EUARENAS

CITIES AS ARENAS OF POLITICAL INNOVATION IN THE STRENGTHENING OF DELIBERATIVE AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

STATE OF DEMOCRACY DEBATE

AUGUST 2022

EUARENAS investigates the ways in which social movements coupled with local government reform initiatives, manifesting themselves in local-level experiments, create momentum for political change that include more inclusive and participatory forms of governance.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction – What do we mean when talking about deliberative and participatory democracy?

The history of democratic institutions runs parallel to theoretical and conceptual debates on its 'content', as well as its constant 'crisis'. Democracy, as an open-ended, idealistic project, can never be fully realized, thus the 'crisis' is its inherent feature. The constant debate, criticism, doubt, and hope are what keep it alive, ever-transforming and adapting, for better or worse. Today democratic states coexist or clash with authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, but also deal with their own structural and economic injustices, colonial and post-colonial heritage, and systemic flaws such as corruption, legal dysfunctions, discursive manipulations, or social anomy. Not only states as such, but also governments on all levels – from local to international – make difficult and not always transparent or ethical decisions on a daily basis. On the other hand, citizens' engagement in the democratic process takes different forms, but mostly through elections or the public consultation process. While more participative and deliberative forms of governance are being introduced throughout democratic countries, their use is still rather small in scale and instances, and practical implementations reveal flaws and difficulties that are not accounted for in the theoretical and political expectations.

This complicated picture of democracy – despite being rendered in a very general and superficial way – already indicates several reasons why the debate on democracy must occur. The 'crisis', or rather multiple, intermingling, and entangled 'crises', are not only of empirical nature, but they also constitute conceptual 'facts' in theoretical debates on their roots, symptoms, effects, and possible solutions. Those four aspects of the debate on the state of democracy are both influenced by and reconstituting democracy in practice. We conceive them as inseparable elements of every democratic endeavor, especially in empirically and practically oriented research projects such as EUARENAS.

To capture the variety of concepts and understandings of deliberation and participation – key conceptual components of the project – we asked 15 participants representing various groups (academia, NGOs, policy-makers) during the 1st project meeting in Helsinki (November 2021) to share with us how they conceptualize these terms. During the workshop, we intentionally asked participants to write down short definitions without consulting their peers, textbooks, or project documents in order to grasp their immediate connotations and intuitions. The results of this short survey reveal interesting conclusions regarding common traits and differences in understanding of these terms.

As for the first term – **deliberation** – almost all of the given definitions underline the intrinsic link between deliberation and some sort of discussion. But where the main difference occurs is how this discussion and its role are understood. Here we recognize two main traits in these definitions: some stress its rationality, responsibility, and depth of argumentation, e.g.:

- *To discuss in a deep way, based on different ways of thought, in order to take a decision;*
- *It is a form of personal decision-making, where a personal opinion is shaped over reflecting on various options;*
- *Reaching a decision through discussion, argumentation, and then reaching a sort of consensus;*
- *Thinking about or discussing something and then carefully deciding and acting accordingly;*
- *Agreement between partners/stakeholders that they go into the discussion without predefined statements and red lines, but the understanding of the situation and possible; solutions are co-defined and the consensus (…) is found.*

The other main trait is inclusion and care for underrepresented votes to be heard and understood. Inclusion takes the form of being invited to the decision-making process, but also of making sure that the represented interest or excluded position/narrative will be taken into account in the decision-making process. In the given definitions inclusion is indicated either as a main feature of deliberation, or a complimentary element of rational discussion:

- *Being a part of discussions/decision-making/setting the agenda;*
- *Being a part of discussions and decision-making in politics, community, etc.;*
- *Deliberation should include effective co-creation of decisions through influence and adoption mechanisms;*
- *A responsible decision-making process based on the inclusion of the subjects of the decision = citizens;*
- *Listening and understanding.*

Additionally, a few definitions also focused on deliberation as a way to enable collective thinking and the creation of common good as something that goes beyond a simple aggregation or negotiation of private interests:

- *Argumentation enabling Collective Action;*
- *Deliberation is the ability to find the balance between interests towards a common goal.*

However, most definitions combined at least two of the above elements, with one being particularly complex and covering all three aspects in a precise manner:

- *People coming together to discuss issues and make decisions through means of discussion. Arriving at a decision (at best, a consensus) together by sharing ideas and arguments, trying to persuade, but also understand, each other in the process.*

When it comes to **participation**, none of the definitions directly invoked discussion (i.e. what was fundamental for deliberation) as a main or exclusive means of participation. They rather treat participation as something more than deliberation, usually by involving more means of political actions such as protest, strategic influence on the outcome of the decision-making process, or through economic and social empowerment:

- *Contribution to representative democracy but also collective action and economic self-empowerment;*
- *The ability to have a real impact on a process and its outcomes;*
- *All means to be engaged in decision making – meaning articulate needs, campaigning, discussion, compromising, voting, being voted into positions, implementation, and follow-ups.*
- *Engaging in a political process and having some say over the process/terms of participation.*

One element that often occurs in given definitions of participation that was nonexistent when reflecting on deliberation is the recognition of participation as engaging in 'counter-publics' or the creation of parallel structures alternative to the official, systemic ones. Almost half of these definitions directly acknowledge that, stating e.g.:

- *Power is everywhere. citizens, organizations, and politicians understand the transactional nature of power and how everybody can influence the situation;*
- *Participation policy must identify the levers to make confrontation and civic protagonism possible.*

Finally, in 2/3 of proposed definitions participation is intrinsically connected to the agency, i.e. direct, even if limited, impact on policy:

- *Being able to act, being involved, and in a way direct the decision made by the administration;*
- *The ability of an individual to be included, to be able to participate in (political) decision making or at least in given parts of decision making.*

The rest of the definitions that did not stress the agency and policy impact focused on the representation of political views and bringing them into public discourse:

- *Expression of opinions on how governance should work;*
- *Bringing the interests of a part, of a territory, or an ethical view*
- *Political participation brings political reasonings social into a multistakeholder arena;*
- *Representing political views.*

To deepen our understanding of how deliberation and participation are understood in the EUARENAS project we also examined deliverables and documents published prior to this report. Similarly to the results of the Helsinki workshop, we found a variety of different uses and meanings for these concepts. What comes forth in the reviewed documents is a central place of inclusion, becoming almost synonymous with deliberative and participatory democracy. However, there are different ways to define inclusion and its role, e.g.:

- *We argue here that, if the design of the methodology does not take carefully into account ethics, diversity, and inclusiveness, this can also potentially lead to a lack of effectivity in the processes, which will not result in increasing the level of social, economic and climate justice at the urban level* (D2.1: 11)*;*
- *Therefore, a deliberative process assumes free public reasoning, equality, inclusion, and mutual respect* (D2.1: 14)*;*
- *Deliberative democratic initiative must be developed starting from a series of core characteristics that can also be used to group phases and tools needed to achieve them. (…) The core characteristics are diversity, engagement, inclusion and influence* (D2.2: 18)*;*
- *Our Toolkit offers tangible solutions that include in decision making or governance processes people that otherwise would be left out from these decisions all together. The Toolkit aims to offer ways in which this circle of actors can be extended through means of participation* (D4.1: 6)*;*
- *The final version will encompass at least 20 tools and cases offering a detailed view of how given participatory artifacts work and what considerations should be followed when choosing the right tool to facilitate participation and thus citizen inclusion* (D4.1: 18)*;*
- *It is well established that public participation is a core aspect of an effective impact assessment* (D8.2: 4)*;*
- *Moreover, the participatory characteristics of both deliberative democracy and co-governance allow for the active and continuous monitoring of the initiative's objectives and impacts* (D8.2: 14)*;*
- *Stakeholders' inclusion is a precondition to successfully deliver any desired change, broadening its impact on society effective contribution to decision-making and community stewardship on urban commons* (D7.1: 3).

The last quotation comes from a deliverable entitled *Stakeholders Inclusion Guidelines*, which is a clear indicator that it is one of the main principles of deliberative and participatory democracy in the EUARENAS project. It is considered an ethical pre-requirement of just deliberation, but also its aim and objective. This hints at a double role that inclusion takes in the process: first, we desire to foster bottom-up, grassroots engagement in the political process. On the other hand, for developing policy recommendations we need tools that will assess inclusion and impact from a 'top-down' perspective, i.e. to what extent the political authorities are ready to implement citizens' recommendations or demands coming from deliberative and participatory sites.

Participation is further problematized in the project documents. What is considered is, e.g. the relation between participatory and deliberative democratic practices:

- *Participation has been treated as a key method for improving the dialogue among citizens and authorities and as a remedy for the shortcomings of representative democracy and its institutions. In recent years, the use of participatory methods has started to be supplemented with deliberative methods. They are seen as more representative in expressing social opinions and needs, and as more effective in bridging the divide* (D3.1: 4);

- *Different means of participation are also often employed when a need occurs to strengthen the peoples' voice in representative systems. Participation initiated both by authorities and citizens can have either a consensual or adversarial approach. In the first case - similarly to deliberative participation - the goal of engagement is to focus on the common good and solutions that expand the range of resources (material and symbolic) available to the community. The adversarial approach applies a different vision of politics, i.e. such where the interest of a particular group needs to be satisfied at the expense of others or secured in a radical struggle against the status quo* (D4.1: 9; see also: D1.1: 20)

different levels at which it can occur:

- *The degree or level of participation is one of the most important dimensions when looking at tools aimed at somehow including citizens into decision making processes or into the management of public goods. Through identifying the level of participation, we can get an idea of how meaningful are given tools at delegating power to citizens* (D4.1: 9)

or time frames in which participation should be described and/or planned:

- *When it comes to the cooperation of various actors in co-creating, cogoverning, co-managing, etc. public resources it is crucial to highlight that while in many cases, a participatory process is time-bound, in the case of cooperative projects participation needs to be seen as a continuous process* (D4.1: 10).

When it comes to deliberation, the project documents usually refer to the most classical takes and approaches in the literature, invoking works of Jurgen Habermas, John Rawls, Joshua Cohen, John Dryzek, Robert Goodin, and John Gastil. From a more practical perspective, experiments of John Fishkin or the mini-public approach of Archon Fung are also mentioned. The selection of literature and definitions is consistent with the mainstream approach to deliberation as an ethical (inclusive) and effective (epistemic) tool for democratic policy-making, especially considering the broader systemic approach (see: D1.1: 16-17). However, any serious concerns raised against deliberation are usually presented as not much more than technical issues, e.g. in terms of randomization of participants, upscaling, ensuring impact and, once again, inclusion:

- *How can experimentation-based processes based on participatory, deliberative, collaborative and co-governance principles contribute to [the quality of democracy] at the urban level, is the question raised by this report. (…) EUARENAS identified several pilot sites addressing different territorial scales as well as different urban challenges, in order to develop a replicable methodology of just deliberative co-governance (D2.1: 5);*

- *The main issues are related to the assembly-based models' capacity to mobilize people and their degree of inclusiveness. This leads to reflections about the size of the deliberative arenas and about its openness. Scholars highlight that participation in collaborative initiatives aimed at deliberative processes is highly influenced by the citizens' educational level and selection techniques difficulty avoid to wider the type of people involved (D2.2: 12-13);*

- *The suggested size of DMPs could probably not being generalized as scholars highlight the trade-offs between inclusion that benefits from the maximization of citizens' involvement and deliberative quality, favored by small group discussions (Shortall et al., 2021). Criticism from a participatory perspective (Chambers, 2012; Pateman, 2012) is related to the contradiction between pursuing a deliberative intention and only including of a small portion of affected citizens (Pow, 2021). The risk of disconnection (Parkinson, 2006) from the world of politics is exacerbated by random selection (D2.2: 13);*

- *A social exclusion analysis could be envisioned prior to the starting point of any deliberative democracy initiative as part of the preliminary discovery activity focused on who is being excluded, who is doing the excluding, and why. This study should lead to select specific techniques, for example from the ones presented in this guide, to avoid that exclusion would threaten the effectiveness of deliberative democracy processes arising the risk that the innovations adopted exacerbate existing gaps jeopardizing the socioeconomic stability of a city or local community (D7.1: 5).*

This approach is consistent with the goals and objectives of each deliverable, whether it is oriented at empirical case studies, practical experiments, foresight, or policy recommendations. Thus, our aim in this deliverable – and in the whole Work Package 1 focused on the conceptual development of the project – is to provide the theoretical and ontological depth to these debates. The questions asked in other deliverables are crucial to the EUARENAS and this report will address them from a critical perspective, by linking them to fundamental debates in the field of political and social theory and philosophy. We reconstruct the current state of debate on democracy not only to identify theoretical lacunas that can be filled by the action research conducted in other Work Packages but also as an essential step in understanding practical opportunities and limitations for participative and deliberative practices within the broader context of democratic achievements – and their 'crises'.

To reach our goal we divide the following report into four chapters. They concentrate on analyzing and summing up the most recent debates that underline the main topics of the EUARENAS project – cities as particular arenas of political life, and deliberative and participative democracy as remedies to the crisis of liberal and representative democratic institutions. The main goal of these chapters is to present discussions on the main challenges to democracy and how to address them. We do not, however, give any definite answers. It is rather our aim to point out that solutions proposed in literature – different concepts, justifications, models, or tools of deliberation and participation – are not as simple and straightforward as some scholars might want to think. Instead, we present paradoxes and dogmas, some of which are perhaps inevitable, as certain limitations to deliberative and participatory democracy, or even to democratic politics

in general. By presenting multiple and sometimes contradictory approaches we do not want to wage reasons whether one approach is more legitimate than others – on the contrary, we believe that adopting a pluralism of approaches, concepts, and assumptions is the only viable way for such complex projects as EUARENAS. With the variety of stakeholders involved in conceptual, methodological, and action-oriented research and practice, acknowledging the variety of paradigms and approaches is not only the best way of reaching the project's objectives but is also a democratic way to approach our internal differences and diversity.

CHAPTER 1

Democracy in crisis

1 Democracy in crisis

The first objective listed in the EUARENAS Grant Proposal is 'to better understand challenges to democratic cultures and the economic, political and cultural factors influencing local responses to these challenges' (GP: 7). A broad range of factors mentioned above requires an equally broad introduction of critical study, both of the object of democracy and its subjects. We start from an assumption that crisis is an inherent part of democracy, one that constantly questions democratic justice and legitimacy, but also inspires debate and change. We start the deliverable with a chapter dedicated to challenges to democracy as we believe that the broader we describe doubts and concerns coming from scholars in different fields of social sciences and humanities, the more inspired and creative can our approach become in tackling more particular challenges connected to deliberative and participatory urban practices. This chapter starts with a more detailed elaboration on the notion of democracy as being permanently in crisis and portrays subsequent ambiguities and disagreements that occur on the verge of political theory, cultural studies, social psychology, and empirical political research.

1.1 Crisis as a permanent state of democracy

While awareness that democracy is in crisis seems widespread, there is a lack of reflection on what the term 'crisis' itself means and what implications the use of the term has for understanding what is happening in democratic societies. It seems that such a conceptual reflection would help to significantly sort out the symptoms of the state of collapse of the democratic system mentioned by experts and help to make at least a preliminary diagnosis regarding the causes. Therefore, we have decided to turn to perhaps the most systematic analysis of the concept of 'crisis' as presented in his work by the eminent German historian Reinhard Kosselck.

Outstanding German historian Reinhard Kosselck, in his conceptual analysis of the term 'crisis,' lists several meanings of the term that have become established in the European tradition. He points out that 'Thus the concept potentially registered all the decision situations of inner and outer life, of individual humans and their communities. It was always a question of definitive alternatives about which an appropriate judgment had to be passed and whose alternative consummation was also determined by and in connection with the particular issues themselves' (Kosselck 2002, 237). He notes that there are three semantic models for understanding the category of 'crisis' The first is the belief that the world is in a permanent crisis. The second, "…can characterize a singular, accelerating process in which many conflicts, bursting the system apart, accumulate so as to bring about a new situation after the crisis has passed' (Koselleck 2002, 240). The third, on the other hand, can mean purely and simply the final crisis of all history that precedes it' (Koselleck 2002, 240). What we call the 'crisis of democracy' seems to meet the second and third definitions of crisis given by the German historian. Certainly, democracy is 'under construction,' and no one questions the need for a profound change in its structure and functioning. However, some experts believe that the crisis of democracy may have further-reaching implications. It could lead to the replacement of liberal democracy with a sham democracy, which, while maintaining a facade of democratic rules, will have nothing to do with it. Such, for example, is the view of Nadia Urbinati, who argues that populism, while distinctive from fascist or other totalitarian regimes, stretches the boundaries of liberal democracy so far that it approaches an authoritarian system (Urbinati 2019). In our further considerations, we will try to identify some axial features of democratic systems as they have been formulated in political philosophy, and in the following section describe the sources and symptoms of the crisis that the system is undergoing.

This will allow us to move on in the following sections of our paper to show the most important views that postulate changes in the democratic system to prevent its collapse.

Democracy is a unique system that, by its nature, has no fixed forms and rules, but is a place of constant experimentation and search for new solutions. This feature of the democratic system, noted as early as the 1920s, found its conceptualization in the formula of French philosopher Claude Lefort, stating that the peculiarity of democracy lies in the fact that it is organized around 'empty space' (Lefort 1991), so everything in it must be constantly redefined. The search for new solutions to social and political problems requires imaginative work, which is crucial for the survival and development of a democratic society. Therefore, the first of the values that characterize a democratic system is creativity. Creativity means that democracy is oriented towards the future, towards the realization of social utopias. However, unlike the social utopias built in totalitarian states, which were based on doctrinal assumptions, the utopianism of democracy is always social and communal, because it grows out of a similarly understood creativity. These two values complement and reinforce each other. The third highest value of a democratic society is autonomy. Here we follow in the footsteps of the eminent Greek-French philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis, who wrote: 'Politics is the project of autonomy. Politics is a reflective and explicit collective activity that is directed to all institutions of society. It refers to everything in society in which we participate and which is common to us' (Castoriadis 1989, p. 169). Autonomy and creativity, however, cannot be realized if society is not united by solidarity. Solidarity would thus be the fourth value necessary for democracy to function. The four aforementioned values are closely intertwined: autonomy implies that people create social institutions that direct their actions toward building a new and better world at all levels in which they function, from their immediate environment to attempts to create a better global order. To build it, creativity is necessary, but one that is primarily social in nature, allowing the potential energy of a community to be released. This energy can only be unleashed through solidarity, which translates into both collective thinking and action.

It is clear today that democracy is in a deep crisis, which according to some experts may threaten its existence. More than 30 years after the collapse of the communist system, when Francis Fukuyama declared the end of history and the eternal reign of liberal democracy (Fukuyama 1989, 1992), people in almost all democratic countries are expressing their deep dissatisfaction with the democratic system. This disillusionment is evident not only in 'new' democracies but also in 'old', 'established' democracies in the West. Some experts predict that it may lead to the emergence of a new type of political organization, such as 'illiberal democracy'(Zakaria, 2004), which is in fact a form of authoritarianism. Thus, it is clear that democratic societies must seek new ways of political organization by reconceptualizing the ideas and dichotomies around which these societies were organized.

The causes and symptoms of the crisis have been described differently by various experts in the field of political theory, but a consensus seems to be emerging on the main problems plaguing democratic societies. The most obvious factor causing the crisis is the growing inequality in the globalized world even in the most equal democratic societies (Piketty 2014, Therborn 2013). However, it is also clear that the crisis and growing inequality have exposed existing flaws in the democratic system, evident at least since the 1970s, when the post-war economic and political consensus was broken by neoliberal economic doctrine and the expansion of the (neo)conservative agenda. They challenged the welfare-state idea that social solidarity is an essential element of any democratic society, so the political institutions of a democratic state should serve this purpose.

The reaction to this development was the idea of post-politics and the 'third way' developed by Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck in theory (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994), but implemented in political practice in

the government of Tony Blair and later by some social democratic parties in Europe, such as the government of Gerhard Schroeder in Germany. The idea is, in theory, to abandon the traditional concept of politics as a struggle for power in favor of the idea of efficient administration, and in political practice to blur ideological differences between political parties. As a result, some layers of the electorate have not found a good way to express their demands (Wilson and Swyngedouw, 2014). Post-politics has been accompanied by a crisis of party politics (Mair, 2013). They are no longer acting as purveyors between government and society, turning, in essence, into government institutions. They are organized in order to govern or prepare to govern rather than to mobilize their members and supporters to political action. As a consequence, the referendum model and the electoral system presupposing accountability of the politicians to the voters rather than to parties became such alternative democratic options.

Therefore, in the 1990s, neoliberal economic policies, as well as the new conservatism combined with post-politics and a crisis in party politics led to the explosion of populist movements, which have always existed on the margins of official democratic politics but have since become an increasingly important player in democratic countries (Hayward, 1996). Populist movements arise outside and beyond established liberal democratic institutions and elude the paradigms within which political and social development has been analyzed so far, one of which is the revival of authoritarian discourses in politics and religion (Weiß, 2017). Populist movements tend to change the traditional relationship between different elements in the public sphere. In the liberal public sphere, there is a balance between political institutions and civil society, while the demands of the masses are expressed through and by civil society organizations. The populist model assumes a conflict between political institutions and civil society, which can only be resolved through direct mass protests aimed at changing political institutions. Mass demands and protests are seized upon by civil society and then passed on to political institutions, which respond directly to these demands.

All of these events render the old trajectories of democracy theory obsolete, and the contemporary conceptualizations of democracy emphasize its precarious position and inherent conditionality. This corresponds to more general observations about our post-modern predicament, in which uncertainty is the organizing principle. There are many names for the uncertain condition we experience today: Lefort (1988) (dissolution of the determinants of certainty), Walzer (1995) (society of alienation), and Beck (1992) (risk society). They are also translated to all subfields of political science. In the field of democratic theory, which is crucial to the EUARENAS project, ever since Robert Dahl's famous distinction between democracy and polyarchy (Dahl, 1971), there has been a widespread belief that the 'democracies' we witness in the world are only approximations of the ideal. Hence, contemporary discussions within democratic theory can be seen as disputes over what promises we should make, i.e., what ideal we should pursue, since democracy is always only a promise, as in Derrida's *Democracy to Come* (Derrida 2005, 2006). Perceived as such, democracy is necessarily associated with a sense of disillusionment and disappointment. One recurring disappointment concerns the imperfect nature of representation. Such feelings can spur political action, i.e., action oriented toward changing the state of perfectibility (Norval, 2007, Thomassen, 2010). In this perspective, democracy can be understood as a form of popular mobilization both toward controlling the government, as conceptualized by Rosanvallon in the notion of counter-democracy and reevaluation of distrust (Rosanvallon, 2008), i.e., reactive mobilization, but also as an impact on political decisions in a more proactive manner, for example, to transform the system or to self-actualize in the broadest sense of constituting oneself, expressing one's will and desires. Therefore, counter-democratic publics organizing protests or holding politicians accountable, are at the same time indicators of crisis and mechanisms of democratic resilience.

