative conceptions are actually normative projects almost identical to those of

participatory democracy. They share the same idea of equality (1). For all these interpretations, rational deliberation is not the only and most important means to combat social and cultural exclusivity; quite the opposite, deliberation, with its emphasis on rational argument and common good, brings about an increase rather than a decrease in political inequality. Many social groups could never take part in the deliberative public sphere because they speak with alternative linguistic codes. Recognizing the political legitimacy of these communicative styles, including humor, "greeting, rhetoric, and storytelling" (Young 1996), entails opening the public sphere to the entry of "the other" and raising the level of political inclusiveness.

Second of all, both theories advance similar concepts of "the political" (2). According to them, deliberation in the public sphere is not the main political act of civil society. Beside this communicative action, civil society enables "contentious politics" (Tarrow 1998) in the public sphere—that is, the use of "disruptive techniques" such as demonstrations, strikes, riots, and civil disobedience to change corporate and government policy. This means that "the political" of civil society consists of protest, agonism, and mass activism as well: for these visions of democracy, "deliberation and conflict" (Flyvbjerg 1998) thus constitute the complementary moments of the political struggle.

Participatory and radical deliberative democracies seem thus to tend toward a unique theoretical paradigm encompassing two specific normative features: the notion of *citizen empowerment*—stemming from a wider interpretation of the concept of "the political"—and that of *political inclusion*—deriving from a stronger comprehension of the idea of "political equality." Citizen empowerment is thought of as the radicalization of the principle of popular sovereignty; that is, the idea that the people possess the authority to influence decision-making processes by employing both conventional and unconventional repertories of action. More specifically, to empower the people means fostering the building of two different yet complementary kinds of political institutions. The first type aims to create high quality deliberative participation with a direct impact on the exercise of power. These collective spaces are conceived of as formal institutional arrangements in which ordinary citizens, deliberating together on issues of common concern, affect the outcome of such decisions. Citizen juries, electronic town meetings, deliberation polls, table scheme displays, and participatory budgeting can be considered some examples of these arenas (Bobbio 2006). On the contrary, supporting the proliferation of the second type of organizations means aiming to broaden deliberative participation within the associations of civil society. Habermas, Fraser and Mansbridge call these more informal political venues, which have only indirect and limited effects on state powers, "culturally mobilized publics" (Habermas 1992, 356), "subaltern counterpublics (Fraser 1997, 81), and "informal deliberative enclaves of

resistance" (Mansbridge 1997). In such culturally, socially, and politically homogeneous areas, citizens who do not have direct access to representative institutions can rework their ideas, their strategies, and gather their forces to attempt to influence the decision-making from outside. Self-organized committees of citizens, grassroots workplace assembles, non-institutional social forums, and collective movement organizations can be regarded as instances of this second group of political space. One can define these two different kinds of public sites, both institutional and informal, as *participatory deliberative arenas*: their centrality within the policy-making process determines the level of power of ordinary citizens. The lesser or greater degree of citizen empowerment thus depends on the political weight of participatory deliberative arenas (della Porta 2008).

The result of this powerful idea of sovereignty is political inclusion. Radical democratic sovereignty does not only express the will of a political body founded on "the full and equal membership of all" (Cohen 1998, 222) but on "the necessity of contestation" as well (Little and Lloyd 2009, 205). Political inclusion means regarding the conflict and disagreement as fundamental dimensions of democratic order. According to participatory deliberative theorists, it is in fact the degree of openness to such conflict that enables democracy to be truly "democratic" and ordinary citizens to be politically included. Radical politics is understood here as a struggle between those who are politically included and those who demand to be. To radicalize democracy means to ceaselessly create, demolish, and recreate "the category of the people" through a strong, widespread mobilization of civil society. In this sense, styles of democratic communication alternative to deliberation are publicly recognized and encouraged: any social group is enabled to take part in decision-making, affect political decisions, and contribute to determining the general conception of the common good.

Tab. 2: The Participatory Deliberative Model of Democracy

Participatory Deliberative Norms	
Citizen Empowerment	The political weight of participatory deliberative arenas
Political Inclusion	The ongoing re-signification of the category of the people

A Stronger Normative Standard for Democracy?

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, no other political regime has represented a credible challenge for Western democracy. On the contrary, democracy has accomplished a "third wave" of expansion throughout the world (Huntington 1995) to the point that some political observers have talked about the "end of the history" (Fukuyama 1991), meaning that liberal society has appeared to

constitute the supreme stage of historical development. Nowadays democracy is diffusely regarded as the only legitimate political way of organizing complex society.