These theoretical transformations concern not only democracy understood as a system of political institutions, but also civic society as an essential element of the public sphere. Civic society gained momentum after the fall of communism (Cohen & Arato 1992; Walzer 1995; Staniszkis 1991; Ekiert 1996). Most studies have focused on associational life (the so-called neo-Tocquevillean orientation, revived by Putnam (1993) with its various degrees of formalization. However, the most interesting studies are those that attempt to restore the concept of the public sphere to civic society research (e.g., Edwards 2009; Alexander 2006). Of interest are both of those inspired by the consensual visions of Habermas (1991, 2001) and more contested visions in the Gramscian tradition, i.e., civic society as both a sphere of consensus-oriented communicative action and a space of dynamic clashes between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic positions. However, as we argue, despite much inspiration regarding the role of extra-parliamentary politics and the logic of organizing protest movements, civil society studies have largely failed to take into account the importance of the collective mobilization of social passions in democratic societies, which are currently being canalized by populist movements.

1.2 Citizenship and the death of the subject of democracy

The modern idea of democracy which started gaining momentum with the age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution originated with a philosophical assessment of the universality of citizenship. Article I of *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* from 1789 treated all Human Beings as born free and equal. However, at first, this 'equality' could have only been exercised by wealthy males, i.e. those who were property owners (Censer and Hunt, 2001: 55; Doyle, 2003). So, despite being understood as universal, the category of citizenship was actually exclusive – of women, the working class, slaves, non-white people, and many more. It was only through political struggle that these other groups were able to *become* citizens and acquire some laws initially reserved for the white, male, bourgeois. But is this a process leading to full inclusion and equality? As Iris Marion Young noted already in 1989, 'many among the excluded and disadvantaged thought that winning full citizenship status (…) would lead to their freedom and equality. Now in the late twentieth century, however, when citizenship rights have been formally extended to all groups in liberal capitalist societies, some groups still find themselves treated as second-class citizens' (Young, 1989: 250). Young was especially concerned about the exclusion of women and ethnic minorities, which resembles the strategic coalitions of the Left of that time. Despite both black and feminist movements in the US have made certain progress beyond the field of legal status, the problem of treating them as second-class citizens is still pertaining to societies across the world. The dynamics of discourses and movements todays also changes, and more perspectives opened to the question of sexual orientation, gender, ecology and others are joining the emancipatory struggle. Recognition of these discourses and understanding means of their inclusion into deliberative and participatory urban spaces is one of key problems that we want to study and implement in the EUARENAS project (D2.2: 18; D3.1: 16; D4.1: 12 D5.2: 16; D7.1; D8.2: 10).

However, the idea – or a myth – of universal citizenship remains the bedrock of the Western concept of democracy. Michael Ignatieff traces it back to Aristotle and his 'ideal of public realm in which through participation the citizen transcends the limits of his private interest' (Ignatieff, 1987: 399). This vision comes close to a republican ideal of the community based on the 'general will' and close ties of all citizens – people who willingly entered the public sphere to take an active part in its creation. On the other hand, this noble vision is juxtaposed to a more cynical one of the public realm by Hobbes and Locke, for whom 'Man (…) is a bundle of passions and interests which he satisfies chiefly in market relations and private sociability:

the political or public realm is a necessary evil – the institutional arrangements necessary to protect and enhance private freedom' (Ignatieff, 1987: 400). Here a liberal stance is preferred, where market relations and private associations are the only means that can realize actual freedom and equality, and the state, its institutions, and politics in general while necessary to maintain security and basic social order, pose a threat to the individual. Citizenship is therefore seen as a right to be protected from the influence of others, especially from political institutions. Also, through privatization of the sphere of (human) rights and freedoms, it became an arena of influence and distortion by market relations. Consumerism 'infantilize' citizens and make them retreat to their private lives and give up politics to 'professionals' (Barber, 2008), and also less likely to contribute to the common good, or even imagine such an idea (Sandel, 2020).

These two models remain relevant and create tension in modern democratic debates up until today: from Benjamin Constant's *The Liberty of Ancients Compared with that of Moderns* to Isaiah Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty* (Cromartie, 2022; Dimova-Cookson, 2022); from republican and communitarian to liberal and individualistic models of democracy (Habermas, 1994; Held, 2009); from (neo-)corporatism to (neo-)pluralistic models of citizen participation (Sintomer et al., 2020); from equality of participation to the equality of legal status (Bellamy, 2008: 31–42). All these debates arrive at conclusions that such a binary distinction between 'Good vs Evil' or 'altruistic vs egoistic' visions of citizenship is doomed to fail. An ideal model of democratic politics based on only one of these assumptions is limited in its scope and incorporates a certain amount of exclusion. Republican models based on positive freedom and active citizenship understood as a participation in the creation of common good tend to exclude groups and particular positions that are 'judged not capable of adopting that general point of view'; while liberal approach based on the depoliticized pluralism and freedom of competition of particular interests 'privatizes policy-making, consigning it to back-room deals and autonomous regulatory agencies and groups' (Young, 1989: 251).

We quote authors from as early as the 1980s to show where these debates originated, but the question of citizenship remains valid until today. Ideas of universalist citizenship are widely debated by the constructivist approach, one that sees citizens as becoming members of the society through the recognition of the 'Other', the recognition that comes either 'passively' as their birthright (based on gender, race, class, and nationality) or through an active struggle to be included in a range of rights of citizens. Contemporary arguments focus both on the normative content of citizenship, i.e. what rights and obligations are ascribed to citizens and how they change over time; and on the empirical scope of it, i.e. who is a citizen and why some groups have been included in or remain excluded from this category (Bellamy, 2008: 27–28).

The decline and collapse of the Soviet Union that consolidated a global reign of neoliberal political imagery sparked numerous debates that called for the reinvention of a privatized and apolitical concept of citizenship that became hegemonic. Normatively, they focused either on material preconditions of equality or on cultural challenges of multiculturalism; empirically they called for liberal democratic reformism or aimed at imagining alternative models of democracy. John Rawls, arguably the most influential author among liberal reformists, with his revision of his theory of justice published as *Political Liberalism* (Rawls, 1993; see: Gaus, 2014), not only argued for a pluralistic public sphere – for which he is mostly acknowledged by deliberative democrats – but also reinforced his argument for an equal opportunity created by a socialist welfare state (Rosales, 1998). A legalist and constitutional framework have also been invoked in this debate, especially in consideration of the legal construction of EU citizenship. To what extent does it reach further than the common values of the free market? (Prentoulis, 2001; Shuibhne, 2010) How is it be combined with local and urban citizenships, juxtaposed to national ones that are still providing the

legal basis of EU citizenship? (Bauböck, 2003; Neuvonen, 2020) And how is it supposed to tackle the question of growing mobility and migration, an issue that is becoming more and more relevant in times of climate change? (Anderson, 2019; Guild, 2004; Oosterom-Staples, 2018; Tazzioli and Walters, 2019) The last question is also reflected in migration (Penninx et al., 2014) and security studies (Scott, 2012). The reshaping of border symbolism in the EU does not leave the idea of citizenship unaffected, but rather puts it in an unambiguous position, promoting both universal European cosmopolitism and its (geo)political particularism against the rest of the World. At the same time, securitization discourses have been used to reinforce national borders in certain countries that are being mostly affected by the ongoing refugee crises. This process can in turn lead to the incorporation of revanchist identity politics. Invoking ontological security by nationalist actors in countries such as Hungary or Poland can even lead to an illiberal understanding of belonging and citizenship (Scott, 2019).

The liberal response to migration and post-colonialism is based on the idea of pluralism and multicultural integration and/or social cohesion. James Tully in *Strange Multiplicity* suggests an expansion of the liberal constitutional approach to citizenship with the constitutional recognition of cultural diversity. Entering into a discussion with Wittgenstein's concept of language, he convincingly recognizes a linguistic difference in understanding between speakers of different 'language games' as a fact of the social world, allowing for multiple constellations of 'rationalities' that set normative order to 'forms of life' connected to these language games (Tully, 1995, 2008; Owen, 1999). This differentiation of language games also regards concepts such as citizenship (Tully, 2014), so not only we have people practicing their citizenship differently, but we also have a heterogeneous field of science, policy, and social practices that use the word 'citizenship' to indicate different meanings and actions. The conclusion here is that, sometimes, practices related to citizenship will also be engaged in non-democratic or illiberal ways. Therefore a post-Imperial constitutional recognition of diversity is necessary to secure the construction and promotion of such meanings and practices of citizenship that will allow tackling challenges of the globalized world (Tully, 2014). Tully with his Canadian background refers to the process of a sustained constitutional dialogue between Native and colonial descendants as a model process of building mutual recognition over a long period, not only in regard to the ethnic and national context.

A different answer to the crisis of neoliberal citizenship is proposed by Jurgen Habermas and many other deliberative democrats, who want to (re)construct citizenship through returning to practices of the rational, deliberating persons, who thus become active, engaged, and informed citizens. Practices of deliberative democracy were proposed by Habermas as a means to bring to a conclusion the unfinished project of modernity. The truly democratic citizenship, as envisioned by Habermas, must become a participant in a consensual and rational creation of the law and regulations, which in turn guide the life of citizens in a universalist way. But this universalism can only be constructed by particular citizens who transcend their personal interests with the mediation of rational and consensual decision approved by all subjects. Through deliberation, a liberal group of individuals can both protect their own privacy and civic agency and participate in a republican construction of a rationalistic public sphere (Habermas, 1992, 1994).

Radical democrats led by Chantal Mouffe tend to criticize the notion of citizenship that is decided by the approval of the rational outcome of deliberation, as they see rationality as the binding force of social hegemony, a force that limits freedom and imposes inequalities (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Mouffe, 1999). In contrast, they propose a solution closer to the one offered by Tully, even if more revisionist than reformist i.e. to engage in the struggle for equal recognition and civic status, challenge existing hegemonic discourses and simply fight for more rights. The relation of adversaries in a public sphere is precisely what

enables citizenship as a common denotation. However, for Mouffe the liberal and democratic components remain in tension with each other, either of them should be balanced against the other, but also preserved in a far and radical reimagination of a more agonistic model of liberal democracy (Mouffe, 2013; Woodford, 2022). She views 'citizenship not as a legal status but as a form of identification, a type of political identity: something to be constructed, not empirically given. Since there will always be competing interpretations of the democratic principles of equality and liberty there will therefore be competing interpretations of democratic citizenship' (Mouffe, 1991: 75), and through engaging in these competitions, people can construct their notions of citizenship concerning their interpretation of the common and shared symbolic sphere of democracy (*respublica*). While Mouffe's interpretation remains focused on identity struggles, scholars have aimed at rethinking this post-Marxist approach to fill the material, and economic lacunae created by this approach (Devenney, 2020).

The broad scope of these debates and propositions, ranging from multicultural cohesion to agonistic political struggle, and from the focus on legal provisions to identity and cultural politics, reveals a range of dilemmas that need to be faced by policymakers, practitioners, and researchers of deliberative and participatory practices. But the problem does not end here. Post-colonial studies of humanism unveil that the concept of 'human' has historically been constructed in a colonial process of expanding and justifying the domination of European imperialism. Similarly to the notion of citizen, 'humanism' did not include all subjects immediately, but rather divided the world of beings into those who are entitled to enjoying universal 'human' rights and protections, and those who are not: 'Slaves, Indigenous People, women, and workers (…) have experienced *and resisted* those always connected binaries from the beginning' (Patel and Moore, 2018: 169). Contemporary theories of feminism, gender, and queer studies, and race theory do often relate to 'anti-humanism' as a way to deconstruct the universal, masculine, rational, and analytical ideal of 'human' in order to dismantle a tool of oppression and discipline (Bacchetta et al., 2018; Braidotti, 2017; Butler, 2004; hooks, 2015; Lugones, 2010; Wynter, 2003) for which citizenship is one of the key components. A question of humanism also implies the question of non-human animals and their inclusion not only in citizenship rights and protection but also in participatory practices (Garner, 2019; Humphrey and Stears, 2006; Kymlicka and Donaldson, 2014).

The multiplicity of these arguments does not – and should not – deliver a singular, universalistic answer to what citizenship is and how it should be constructed in order to maximize personal freedom, the common good, and equality. On the contrary – the depth and continuity of these debates should rather keep on reminding us that we fall into numerous traps every time we raise the notions of inclusion, equality, identity, and the rule of law. This does not make practice-oriented projects like EUARENAS impossible but rather poses more challenges to it. But with every challenge comes an opportunity to provide individual and global impact on how we can employ these debates to deepen our understandings of democracy and actually help motivate and empower individuals to be more compassionate, and empathetic, but also self-conscious and critical citizens.

1.3 The institutional crisis of democratic politics

By stating that crisis is an inherent and permanent state of democracy, we are far from claiming that specific problems will necessarily appear everywhere, or that they will manifest themselves in the same way across all European countries. To further our understanding of the underlying crises that are most relevant to the EUARENAS project, we also want to focus more on the 'local' perspective. But this 'locality'

is for us not only spatial, as certain dysfunctions tend to appear worldwide in both 'old' and 'new' democracies, but rather temporal, i.e. typical of the first two decades of the 21st century. After years of progress in the process of democratization that followed the end of the Cold War, even more rapid demise has been noted in virtually all Central and Eastern Europe countries (Ágh, 2019), and has since been imitated in the West (most notably in the USA and the UK) (Krastev and Holmes, 2019). Even in the countries where traditional conservative parties did not start to abuse nationalist, fundamentalist, and anti-democratic narratives of the extreme right, populist movements and parties visibly grew in relevance (Eiermann et al., 2017; Pytlas, 2017). Some authors, such as Timothy Snyder and Peter Pomerantsev, even argue that the post-1989 World order was not, in fact, a dominance of the Western political model over Eastern Europe, but rather a new, post-ideological space for new authoritarian models to be developed (in Russia) and exported (to Europe, USA and beyond) (Pomerantsev, 2019; Snyder, 2018). While at publishing these arguments were greeted with much controversy for overstating Putin's and Russia's influence on European politics, a war in Ukraine, and numerous facts about the Kremlin's involvement in financing and supporting politicians, media, and even activists from both the extreme right and left (ecological) spectrum, might prove these Authors right.

In the EUARENAS D1.1 Conceptual Framework we have already enlisted numerous criticisms of the actual functioning of representative democracy, showing how it deviates from the ideal model based on the 'chain of representation' and the 'chain of accountability' (fig. 1). These flaws originate either from deformations caused by systemic imperfections or human, cognitive biases and distortions – including those connected to the notion of citizenship – but also from corruption and deliberate, malevolent actions of autocratic political actors. However, staying in line with the first part of this chapter, we consider these problems not as deviations from democracy *per se*, but rather its inherent features (crises) with which it needs to deal.

Figure 1: Problems of representative democracy

- Low participation levels
- Gaps in civic education
- Lack of genuine choice
- Promoting individualism rather than common good
- Electoral preference deformation by voting systems

- Manipulation of voters through misinformation, abuse of state resources, electoral code etc.
- Strong structural position of parties as an obstacle for competition

Voters
Representatives
Government
Civil servants

- Governments overtake legislative role
- Dominance of parliaments to dismantle checks and balances
- Bribery or threatening of MPs

- Partisan interest
- Dysfunctional coalitions
- Rubber-stamping and retreat from controlling function
- Corporate lobbying

- Promoting partisan interest and nepotism over competences
- Administrative abuse of power
- Lack of continuity and clear career paths
- Political situationing of expert knowledge

- Serving the party rather than the state and citizens
- 'The iron law of oligarchy' - maintaining the structural status quo

In the following sections, we want to take a closer look at recent debates on the institutional dimension of the crisis. We focus on several aspects: professionalization of political parties, electoral malpractices, and authoritarian state capture, and the separate chapter will present debates on the deficit of democracy in the EU.

In the book that we have already mentioned in this chapter, Peter Mair (2013) enumerates five conditions to be met for party government (i.e., the classic model of governance formed in the democratic system) to prevail. (1) A party (parties) wins control of the executive as a result of elections. (2) Political leaders are chosen by and through parties. (3) Parties offer voters clear alternatives. (4) Public policy is determined by a party (parties) in the executive. (5) The executive is held accountable through parties. It does not take particular acumen to notice that the party government system is crumbling ever faster, and is ever more frequently challenged by other, alternative democratic models mainly t focused on governance, rather than the government. In the last decades, parties turned from being a representation of certain classes (land-owners and aristocracy, bourgeois or workers) into professional, elections-oriented machines. This phenomenon has already been observed in the 80s when parties began to specialize in political marketing and turned from sponsorship through members and partners to financing through private entities, mainly interest groups (Panebianco, 1988: 264). This led to rapid development of both new political PR and marketing strategies, including infamous microtargeting (Cronin, 2018; Zuiderveen Borgesius et al., 2018) and private-interest-oriented lobbying (Giger and Klüver, 2016). Such an approach is very successful in terms of electoral success, however, it is ambiguous in terms of a redefinition of the representative role of political parties. Sarah Birch argues that democratic elections are a public event, therefore should be publicly funded in order to secure free and fair elections (Birch, 2022). Of course, lobbyists' influence on political parties is not limited to financing and advising in their electoral campaigning, but also affects their policy decisions.

With political parties being elected thanks to professional political marketing campaigns, and realizing policies in the interest of private, influential interest groups, what role can they play in representing their constituencies? Certainly, political ideology and programs are no longer the central elements that organize party activities and mobilize voters. Thus, their role as a link between government and society is weakened, turning political parties into government institutions, especially with the rubber-stamping legislature being dominated by the executive powers. As Mair writes: 'The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a gradual but inexorable withdrawal of parties from the sphere of civil society toward the sphere of government and the state, and together these two processes have led to a situation in which each party tends to distance itself from the voters it purports to represent, while at the same time tending to associate more closely with the alternative protagonists with whom it purports to compete' (Mair, 2013: 82). In a recent comparative study that focused on 'deaths' of European political parties, the Authors claimed that while there still are ideologically oriented political parties, a slight dominance of entities consisting of career-driven, office-seeking politicians can be noted (Bolleyer et al., 2019: 13–14).

Political marketing and PR have become widely accepted means of electoral campaigning in democratic politics, and their use is not seen as election rigging. However, it is not uncommon for incumbent politicians today to try to tip the balance of elections in their favor. There are many ways to influence elections without the need to falsify the results, and the 'menu of malpractices' is being constantly creatively expanded by authoritarian politicians. Already in 2002, Andreas Schedler enlisted a broad range of such malpractices: limiting the scope of elective offices and their jurisdiction; exclusion or disorganization of opposition forces; restricting political and civil liberties, including access to media and funding; formal and

informal disenfranchising of suffrage rights; intimidation or corruption of voters; influencing electoral rules and election management (e.g. gerrymandering); and, if all of that does not succeed, preventing elected officials from exercising their constitutional powers (Schedler, 2002: 39). This list is already long and general, so many practices can be included in it, but it has been even further developed in recent years. For example, Birch expanded it with violation (not only manipulation) of the electoral code, abuse of state resources, aggressive propaganda in media, and electoral violence (Birch, 2011; Birch et al., 2020).

There are also taxonomies of electoral malpractices that include long-term strategies which reach beyond a single election cycle, such as creating clientelist and patronage networks, new elites, or alternative political narratives (Bermeo, 2016). The term 'state capture' describes this phenomenon fairly well, as it describes both the change in formal rules of governing and distribution of state resources and informal rules and networks applied to decide who is allowed to participate in this distribution of power and resources. In the 21st-century state capture has been mostly associated with South Africa, Turkey, or Russia, but as a model it has been adapted and copied in almost all countries in Central Europe and Western Balkans (Klíma, 2019; Vachudova, 2019). Nowhere is this more visible than in Viktor Orban's Hungary, for which the term 'post-communist mafia state' has been coined (Magyar, 2016), where a new political family—or 'poligarchy'—of loyalists has been created to take over virtually all possible political seats and offices, but also to play a dominant role in media and economy (Bajomi-Lázár, 2013; Stark and Vedres, 2012; Vásárhelyi, 2017). But while Hungary might be an infamous champion of illiberalism and de-democratization in the EU, this is a regional trend that can also be found in Poland (Kerpel, 2017; Sata and Karolewski, 2020) and in the Baltic states, including (albeit to a much lesser extent) Estonia – a state that remained one of the best performing 'new' democracies in the EU (Cianetti et al., 2018; Cianetti and Hanley, 2021), but still not untouched by populist symptoms, where the mass conservative party has been used as a vehicle for right-wing populists to ascend in relevance (Saarts et al., 2021). Italy – where the fourth pilot of the EUARENAS project is taking place – despite having a different historic context of democratization has also suffered from state capture and mob infiltration. Connections between organized crime and politics in Italy have a long tradition and are still present today, having both direct and indirect impact on the political system and populist actors that tend to play a leading role in it (Aassve et al., 2018; Castaldo and Verzichelli, 2020; Ruggiero, 2010; Verbeek and Zaslove, 2016).

One of the main reasons for a failure of democracy lies within the social disappointment in the promises and failures of neoliberal reforms, especially within the countries that play a semi-peripheral role in the system (Ágh, 2014; Cabada, 2020; Wilkin, 2018). This complex situation influences many areas of functioning of the society – it is not only a sheer dissatisfaction with the lack of economic benefits for many due to changes in fiscal policy (discipline, austerity, over-regulation) and social policy (cutting of social benefits, privatization of social welfare). It also exceeds dissatisfaction with low-quality politics (corruption scandals, poor economic performance, etc.) that preceded the coming to power of illiberal parties. Hence, a common trait that can be found in those states is a specific, internal division of mindsets and approaches, sometimes dubbed modernist/traditionalist, sometimes urban/rural (Ágh, 2019: 142; Dawson and Hanley, 2016: 23). Liberal policies played an important role in preserving traditional, conservative values or ethnonational divisions (Bíró-Nagy, 2017; Bozóki, 2014; Rupnik, 2012) by disengaging certain issues from the political 'game', thus preventing them from entering into a dialogue with other worldviews and perspectives (Koczanowicz, 2008). Moreover, liberal reforms in CEE countries influenced the structure of economy by creating powerful networks based on corruption and clientelism. Together with a constant disappointment with democratic opposition, this set a stage for current actors to extend and further abuse those networks in creating a non-competitive political environment.

In the conditions of free, but unfair elections and prevailing state capture, it is difficult to say whether these countries are still democratic, or do they fall under the category of electoral authoritarianism? The term 'borderline regimes' describe a long-term situation in which states are 'balancing between two types of regimes – the one they have in place (usually flawed democracy or hybrid regime) and the less democratic one (hybrid regime or some type of new authoritarianism, respectively)' (Szymański et al., 2020: 213). This means that while in some areas the democratic backsliding is rapid, in others it might be slower or even work in another direction. What is especially interesting for us in the EUARENAS project, is how this process can be addressed in municipal governments, whose role can be seen as both sites of flourishing post-national democracy, anti-populist resistance, and spaces largely contributing to current political crises (Hall, 2019; Mehan and Rossi, 2019; Rossi, 2018). Illiberal regimes seek numerous means to curtail cities' budgets, prerogatives, and autonomy as a weapon in a total war against opposition, while local governments remain one of the leading counterweights to institutional de-democratization and cultural radicalization of politics (Batory, 2022; Bojarowicz, 2020; O'Dwyer and Stenberg, 2022; Przybylski, 2018).

A large segment of the discussion on the current process of de-democratization in Europe refers to populism, both as a narrative and a political strategy. However, populism is a much broader topic, as it considers not only political parties in power but also extremist organizations on the peripheries of the political system, social movements, media discourses, etc. This has also been one of the most discussed phenomena in recent years. Since populism is seen as one of the leading challenges to which the EUARENAS project is supposed to respond to, we dedicate a separate subchapter to this topic. However, before moving to that part we want to summarize the subchapter on the institutional crisis by taking a closer look at debates on the 'democratic deficit' in the European Union.

1.4 EU and the 'democratic deficit'

The debate on the 'democratic deficit' can be traced back to the 1970s when this issue was noted on the level of European Communities by constitutional lawyers and political scientists (Bülow, 1977; Dagtoglou, 1973; Nassmacher, 1972). At first, the deficit was defined as a 'restriction of the influence of EC member state Parliaments on policy-making at the Community level (…) with a resultant decrease in democratic accountability' (Steppat, 1988: 5). In fact, the European Parliament itself similarly defined the deficit, declaring that not only more powers are being transferred from the states to the Communities level, but also these decisions are being made by institutions other than democratically elected European Parliament (Bogdanor, 1989: 203–204). Naturally, since the first direct elections in 1979, the role of the European Parliament within the structures of the European Union has evolved and its influence on the European Commission and the legislative process has grown, especially after the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty (Hix and Høyland, 2013), but the 'democratic deficit' is still being discussed.

One reason for that lies within the institutional discourse and is based on a claim that the European Parliament still needs to play a larger role within the EU structure. This is a common opinion, e.g. we noted such voices during pan-European media analysis conducted in the EUARENAS WP 5 (D5.1). It is also mentioned as one of the recommendations included in the Report of the Final Outcome of the Conference on the Future of Europe. However, the latter document is more general in expressing the need for the European decision-making process to be more transparent and democratic, allowing for more direct involvement of the EU citizens or their local/regional/national representatives. This results from the fact, that the weakness of the European Parliament is not only institutional but also stems from the weak bond

between MEPs and their constituents. The following sentence, written after the third European Elections in 1989, can easily be written today: 'not only was turnout low (...) but the elections seemed to be more of the nature of plebiscites on the performance of national governments, rather than genuinely transnational, and politicians found it difficult to demonstrate their relevance to a wider public. Despite the negative trend in electoral participation has only recently turned once in 2019, especially in the countries where voters did not engage in large numbers in previous elections, it is still true that small radical new parties, such as the Front National were able to exploit the elections to their advantage. But this, of course, did not endear the European elections to liberal democrats' (Bogdanor, 1989: 199). A relatively weak position of the Parliament combined with distant and obscure politics of the Commission and Council also contributes to the fact, that European elections are viewed as less important, second-tier events. Moreover, the nation-state-based system of voting and electing candidates combined with the absence of the pan-European public sphere makes it difficult for candidates to focus on EU matters, thus usually referring to already existing local patterns of political competition. Therefore, a need for other means of enhancing democratic impact and accountability is often expressed while debating the 'democratic deficit', and the European Parliament is seen as only one among many actors in this process. Most notably, numerous calls for more participatory and deliberative network governance that would construct an alternative procedural model of decision-making and democratic control over European institutions and politicians have been present in the literature since the 1990s (see: Jensen, 2009), and efforts to enact it are being made through several initiatives, most recently the European Citizen Panels' organized during the Conference on the Future of Europe, Climate City Contracts, and through various research and practice-oriented projects, such as EUARENAS. Our placement within various EU democracy-enhancing plans and programs is discussed in more detail in WP 2 deliverables D2.1 Methodological Framework (D2.1: 7-8) and D2.2 Methodological Protocol (D2.2: 8), where climate- and urban-governance and policy framework calls are described.

But it is not only the institutional dimension of the UE that is being discussed. A notion of 'democratic deficit' is also used occasionally, especially to elucidate non-democratic elements of EU politics and policy in times of crisis. In the 21st century, three such major crises occurred in Europe and subsequently invoked debates on the EU's democracy: the financial crisis and the so-called Great Recession that started in 2007, the refugee wave of 2015, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The financial crisis that started with the bursting of the housing bubble in the USA in 2007 quickly reached Europe and had the largest impact on peripheral Eurozone states such as Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Greece. The EU reacted by reinforcing austerity policies that not only did not help with the post-crisis recovery but also resulted in creating and/or deepening structural and economic problems that only furthered the recession and crisis (Blyth, 2013). Austerity has been especially enforced on the people of Greece, where the left-wing Syriza-led coalition, supported by the majority of the people who voted in the referendum, tried to reject strict restrictions and economic adjustment reforms that were proposed by the 'Troika', i.e. the group formed by the representatives of the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. In the end, radical austerity reforms were enforced upon the Greek government, and this resulted in a major decline in the popular satisfaction with democracy and erosion of trust in political bodies, especially in the Eurozone peripheries: 'for their lack of democratic legitimacy concerning both the output- and the input-oriented dimension, externally imposed economic adjustments translated into a broad-based erosion of support for democracy in the affected countries' (Armingeon et al., 2016: 21; Papadopoulos, 2020). What is especially interesting in these cases is that the 'democratic deficit' is driven not only by procedural shortcomings of democratic institutions but also by the neoliberal ideology that was not subjected to democratic debate – on the contrary, it led to its immediate

dismissal as irrational and populist. Neoliberal 'TINA' (There Is No Alternative) dogmatic attitude of the EU has been seen as a challenge not only to democracy, equality, human rights, and state sovereignty but also to classic and contemporary economic and political liberalism (López-Castellano and García-Quero, 2019; Queiroz, 2018; Wigger, 2019).

As regards the refugee crisis of 2015 and the reaction to the COVID-19 pandemics, the impact of these events on the 'democratic deficit' debate is more ambiguous. On the one hand, they revealed layers of compassion and cosmopolitan solidarity, both on the level of social movements and civic society, and between the EU member states (Della Porta, 2018). But the EU is not only about the politics of open borders. On the contrary, 'Europe's boundaries are in many ways markers of inequality, exclusion, and, as such, symbols of unfairness. The European (…) has markedly restricted the possibility of asylum while invoking police powers and state violence in order to prevent, at a very high human cost, irregular entry into its territory' (Scott, 2019: 157). At the level of member-states, the influx of refugees to Europe sparked the use of xenophobic and anti-Semitic rhetoric strongly connected to a securitization discourse that evoked the need to defend national identities. Therefore, this narrative included a strong anti-European component, and with the immediate threat of 'the Other' at the border, the negative mobilization turned against the EU institutions with full force. Such narratives were especially powerful in Hungary and Poland (Cichocki and Jabkowski, 2020; Vachudova, 2019) in Central Europe, and in Italy and France in the South-West (Castelli Gattinara, 2018). A study of citizens' trust shows that – especially among right-wing-oriented people – the influence on attitudes towards the EU has been noted in all member states (Brosius et al., 2019; Harteveld et al., 2018). A similarly ambiguous outcome, i.e. combination of cosmopolitan solidarity and chauvinist Euroscepticism may be expected from the refugee crisis that came after the war in Ukraine, but it is too early to claim that without further study.

As regards COVID-19 and its impact on democracy in Europe, again there are several factors in play. On the one hand, societies have largely adapted to unprecedented measures dictated by the need to care for others (Guérot and Hunklinger, 2020), as in the case of the use of face masks, although in some European countries all protective measures and lockdowns have been criticized and led to massive protests of pandemic deniers. Also, in the first days of the pandemic, Giorgio Agamben (2020) wrote a widely criticized essay on how governments will 'invent' pandemics in order to expand their powers in a 'state of emergency'. Despite immense criticism of his cynical and neglective approach to disease (Esposito, 2021; Nancy, 2021), some – if not most – European governments did use the pandemics to enhance their influence and control, either over citizens, economy, municipalities, or over the opposition. Once again, Hungary and Poland are the most conspicuous, but not the only cases of using COVID-19 as an excuse to abuse power (Golec de Zavala et al., 20200903; Guasti, 2020; Molnár et al., 2020). However, almost all debates on the impact of COVID-19 on politics underline how much it challenges neoliberalism, especially its austerity politics and privatization of public health (Hadjimichalis, 2021; Koczanowicz, 2021; Nunes, 2020). An increase in public funding for the health sector is being expected, and anti-austerity measures have been applied not only by particular states but also in a ground-breaking decision by the EU to issue long-term bonds and use this money to revive economies after the pandemic. But not all authors agree that it marks a turn in the EU neoliberal agenda: the funding is directed towards the largest economic actors and corporations, while labor costs and conditions further crumble as an element of anti-crisis measures (Šumonja, 2021); which also works to strengthen the already hegemonic states, constraining ideological debates and equality within the EU and between EU states and their surroundings (Sebastião, 2021).

To sum up, 'democratic deficit' can be perceived as important from at least three different perspectives.

First of all, it is an accurate presentation of the basic institutional and political design of the European Union, tracing back to the European Communities, as it constitutes the primary source of its legitimacy in the national government, without direct delegation or accountability of the people. While reforms of the European Parliament or implementation of direct democratic measures such as the European Citizens' Initiative are being implemented, the core structure of the EU decision-making process is still more technocratic and elitist (Longo, 2019; Pausch, 2014; Stie, 2012, 2021). Secondly, the evolution of the debate on the 'democratic deficit' in the EU also reflects current attitudes and indicates areas where major problems occur. In this sense, following the debate is useful for understanding socio-political changes in relation to the EU and liberal democracy in general, either in the form of sovereigntist disillusionment or radical expectations. Finally, to once again refer to the first part of this chapter, we treat 'democratic deficit' as an inherent feature of the EU, just like of every political entity that aspires to consider itself democratic. The sole debate on the 'democratic deficit' means that there is not only a political will, but also a social (and academic) expectation that the EU can and will become more democratic with time. Moreover, many of these debates are often triggered by the EU institutions themselves either by direct feeding into it or through funding projects that aim at enhancing European democracy, which is, in itself a part of the constant evolution of ways in which the 'deficit' can be addressed.

1.5 Populism and democracy: challenge or opportunity?

Populism is widely discussed in the social sciences and humanities but it is also a hot issue in political discussions and controversies. The experts (Mounk, 2018, Levitski and Way, 2010), as well as politicians, often claim that the current rise of populism as a discourse as well as a political practice is a radical challenge to the existing model of liberal democracy. They suggest that under the influence of populism, liberal democracy can morph into a new model of democracy where popular sovereignty will not be accompanied by the rights of the individual and the legal order. Such illiberal democracy, to use Fareed Zakaria's concept, would open the doors to new authoritarianism disguised as a popular democracy (Zakaria, 2003). This risk is arguably very serious, but on the other hand, one can claim that the populist challenge reveals the real problems and flaws of a democratic order which have been masked by the dominant discourse of the superiority of liberal democracy as 'the end of history', as Francis Fukuyama announced in 1992 just after the fall of Communism (Fukuyama, 1992). Chantal Mouffe, k in her seminal book For a Left Populism maintains that left populism can introduce a new model of liberal democracy which will radicalize the progressive elements in its existing model (Mouffe, 2018).

The logic underlying populism allows the constituent movements to enter into various alliances. For example, it is generally argued that populism sits at the opposite pole from the expert rule, even though both can be a threat to liberal democracy. However, the category of technopopulism has emerged, which, according to the authors of a book devoted to the phenomenon, is a: 'new logic of political action based on the combination of populist and technocratic traits. By this, we mean that contemporary political actors face a new system of incentives and constraints which pushes them to adopt both populist and technocratic modes of discourse and organization, at the same time as they become increasingly unmoored from the representation of particular interests and values within society' (Bickerton and Acceti, 2021: 3).

Regardless of these controversies, it is clear that populism is not a fleeting buzzword but a serious political and social phenomenon that has to be theoretically dissected. Pundits who work on populism usually put stress on populism's ability to question representative democracy and the promotion of various forms of direct democracy. According to Mudde and Kaltwasser, populism is "a thin-centered ideology that considers

society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic camps 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite, and which argues that politics should be an expression of volonté générale (general will) of the people.' (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 2017: 6). Norris and Ingelhard define populism in terms of 'cultural backlash' and oppose it to liberal democracy: 'It is defined here minimally as a form of discourse about the first-order principles of governance, delegitimizing established power structures and the role of elected representatives in liberal democracy while claiming that the people should rule. The antithesis is pluralism, where legitimate authority is understood to rest with elected representatives and liberal democratic institutions providing checks and balances on executive power' (Norris and Ingelhard, 2019: 65). Thus, the crucial issue in populist political strategy is to have a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them'. This operation enables populists to engage in what Jan-Werner Müller calls the 'moralistic imagination of politics' which is the hard core of their strategy (Müller, 2016: 38). There are various ways of constructing the 'ordinary people', and all of them have been employed by the populist movements (Ostiguy, 2017, Laclau, 2005).

But from the perspective of the research in the grant, the most important question is to what extent populism threatens liberal democracy. The answer to this question is, of course, not simple and straightforward. Above we have presented various conceptions of populism, but it seems that none of them presents some kind of universal vision of the movement. A good starting point for consideration is Claire Woodford's classification of various approaches to populism (Woodford, 2022). She distinguishes four major groups of definitions of populism. The first three define populism as fundamentally hostile to liberal democracy, but to different degrees. Of these three, the first two firmly, though to different degrees, specify that populism: 'ultimately simplifies politics into two opposing camps of people and elite, and polarizes the social; it has anti-democratic tendencies; it excludes minorities; is intolerant of social difference and has authoritarian tendencies in its over-reliance on a strong leader' (Woodford, 2022).

The third way to approach populism is more nuanced. Woodford notes that it is based on the idea that liberal democracy is a hybrid system based on two pillars: inalienable individual rights and popular sovereignty. Populism would lead to the negation of individual rights and introduce the 'tyranny of the majority'. Obviously, in this perspective, the most important thing is the question of balancing the proportions. 'Good' populism would strengthen democracy by granting more power to the people, but without radically undermining individual rights. Such populism would be a kind of cure for the excessive proceduralism that many contemporary democracies suffer from. 'Bad' populism, on the other hand, would lead to the questioning of individual rights and the introduction of the authoritarian rule of one sort or another.

The fourth, and most interesting to us, way of framing populism is the one that 'refuses to start from the assumption that populism must be undesirable. It instead traces the logics of populism to show where they converge more or less with democratic logic' (Woodford, 2022). We are then dealing not with an abstract juxtaposition of liberal democracy and populism, but with an analysis of the concrete conditions under which populism appears. In this perspective, populism can be treated as an answer to the deficits of liberal democracy rather than as an inevitable threat to the foundations of liberal democracy. We are then dealing not with an abstract juxtaposition of liberal democracy and populism, but with an analysis of the concrete conditions under which populism appears. In such a view, populism can be treated as an answer to the deficits of liberal democracy more than as an inevitable threat to the foundations of liberal democracy.

Such an approach makes it possible to consider populist movements and the tasks that are referred to by this term from a holistic perspective. This means, among other things, that the same slogans, political

statements, and policies can have completely different meanings depending on institutional and social circumstances.

1.6 European populisms in the 21st century

The recent outburst of populist movements in Europe does not have a single structural form. It ranges from social movements (such as Indignados, PEGIDA, Kukiz'15, Fridays For Future, etc.), to political parties (*Freiheitlichie Partei Österreichs*, UK Independence Party, *Front National, Alternative für Deutschland*, Hungarian *Jobbik*, and *Mi Hazánk Mozgalom*, Polish *Konfederacja*, Italian *Fratelli d'Italia*, *Movimente Cinque Stella* and *Lega Nord*; from the left-wing populism most notably Greek *SYRIZA* and Spanish *Podemos*), to political leaders who overtake leadership of mainstream political parties or stand out in presidential elections (Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, Jeremy Corbyn and Jean-Luc Mélenchon). The surge of right-wing populism inspired long-standing political elites in CEE (Pytlas, 2017) to adopt some of their rhetoric and tactics and to reuse them in social and political conditions that favored them over their liberal and social-democratic counterparts. In fact, it is not the 'classical' right-wing populisms that eventually formed illiberal governments in CEE, but rather already well-established politicians: Orbán, Kaczyński, and Janša have all been active and influential politicians ever since the transformation 1989/90, occasionally forming ruling coalitions or supporting major democratic transformations or the European integration process. Other politicians started their paths to the government after years spent in public administration (Borisov) or as members of the country's financial elite (Babiš). Similar careers have been made by their close co-workers in the party or government. Despite this 'burden of politics', they were all successful in creating their image as anti-elitist champions of the people that are being maintained throughout their incumbency.

A specific examination of all these populist actors lies beyond the scope of this chapter, as we aim for a more general description of current populism in Europe. In this part, we will give a brief description of right- and left-wing populisms and a critical assessment of similarities and differences between key characteristics of their agenda. We base this on the work of Mudde and Kaltwasser, who traced populism in Europe and Latin America in three dimensions: material, political, and symbolic (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), which will be complemented by their attitude towards European integration. We recognize the description of Latin American, inclusive populism as appropriate to portray also left-wing populisms in the EU.

The right-wing agenda in three already indicated dimensions bears resemblance to what Mudde and Kaltwasser described generally as 'European' populism. In the material dimension— a vision of how the state should redistribute goods—right-wing populism does appreciate benefits from a social distribution within the states, however, it aims at 'defending' these rights and withholding them from the political 'Others', such as refugees, migrants, and their descendants, ethnic minorities, women and sexual minorities, etc. In the political dimension—referring to political participation and public contestation— right-wing populism both attacks the current system of political rights protecting minorities, usually labeled as an empty signifier of 'political correctness', and also opposes the extension of already existing political rights to 'Others'. Finally, there is a symbolic dimension or a way to define 'the People'. For right-wing populism, it is more often defined by using the signifier 'the Nation', although this category is not based on citizenship, but on ethnic background and traditional gender roles. Also, the elites and establishment are excluded from 'the Nation'. Right-wing populism is also skeptical about EU integration, claiming that it is disrupting traditional values and taking away national sovereignty.

The left-wing populist agenda might look similar in several dimensions since it engages in similar questions.

However, in the motivations that fuel it, it is radically different from right-wing populism. In the material dimension, the impoverishment of European societies is considered to be caused by the structural oppression of global, neoliberal capitalism, and therefore it is the system—not the 'Other' people—that is to be changed; also, references to 'socialism' and even 'communism' as a desired economic system appear more often. In the political dimension, left-wing populism is directed against liberal democracy for its lack of actual 'democracy'. It appeals for more egalitarian participation and inclusion, which is not restricted to a certain group of citizens, but that which would take a more universal perspective. In the symbolic dimension, 'the People' as a term itself is used more often than in right-wing populism, although it does not necessarily appear in that form (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014). However, 'the People' are construed rather as an economic class, in different manners excluded or abused by the capitalist economy, although it is the cultural dimension of identity construction that has dominated the left-wing approach to populism (Devenney, 2020). Finally, left-wing populism is also skeptical of EU integration, however, it criticizes European institutions for being non-democratic and pro-capitalistic, and therefore the agenda here is oriented rather towards radical reforms, although some politicians opt for leaving the EU.

To sum up, although responding to the same issues and problems, right- and left-wing populisms almost always propose very differing solutions. The right-wing is focusing more on a symbolic order of the exclusive vision of the nation, while the left-wing calls for radical reforms in the economy. However, a larger democratic potential definitely lies within the inclusive left-wing populism, rather than in supremacist and hate-promoting right. Therefore, despite challenging the basic economic structure of Europe, it is left-wing populism that seems to be offering both bigger chances and posing fewer threats for further democratic developments in Europe.

Table 1: Exclusionary and Inclusionary populism in different dimensions

Dimension of populism	Exclusionary	Inclusionary
Material	Appreciate the benefits from the redistribution of goods; Aims at defending the right to distribution from political 'Others' who want to abuse them	Redistribution is being oppressed by global, neoliberal capitalism; It is the system – not the 'Others' – which is to be changed; Does not abstain from the terms 'socialism' or 'communism'
Political	Rejection of the existing norms protecting minority rights ('political correctness'); Oppose the extension of already existing rights to 'Others'	Rejection of representative democracy for not being democratic enough; Appeals for more egalitarian participation; Universalist perspective on citizenship
Symbolic	The People = the Nation, based not on citizenship, but on ethnic (and cultural!) background; Elites and establishment are excluded from the Nation; Integrates mainly cis men	'The People' as a specific term is referred to more often; Construed rather as an economic class, exploited by transnational processes; Heterogeneous and inclusive view on gender
Attitude towards the EU	Skeptical toward further integration; the EU is disrupting traditional values and taking away national sovereignty	Mostly skeptical towards deepening the integration; EU as a non-democratic and neoliberal, capitalist structure; They propose drastically reforming EU or leaving it; Inclusive populism in CEE is more euroenthusiastic

Source: (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), own study.

The number of actors falling into the category of 'populism' grows, and consequently does the category itself. Especially the post-Soviet region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – but it can also be said about 'old' European countries, especially Italy and France – provide for such a case, as these countries are going through a populist boom in numbers and relevance of parties dubbed populist. But here an interesting duality can be clearly noted, as what is considered populist refers both to radical, extremist, or far-right parties, which are well-recognized throughout the whole Europe (Buštíková, 2018), but also to a growing number of parties running illiberal governments throughout the region. Ben Stanley offers a distinction between right-wing and centrist populisms (Stanley, 2017) referring to ideological distinctions between 'hard' and 'soft' or 'moderate' populism. But to equate these parties with, or even compare them to, ultra-right extremists that dwell on the peripheries of the political system is misleading, since the former have been involved in government for years now and have even longer contributed to the system, which their election rhetoric disparages. Moreover, whenever they seize power, they do not alter the system in any substantial way, but rather capitalize on the mechanisms and power structures in place in order to radically expand their influence, tighten their control of institutions, and augment their financial resources. In this way, they quickly produce a new establishment, a broad 'political family' that binds together state-owned and private companies, media, and the judiciary and is additionally reinforced by a web of clientelist connections with their voters. Additionally, they reform the very system of political institutions in ways designed to perpetuate their government. As Urbinati (2019) observes, appearances of democracy are retained, even though radical political change is unfolding in terms of the personnel (as political institutions are handed over to loyalists) and the logic of institutions (which are harnessed to benefit the incumbent, rather than safeguarding democracy). However, all these alterations leave the hegemonic foundations of the economic and social state structures largely intact and unchallenged.