Going beyond the democratic ideal is not a political matter currently under discussion either in theory or in practice. However this does not imply giving up the debate of what democracy truly is today and, above all, what it can still become. According to several democratic theorists and practitioners, the normative potential of modern democracy has not yet run out. For them, the idea of democratic revolution—that is, "the extension of the democratic struggles for equality and liberty to a wider range of social relations" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, XV)—is still present and continues to stimulate struggles for emancipation in the South as in the North of the world. The political actuality of such a revolution is also producing important consequences for democratic theory. From many sites, both academic and extra-institutional, the conviction that is necessary to innovate the common comprehension of liberal democracy in more radical terms is in fact emerging. Defining democracy as a political system based on an electoral competition of alternative parties and governed by the majority rule no longer seems sufficient. Though not all of these scholars and social actors propose to overcome the representative form of democracy, they all support a new idea of democratic legitimacy able to offer a stronger normative standard for assessing the quality of existing democracy. This is precisely the theoretical task of participatory deliberative democrats. They acknowledge the political and operative centrality of the electoral device for mass democracy. By means of the vote, ordinary citizens are called to choose representatives, advancing their own interests in the political sphere, and governors capable of transforming such interests into public policies. For the majority of these radical perspectives, the electoral dimension is still considered essential in modern democracy. Yet recognizing it does not mean affirming that voting is also the most important instrument for measuring the democratic legitimacy of liberal society (Dryzek 2009). Paradoxically, the acknowledged relevance of the electoral mechanism seems to suggest exactly the opposite conclusion. If any democracy embodies electoral competition as a fundamental part of its political process, then such an element cannot be considered the best standard for assessing the democratic quality. Free and pluralistic elections only distinguish democratic from non-democratic regimes (Sartori 1993, Morlino 2003), and they do not say anything about the extent of deepening the democratic ideal within the first type of regime. In order to measure the achievement of this ideal and, in so doing, achieve the democratic quality of liberal order, it is necessary to take into account another criterion of evaluation. What is this "more democratic" standard for assessing democracy?

Participatory deliberative theory seems to offer the best answer to such a question. Its innovative way of combining participation and deliberation helps overcome three main deficits of

competitive representation. According to Cohen and Fung, the participatory deliberative form of democracy manages to pursue the values of responsibility, equality, and autonomy better than the representative. 1)It improves the level of accountability of the political system to the extent that participatory deliberative arenas function as public spaces that bridge ordinary citizens with the ruling elite. On the one hand, these arenas—as schools of formal and informal deliberation—promote the formation and influence of new ideas, opinions, and interests on representatives and the legislature (input). On the other hand, they strengthen the bond between the governed and governors by operating as spheres of control and criticism for the implementation of policies and their impact (output). 2)Participatory deliberative democracy increases the principle of equality. Expanding and enhancing the deliberative participation in public institutions may be the most effective strategy for challenging the inequalities that derive from asymmetric concentration of interest and from traditional social and political hierarchies: "[...] deliberation, because it blunts the power of greater resources with the force of the 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" (Cohen and Fung 2004, 25). 3)Finally, participatory deliberative conception encourages the realization of a stronger vision of political autonomy by enabling people to debate laws and policies that representatives and governors enforce for them. Taking part in a variety of collective arenas, citizens learn to advance and defend their own solutions to common problems and to argue in such situations on the basis of different yet relevant reasons.

This more radical vision of democracy therefore introduces an innovative conception of democratic quality grounded on the idea of participatory deliberative arenas: the greater the number of these public spaces, the higher the democratic legitimacy of liberal society. Such arenas of deliberation—both institutional and informal—constitute the most appropriate instrument for measuring the further democratization of actual democracy. Promoting their proliferation indeed means democratizing authority structures throughout society. More specifically, the lesser or greater capacity of arranging these collective spheres in terms of *deliberation*, *political inclusion*, and *citizen empowerment* affects the extent of deliberative participation present in democracy. I)Deliberation entails the discursive quality of a public space: How insightful is a discourse in that space? Does a plurality of public reasons exist? How and what kind of reasoning is advanced? Deliberation is here a process by means of which original preferences of individuals are transformed during discussion in order to take into account the political opinions of all (Miller 1993). II)Political inclusion measures the inclusiveness of these participatory arenas: To what extent are perspectives of the most disadvantaged people included into such new institutions? And

how much is their voice publicly listened to? Political inclusion requires institutional assets in which people can formulate, discuss, and make decisions on public issues that directly affect their own lives (Bachrach 1975). III)Citizen empowerment indicates the grade of political influence of ordinary citizens in decision-making process: What decisional weight do these new sites have? How often are their solutions taken into account by policy-makers? What is their political impact? To empower citizens means designing decision-making processes on which the mobilization of civil society can bring about concretely visible effects. The quality of public discourse, degree of political inclusiveness, and magnitude of citizen empowerment thus pinpoint the fundamental qualities of participative deliberative arenas (della Porta 2008). Their low or high presence determines the amount of deliberative participation present in each arena.

Conclusion

I can now answer the main question of my research: Is it possible to establish a normative standard stronger than voting for assessing the democratic quality of existing democracy? My research has attempted to demonstrate that this is possible, to the extent that we draw on and then employ the political principles of participatory deliberative tradition. In light of this more radical prospective, one can present the normative proposition on democratic legitimacy as follows: *the greater the number of participatory deliberative arenas with high levels of deliberative participation, the higher the level of legitimacy of democracy*. Moreover, I retain that the diffusion of these arenas is also the most promising way for actualizing the content of democratic revolution today. Insofar as the participatory deliberative model of democracy is adopted to organize society, the enrichment and strengthening of democratic citizenship can be fulfilled.

Tab. 3: The Participatory Deliberative Standard for Assessing Democracy: *The Proliferation of Participatory Deliberative Arenas with high levels of Deliberative Participation*

	Types of participatory deliberative arenas			
Participatory deliberative qualities of arenas	*Institutional arenas (state): top-down building process*		*Informal arenas (civil society): bottom-up building process*	
Degree of Deliberation	Quality, plurality, and publicity of argumentations		Consensual building process of public discourses	
Level of Political Inclusion	Inclusion and equality of all political perspectives		Public recognition of socially culturally, and politically excluded	
Magnitude of Citizen Empowerment	Position in state decision-making processes		Power of influence on state institutions	
Amount of Deliberative Participation	Presence of one out of three qualities (low)	Presence of all three qualities (high)	Presence of one out of three qualities (low)	Presence of all three qualities (high)

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