In terms of the objectives of the EUARENAS project, populism seems to pose at least a two-fold challenge. First, it is the growth of chauvinism, xenophobic, racist, homophobic and misogynist attitudes that is fueled by politicians, pundits, and – as recent studies are revealing – hostile foreign agents (Graff and Korolczuk, 2021; Jankowicz, 2020; Kurowska and Reshetnikov, 2018a, 2018b; Sakwa, 2022). These narratives, almost always connected to the anti-EU agenda, are both an existential threat to the European integration project (as Brexit has shown), and a general threat to any pro-democratic, egalitarian, and inclusive actions. Right-wing extremism can disrupt deliberation and transform participation into violent, discriminatory practice. On the other hand, we have (pseudo-)populist governments, that are driven by opportunism and cronyism rather than by ideology, but nonetheless will be hostile towards any uncontrolled democratic participation, whether deliberative or not. On the contrary, their aim is to dismantle mechanisms of democratic control and accountability, rather than share power with citizens. Finally, we have left-wing populisms who are clearly more in favor of democracy and participation and – in many cases – can be perceived as allies of enhancing deliberative and participatory governance. Not only do they share common ideals of democracy and inclusion, but can also act as radical reminders of missed or overlooked inequalities and injustices, reorienting the discussion. However, their strong anti-systemic stance might lead them to disengagement with official, institutional politics – be it at the EU, state, or local level – especially in its deliberative form, and rather focus on building alternative community structures or engaging in protests and other counter-political and counter-cultural actions.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The picture of crisis – or rather a plethora of multidimensional and multi-aspect crises – that we described in this chapter, portrays a wide variety of challenges that our project aims at addressing. In the following

parts, we will keep on returning to the issues and challenges mentioned above, in order to present how the current state of debate on democracy tackles them in more detail in the fields and topics that are central to the EUARENAS project. By examining how theoreticians and researchers of democracy, urban studies, social movements, politics, and governance navigate these questions, we wish to point to practices or ideas that might be inspiring, but also cautionary to action research undertaken in the project. We also hope to elucidate new lacunae and connections between existing positions to move the frontiers of the debate further thanks to learning from the outcomes and proceedings of the EUARENAS project.

CHAPTER 2

City and politics

2 City and politics

When diagnosing the crisis of the current mode of operation of liberal democracy (indirect, parliamentary), it is worth raising the issue of where new forms of a democratic society can be found. It is interesting to what values of democratic culture (e.g. freedom, equality, self-determination, solidarity) these forms refer to and what meanings, senses, norms, patterns concerning the functioning (existence, organization) of communities are revealed in them. The second question refers to the spaces in which these forms are realized. As part of the EUARENAS project, we assume that the city is the space for the development of a democratic society. Today it is a kind of laboratory of new forms of democracy and the results of the experiments may determine whether this system will survive at all. The activity of grassroots urban movements for greater and more direct influence of citizens on decisions on how to solve social, civilizational, economic, and political problems is particularly significant here. On the other hand, state-level representative politics become more and more alienated from the people, and urban spaces – with their geographical and cultural 'proximity' to their citizens – are becoming major arenas of the exertion of participatory and deliberative democracy. This ambiguous situation, combining unique opportunities and challenges, is the backbone of research and political actions that we undertake As one of the project documents states,

> EUARENAS operates within cities recognizing that they are centers of productive and social innovation, attractors of multi-sectoral and scalable knowledge and competencies, characterized, however, by different dimensions of fragility: physical in the vulnerability to climate change and environmental disasters; spatial in the conflicting relation between settlements, environmental and infrastructures; economic in the difficulty of directing investments and in the vaporousness of competitive capacities; social in the risks of inequalities, demographic variations; health, lack of equal access to opportunities (D2.2: 7).

In the D1.1 Conceptual Framework, we discuss the place of the city in the current model of the European Multi-Level Governance[1] scheme and identify the main human and non-human actors that are key stakeholders in the process (D1.1: 23-27). This is further integrated into the methodological framework and protocol from WP2, especially when the multi-stakeholder approach from D1.1 is combined with the Co-City Cycle and the Quintuple helix model (D2.2: 20-22). But the current debate on cities and democracy is much broader than these formal or technical discussions on political governance. The context of the city was crucial in giving birth to ancient (Greece) and medieval (Italy) forms of democracy. Thus, in this deliverable, we want to go beyond institutional and political debates and reach out to the most prominent discussion that sees cities as particularly suited forms of organization that are capable of developing and sustaining not only new tools and techniques for democratic participation but even new forms and models of democratic politics.

2.1 Urban and global utopias

Why is the discussion about the future of democracy focused on cities? What is important here is the increase in the political role of cities on a global (although also local) scale, which has often been emphasized in the last dozen or so years. According to Benjamin R. Barber, cities that were the original incubators of democracy are once again becoming its enclave and its greatest hope. He points to the failure

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[1] We discuss MLG, multi-stakeholder governance and other theories of governance in detail in chapter 4.1.

of national projects, especially in terms of promises of independence, freedom, and civil liberties. According to Barber, the spaces in which the flows within the global network of connections (economic, political, technological, cultural) are concentrated are contemporary urban organisms (he refers to such examples as New York, Bogota, Singapore, Seoul, Rome, Athens, Hamburg, Gdańsk, Wrocław). The urban space appears as a sphere of creativity, innovation, community of interests, participation, citizenship, political pragmatism, and solutions that reduce conflicts. Modern democracy is a community (here Barber refers to John Dewey's concept) that connects people through collective actions and symbols organized around social communication. It is a vision of a civic society consisting of residents of global cities who, when associated at grassroots – and therefore voluntarily – cooperate across existing borders or divisions and politically strive to achieve the common good. Edward Glaesler has similar hopes for the city, recognizing it as the greatest invention of man, which makes people richer, wiser, greener, healthier, and happier. Like Barber, he claims that the city is the best place to live and the best hope for the future.

Barber and Glaesler start from the premise, known at least since the time of Aristotle, that the community is called to achieve good. The meaning of the word *polis* in ancient Greece, more than with a limited, small area, was related to the way in which a political community was managed to unite citizens living in cities. A more important element than the 'urbanity' of the system itself was its form/organization. Barber in *If mayors ruled the world* (2013) proclaimed that the city's epic history has come full circle and in today's globalized world, as in the civilizational and political beginnings of our species, cities are a breeding ground for democracy. The basic question posed by the American political scientist is 'can cities save the world?'. Already in the first paragraph of the book, Barber declares that he believes in such a possibility. After millennia of empires and monarchies, after the burdens brought about by the invention of nation-states, the only recipe for the survival of democracy are globally connected cities (Barber, 2013: 3). Currently, more than half of the world's population lives in urbanized areas, and in this sense, cities turn out to be not only a civilizational and political cradle but also a destiny (future). 'Urbanity may or may not be our nature,' writes the author of If mayors ruled the world, 'but it is certainly our history, for better or for worse, through opportunities and projects, it determines how we live, work, play and interact' (Barber, 2013: 4). From its inception, modern democracy has struggled with the problem of how to reconcile participation, which necessarily has a local dimension, with a central authority. The answer to this challenge, which the nation-states have not met, is to create a new kind of community.

In earlier times, communities, in their efforts to establish what was good and just, were to be comprehensively self-sufficient and self-governing. Their democracy did not need to be based on any external being, nor did it need to be incubated/produced. It remained dependent on itself — or more precisely, on the will of its citizens — and that was its essence. This seems to be the case with Barber's 'city governments.' Although, as he assures us, we would be dealing here with a movement of grassroots initiatives, and not with pre-approved, unifying directives legitimized by global laws and principles, he does not mean a variety of the Greek 'urban' democracy of an 'internal' character, but the reproduction of a system or order within the emerging new world-wide structures of knowledge, economics, and management. There is a clear lack of local knowledge here.

In turn, the aforementioned Glaesler in *Triumph of the City* (2012) begins with a critique of Rousseau's views, expressed in the famous sentence of the French philosopher saying that cities 'appear to be the abyss of the human species'. Glaesler strives to prove that today's urban centers are the healthiest, greenest, and most attractive places to live in both economic and cultural terms. Today's cities with their possibilities of cooperation bring historical light to the human species. 'This is because as humans we learn

so much from each other, we teach more people around us. Urban density generates a constant flow of new information, coming from the observation of other people's failures and successes. In the great metropolises, people can find communities whose members share their interests, just as Monet and Cézanne found themselves in nineteenth-century Paris. Cities make it easier to observe, listen and learn, [...] they make us all more human' (Glaesler, 2012: 247). In other words, the city intensifies the powers or abilities of man. Democracy, printing, and mass production are just some of the many inventions we owe to urbanization (Glaesler, 2012: 250). Nowadays, thanks to global nodes, centers creating new ideas, generating knowledge, and introducing innovative global solutions, cities are characterized by extraordinary growth in almost every area of life.

The thoughts of Barber and Glaeslera correspond to many theses developed as part of global studies covering both the role of cities in the modern world (Sassen 1998, Glaesler 2007, Hannerz 1980) and issues related to the management of Western metropolises. They are also part of the trend of thinking about ideal cities of the future, which includes the publications of Richard Florida (2002) and Jan Gehl (2010). More generally, they belong to a broader New Urban paradigm of ideas about global urban spaces. One of the variants of this type of idea is a smart city, emphasizing the role of new technological solutions in urbanized areas. It is about innovative electronic systems to improve the management of urban infrastructure, digitization, collection and processing of data which allow for a better understanding of the processes taking place in modern cities and the creation of rationalizing projects in the field of public transport, energy resources, municipal resource management, security (Townsend 2013). However, large-scale monitoring of citizens' behavior may raise concerns about freedom and the right to respect privacy, especially since when Smart City strategies are implemented, their focus is on technological, rather than social development (Masik et al., 2021). It also results in the centralization of decisions. In this way, it may but does not have to find itself in opposition to the ideas propagated within the framework of deliberative, participatory, and agonistic democracy. It contributes to improving the quality of life and efficiency of urban institutions but promotes the dictates of data in place of the agency and will of citizens.

Is it possible to share the optimism of political scientists and economists like Barber, Glaesler, Florida, and Gehl? Almost a decade has passed since the publication of their works and it is difficult to say that Asian, European, or American cities have become real centers of power. Cities are connected by global networks of dependencies through which ideas and solutions to specific problems are transferred, but do 'mayors rule the world'? The influence of nation-states and international organizations or associations has by no means diminished. In addition, in the case of today's global cities, various competitive and mutually contradictory visions are emerging regarding social, economic, and infrastructural development and, above all, different ideas of the common good. Citizenship seems to mix with individualism, communality with particularisms, state power with self-government, globalism with locality, and materiality with digitalism. Naturally, global networks of capital and information connections are of great importance for the development of the neoliberal world, in which large international corporations, financial institutions (related to state entities), and other private organizations play a major role, also in the commodification of the management of urban common assets (Sagan, 2017: 35-39). The main beneficiaries of the multi-party urban governance are primarily the upper and middle classes. They seem to have the greatest impact on defining what the public good is (including ways to solve social, infrastructural, environmental problems, etc.). Among the issues important for the representatives of this stratum, we can mention openness, diversity, self-development, mobility, creativity, innovation, health and recreation, greenery, visual order, and economic and cultural wealth. The middle-class lifestyle is conducive to sustaining the traditional urban

model of governance. Its representatives are ready to use or implement ideas and solutions developed from the bottom-up by local activists, artists, and animators, as long as they seem politically (electorally) beneficial. The closer they are to the patterns already functioning globally and coinciding with class taste, the more willing they are to apply them[2]. Meanwhile, the importance of economic inclusion and redistributive policies directed at the most vulnerable classes is considered crucial for sustainable local development, and moreover, it needs support and coordinated action from the regional or state level (Katz and Nowak, 2018: 146–147). This is one example depicting that a truly democratic development of urban sites can be limited both by its internal structural composition and external dependence on central regulatory policies.

Yet, despite numerous challenges democratic innovations and developments need to face in recent decades, there are many instances of citizens' creativity and engagement being enacted in new ways and contexts. Changes in a particular space can quickly spread on a global scale. Moreover, in the era of globalization, both the authorities governing metropolises and representatives of urban movements can plan and coordinate their activities with other entities, even if these are located thousands of kilometers away. Nowadays, the chances of success are given not only by local cooperation but also by the use of a global network of information flow. In both cases, we rely on material, physical elements of reality, the existence of which we must not forget, but it is necessary to agree with Barber and Glaesler, that what today determines the importance of cities and the transformations they can undergo are processes and phenomena of a global dimension. Justin McGuirk, in the introduction to his book Radical Cities, cites the famous example of Porto Alegre, 'which in 1989 initiated a policy of participatory budgeting that gave citizens an active role in determining how public money was spent. Within seven years, spending on health and education had risen from 13 percent to 40 percent. This was a potentially revolutionary reversal of top-down politics. Its effectiveness has diminished in recent years (following a swing to the right in the 2004 local elections), but Porto Alegre is now a touchstone of bottom-up urban management, and the policy has been implemented by more than 140 municipalities across the country, and 3,000 across the world' (2014: 37-38). The latest estimates indicate that in 2018 the number grew to 7500, and in 2019 – over 11000 instances of participatory budgeting across the globe (Dias et al., 2019), making it one of the fastest spreading democratic innovations in history. It is also a rare example of democratic tools being transferred from the Global South to the Global North.

But the growing importance of networking structures does not come with a loss of autonomy and self-dependency of the cities involved, at least in some areas. Even declaring his far-reaching skepticism about the optimistic diagnoses of Glaesler's arguments, and calling for urban revolutions, Polish architect and urban planner Krzysztof Nawratek admits that

> the only reason for the flourishing of modern cities is the fact that they are the nodes of the network of global 'tides'. It is these tides – of capital, of people, of ideas – that constitute the city. The city, therefore, exists in its instability, and the freezing of the "tide" must result in its destruction. Despite this, modern cities are trying, in a sense, to "trap" the tides. They do it in different ways and focus on different tides – from capital through industry or trade, to people (Floridian "creative capital"). However, they are aware (or at least should be) that this is an activity doomed to failure in the long run (2012: 18).

It is an important point that although the social class focusing on development, creativity, innovation,

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[2] We continue the discussion of the relationship between culture and local politics in chapter 4.3.

health, greenery, and culture stimulates the development of cities, favoring the visions and current policies of the authorities managing them, its mobility, combined with the economic nomadism of global corporations, the relocation of production and services to places generating lower costs of labor organization, causes uncertainty about the future. Considering the above, it can be said that, depending on whether it is mayors or urban activists, there are always wider groups of people, thanks to whose support efforts to transform are gaining momentum. The result of a change is therefore the broadest possible community of interests.

2.2 Reclaiming the city as material and symbolic commons

The city has been and will be an area of concentration of political struggles. The interest groups in it are constantly striving to achieve the goals they set. It is an uninterrupted movement in which individual, social, self-governmental, state, and commercial entities competing with each other try to convince various urban environments of the rightness of their ideas, projects, solutions, postulates, demands, or claims. Although behind this 'rightness' there often stand relations of power and material benefits, within the framework of a democratic system disputes, tensions, struggles, as well as various forms of cooperation and participation are ultimately to serve justice, usefulness, and the common good. As we have already emphasized in this report, the pursuit of this good does not necessarily have to, or perhaps should not even mean consensus[3]. Chantal Mouffe (situated more to the left side of the political spectrum than the liberals Barber and Glaesler) believes that the most important thing is to allow as many entities and interests as possible to speak, as well as to accept the dispute between them. The agonistic pluralism presented by the Belgian philosopher does not follow the traditional Marxist trail – it does not seek a final solution to the conflict. On the contrary, if the conflict ceased to exist at all, the democratic system would collapse with it as a result of depriving it of the space for dispute between different political positions – this is the 'paradox of democracy' (Mouffe, 2000). It is the city that is the most important arena of conflicts concerning the future of democratic communities. As part of these disputes, innovative solutions are being created, also in the field of creating new forms of democracy (co-decision, co-governance).

According to Mouffe, the ideal political arena – that is, in the perspective adopted here, the city – should enable the articulation of all views and postulates, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, skin color, and ethnicity of citizens. The greater the degree of inclusion, the more different voices, and at the same time the more farewells to dreams of a mythical consensus that we know from deliberative democracies (Rawls, 1993; Habermas, 1996), the more space for different ways of life. Again, the city is first and foremost diversity. It can strengthen the foundations of democracy and distance it from its threatening illiberality and the lurking traps of populism. Mouffe's model of agonistic democracy places a fundamental boundary condition – pluralism, as well as the resulting antagonisms, as a permanent element of politics (Mouffe 2000). In contrast to the traditionally understood liberal democracy, in the agonistic model it is important to transform antagonisms into agonisms, that is, to move from conflicts in which one of the parties must be 'destroyed', to the acceptance of the existence of various approaches and positions without striving to eliminate pluralism in a diverse urban environment. Here Mouffe proposes that political life should involve not only political parties or strongly established social movements but also representatives of marginalized groups, whose agency in the system of liberal democracy is usually suppressed and limited. It is therefore a question of broadening the voice spectrum and creating conditions conducive to the search

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[3] We discuss this issue in detail in chapters 1.2, 3.1 and 4.4.

for appropriate solutions and thus strengthening democracy (2000).

As has already been said, the question of the crisis of the current model of functioning of liberal democracy and of where new forms of a democratic society can be sought is connected with the problem of values. Let us emphasize once again Lefort's claim[4] that democracy is a unique system organized around 'empty spaces', so by its nature does not have universally established forms and rules, but rather implies constant experimentation and searching for new solutions. It follows that democracy means constantly negotiating anew the most important issues for the communities. Searching for new solutions to social and political problems certainly requires imagination and the sharing of experiences and views, even if it is all accompanied by deep ideological disputes. Democracy is oriented towards the future, towards the realization of social utopia. However, unlike the social utopias built-in totalitarian states, which were based on doctrinaire assumptions, the utopian nature of democracy is always social and communitarian. At this point, it is necessary to return to the concept of Castoriadis (1989), discussed in more detail in the first part, who saw politics as a collective activity centered around the most broadly understood institutions and societies. In other words, it is what constitutes us as a community (1989). In this sense, today it is often said not so much about 'politics' as about the political. It is therefore about building a new, better world at all levels, from the immediate environment to attempts to create a better global order (as Barber and Glaesler wanted). The closest environment in which you can experiment with non-standard forms of cooperation and innovative solutions is the neighborhood and the city. In the latter, it is easier to liberate and focus the potential energy of citizens. Such energy can be triggered by a sense of community and convergence of overriding interests (quality of life, security, cleanliness, aesthetics, wealth, etc.).

The crisis of democracy is certainly a crisis in the values that underpin society. There is no doubt that we are currently dealing with such a crisis, which can be seen not only in a collapse of a certain way of functioning of institutions but which also and above all, affects the deepest foundations of social life. The causes, symptoms, and consequences of the crisis are described extensively in this report. One of the main causes is growing social inequality, even among the most egalitarian democratic societies. It seems, however, that the economic problems have revealed and at the same time accelerated the process of erosion of democratic values. Already in the 70's the consensus on social solidarity, which lay at the basis of post-war economic and social prosperity, collapsed. The consequence of the collapse of social solidarity was the crisis of political institutions. One of the most important mechanisms for coordinating activities between different groups in society has ceased to work. In this way, the space for urban democracy has expanded. In the activist movements, one should see an attempt to fill it. Their representatives strive to increase social participation, to expand the right of citizens to decide on the directions of urban development. Solidarity is easier in a common space closest to the inhabitants.

But if democratic politics, in cities as in other political arenas, are based around communitarian orientations, why do we observe a constant growth of inequalities and exclusion? This is perhaps one of the most obvious paradoxes brought by the neoliberalization of the political discourse that we describe in chapter 1.1, and it has also impacted values driving urban governance and development, especially in Central and Eastern Europe (Sagan, 2016, 2017). On the other hand, the ideological dominance of neoliberalism that values privacy, individualism, and a clientelist approach to public services and goods caused the creation and spread of the 'private citizenship' attitude that treats politics as means of realization of private interests and needs, without the need to consider 'others', especially more vulnerable

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[4] See: Chapter 1.1 of this report.

members of the society.

This situation leads to a necessity to reclaim the understanding of the city as commons, not simply as a neutral arena for a pluralistic (not necessarily fair) rivalry of private interests. The question of who the city belongs to is one of the more important issues considered by the researchers of urban studies but also by urban activists, animators, etc. This is combined with a debate on how urban spaces can be used, and who is profiting from this use. One of the questions posed in the debate is the availability of urban land to a heterogeneous community of residents, not just to representatives of the upper classes. This area of reflection stems from the opposition to neoliberal practices known, for example, from 'global cities', in which the dictate of profit leads to the commodification of various urban resources. The actions of decision-makers which result in selling off parts of the cities in order to privatize them which brings profit to narrow social groups are subjected to criticism. To maximize profits officials bend the local regulations to suit investors' preferences ignoring the needs of other citizens. Such practices foster social exclusions and intensify the process of 'pushing out' the city residents (Foster, Iaione, 2016: 282-283).

An alternative to the neoliberal concept of the city are proposals focused on the category of community or commons. It is not, however, only about determining the owners of a given resource, but about 'the existence of a common stake or common interest in resources shared with other urban inhabitants as a way of resisting the privatization and/or commodification of those resources. In other words, the language of the "commons" is being invoked to lay claim to, and protect against the threat of "enclosure" by economic elites, a host of urban resources and goods which might otherwise be more widely shared by a broader class of city inhabitants' (Foster, Iaione, 2016: 284). The city construed as 'a commons' allows the space for reflection on creating more inclusive and fair urban areas, not only on urban planning and architectural levels but also on a social one. It is certainly a reflection not only on alternative ways of designing cities, but also on the management of metropolises without unlimited privatization, excessive exploitation, and profiting. This means that 'the city is a commons in the sense that it is a shared resource that belongs to all of its inhabitants' (Foster and Iaione, 2016: 288). The underlying idea here is the right to co-decide on urban space and the right to co-create it. It remains an open question to develop tools and strategies to implement this idea, but opening the democratic imaginary to the notions of the common good and shared public interests, creates the possibility of envisioning cross-cutting alliances and networks of cooperation that in a long term will benefit the society as a whole, not through the immediate satisfaction of individual needs and interests.

2.3 Urban sites as arenas of a strategic struggle for democracy

Another reason for turning to urban locality was the disillusionment with the concept of 'illiberal democracy', i.e. one in which the will of the majority, interpreted by politicians, is crucial. In the classical model of liberal democracy, the will of the majority is limited by a series of mechanisms designed to safeguard the inalienable rights of the individual. Illiberal democracy is either completely devoid of these mechanisms, or they are significantly limited. Enacting democracy on the local level can, to some extent, counter these tendencies. In the absence of influence on national politics – and thus the collapse of faith in representative democracy – dealing with the immediate environment restores faith in one's own civic agency. It also makes it possible to see the real effects of the efforts made. However, indirect participation in democratic power, in addition to offering opportunities to strengthen social relations, is increasingly becoming a promise of a joint search for solutions to the most important problems of the lack of political compassion, also in the global dimension.

Of course, the genesis of modern urban democracy should be recognized in various places and times. Here we can acknowledge the civic movements of the 60s and 70s in the USA, the already mentioned idea of a participatory budget built in Porto Alegre since 1989 (which is a hybrid of direct, deliberative, and representative democracy) or the slogan of the World Social Forum that took place for the first time in the same city in 2001. One of the main catalysts for these tendencies is the growing social inequality, which is being revealed with all its force in the case of successive economic crises. Economic crashes undoubtedly caused a process of erosion of democratic values. At the same time, however, locally they strengthened the sense of community and solidarity, and the impulse to think and act to lead to the construction of a new, better world. Particularly important here was the financial crisis of 2007-2009, as a result of which many new urban movements – most notably Occupy Wall Street and M15 – were created. For the time being, it is difficult to predict what generative impact the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and the economic and energy crisis related to the invasion of Russian troops in Ukraine will have in this respect. We will see this in the near future, but the preliminary research conducted in the EUARENAS pilot cities of Gdańsk and Voru suggests that it was the representatives of grassroots movements that were most involved in helping refugees. Especially central authorities did little in this regard, while the response of local governments varied, and a closer study revealing implemented policies and strategies could shed some light on their consequences for dealing with a political crisis that occurred.

The rationale of liberal democracy based on a free market makes finding alternative forms of a democratic society one of the most important tasks facing the European community. Such alternative forms appear precisely in the activities of representatives of urban movements, activist circles, and representatives of publicly engaged critical art. The growing philosophical and political theory still seems to underestimate their importance sufficiently. This is because the tools it has developed are used to analyze ways of reaching compromise in the complex political game of liberal democracy. Meanwhile, modern democratic movements (including protest or resistance movements) often have an amorphous structure, their actions take non-standard forms, closer to artistic performances than to classical political actions, and the aim of these practices is not so much to seize power, but above all to change public awareness, which in turn serves to influence specific decisions. of authorities. The operation of the new movements is therefore on the border between political and culture-forming activity. If we agree that the crisis of democracy is first and foremost a crisis of democratic values, these movements have a huge role to play. They become a kind of forge of a new understanding of axial democratic values, and thus the shape of the new democratic world.

While we continue the debate on social movements and NGOs in chapter 4.2 of this deliverable, here we want to focus on how it portrays the city as an arena of politics. One of the fundamental questions is how various actors, especially urban movements – but also activists, artistic collectives, and aid organizations – participate in the new democratic project of implementing the axial values underpinning democratic culture. As has already been said above, democracy as a form of government at its source is related to how cities function (as in the case of the Greek *polis* or Italian city-states). In this space, the struggle for the realization of democratic values took place and is still being played out (anew). Contemporary cities are increasingly becoming an area of agonistic discussions, which not only refer to thinking in terms of the common good of residents but also build a space of resistance to national, ethnic, racial, and religious concepts. The diversity of lifestyles, convictions, and beliefs with an accompanying sense of commonality forces us to develop identity strategies, often oriented in opposition to the idea of the nation-state (or competing with it). This opposition undoubtedly defines the citizens of cities. Here, too, the forms that

democracy takes today are revealed. The axial values of democratic culture and the proposals for the functioning of communities that lead to them mean confrontation with the authorities elected within the framework of representative democracy.

Although participatory slogans most often seem to refer to deciding on the direction of changes in the local dimension and are often critical of the policy of town halls, as Barber rightly points out, the opponents of these movements are national political forces with vested interests. An important part of the postulates presented by urban activists fits in – or reflects – global tendencies to combat negative phenomena affecting various communities. These include, among others, the deficit of freedom, the lack of equality and respect for minorities, the low level of security, unequal access to education and health services, the pollution of the environment and climate change, the destruction of greenery, and the lack of respect for animal rights.

While in the field of thinking about the functioning of urban infrastructure, the crucial role is undoubtedly played by the so-called utilitarian values, perceiving the city as a project, i.e. 'space in constant creation', the area of innovation, community of interests, cultural participation, citizenship, artistic, aesthetic, ethical and cognitive values seem to be important. The first two types may remain less axial to the culture of democracy itself (modernity, originality, beauty, order, contextuality, chaos, ugliness, devastation), but they are present both in the process of shaping the urban space itself and the lifestyles occurring in it, and thus remain closely related to the forms of manifestation or actualization of other types of values. In particular, it refers to ethical values. Sometimes they are divided into: 1) 'individual', focusing especially on happiness, freedom, anonymity, responsibility, and caring for the public good; and 2) 'collective', i.e. commonality, equality, security, multiculturalism, local identity, the standard of living of residents, nature, ecology, etc. It is difficult, however, to say to what extent the division is legitimate.

Considering everything that has been characterized above and what will be described in the further part of this deliverable regarding participatory and deliberative democracy in urban areas, the most important issues that arise here can be listed:

- Where are new forms of democracy mainly created and developed (west or east of Europe, large or medium-sized cities, centers, downtowns, or suburbs, etc.)
- Who creates them (representatives of the middle class, liberal professions, anarchist activists)
- Do they take on a similar shape and direction in individual European countries (depending on the economic and political situation – e.g. Poland, Finland and Italy are in a radically different situation) or do they differ significantly from each other
- Is it possible to point to the dominant trends (also aesthetic) present in urban centers located in different regions of the continent
- How are ideas and patterns transferred (who, how, which way)
- Are they similar democratic values, such as solidarity and community, or various other social, ethical, and aesthetic values

When analyzing the new forms that democracy adopts in contemporary cities with its axial values, such as community and solidarity, it is necessary to constantly remember what the opposite of these values is and what the *spiritus movens* of urban movements are, e.g. the inequalities emphasized in this part of the report. As Andy Merrifield writes in his specific poetics, the question of whose city it is – the authorities'? the elites'?, the citizens'? – keeps recurring. According to the author of *The New Urban Question* (2014), the answer is quite simple: 'it's the parasites' city, and their progeny is a species we can now label the

parasitic city. A parasite, remember, is an organism that feeds off a larger "host" organism, an uninvited diner at the lodge who doesn't pay for their grub. Parasites chomp away at the common-wealth the world over, eating away inside the social body, stripping peoples' assets, foreclosing homes, dispossessing value rather than contributing anything toward its creation' (Merrifield, 2014: 109). In today's cities, social wealth is largely consumed by wasteful enterprises administered by political and economic elites. This modern aristocracy squanders for its own benefit the creative potential of other citizens, prospering through the constant implementation of unproductive forms of activity and 'Maybe the greatest reform and strongest prophylactic against parasitic invasion is democracy, a strengthening of participatory democracy in the face of too much representative democracy, especially when representation is made by public servants intent on defending private gain. Government as we currently know must be terminated. We need to root out the virus, all those blood suckers who leech life from the generative social body', Merrifield adds (2014: 113).

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Current debates on the city as a political arena tend to mix two perspectives. On the one hand, there is an idealistic, utopian vision of locality being the global (sic!) cradle and the pinnacle of democracy, with urban development as a vehicle for tackling injustices and challenges of inequality, exclusion, climate change, etc. On the other hand, there are pessimistic and even fatalist visions of cities as predominantly bourgeois constructs that became safe havens for financial elites and creative middle-classes, with liberty and pluralism being only a *façade* of democracy. These two visions do not necessarily exclude each other, as one refers to a utopian future and the other is based on current discontents, but if they become disentangled, as is the case in narratives proposed by Barber and Glaesler, they might bring no positive results. If the utopian vision of the future does not account for the actual exclusion, suffering, precarization, and proletarianization of the vast majority of inhabitants of the cities – as well as of rural areas that are closely connected to them, e.g. by producing food and energy or collecting waste – these idealistic visions will be nothing more than soothing of the conscience of what Merrifield called 'parasitic class'. On the other hand, a purely fatalistic vision of the city as a stronghold of the elitist perspectives not only omits its creative potential in terms of democratic engagement but can also lead to a populist vision of the 'common' good, i.e. the one that will want to exclude at least some parts of the society that will be considered 'evil' and 'corrupt'.

The goal of the EUARENAS project requires a careful combination of these perspectives. On the one hand, urban utopianism is what primarily motivates us to recognize it as a cradle for new democratic innovations and further strengthen its opportunities in this context. On the other hand, we want the project to be truly inclusive and empowering so that the tools and policy recommendations that we propose will be able to break the *façade* of the bourgeois pluralist society and create spaces for broad participation and co-creation of what the democratic city might become.
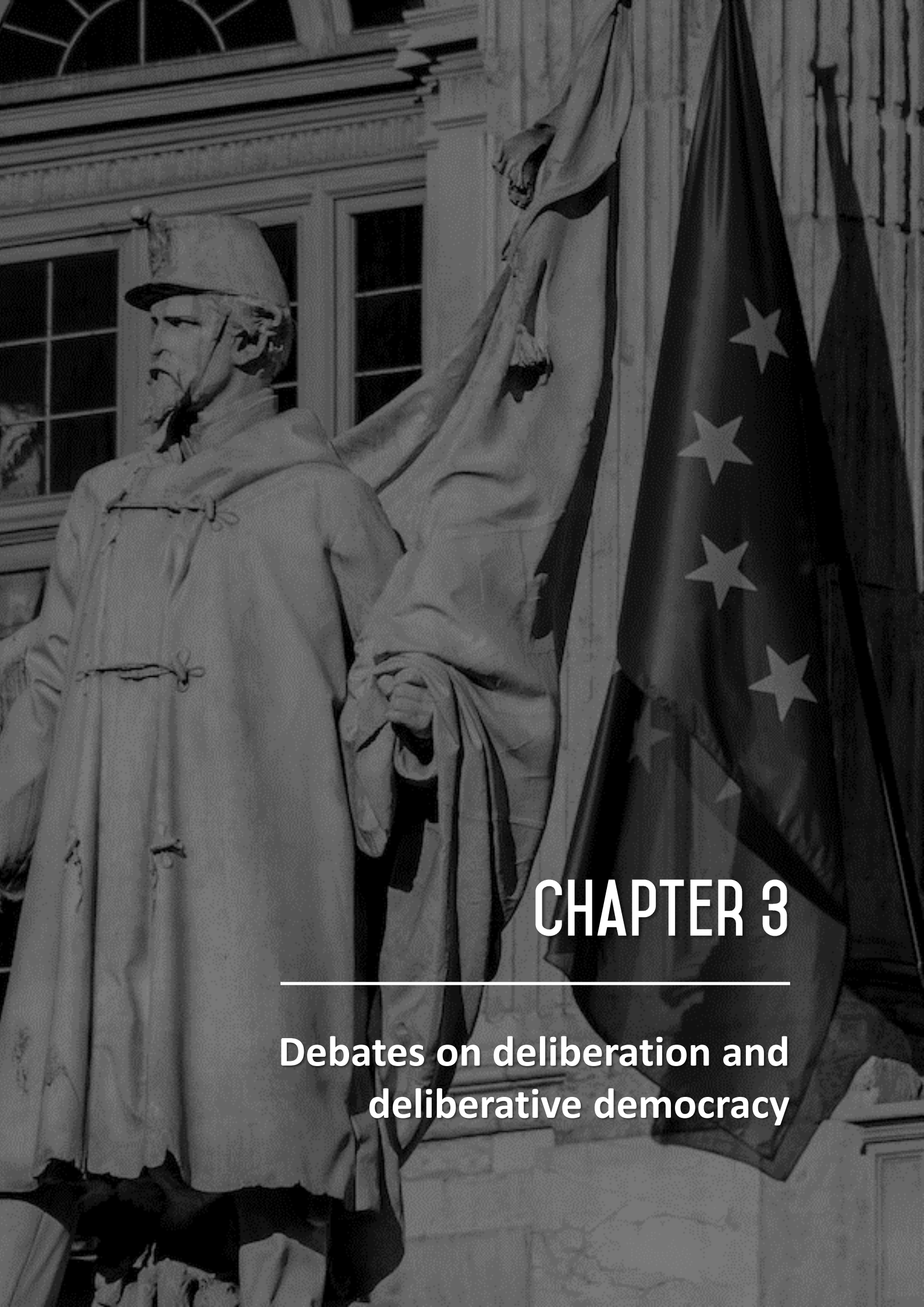
CHAPTER 3

Debates on deliberation and deliberative democracy

3 Debates on deliberation and deliberative democracy

Deliberation – and deliberative democracy – comprise a second key concept for the EUARENAS project, bringing focus to a specific type of participation that we want to enact to combat political and social challenges and enhance civic engagement in this process. Over almost 40 years since the first formulation of the idea that deliberation can be a tool for achieving truly democratic decisions, the body of literature on this topic has become immense. Research, discussions, and practical experiments range from philosophy through political science to psychology and computer science. We have briefly introduced the history of the concept in the D1.1 Conceptual Framework (2021: 15-19) by focusing on the type I/type II distinction between idealized and more practical models of deliberation (Bachtiger et al., 2010), and by referring to the 4-generations approach (Elstub et al., 2016), which concludes historic stages of the theory and how it led to the embedding of most research and practice within the current 'systemic' paradigm (Mansbridge et al., 2012). Since the problem has already been extensively covered in the literature, it is not our aim to reproduce it, but rather to point out and focus on selected, most disputable elements of these debates, that are directly connected to challenges recognized in the EUARENAS project.

In general, the questions regarding deliberation fall into two categories: in what way can deliberation be democratic? And in what way can deliberation impact policy? These seemingly simple questions are, in fact, both very broad and deeply debated in many academic fields, as they invoke many fundamental issues of deliberation, such as reason and rationality, consensus and inclusion, justice and ethics, which are also debated on the outskirts of the 'core' of deliberative theory, where the consequences of power, knowledge, leadership, and politics are being discussed against (or in parallel to) deliberationists. As the current debate on deliberation exceeds its philosophical origins, multiple disciplines bring their own approaches, assumptions, and limitations to the table, making the debate on deliberation rather non-consensual and problematic in many areas, spotlighting dogmatism, biases, and narrow-mindedness of not only academicians and researchers in all fields of deliberation, but also of political and social stakeholders in these processes.

The uniqueness of the EUARENAS project lies in its position at the intersection of theory and practice, which enables it to bring together people of different approaches and interests in deliberation. Invoking relevant literature can therefore have a double impact on the project. First of all, by bringing forth a better understanding of the nuances of the debate, we might be able to understand better our own attitudes to the practice of deliberation and what stands in the way of reaching our objectives. Secondly, since very few debates are able to combine both deeply philosophical and theoretical reflections with unique, dedicated empirical and practical experiences we hope to identify theoretical gaps and inconsistencies by highlighting crucial debates and their blank spots and design our research to the effect of bringing evidence shedding light on these issues. Therefore, we treat this part of the state of debate both as a way for theory to have a meaningful impact on practice and *vice versa*.

3.1 Deliberative democracy between rational consensus and inclusion

As we have noted in the introduction to this document, the understanding of deliberation within our projects places a political discussion at its core, but often conflates the two elements that justify its democratic character, i.e., consensuality and inclusiveness. However, theoreticians of deliberation are not always in agreement that they both can be merged, especially in political practice, where the size of the public, the scope of topics, and the time for deliberation are limited.

The emergence of the idea of deliberative democracy in the works of Habermas (1984, 1987, 1992), Cohen (1989), and Rawls (1971, 1993, 1997) completely transformed the world of democratic theory. But when moving from philosophical ideal towards more applicable forms, prerequisites of deliberation – adherence to purely logical, rational argumentation, leaving the category of self-interest behind, and a close focus on reaching a consensus – became major concerns of its adversaries or skeptics. This put transformative pressure on the theory from the outside. Moreover, the requirements of perfect deliberation to engage all citizens, uncover full knowledge on the topic, to provide a comprehensive consideration of every argument, demand an infinite amount of time and public resources. These have been the main concerns of scientists who support the idea but also seek its transformation. It is around these two concerns that deliberation has evolved in the last three decades.

The deliberative ideal quickly became recognized as not only difficult to achieve but even as threatening democratic inclusion, considering the exclusive potentiality of consensus and purely rational speech (Dryzek, 2000; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Young, 2000). Those arguments, especially when raised by radical scholars, postulated abandoning the idea of deliberation for the sake of democracy – we will get back to these later. But within the theory, they led to 'softening' its rigid conditions. The main theoretical input to this new model was ensuring that the 'concept stretching' of deliberation retains its democratic legitimacy, based on the Habermasian universality of the rational consensus[5]. The idea of consensus has been expanded to cover all sorts of its partial, meta-forms, where the agreement could end with the mutual recognition of the legitimacy of conflicting claims, shared understanding of the problem without accordance with the proposed solution or vice versa, entering into integrative negotiations, etc. (Mansbridge et al., 2010; Naurin and Reh, 2018; Niemeyer and Dryzek, 2007). The discussion on means of communication, initiated mainly by Iris Marion Young (1996, 2000), led to the co-optation of additional types of communication, such as rhetoric, story-telling, narratives, and greetings, as legitimate ways of supporting the logical and evidence-based argumentation for those who struggle with high demands imposed by the cultural and social preconditions of rational speech.

While Young was not the only one to argue how rhetoric, i.e., speech that invokes certain emotions, can be successfully used in deliberation, her arguments went further than that. While other authors, such as Gutmann and Thompson, in their acknowledgment of a role for rhetoric and passion in democratic discussion nevertheless maintains a distinction between a kind of expression that is rational and dispassionate and a kind of speech that is not (…) They also oppose reason to passion in a misrepresentation of the position of some critics of deliberative democracy. They claim that some people say that for disadvantaged groups to gain an effective voice in the public forum, their representatives must make passionate *rather than* rational appeals (Young, 2000: 64–67)

In these passages, Young recalls 'critics of deliberative democracy,' most notably Chantal Mouffe. Her argument laid against liberal/deliberative models of democracy as proposed by Rawls and Habermas is based on a concern that rationality is a hegemonic social construct, i.e. an expression of dominant views and disguised relations of power, therefore a consensus can be only a mere strengthening of already existing political norms, economic structures and social roles (Mouffe, 1999, 2000). To strengthen this

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[5] Here we want to remind a paragraph from a conceptual lexicon from D1.1 – Conceptual Framework: *According to Habermas, to ensure that the deliberative decision-making procedure is arriving at a (radically) democratic consensus, two principles must be satisfied. The first one is a 'discourse principle' and claims that 'Only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse'* (D1.1: 12).

argument, Amanda Machin and Graham Smith state that a consensus-oriented procedure leaves only accidental, but not intentional space for substantial plurality in values (Machin and Smith, 2014: 58). Katarzyna Jezierska adds that consensus is even putting an end to open, democratic deliberation (Jezierska, 2019). Plurality comes from disagreement, a radical stance against the arbitrary distinction between what is reasonable and what is not (Decreus et al., 2014; Machin, 2020; Rancière, 2010; Rostbøll, 2009). Therefore, if deliberative inclusion limits itself to inviting formerly excluded people to the 'table' and requires them to speak the same language in which their initial oppression is rationalized and fortified, it is not emancipatory, but a symbolic inclusion that, in fact, preserves the *status quo*.

For Young, the first step to dismantling rationality is to acknowledge that 'the claim that deliberative democracy wrongly privileges argument does not wish to replace reason with passion, but rather claims that passion accompanies reason' (2000: 67). This is further confirmed by empirical studies on emotions and empathy (Mackenzie and Sorial, 2022; Morrell, 2010), which indicated that they are crucial for deliberative recognition and understanding. But emotions and reason are intrinsically interconnected in a way that limits the capability of reason. Cognitive biases or deeply rooted emotional beliefs can lead deliberating people – individually and collectively – to the mistakes of judgment, misinterpretation of facts, and poor reasoning (Scudder, 2020; Urbinati, 2019), and deliberation also enhances the confirmation bias (Dickinson, 2020). Samuel Bagg refers to another mechanism known as 'motivated reasoning' to show that human reason is always shaped by hidden social and biological motivations over which we cannot exercise control. As such, our reasoning is biased – unintentionally – in ways that often turn out to be self-serving or protective of our social identities. Thus (…) we are unlikely to achieve power-neutralizing deliberative conversions with greater regularity than we already observe. Powerful citizens are unlikely to recognize their agendas as "selfish" (…). Because our "reason" is constitutively shaped by our identity, much of the "selfishness" we exhibit is *unintentional* and even *invisible* to us; unconsciously woven into the fabric of our moral experience. (…) [Power corrupts by changing the way we perceive the world; by altering what we recognize as selfish or evil (Bagg, 2018: 261).

Hence, Young's claim that passions accompany reason is true and rightfully provide a breakthrough in deliberative theory by launching the concept of the impossibility of 'purely rational' participation, although it can have a surprisingly impeding impact on the epistemic outcome of deliberation.

But this does not conclude the debate on reason and inclusion. Let us have another look at Young's argument. Initially, she provides a compelling case against rationality – independent of how it is constructed – as incapable of representing minor, excluded 'reasons'. But in the end, she concludes her argument by expressing her belief that adding narratives, greetings, and storytelling to deliberation is enough to ensure inclusion if they do not disturb the rationality of argumentation. All throughout the way, the goal of this argument is to provide justification for these different means as supportive in the process of argumentation. The analytical, thorough process of argumentation and evidence-based assessment of expert knowledge has remained the end goal of the very process that originated from a deep critique of its key components.

It is doubtful that just expanding the range of acceptable means of communication in deliberation beyond rational argumentation is enough to solve the problem of its elitist exclusionism – especially when it is rationality that acts as a final justification for deciding whether certain communication strategies should be considered valid or not. This approach can help in recognizing excluded positions and reshaping them towards comprehensibility within the hegemonic terms; to a certain extent, it can slightly broaden the acceptable discursive spectrum. But it would not see non-rational discourses as they are, i.e., with their

own understanding of what is 'reasonable,' 'normal' and 'true'. It is precisely those elements that are filtered by the requirement of rationality, even in the 'soft' approach of type II deliberations. However, deliberative democrats do not consider those propositions as flawed, or not inclusive enough. In fact, they reject poststructuralist concern that every act of inclusion is necessarily exclusive (Thomassen, 2005). Instead, deliberative democrats, especially Habermas in his book *The Inclusion of the Other* (2005), recognize discourse ethics as the only universally inclusive strategy, based on certain rational and linguistic competencies ascribed to every human being, such as the ability to communicate, listen and respond to arguments. Nevertheless, they keep on neglecting the cultural dimension—even the origin—of these competences, leaving deliberative theory blind to numerous aspects of social injustice.

The weakness of this overlooking matters so much especially when we realize that most deliberative democrats assume that the epistemic value of deliberation comes from inclusion. The more cognitive diversity[6] of a deliberative forum, the more capable it is of solving complex, political issues and providing more elaborate, inclusive policy recommendations (Benson, 2021; Estlund and Landemore, 2018; Min, 2016; Min and Wong, 2018). Helene Landemore – coming from a predominantly Rawlsian strain of deliberative theory – goes even further in this argument, claiming that the recognition of a *fact of* 'difference', 'disagreement', or 'pluralism' is, actually, blocking the deliberative theory from reaching its maximum, democratic potential (Landemore, 2017a). As she states, simply recognizing plurality as given is not enough to ensure its epistemic legitimacy, i.e., foundation in being 'reasonable'. She criticizes what seem to be crucial developments of deliberative theory for its practical implementation, i.e. softening of the demands for consensus based on purely rational argumentation or turning to reciprocity and recognition as crucial deliberative goals (Landemore, 2017a: 280; Cohen, 2009), endorsing a more procedure-independent standard of objectivity (Landemore, 2017a: 281; Estlund, 2012). Therefore, deliberation should be inclusive, but only if this does not impede reaching the difficult 'truth'. The occurrence and relevance of this debate indicates, that even though most deliberative democrats are enthusiastically welcoming the transformation from type I to type II deliberation, it has not been fully theorized whether by making it more feasible in practice it does not give up some of its democratic promise. Or, to restate this question in a different light, whether there is a way of combining democratic legitimacy that comes from inclusion with the one that comes from consensus? Perhaps it is correct to state that the 'tension between the democratic principles of consensus and diversity, however, remains unresolved and might not even need to be resolved, as it functions as a driving force for further democratic innovation' (Asenbaum, 2016: 9)

But the argument against rationality goes far beyond deliberative democracy. There are numerous convincing critiques of this approach in the field of political philosophy, especially regarding the discursive ethics of Habermas and the theory of justice of Rawls. Aside from Mouffe and the radical/agonistic strain of political theory that has been already discussed in this chapter, the critique came also from within the tradition of the Frankfurt School. Rahel Jaeggi noted that the (liberal) pluralism grounded in specific, shared beliefs and values that are reasonably (rationally) validated in modern societies, is based on a distinction between universal morality and particular, individual ethics. But in deliberation, neither can really become its subject: universal claims that underlie the whole process of deliberation are already recognized as non-debatable, while ethics is placed within the sphere of private autonomy (Jaeggi, 2018: 30–34). Deliberation should abstain from discussing both its moral groundings, especially the notion of equal capacity of all

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[6] 'Variety of mental tools that human being use to solve problems or make predictions in the world' (Landemore, 2017b: 89).

participants to discuss on a basis of rational argumentation, and from impeding the individual autonomy of ethical beliefs and values. She concludes that 'the abstinence doctrine turns out to be an ideological self-misunderstanding of the liberal neutrality thesis that obscures the fact that the selection of possible evaluative decisions is always already pre-decided in certain respects by the institutional framework of liberal societies as well' (Jaeggi, 2018: 36).

Moving to another philosophical tradition, many theorists invoke interpretive (hermeneutic) arguments based on the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein (Norval, 2007; Temelini, 2014, 2015; Tully, 2008; Wallgren, 2006). These authors compare Wittgenstein's notions of 'perspicuous representation' and 'rule following' which resemble the process of evidence-based argumentation conducted under the rules of logical reasoning that brings people together towards a collective understanding. However, they point to a multiple and ambiguous content of these concepts, as representation can also be a misrepresentation; and every rule to follow can be misunderstood or ignored. Where the Wittgensteinian approach differs from radical democrats is that rule-following is understood as both disciplining and allowing for – sometimes even asking for – its ignoring or subversion. While the latter is less likely to happen, it allows us to understand deliberation as – under certain circumstances and in very limited capacities – capable of unexpected changes or even radical outcomes. While the exact result depends on a particular configuration of different 'rules' and 'institutions' – of speech and persuasion, media and expert knowledge, class hegemony, and, of course, the impact of the official, political power – in these terms they are all recognized as contingent and no 'universality', or in other words, no position of a meta-language game, needs to be ascribed to any of them.

This has at least two important implications for the way in which this approach can be useful for enhancing our understanding of deliberation. First, it supports the claim that rationality necessarily implies some ambiguity, alongside the possibility of being broken or simply ignored. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that rational speech will always lead to the same result, or that the result will mean the same to every 'player' in the deliberative language game. Secondly, such an understanding of the rule-following creates an intricate link between the underlying concept of language in deliberation and its institutional surrounding – the link that has for long been ignored by mainstream deliberative theorists who assume the impartiality of a singular deliberative process, even when it is exposed to expert knowledge, political actors organizing it, media and people who moderate it. To better understand this division, it is necessary to turn toward political ontology and the distinctions between the modernist and interpretive approaches in political science.

3.2 Modernist functionalism or interpretive approach?

The ontological dualism – and its inconsistency – of deliberative theory has been recently studied by a group of scholars, most prominently Mark Bevir, Nabil Ansari, and Kai Chan. The question they ask is *Should Deliberative Democrats Eschew Modernist Science?* (Ansari et al., 2022), and the starting point for this argument is the recognition that the dominant systemic approach to deliberation is rooted in a functionalist paradigm. The systemic approach combines deliberative mini-publics[7] and other non-deliberative parts of

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[7] We describe mini-publics as forums that consist of a sample of citizens that are selected (randomly or methodically), following Archon Fung (2007). This is a broad definition that covers both models indicated elsewhere in the project, i.e., assembly-based models and mini-publics (D2.2 Methodological Protocol EUARMP: 12-13).

the political system to enhance its overall democratic capacities. Deliberative scholars proposed a 'systemic' turn in the theory (Mansbridge et al., 2012; Asenbaum, 2022; Bevir and Chan, 2021), which treats the political system as a whole, but with various elements (institutions, actors, mechanisms, resources) taking part in a 'division of labor'. This approach emphasizes the need for placing deliberation in well-crafted, carefully recognized places in this system where it can have the biggest impact on the decision-making process or can overcome democratic deficiencies. Focusing on the complexity of the system reveals that even essentially non-democratic actors or institutions can foster deliberation, e.g., when it is organized or supported by the private sector, media, or academic experts. On the other hand, this approach also implies further conceptual stretching when it comes to features and requirements of the deliberative process, as it proposes a rethinking of the coercive, yet the irremovable role of emotions, self-interest, and expert knowledge in deliberation. It is the acknowledgment of these contingent elements where the argument of modernist science begins.

The systemic approach relies on a premise that sociological systems are operating through fulfilling their functions, just like mechanical or biological systems. What follows is that given functions, derived from normative claims about epistemic effects and democratic legitimacy of deliberation, are dependent solely on the design of the system, and that can be engineered by policymakers and researchers in a way that will make its operation independent from the intentionality of human actors involved in this process. In other words, it is based on an assumption that 'the deliberative system has, either actually or potentially, a self-active problem-solving logic independent of human intentionality' (Bevir and Chan, 2021: 8–9). This approach is extended to the question of evaluation of deliberative practices, as functionalists both 'define the goals for a deliberative system and then use empirical measures of outcomes to check whether it is delivering those goals' (Bevir and Chan, 2021: 9), just like engineers test their machines in the modernist paradigm of science. If the evaluation turns out negative, it is specific parts or the relations between them which are to blame – but not mistakes or malpractices of individual actors. In the most extreme case, this approach is present in the 'epistemic' turn described in the first part of this chapter which assumes the objectivity of truth and its independence from the actual contingencies of the deliberation process, as long as the deliberation is rational and the outcome is consensual (Landemore, 2017a).

On the other hand, there is an interpretive approach to deliberation, following Gadamer's and Wittgenstein's hermeneutic claims that what underlies human experience and actions are meanings that we ascribe to the world and its different subjects and objects. Moreover, these meanings are not independent of the historic context and actual, social, and individual practice: they are constructed by them. Finally, meanings are not set, but constantly inconclusive and fluctuating, and they can rarely – if ever – be identical between two individuals. The same ambiguity relates to deliberation and deliberative systems. First, within the interpretivist paradigm, it is the policy planner or researcher, whose own intentionality should be considered when designing a deliberative practice. That means that while projecting or planning such practices, we define the boundaries of the deliberative system (i.e. what is of our interest as potentially impactful on deliberation, and what parts we decide to leave out) pragmatically: in accord with our own interests, beliefs and previously acquired meanings ('patterns of intentionality') (Bevir and Chan, 2021: 11). It does resemble what Deborah Stone writes about public-policy planning process where she criticizes the concept of 'objective', 'neutral' or 'independent' policy advisors and consultants, who ought to simply transmit the results of scientific inquiry to politicians and policymakers. However, such policy advisors are not only biased because of their personal cognitive limitations, but also because they eventually need to engage in rhetorical argumentation that will conjoin the optimal

policy solution with the *political* goal of their principals[8] (Stone, 2012).

Secondly, in the interpretivist approach, it is not the institutional design *per se* that is of interest but what it enables (or changes) in actors' intentionality in the process of deliberation. An interpretive study, consisting of qualitative data and observation, allow for a better understanding of internal group dynamics of meaning. How do they understand deliberation and diversity? How do they incorporate concepts such as inclusion and consensus? Interpretive approach is furthermore more capable of recognizing alternative locations of deliberation, e.g. in social movements (Ercan et al., 2017: 200), and strategies that different actors (politicians, lobbyists, interest groups, media) might employ in order to mislead other stakeholders into deliberation upon false premises (Heath, 2021). Even reasoning – the key to regarding a certain practice as deliberative – will vary from person to person, from group to group, and will fluctuate in time, therefore it cannot be assumed by researchers, but rather discovered and interpreted 'on the ground' (Ansari et al., 2022: 4). Finally, the interpretivist approach focuses on discursive elements that prevail in the system: 'the arguments, ideas, claims and justifications' (Ercan et al., 2017: 200–201), adding to the understanding of the historic and cultural context in which it takes place. In this way, the study of deliberative democracy can be intertwined with the observation of radical democrats and other post-foundational scholars, who acknowledge the contingency and exclusiveness which are brought to the table by the discourse, but at the same time refuse to study deliberation and instead, turn to more protest- and resistance-oriented practices.

What seems crucial to our EUARENAS project in this debate is that these two ontological approaches imply different, to a considerable extent, incompatible, research agendas and normative standards of scientific inquiry. Functionalism defends deliberation on the grounds of its outcome and the way it helps the system realize functions valued by researchers, activists, or policymakers. This leads researchers toward designing deliberative systems in which separate parts find their appropriate place and roles that enable the system to function: 'If each part plays its role, deliberative system will necessarily fulfill its overall goals' (Bevir and Chan, 2021: 15–16). A functionalist approach allows to study, understand and redesign deliberative and non-deliberative institutions (elements of the system) in a way that will be scalable and possible to accept in a form of policy recommendations. This kind of inquiry is essential to a kind of study we undertake in the EUARENAS project, especially in pilots (WP4) and work packages dedicated to policy tools and impact (WP7, WP8). Another key objective of the EUARENAS project is connected to what Bevir and Chan understand as normative design, i.e., 'to show that certain principles and processes are core to reforming governance schemes so that they are just' (*D2.2 Methodological Protocol EUARMP*: 7).

An additional illustration that very well represents how the functionalist approach can be found in *D2.1 Methodological Framework*:

> 'Mini publics contribute to give legitimacy to public policies; however symbolic their contribution may be. The decisions of a mini-public would derive their accountability and authority from the

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[8] For a detailed discussion of Stone's arguments and its consequences for deliberative policy-planning, see the working paper *Politics in Deliberation – Criticism of The Apolitical Nature of Public Institutions and Policies* published in D6.5 Working Paper Series 1. This paper also reflects on how deliberative democrats disengage with interpretive/hermeneutic concerns about the potential reach of political power expressed within the 'argumentative turn' in the theory of public policy. While the hermeneutic approach recognizes the multiplicity of sites and operations of power, leading deliberative democrats in the field (Dryzek and Hendriks, 2012) simply argue that diverse deliberative settings will be capable of reaching *policy* goals without the need to be influenced in any way by *politics*. We disagree with such a simplifying perspective (see: Ufel, 2022).

legitimacy of the democratic process. As such they would give also increase the legitimacy to the processes in which deliberation has been considered. The more conspicuously policy-making process involve the deliberative engagement of a representative group of citizens, the more the resolution of entities whit legal authority might be respected across the macro-political system' (D2.1: 16)

However, what Bevir and Chan find to be not compatible with this institutions-oriented approach is the intrinsic defense of deliberation focused on changing relations between stakeholders of deliberation – in terms of how they offer justification to one another, learn to listen, understand, and respect differences. This requires a contrary presupposition, i.e. that 'system does not determine the quality and content of people's reasons (…) By leaving individual agency out of its mode of explanation, the functionalist approach erases the intrinsic reason for ascribing normative significance to deliberation' (Bevir and Chan, 2021: 16). On the other hand, it opens deliberative democrats up to understand the dynamics of the process in terms of intentional inclusion, i.e., the one which is facilitated or moderated through human intervention, or through the way ideas are transmitted and transformed within the public setting. It can also find intrinsic reasons for the failure of the deliberative process, e.g., when people fail to reach an agreement, or their decisions cannot be implemented as a policy. The conclusion of the interpretive approach is that some issues connected to ambiguities in human reasoning, understanding, and giving meanings to facts cannot be solved through institutional design, as they will always appear in any given social context, driving undue domination and subtle hegemony that will impede the process of deliberation itself.

It is undeniable that these questions also play a vital role in the EUARENAS project, and to a significant extent, they are emphasized by an interpretive ontology. It is especially the care for inclusive and democratic deliberation that is reflected throughout all the project Work Packages, from theory and methodology, through practice to dissemination and management. It is mostly reflected in the WP5 that strongly relies on the 'community reporting' method, which is dedicated to giving voice and listening to personal stories, and to the valuation of intentionality and agency over functional systemic design (*D5.2 Lived Experience Foresight Guide*: 11-14). There are still unresolved issues that pose practical challenges to the democratic policy-making process, and a good example of such tension is the question of randomization of the selection of participants for deliberation. The *D2.2 Methodological Protocol EUARMP* addresses these issues by invoking different voices that are the most relevant in current literature. Arguments that support randomization as a proper measure for providing equality refer to a modernist, epistemic explanation that relies on a universalizable procedure. At the same time, some arguments against it, such as the risk of disconnection from world politics and the danger of omitting certain groups in the random creation of deliberative mini-publics, are grounded in the regard for individual agency and intentionality of both researchers and participants (D2.2: 6, 13).

Similar tension can be recognized as one of the limits of experimentalism, a key element of our project's approach (D2.2: 5). While 'modernist' experimentalism is based on 'randomized controlled trials,' operation in complex urban living labs imposes boundaries on this endeavor. This problem has been solved by the incorporation of a mixed method approach, where quantitative methods supplement interpretative (qualitative) ones, and in practice by the adoption of the co-city cycle which is both iterative and adaptive (D2.2: 6). In the latest article on the modernist/interpretive distinction, authors tackle this problem in a very thought-provoking paragraph. It is worth citing for a detailed inspection of this argument:

> deliberative democrats sometimes conflate interpretive approaches with qualitative methods; they (…) believe they can eschew modernism simply by employing qualitative methods. Similarly, they

sometimes say they favour mixed approaches when really, they are calling for mixed methods. Finally, even when they genuinely intend to take on interpretive commitments, they can be insufficiently aware of the distinction between approaches and methods.

Whereas methods are instrumental tools, approaches involve modes of social explanation grounded in philosophical commitments. When deliberative democrats conflate the two, they sidestep the implications of interpretivism in a way that typically leads them implicitly and unsystematically to continue to rely on modernist assumptions. Further progress in empirical research on deliberative democracy requires us directly to confront the tension between its theory and modernist approaches to social science (Ansari et al., 2022: 2).

The scarcity of committed interpretive approaches in deliberative theory, alongside the already mentioned resilience of deliberative democrats to defend the core, modernist approach of deliberation[9] would suggest that the authors are right to point to the insufficient awareness of the consequences of their distinction. But there is no simple answer to how to combine these two approaches and whether it is even possible or desirable. The first attempt to tackle this problem (Ercan et al., 2017: 201) took a complementary approach, claiming that the interpretive approach can offer support and more insights into a predominantly functionalist systemic context. But Bevir and Chan, who studied differences in ontological assumptions, conclude with a strong suggestion that single researchers should consciously limit their approach and commit to one perspective (2021: 17). A field of deliberative democracy, however, should not aim at unifying this approach. On the contrary, differences among theoreticians, researchers, and practitioners of deliberation are valuable and lead to robust and fruitful debates which help identify and solve various challenges posed to deliberative practices making them effective and democratic.

Perhaps invoking an interpretive approach inevitably leads to post-foundational paradoxes of the 'hermeneutic cycle' or the lack of 'meta-language games', which has been subjected to interesting debates of Habermas with Hans-Georg Gadamer and Michel Foucault (Mendelson, 1979; Widdershoven, 1992; Ashenden and Owen, 1999), that led the author of *The Theory of Communicative Action* to reject hermeneutics and develop his universal pragmatism and, eventually, the proceduralist model of deliberative democracy[10]. Up to this day the debate among Wittgensteinian scholars over how to justify his conception of language in the light of the general impossibility of any universal justification in the field of philosophy and theory is amongst the most fruitful, yet still unresolved (Rasiński, 2012: 175–176). The interpretive ontology also assumes contingency and temporality of a personal judgment, so this does not prevent a person from adapting to different ontological grounds over time, and from a collaboration between different fields of academia to be creative and capable of reaching their own objectives. Therefore, a reason that lies behind the claim urging (at least some) social scientists to commit exclusively to the interpretative paradigm, is in contradiction with itself.

We conclude that while it is not necessary for any deliberative democrat to fully 'eschew' the modernist – or interpretive – approach, it is imperative to be aware that the difference between these two is not only

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[9] By that we mean both the reluctance of Young to draw full consequences from her own objections to rationality-centred deliberation described in the first part of this chapter and the resistance of deliberative theorists to meaningfully engage with the concerns of the 'argumentative turn' mentioned in the footnote above.

[10] A less prominent and recognized influence of Wittgensteinian hermeneutics is also known to effect Rawls, leading to his conceptualization of the 'original position' as a corroboration of purely intrinsic, rational deduction of the principles of justice (Bevir and Gališanka, 2012).

technical or conceptual but is deeply rooted in incomprehensible assumptions. Therefore, they will always create tension to expand our research methods and conceptual tools to develop the field in different directions, even if aimed at the same goal. While we recognize the functionalist paradigm is suitably covered mostly by the ethical and just deliberative approach of the Co-city cycle (Iaione, 2016) and the methodological protocol employed in the EUARENAS project, in the last part of this chapter we will explore debates and subfields of the deliberative theory that are more interpretive – i.e. investigate contingencies and actors' intentionality – but also more elusive to measure and impossible to solve through a scalable design.

3.3 What makes a successful deliberation

Achieving a successful deliberation is undoubtedly an important objective for researchers, activists, politicians, and policy experts alike. But to do that, a more basic question needs to be answered – what is the indicator of success? As we stated in a subchapter above, there is no intrinsic or essential indicator of deliberative success, but it is a researchers' or policymakers' own initiative to define the goal of deliberation (or deliberative system). But deliberative democrats, especially theorists, are also interested in seeing these ideas implemented as often as possible, which means they need to convince politicians that this is a worthy step. So, it is not surprising that the question 'Why deliberate?' has been so often asked, especially throughout the 1990s when this idea was gaining popularity.

The catalog of answers or sets of answers to this question/s given by scholars is extensive and complex, as it refers to different moral and practical reasons on general or more particular levels. Some of them refer to the morality of democratic systems based on human rights and dignity: "persons should be treated not merely as objects of legislation, as passive subjects to be ruled, but as autonomous agents who take part in the governance of their own society, directly or through representatives" (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004: 4). There is also a set of consequences of deliberation provided by Habermas in his books and articles. I will point out four of them: (1) democratic legitimacy of law; (2) rationalization of a public sphere, and thus creating a better law; (3) inclusion of people as subjects in politics; and (4) creating a community (Habermas, 1992, 1994, 1998). James Fearon posed this question in an unusual way: instead of asking why people *should* deliberate, he seeks the answer to the question of why *people deliberate*. He gives six reasons/arguments: (1) to reveal private information and share it with others, in order to achieve the best possible outcome; (2) to minimize or overcome the impact of bounded rationality; (3) to force or encourage a particular mode of justifying demands or claims; (4) to help render the ultimate choice legitimate in the eyes of the group, so as to contribute to group solidarity or to improve the likely implementation of the decision; (5) to improve the moral or intellectual qualities of the participants; and (6) to do the "right thing", independent of the consequences of discussion (Fearon, 1998: 45). However, while discussing each of those arguments in details, he shows that in specific cases, deliberation (or discussion) is not the solution that brings best effects. Another answer to the question "why deliberate?" is given by authors who refer to political culture as a background making deliberation more likely to occur or succeed. For example, circles dominated by the culture of analytical knowledge—where not knowing the answer to one questions is not a sign of a general ignorance—seem much more friendly to the process of deliberation than circles, where the opposite culture—of indexical knowledge—is dominating (Gambetta, 1998). Thus, Gambetta supposes, that deliberative democracy is a project that will be hard to achieve in countries like Spain, Italy, or Latin American states, though this claim was not based on any empirical evidence. On the contrary, initial data from empirical and practical research conducted in our project indicates that Italy and Spain have been

successful pioneers of deliberation in urban spaces (D3.1: 9-11), and participatory budgeting in Brazil and other Latin American countries is more deliberative than in Europe (Wampler et al., 2018).

The recent literature on the systemic approach aims at reducing this growing number of reasons by proposing three broader categories that comprise more particular functions of deliberative systems: epistemic, ethical, and inclusive. The first one, epistemic, refers to the substantive outcome of deliberation that is enhanced through a logical consideration of existing knowledge and evidence coming from experts and the life experience of participants and stakeholders. Ethical reasons consider relations between the subjects of deliberation, who in the process form mutual recognition, understanding, and respect for each other. Finally, the inclusive function is realized as multiple different voices and perspectives get a chance to be listened to and considered in the policy-making process (Mansbridge et al., 2012: 11–12). These functions are related to each other and especially the latter two are important foundations of the democratic aspect of deliberative systems based on mini-publics. However, when this classification was put under scrutiny in light of initial empirical findings of the WP3-related case studies of the EUARENAS project, it does not seem to exhaust all functions of deliberation in the context of political systems. As we argue, a political dimension should also be considered, as deliberation might also serve as a legitimizing element of the system, either through legitimizing tough decisions, or political elites in general or as arenas for promoting marginalized perspectives in the long-term process of causing a shift in discursive hegemonies[11].

After setting proper goals, another crucial element for deliberation to be considered successful is uptake, i.e., the implementation of its results into policy. Recognizing how impact can be made and therefore what are the policy options for strengthening inclusive governance are directly indicated as objectives of the EUARENAS Grant Proposal. Influence on policy is what distinguishes democratic deliberation from 'other formal and informal ways of aggregation and discussion' (D2.2: 18). The importance of this question has been stressed by the members of the EUARENAS Community of Practice during the first Knowledge Exchange meeting, as uptake is considered crucial for sustaining long-term citizens' engagement and for building trust in participatory and deliberative practices. The credibility of these sites is also considered crucial in impacting their epistemic quality, as the recognition of one's impact is correlated to their motivation to contribute meaningfully to civic activities (Rosenstone and Hansen, 2002).

In one of the earliest attempts at tackling this question from a systemic perspective, Jon Elster enumerates seven normative propositions of the optimal design of deliberative constitutive bodies: (1) constitutions should be discussed and written in assemblies that are created for this purpose only; (2) no other institutions should influence the process; (3) the process itself should contain both secrecy (for serious discussion) and publicity (to eliminate logrolling and partisan interests); (4) elections to those bodies should follow the proportional system; (5) the discussion should not take place in capital or major cities; (6) after being agreed on in assemblies, the constitutions ought to be voted for in popular referendum; and (7) in order to eliminate partisan or short-term interests, the procedure of a long *vacatio legis* should be imposed on the constitutions (Elster, 1998: 117). But this set of conditions seems to be applicable only in states with a specific, political culture: with a strict and strong division of powers, a tradition of proportional voting systems; well-established mechanisms of democracy; and an already functioning and stabilized system of political institutions that would allow a long *vacatio legis*. This is not easily suited to emerging or backlashing democracies, especially in times of political and economic crisis that require rapid and

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[11] We base this claim on the outcome of WP1 workshop conducted during the First Project Meeting in Helsinki in November 2021. These considerations will be further investigated in the course of the EUARENAS project.

democratic intervention. Some authors thus propose to simplify these conditions and limit them to a legal condition of obliging politicians to implement recommendations of deliberative bodies as long as they reach significant support, e.g. 80% (Gerwin, 2018). However, this would require a constitutional embedment, or otherwise could simply be ignored by politicians, especially if deliberation itself does not attract enough attention from the media and the public. It would also omit the sphere of informal and every-day talks, which also play a key role in deliberative systems theory.

Empirical evidence provides even more obstacles to ensuring the effective translation of the results of deliberation into policy. Mikko Rask enlists three categories of such 'roadblocks': '(1) diffused understanding of the usability of deliberation as a component of policy making (cognitive level); (2) inadequate infrastructures for facilitating the translation of public-interest oriented deliberations into effective public policy (structural level); (3) inadequate resources and skills of deliberative bodies for effective social outreach of participatory processes (operational level)' (Rask, 2013: 39). To solve these problems, Rask proposes a set of solutions, ranging from a strong 'guiding vision' that would inform policy-makers of the informative and political role of deliberations, to a larger involvement of political actors and decision-makers in the initial stage of the deliberation process, but also to developing new institutional infrastructures, models of policy integration and strategic coalitions of deliberative bodies (Rask, 2013: 50–51). Other authors examined the transmission as a complex phenomenon that can occur in many ways, either through traditional institutions, deliberative innovations (mini-publics), or discursive narratives (Boswell et al., 2016: 266–274). But the study also reveals that in any case, deliberative transmission is vulnerable to distortion and neglecting by political or institutional context, therefore they suggest accommodation of various, also informal, and semi-formal actors and sites of deliberation; amplification of transmission by media and empowered individuals in an inclusive and accountable manner; and sustaining transmission after the singular deliberative event concludes. These answers show that both functionalist and interpretive ontologies might deliver useful insights on actions needed to take to secure effective implementation of the results of deliberation.

In a more recent discussion on deliberative uptake, Mary Scudder argues that it should start with the process focused on inclusive listening. It is not mere inclusion, she states, that makes deliberation inclusive, but rather the ability to fairly understand and consider concerns, personal stories, and even deep differences that participants of deliberation express to one another as 'the others', going beyond simply procedural discussion and reaching ethical appreciation of each other (Scudder, 2020; see: Beausoleil, 2017). This perspective represents the interpretative approach, where agents' intentionality is put forward as crucial regardless of the institutional design of deliberation. This is further corroborated by initial results hinted in the EuComMeet project of Horizon2020 cluster: 'our new databank suggests that there is a fairly "technocratic" road to mini-public success, i.e. uptake only happens when mini-publics are organized top-down, are designed for policy appraisal and do not contest the policy preferences of political elites' (Bächtiger, 2022). This not only further stresses the importance of the focus on intentionality – this time of politicians – but also corroborates the suggestion of the need to include political functions and goals of deliberation as its key element.

This suggests that a successful uptake requires proper leadership – a notion that itself is rarely employed in deliberative thinking, especially since it is incompatible with the ideal of deliberation as devoid of any relations of power (except the power of the stronger argument). This is especially strong within the functionalist approach, where actors' intentionality is left out of the ontological assumption. Any potential 'leaders', such as moderators or facilitators, are expected to moderate and withdraw from influencing the

process, remaining neutral and unbiased. But leaders – not only 'political leaders' as in traditional, party-driven politics – have a special 'translative' role here, like the one described by Stone. Some examples noted above show how leaders need to ensure that the deliberative uptake happens (Kuyper, 2012: 19), and that combines both influencing decision-makers to employ deliberative practices, manage the outcome of deliberation in a way that is comprehensible from the perspective of policy requirements and political expectations, and also ensure that the implementation of its results is not abandoned. All throughout the process they also need to pay attention to the potential exclusion that might occur, where some voices might be marginalized by most participants or not even expressed due to contingent, personal reasons such as lack of confidence or communicative impairment. Of course, all these functions might be performed by many people, although some agents might be more influential than others, especially in terms of promotion of the idea of deliberation.

But leadership roles do not end here, and more can be envisioned. Some hints can be found in *Between Facts and Norms*. While studying different communication modes in political systems, Habermas criticizes the most common modes of top-down information flow. Agenda setting is the key function leaders should perform in deliberative politics, as top-down, "standard" communication does not apply to the requirements of deliberation. According to Habermas, the initial step of leaders is to set the agenda independently of the governmental politicians, already operating in the public sphere (Habermas, 1992: 361–362), although this normative claim seems to be invalidated by the aforementioned EuComMeet findings. In another passage of this book which focuses on the role of interest groups in deliberation three other leadership roles are ascribed to leaders: speaking up about social problems; making broad demands; and articulating public interests or needs (Habermas, 1992: 355). All these roles refer to the process of deliberation itself and are about fostering the discussion by its operationalization. No further remarks on leadership are made in the work of Habermas, as he focuses more on the process rather than on the actors, but some works commented on this approach and indicated some other roles in the limited space that the ideal of deliberation offers to leaders, i.e. consultative (to carry on deliberative sessions, to help achieve consensus); and informative (a role of a gatekeeper, a creator of possible solutions) (Żukiewicz, 2011: 38). The main difference between these two functions is in the extent to which the leader participates in the process: in the first case, his role is more passive as he only helps other participants in expressing themselves effectively or fosters communication between them. In the latter, the leader must be more active, both as a source of information/power and as a proponent of the final decisions.

In one of his articles, Jonathan Kuyper gives much more space to various roles of leaders in different moments of the entire process in which deliberative democracy occurs. Even its title suggests that leadership is a 'neglected dimension' of deliberative democracy. The Australian author studies leadership in its four distinctive moments: initiation; operation; uptake; and execution. All of them ascribe distinct roles to leaders, and in the case of the moment of operation, those roles are respectively defined for moderators and participants of the process. Initiation occurs when making the decision of moving decisive competencies from state authorities (governments, parliaments,) to a deliberative mini-public. Behind this 'creative' role lies also an empowering one since Kuyper claims that 'the rate of participation of citizens is dependent upon the proximity to powerful leaders' (2012: 12). Therefore, leaders at this moment have the power to decide not only if, but also in what shape the deliberation (in formal institutions) should occur. The next moment is operation, which includes all activities necessary for the event to operate. Kuyper makes a division into two roles of leaders at this moment, following the distinction between moderators and participants. In the first case, leaders are expected to foster the event and are in a way responsible for

its (technical) success. They are expected to take specialized training and/or have special qualities. The author ascribes them the following functions: 'moderators and facilitators are supposed to keep participants on topic and uphold principles of good deliberation such as mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance. Leaders are supposed to provide the framework for deliberation and maintain the structures/boundaries of discussion' (2012: 13). On the other side of this distinction, Kuyper situates participants who also conduct crucial leadership roles. They are likely to arise from members of any group that consists of people who actually 'enter the political arena. on unequal terms and with unequal skills' (2012: 17). Participants function as leaders when they create an 'informed elite"' as 'more informed participants who initiate discussions and weigh in more frequently will have a large impact on determining the course of the deliberation, and thus the outcome engendered' (2012: 17). However, in deliberation they are expected to function according to normative standards that foster the system viability, be it epistemic or democratic, e.g., by closing the information gap between participants.

The third moment singled out by Kuyper is an uptake, an element that we have already mentioned. He claims that without any kind of leadership it would be impracticable, therefore the role of leaders at this moment seems to be clear (2012: 19). They are responsible for both communication between deliberative bodies and political elites; as well as between those bodies and the rest of the citizens who are not members of the mini-public structures. Therefore, their functions focus on a broad spread of the outcomes of deliberation and on enlarging the inclusion of the process by empowering individuals who were before outside the deliberating environment. They play the role of promoters. Finally, Kuyper writes about execution as a final moment in which leadership plays a significant role in deliberative democracy. Here, leaders are expected to 'actually take care of the day-to-day running of the policy which is being implemented' (2012: 23). The scope of executive power to a considerable extent lacks deliberative dimensions which are mostly ascribed to the legislative power. That is why leaders play such a vital role in that area: they are responsible for the execution of the deliberative outcome in a manner that complies with the demands of mini-publics.

To sum up these few reflections on the roles and functions of leaders in deliberative democracy, we would like to make a distinction between internal and external leadership roles that occur in the process. Internal roles refer to all actions taken by leaders in the very process of deliberation. These roles include all that facilitators and participants can take: **moderator** (who decides about the structure of communication in the group; who also decides on agenda setting, as long as such is not decided before starting the deliberation); **speaker or tribune** (who speaks on behalf of excluded parts of the deliberation, sometimes only by encouraging people to speak up for themselves; they also make broad demands and speak about public interest); **conflict manager** (who tries to find a link between discussing parties, focusing on enhancing relations between participants); **expert** (a person who shares knowledge or personal experience and gives the group necessary information when needed, while being a participant); and **idea promoter** (a person who proposes possible solutions and helps in working them out in details). Leaders that occur on this level of the process relate strictly to the deliberative environment and therefore enable it to reach its goals directly through deliberation.

External roles are those that operate on the borders of the deliberative environment in their connections to other sections of political and social systems. Roles played by leaders on this level are as follows: **initiator** (a person responsible for initiating the deliberative procedures as legal actions in the broader political system that does not appeal to informal deliberative organisms and plays an important role in creating a deliberative public sphere); **agenda controller** (pre-setting the agenda of the event, if such occurs);

promoter (a person responsible for communication between deliberating mini-publics, and political elites, promoting deliberative outcomes among them, and the rest of the society, where they not only inform about the outcome but also invite to take part in the deliberation[12]); **gatekeeper** (for the process to be effective, not all citizens can be participants and not all knowledge and information are needed, gatekeepers are responsible for controlling the resources that flow to and from deliberative systems); **executor** (controlling, whether and in what way the deliberative outcome is being implemented). Leaders in this dimension sometimes operate outside the deliberative environment, therefore the methods they use are more likely to differ from the tools available for leaders playing internal roles.

Two of these roles seem to overlap on internal and external levels, so at that point, they require clarification. These roles are the role of an expert and of a gatekeeper controlling information flow. the difference here is clear, though: the expert, operating as an internal actor in deliberation, shares his own knowledge, experience, needs, intuitions, and feelings, and the process is contingent; the gatekeeper, on the other hand, can also be an actual expert, who is employed by the authorities to enhance the process of deliberation, but operates from the outside of the mini-public and his actions are planned, steered and rational. The latter shares his expert knowledge only to the extent selected by him (or his principal), just to give the supposedly most valuable information.

The roles of leaders in deliberative democracy, therefore, appear to be varied but keeping the limitations of deliberative democracy in mind, one needs to remember that they do not always have a positive influence on deliberation. It is common that authors discussing leadership roles in deliberation to claim that leaders have a negative impact on the democratic value of this process by disturbing its intrinsic rationality coming from the procedure. While there are very few studies dedicated to this phenomenon in practice, the results strongly suggest that moderators can have an overwhelming impact on the process (Humphreys et al., 2006; Spada and Vreeland, 2013). More attention is drawn to the role of expert knowledge, which is another necessary content of deliberative practices, but it can have both a leading and a misleading role. On the one hand, the sole presence of experts can be intimidating, especially to participants with lower qualifications and less confidence (Smith, 2012: 99; Asenbaum, 2016). We describe how the 'cult of science' and the intrinsic correlation between knowledge and power might have an undue impact on deliberation in *D1.1 – Conceptual Framework* (D1.1: 30). Another problem debated in the literature is how expert knowledge is limited by itself, i.e., by the structure of modern science and personal limitations of experts. They themselves tend to show numerous cognitive biases, especially compartmentalization of knowledge and tunnel vision which are caused by their overconfidence (Holst and Molander, 2017). Susan Bandes even claims that experts – due to the social context in which they operate – are 'bad at identifying their own fallibilities' (2013: 200), which poses a challenge to deliberative systems, as they are supposed to rely on unbiased and evidence-based arguments and knowledge.

These claims require attention, as they are based on numerous empirical studies of leadership in deliberative democracy and other fields, such as civic participation, sociology of science, or social psychology. The way these modern concepts portray human behavior contradicts the ideal assumptions of deliberation, especially its key rational and democratic components. They call for additional measures that will allow mitigating the undue influence of power that distorts outcomes of deliberation. Bandes, whose primary focus is on emotions, invokes the role of institutions surrounding deliberative spaces, such as

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[12] The importance of this role has been also stressed in other documents in the EUARENAS project, where the role of promoters is seen as constitutive for setting the basis of proactive, open, and unbiased discussions (D2.2: 13).

schools and policy-making procedures, claiming that they should be structured in a way that promotes values and citizen attitudes championed by deliberative democrats (e.g. critical thinking, tolerance, empathy) (Bandes, 2013: 204–206). Non-deliberative institutions, such as watchdogs, fact-checking media, or collective action can also make minor interventions in the field of knowledge, where 'motivated reasoning' and 'tunnel vision' act as sources of cognitive biases (Bagg, 2018: 274–275) On the other hand, Kuyper turns inwards to deliberation, suggesting that the process should be designed taking into account the 'lattice of leadership', or an institutionalized dispersion of leadership roles that will enhance each other in fulfilling the systemic functions and cancel each other out when they become potentially coercive (Kuyper, 2012: 14–22; Uhr, 2008).

However, all the above answers conflate functionalist and interpretative ontologies. Distortions of knowledge and power are based on human agency and intentionality, or to a considerable extent, unintentionality, while all the propositions seek to find solutions through social engineering that relies on the independence of specific personal traits of participants in deliberation (or in broader deliberative systems). While effective to a considerable extent, it will not eradicate human fallibilities, and leaning towards procedural universalism might in turn deteriorate inclusion. Leaders are recognized to play a crucial role in all expected functions of deliberative systems, be it epistemic, ethical, inclusive, or political. By turning a blind eye to their behavior in a particular context, deliberative democrats deprive themselves of a powerful and crucial tool for securing a successful, democratic, and inclusive deliberation.

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The 'common sense' understanding of the development of deliberative theory is that it started with ideal formulations, moved on to a formulation of a justified, but more practical model, and then turned into the experimentation phase of institutional design supported by empirical research inviting scholars from different fields (see: Elstub et al., 2016). From a strategic point of view, this has certainly benefited deliberation by promoting it among the wider public. But the current state of the debate suggests that this evolution should not be considered as linear and universalist as it is believed. On the contrary, it seems that only recently is the field of deliberative democracy realizing its own internal contradictions and flaws that reach far beyond the technical lack of data needed to validate models or the unwillingness of politicians to share power.

While it is understandable that the collective effort of deliberative democrats had to combine the development of the field (whether normative or empirical) with its promotion and fierce defence against its opponents, especially from democrats of difference and proponents of political realism, this might explain why they have been reluctant to take a more critical stance against their own research. But with deliberation gaining more attention and sympathy in recent years not only in academia, but also among activists and, most recently, in urban political spaces, such a stance might in fact stall further development of deliberative practices and policies. The worst that can happen is that if deliberative scholars overpromise what it can achieve, policymakers and activists might get easily demotivated and give up efforts to create engaging and inclusive deliberative sites.

The aim of the EUARENAS project should not be to resolve any of these fundamental debates by finding out which paradigms are right, and which are wrong, or what are the creative ways of overcoming intrinsic tensions within deliberative theory and research. On the contrary, we present the above arguments in a way that acknowledges that they are irresolvable, whether regarding the clash between rationality and

and consensus or functionalist and interpretive approaches. While a single researcher or team dedicated to studying a narrow, selected element of deliberative practices might find themselves in contradiction when drawing from these different perspectives, such a large, multi-disciplinary project as EUARENAS, comprised of various approaches and stakeholders can only thrive on the recognition of these tensions. We see this chapter as contributive to our further work in a threefold way: firstly, by identifying tensions and dogmas that are intrinsic to the field of deliberative democracy and are hence recreated within the project.

Secondly, following from the first point, by allowing to engage in a creative debate about challenges that are derived from realizing these tensions; finally, by aiming at identifying a broader range of opportunities that are discovered by taking a step back and recognizing the need for multiple approaches to filling lacunas in the field, especially regarding questions of what deliberation is when it emerges in public, and how to ensure that it is successful in the realization of social, political and policy goals.

CHAPTER 4

Political participation as a democratic mechanism of change

4 Political participation as a democratic mechanism of change

Until now our main focus in this deliverable has been on deliberative practices and sites that envision citizens' engagement in politics through a specific mode of evidence-based, rational discussion fostering consensual policy recommendations and better mutual understanding and respect. But the debate on political participation does not end there. Especially within the dominant 'deliberative systems' approach described in chapter 3; a vibrant civil society is considered one of the key elements needed for a meaningful deliberation to occur. Urban NGOs and social movements are acknowledged as actors whose involvement spurs deliberative sites and provides them with the representation of the interests of certain groups and communities. They function as intermediaries between the society and local governments, as well as independent labs for political debates and activities, allowing for the growth and transformation of social identities and civic attitudes that are oriented toward the common good and democratic politics. But equally important are participatory interventions in hegemonic discourses and areas of perceived injustice that are initiated through art and culture, political performances, and protests. Not only do they 'fuel' the public sphere with new challenges, ideals, and values, but also regulate participatory governance by putting pressure on politicians to introduce new tools of citizen engagement and by criticizing the already existing ones. The objectives of the EUARENAS project require that we approximate how different debates on these topics evolved and enacted practical applications of participation, and how it is related to (urban) democratic governance. Therefore, in the last chapter of this deliverable, we focus on the most important current debates on these issues, to show how various aspects and modes of participation are interconnected and can be understood as crucial elements of deliberative and participatory urban democracy.

4.1 Throwing away the ladder (of participatory governance)

The analysis of social participation in political science dates back to the last century and has led to numerous classifications and models One of its most popular origins is Sherry Arnstein's famous 'ladder of participation' (1969) which after many years is still the subject of numerous criticisms and modifications (Davis and Andrew, 2018; Hurlbert and Gupta, 2015; Norton and Hughes, 2018). However, it is still a popular and useful classification, which is referred to in Work Packages 3 (D3.1: 8, 25) and 4 (D4.1: 9-10) of our project. This approach has led to discussions whether it is still usable today amid all criticism. The ladder metaphor is for example problematic as far as it presupposes in advance certain progressivism, i.e., an unconditional preference for 'higher' rungs or steps over lower ones. It also assumes certain linearity and homogeneity of the process of participation, which makes it difficult to use as an indicator of the whole democratic system, in which non-participatory institutions make participatory politics possible and conduct their implementation. Therefore, we repeat the famous metaphor of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who acknowledges that even conceptually contradictive theory can be used in order to understand its own limitations and consequently 'be thrown j away', but from a new perspective that it was able to elucidate (Diamond, 1988; Wittgenstein, 1994). In this context, Arnstein's ladder is most useful to indicate that there are many practices that seem to be participatory, but are, in fact, extremely far from the ideal of citizen's co-ownership and full control over the policy-making process. To quote the authors from Work Package 4, 'we can see that it is important to study the fine details of participatory mechanisms and tools because what might seem like a tool to facilitate meaningful participation at a first glance, might not, in fact, move inclusion forward' (D4.1: 10).

Arnstein's model lists 8 'levels' of participation divided into 3 categories. On the lowest steps, there is a lack of citizen participation in the activities of government. Citizens are subject to information manipulation (by hiding some information or presenting them with a false picture of reality) or to 'therapeutic reeducation'. In the latter case, any difference of opinion between the authorities and citizens becomes the subject of PR activities or 'education' so that the people express support for the actions of the authorities. The next three degrees are referred to as 'sham activities,' or 'tokenism,' i.e., such relations in which citizens are recipients of public policies, but their influence on them is small or even nonexistent. This refers to situations in which they are merely informed about the actions of the authorities, invited to non-binding consultations of policy decisions, or symbolically included (as representatives of a minority) in the structures of government, but without translation into greater influence on actual policy. These actions do not involve any real sharing of power but are only designed to conduct a decision-making process that maintains greater appearances of democracy than a decision made behind the closed doors of political cabinets. In a long run, this might even impede participation, as a lack of true impact on policy demotivates citizens from investing their time and effort in the process. The actual sharing of power between government and citizens occurs only on the third level. This refers to cases in which the voice of citizens becomes important (partnership) or even crucial (delegation) in the process of making final political decisions, most often through participation in several types of collegial bodies. The opinion expressed by residents is then binding upon the authorities. The highest step of the ladder is civic control, a situation in which citizens are fully responsible for the entire decision-making process, from planning to its implementation.

As has been said, the presented ladder does not exhaust all the possibilities of citizen participation in power – activism and civil disobedience, for example, are believed to be its additional rungs. In democratic urban participation, the success of which requires not only promising ideas to solve public issues, but also organizational measures and an effective promotional campaign and lobbying, activism in particular stands out as a crucial factor. On the one hand, the existence of local leaders, at least in a residual form, is required for participation to exist at all. The activity of willing participants ready to submit and promote projects, organize civic activity, and formulate expectations and demands from the authorities, cannot be 'ordered' by authorities. Also, in the broader public dimension, it is impossible to consider the importance of mutual relations between civil society actors without considering the state of their relations with each other, the authorities, as well as with the various communities on behalf of which NGOs speak and participate in public life. The openness, cohesion, and bridging (connecting) nature of these relations are some of the characteristic features of a developed civil society, cemented by social capital and characterized by a prominent level of generalized social trust. Under such conditions, citizens cooperate, co-determine and share public responsibility for decisions made and actions implemented. We return to this issue in the next subchapter of this work.

To complete the picture of participation, it is also worth considering the role of the private sector or the ambiguous functions of public institutions such as cultural or educational centers. Finally, single steps of the ladder will usually not be able to reflect the nature of the relationship between government and citizens in a given decision-making process, much less in a general assessment of the 'urban state of participation'. This process is dynamic, and the degree of the relationship will vary depending on the policy area or a specific stage of the decision-making process. At this point, it should be mentioned that the underlying empirical and practical methodologies of the EUARENAS Co-City Cycle (D1.2: 12) and Quintuple Helix (D1.2: 10; D2.2: 21-22) project address these problems by introducing a heterogeneous, multithreaded, and cyclical understanding of the participation process, as well as the multiplicity of actors and their functions.

As a side note, it is worth mentioning that in the academic literature there are at least two distinct quintuple helix models, the second of which – proposed by Carayannis, among others, and based on the earlier triple helix model of innovation (Carayannis et al., 2012; Carayannis and Campbell, 2010) – is far more linear and deterministic in nature, assigning the creative role in innovative governance to the academy and business, while treating governments, the media and the environment, which play a passive role, as reactive to the innovation process initiated elsewhere.

Finally, Arnstein's classification also does not tell us much about the type of relations of participatory actors, primarily organized, formal representatives of specific interests. Historically, it is possible to speak of two ideal types of these relations – corporatism and pluralism – in which patterns of cooperation or competition dominate, respectively. Corporatism is based on a model in which interest groups - here NGOs – cooperate with each other (whether bottom-up or within a framework created by public bodies) to achieve jointly developed goals. In the pluralist model, on the other hand, organizations compete with each other for key public resources - influence on political decisions, access to funds to conduct tasks, housing resources, etc. In practice, the two models intermingle, as competition and cooperation are indelible strategies of any organization or interest group. However, political authorities can use various tools that can reinforce one of these tendencies, or deliberately create conditions for hybrid solutions.

The discussion started by Arnstein still reverberates today in the way the role of citizens and third sector organizations in policy-making, including at the city level, is perceived. With the (neo)liberal turn of the 1980s, which took place mainly in the United States and the United Kingdom, the principles of so-called New Public Management (NPM) (McLaughlin et al., 2002) and public-private partnerships gained popularity – especially in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. The idea advocates a move away from bureaucratic administration to efficient and more flexible management, focused not so much on strictly fulfilling instructions, but on efficient (in terms of cost and quality) delivery of public services. The idea of inviting private organizations into the sphere of public goods and services management stems from a belief that it would allow for market-driven optimization of their cost and quality. In terms of citizen participation, NPM refers to the aforementioned competitive pluralism, further supported by ideas of the free market and privatization of public tasks. A key component of NPM is the delegation of specific public tasks to private and, in particular, civic sector entities, in which NGOs often become the most efficient to meet the needs of residents-consumers of public services. One of the most influential models of NPM for the functioning and development of civil society was the decentralization and downsizing of the public sector, which supported the development of NGOs by delegating more tasks or even policy sectors to them. Such organizations can enjoy greater financial stability, which promotes the professionalization of their activities but also creates a specific relationship between them and government entities. They have been classified as 'quangos' or 'quasi NGOs' (Greve et al., 1999; Van Thiel, 2017) to indicate the intrinsic link that is being created between these organizations and politics, shifting their role to a more political one, therefore asking the wider public the questions of independence, interest and accountability.

Recent years have brought another paradigm shift in thinking about organized citizen participation in government. With the rise in popularity of deliberative techniques, as well as the development of the concept of Multi-Level Governance (MLG) (Bache et al., 2022; Jessop, 2004), new normative concepts of co-governance (co-governance, collaborative governance, multi-stakeholder governance) are emerging, in which the participation of citizens and third sector organizations is permanent, inclusive and sometimes even dominant in the relationship with democratic power (de Nictolis and Iaione, 2021; Iaione and Paola, 2015). In collaborative modes of governing, citizens should no longer be invited to the political process at

its specific, democratically sensitive moments, but should be present all along as equal partners for the authorities. The vehicle for such continuity can be well-functioning NGOs, that is, entities that are recruited from 'ordinary' citizens, which are in permanent contact with them and represent their interests, alongside broader and less formal social movements, and community leaders. They can perform a range of roles, from promoting innovative ideas, excluded interests and local solutions among residents, to direct representation in participatory processes. Through their formal structuring, but also by building 'soft' competencies, organizational expertise, and networks of relationships with officials and other partners, they can become entities that effectively and professionally work for the common good.

It should also not be overlooked that in at least some models of deliberative and participatory co-governance an evolution of MLG and NPM in terms of understanding of partnership, depth of integration and a range of stakeholders invited to participate in politics, comes with a radical shift in an economic paradigm underlying the understanding of politics. Originally, NPM and initial models of MLG focused on bringing market efficacy into governance in order to move it away from political to private – or privatized – sphere. For collaborative governance to be effective, this neoliberal paradigm needs to be rejected, and that happens when the notions of the common good and the governance of commons are reintroduced into political theory: 'the commons are embraced as a project of radical democratic change that will prevail over neoliberal capitalism and top-down elitist politics' (Kioupkiolis, 2019: 128).

Today, this distinction is still not fully realized within the field of public policy and governance, and many models and practices of participation neglect this dimension. However, if recognized, it allows for an interesting and precise description of different models of participation adopted today. Based on an extended study of practices emerging around participatory budgeting since its first implementation in Porto Allegre, six such models have been described by a team led by Yves Sintomer. These are:

- **Participatory democracy**: focused on state-led, socialist transformation towards social justice and democratization of the society.
- **Proximity democracy**: a deliberative-oriented version of republicanism with a leading role of state fueled by informal public spheres based on reciprocity.
- **Participatory modernization**: as a participatory version of NPM, it links top-down initiated, non-deliberative participation with modernization policies.
- **Multi-stakeholder participation**: assumes a small role of the state which gives up participation to competing private entities, including corporations and autonomous NGOs.
- **Neo-corporatism:** assumes a leading role of the state in the organization of the social dialogue between autonomous corporations and NGOs, while excluding non-organized citizens from the process.
- **Community development**: assumes the hegemony of the market, by seeing it as a way to delegate tasks to autonomous communities, thus empowering them against oppressive or corrupt governments. (Sintomer et al., 2012)

This analysis shows that liberal mindsets and approaches to participation as a 'private' activity or substitution of state intervention are still a predominant perspective. Even when the hegemony of the market is rejected, such as in 'participatory modernization' and 'neo-corporatism', it is only to strengthen private entities and interests as the most effective means of modernization.

The above comparison reveals other interesting conclusions: only very few models (participatory democracy and community development) assert the role of bottom-up participation, while most

governance practices – in this case relating to participatory budgeting – assume the dominance of the state over the entire process. While in the EUARENAS project we are dedicated to fueling bottom-up participation, we need to be aware that most participatory practices conducted within the frames of (local) governments will be subjected to top-down control. Participation is often viewed as instrumental, as a management tool that will either promote private interests and leave the political space to the domination of influential corporations (participatory modernization, multi-stakeholder participation) or to a formal and organized mediation of interests between interest groups (neo-corporatism) that excludes non-organized citizens or NGOs and social movements that are not recognized as legitimate representatives of social interests by politicians. A geographical analysis of these different instances of local participation reveals that it is these latter three models that are most prevalent in Europe: participatory modernization and neo-corporatism are most typical for Germany and Northern Europe, while multi-stakeholder participation appears mostly in Eastern Europe. The two models that encourage bottom-up participation are, on the other hand, associated with Latin America and to a lesser extent with Southern Europe (participatory democracy) or with Anglo-Saxon countries (community development). This is a valuable observation as it regards the social context of participation, especially in terms of social identities and attitudes of authorities, and it suggests a need to account for 'path dependency' in proposing scalable policy solutions based on experiments and case studies conducted across various parts of Europe in WP 3 and WP 4.

4.2 NGOs, social movements and democratic society

One of the most recognizable changes in contemporary politics is the emergence and growth of social movements as a form of political expression distinct from both civil society and the political sphere. The textbook definition of social movements distinguishes them from other actors on the political scene through action 'outside the system by engaging in various kinds of protests, including demonstrations, picket lines, sit-ins, and sometimes outright violence' (Barkan, 2013). According to this definition, what discriminates social movements are primarily the ways in which they act, rather than the specific goals they seek to achieve. Therefore, social movements are across the entire spectrum from the radical left to the radical right or conservative.

Generally speaking, social movements were identified and defined in the 1970s of the previous century (Meyer, 2002: 7-9). However, the roots of such movements can be traced back to the early days of liberal democracy, although they were often referred to as irrational, emotional and violent (Nye, 1975), a view that prevailed well until the mid-20th century. However, apart from certain important philosophical works (e.g., Balibar, 1997; Hardt & Negri, 2004), investigations of crowd politics and its relation to democratic theory and civil society in late modernity are non-existent. In order to meet this challenge, the proposed project partly builds on Jonsson's historical studies (2013) and extends his analysis of the modern idea of 'the masses' on the contemporary situation. Jonsson's studies have changed the understanding of the modern crowd as an agent of political disintegration. In contrast to research within mass psychology and contemporary social psychology in which the crowd appears as a negation of the rational political subject, Jonsson argues that the crowd – far from being just a container of irrational affect – is also a locus of democratic potentiality and an embodiment of social change (cf. also Borch, 2012).

Social movements can be considered as the core of what Rosanvallon calls counter-democracy: "By "counter-democracy" I do not mean the opposite of democracy but rather a form of democracy that reinforces the usual electoral democracy as a kind of buttress, a democracy of indirect powers

disseminated throughout society – in other words, a durable democracy of distrust, which complements the episodic democracy of the usual electoral-representative system" (Rosanvallon, 2008: 8). If we inscribe social movements in the democratic system, the basic question is, of course, to what extent they are a complement to democracy, and to what extent they constitute a threat to its continuation and development. One way to answer this question is to compare social movements with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are widely believed to be the core of civil society. In a 1998 review article, Alex Demirovic defines extensively the characteristics that differentiate NGOs from social movements (Demirovic, 1998: 91-92):

New social movements	NGOs
Self-determined goals, self-activity, Self-reflexive	Social aid, operational functions, advocacy, instrumentalization
Founded endogenously and molecularly	Frequently founded exogenously and strategically
Involve all social classes, but with middle-class orientation	Involve all social classes, but mostly rural, plebian and/or bourgeois
Scarce financial resources	Large volumes of finance
Financially independent	Financially dependent (on donations, on governments)
Political, conflicts over interpretation and needs	Frequently apolitical, with expert technical orientation
Low level of professionalism, organization is temporary and discontinuous	Prominent level of professionalism, organization is continuous and formal
Without formal membership	Organized (members)
Decentralized	Centralized
Non-bureaucratic	Bureaucratic
Distant from the state and frequently anti-statist	Close to institutions, frequently dependent on them
Critical of the system, conflict-oriented, confrontation-oriented (civil disobedience, demonstrations)	Reformist, governance, global governance (lobbying, expertise, negotiation)
Symbolic identity as collective actor	Symbolically non-integrated, corporate identity as organization
Sub-national and national	Internationally interlinked

Most of the abovementioned differences have retained their importance, but the situation has changed with growing awareness of the importance of social movements as a vehicle for democratic change. The 21st century can be justifiably called, the century of social movements. The Occupy movement, the Arab Spring, Gezi Park, Black Lives Matter, Extinction Rebellion, and the Women's Strike in Poland are examples of such movements. Some of them proved to be ephemeral, but others took a major place on the political scene of the countries where they emerged.

One can give several reasons for this. The popularity of social movements is undoubtedly a result of the crisis of democracy, which we dealt with extensively in the first part of this paper. The delegitimization of many traditional democratic institutions is causing a turn toward direct democracy, of which social movements are one of the expressions. They are also more credible than political parties because they still have the ability to do what parties have failed to do, namely, to build unity between rank-and-file activists and the leadership. They grow out of genuine and primordial discontent and are often dedicated to a single cause-for example, changing the functioning of the police force, or defending women's reproductive rights, without taking responsibility for the entire functioning of society. This in turn allows people with quite different political views to participate in these movements. Moreover, they arise in opposition to governments, which are seen as bureaucratic, too distant to understand human needs and sometimes even corrupt. In this way, they channel public discontent with social relations which privilege political and financial elites. In some sense, then, social movements are a return to the idea of democracy conceived as popular sovereignty.

It can be supposed that social movements can play a significant role in strengthening or restoring the political sphere on a local, national, or even European scale, although in general their activity is limited to the nation-state. Increasingly, however, especially in the case of the fight against climate change or the issue of refugee rights, they are taking on a transnational character. Therefore, they can be the foundation of the European public sphere or European civil society, which needs bottom-up initiatives (Bee, 2014). Especially progressive social movements are valuable actors that bear a promise of countering populist and undemocratic governments, as well as fostering democratic innovations (Della Porta, 2022; Della Porta and Felicetti, 2022). However, to become a permanent part of the political landscape, social movements need to establish cooperation with other organizations, primarily NGOs, which make up civil society. This is not a matter of theory, but of political practice (de Burca, 2019, Silberman, 2020). The advantages of cooperation seem obvious because, as de Burca states: 'NGOs are likely to benefit from the increased credibility and legitimacy linked to working alongside grassroots social movements. On the other hand, social movements would benefit from having access, through NGOs, to assets which they do not possess such as meeting spaces, technical equipment, funding, and policy and technical expertise' (de Burca, 2019). The problem, however, is that cooperation is mutually beneficial in a technical sense, which of course is significant, but not exhaustive. One can easily imagine barriers to such cooperation. Social movements can lose their authenticity by tying themselves to government-funded NGOs. For NGOs, the acceptance of the goals and methods of these movements can be problematic. NGOs fit into the concept of civil society and the political sphere in general, where consensus is of the greatest value. Social movements, on the other hand, are oriented toward struggle and resistance and use methods which suit them. Thus, they reject consensus and instead strive for a more or less radical change in the situation that initiated their emergence.

Therefore, incorporating social movements into civil society requires rethinking and reframing of the very concept of that society and the foundations of democracy. It necessitates an assumption that spontaneous mass movements constitute a dimension of a democratic society which is, at the same time, inevitable and

marginalized. According to this assumption, mass political movements are an inevitable element of democracy under 'normal' conditions. However, they become invisible (in the sense used by Rancière) or are perceived as a threat to a democratic society. Liberal theories of democracy assume that democracy is a system constituted by dialogue between autonomous and rational individuals (Bohman, 1996). Civil society is usually perceived as a political embodiment of such dialogue. According to this line of thought, the masses cannot participate in rational dialogue and are therefore excluded from democratic communication and deliberation (Hayward, 1996). One can argue that such a perspective follows from the adoption of a narrow definition of dialogue and an equally narrow definition of the concept of a spontaneous mobilization of the masses. It can be shown that mass movements elaborate their own methods of dialogue, i.e., that the crowd has its own dialogical imagination and its own dialogical practices (e.g., communication during rallies of the Occupy movement).

In the broader theoretical scheme, the question of integrating social movements into democratic procedures requires the following research conditions. 1) the determination of the specific character of dialogue in the area of spontaneous mass actions; (2) the identification of the conditions which enable mass protest movements to participate in the construction of a democratic state and civil society, as well as the conditions which cause such movements to support authoritarian and anti-democratic politics; (3) the development of a theory of democracy in which dialogue is not only an instrument of consensus and compromise but above all a political medium of understanding which constitutes the foundation of civil society; (4) putting forward a new perspective on civil society as a sphere where collective emotions and passions can be transformed into lasting support for democratic institutions and democratic political culture.

4.3 Culture, art and performativity as participatory practices

The philosophical tradition associates cultural phenomena primarily with the symbolic and axiotic sphere. In phenomena and processes, it perceives manifestations of an order based on values. In human behavior, it sees forms of realization of specific meanings, norms and rules. People's ways of life (including goals and aspirations) depend on a number of different causative factors – biological, geographical, civilizational, social, etc. When it comes to the dimension of culture, it is a space for actualizing practices undertaken precisely for the sake of values. Culture thus turns out to be a special way of being human and remains relatively autonomous in relation to other components of the human universe. This does not mean, however, that activities aimed at the implementation of moral, ethical and aesthetic norms or postulates are not related, for example, to the areas of politics and economy (which are praxeological in character). Power relations and economic relations, apart from the obvious issue of striving for domination and achieving material profits, become fully legible only in the cultural context, i.e. within the framework of analyses taking into account axiological patterns regulating human behavior (dispositions, attitudes, beliefs). Values, as understood here, make up certain structural-relational order shaping thinking and conditioning the ways of behavior of representatives of a given community. In the EUARENAS project we look at deliberation as 'a tool/means to enable local communities to activate mechanisms to recapture the value generated through their participation in the decision-making process' (D2.2: 7). Cultures, however, are never completely homogeneous. Even the main values, such as freedom, are ordered and contextualized differently in the same cultures – it is impossible to indicate a single content characteristic. Therefore, within communities – especially those of big cities – embraced by modern processes of democratization of life, contradictions among beliefs and views must be overcome (but not abolished), and

there must be norms regarding behavior and negotiated compromises (not necessarily meaning consensus) that ultimately allow for building new social orders. Of course, not every action has a 'political' character, but it should be remembered that the most important slogans of emancipation, inclusion, empowerment, redistribution of goods, and increasing participation in the exercise of power, are always based on the core values, among which we can mention autonomy, freedom, equality, justice, solidarity.

In the EUARENAS project, we constantly encounter such values and their relation to politics. For the deliberative and participatory approach that we embrace in the project, inclusion and empowerment play a central role, and the questions of how to deliver it through just and ethical co-governance, lie at its methodological foundations (D2.1: 5-6, 9-13), spanning to its different dimensions: social, economic, but also in regards to climate and technology. But there is no singular, universal content of the notion of 'justice' – or any other value – and it is a central role of culture to mediate between different understandings, ethical norms of conduct, or discontents with this notion and its political enactments. Therefore, culture and art can be – and many times have been – vehicles for democratization, a way to intervene in the public debate by artist, but also by the audience. But it is not only the performative dimension of art and culture that we are interested in terms of political participation. With modern cities almost always operating as sponsors and curators of local art and cultural heritage, we also look into in how democratic innovations are engaged in the cultural management in one of WP3 case studies (D3.1: 13) and the management of the resources also play an important role in the Reggio Emilia's Co-City Protocol (D3.1: 11). We start with focusing on the performative dimension of culture in politics, and later on we indicate how is it interrelated with politics and governance.

Urban democracy can be analyzed from the perspective of broadly understood performances. Given what has already been said, they may be associated, inter alia:

- with resistance to decisions taken by international organizations and national authorities
- with contesting development strategies (including economy, environment, transport, safety, health, and especially housing and urban development policies)
- with opposition to the irresponsible activity of 'parasitic' elites towards the common good (including business entities, such as developers and high-ranking representatives of global corporations)
- with the fight against radical political groups.

All these activities are based on the values of democratic culture, and their overriding goal, as was still the case in the traditional model, is not so much to seize power, but to bring about a change in the existing situation in the following aspects:

- cultural (horizons of meanings, norms, patterns of behavior)
- social (inequality, marginalization)
- political (ignorance, arrogance, informal dependence)
- economic (sustainable development, forward-looking thinking).

One of the important aspects of this type of performative activity is how it attracts media attention and the so-called public opinion to the problems or methods of exerting pressure on the organs of representative democracy and the holders of financial instruments within the performance data. It should be emphasized here that the category of performance is not related in this context only to practices traditionally associated with visual arts and theatre. This may evoke associations with the slogan 'cities as stages' and Erving

Goffman's book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). However, we understand performativity more broadly here. The performance category includes various forms of action – from meetings, discussions, lectures, conferences, briefings, pickets, demonstrations, marches, blockades (e.g. roads or, in the case of tenants' movements, not allowing for eviction), through happenings, artistic activities, to the most radical acts, such as self-immolation. These forms take on very diverse aesthetics, which in turn is closely related to the ideological (ethical) layer. The visual and auditory dimension of performative situations is therefore an extremely important part of the 'new arrangements' around the Lefortian 'empty space'[13] that characterizes democracy. Observing urban performances, it can be assumed that despite their incredible diversity, they are governed by certain, describable, 'arrangements'. The leaders of movements centered around a particular action usually shape it collectively, through negotiation and cooperation. They often use an existing strategy, circulating globally or locally. In contrast to the sphere of art, it is less common for one author to play an absolutely decisive role in this process – the importance of community for the creation of urban forms of democracy is revealed here.

However, it is often possible to trace and indicate the flow of ideas, inspirations or even specific objects between the urban/public space of performance and art spaces and vice versa. In the colors used, in the materials used, in sounds, shouts, slogans written on banners, in graphic signs, symbols (such as gas masks, signs of radioactivity, drawings of vehicles, images of city presidents, black clothing, umbrellas, brochure editions of the constitution, flags, drums, whistles, vuvuzelas and other props), the axiological order is actualized. Aesthetic forms are meant to refer participants, witnesses, decision-makers and other actors of public life to the values that are the causative agent of these expressions. The aesthetics of these activities can hardly be considered something accidental. It is connected with strategies consciously developed by their initiators. Of course, individual elements of performances are produced not only based on duplicating previously known models, emblems and images, etc: they are created primarily by stimulating innovation and building community, which, as has already been emphasized, appears to be crucial for the survival and further development of a democratic society. It is thanks to them that new meanings are produced. Of course, they are not only contesting in character, but they do not fit into the consensual myth of deliberative democracy.

Here, a clear distinction between contesting performance and a deliberative approach becomes clearer. Performances oscillate around the transition from the antagonistic model to the agonistic one. Following Iwona Sagan, let us emphasize that 'the understanding of political activity should not be limited to participation in social movements or institutionalized political processes. Political activity is also individual and collective, official and private, rational and emotional actions, and influences' (2017: 26). The Polish social geographer, referring to deliberative democracy, writes: 'democracy in deliberative terms is an institutionalized debate for the collective resolution of problems through discussion, while deliberation is the practice of resolving conflicts. As a result of the adoption of procedures based on public discussion and joint decision-making, the perspectives of all social groups concerned are taken into account, which leads to a broadening of mutual understanding and going beyond particular group interests. Decisions taken by deliberation are considered to represent the common good' (Sagan, 2017: 28). On the other hand, in the context of reflection on urban democracy and the possibility of using mechanisms related to deliberation within it, she points out that: 'in practice, a public discussion based on full impartiality, equality, openness, lack of coercion and unanimity is impossible. Even the most extensive deliberation procedures will not free

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[13] We discuss Lefort's account of democracy in chapter 1.1 of this deliverable.

the decision-making process from the influence of particular interests. It is susceptible to all forms of manipulation and play by pressure groups such as politicians, lobbying groups or media companies' (Sagan, 2017: 28). Decisions taken in this way do not lead to the attainment of the common good, but can contribute to maintaining existing inequalities, as well as to deepening them and institutionally justifying them. Deliberativeness is therefore more top-down, while urban democracy developing in performative forms is rather bottom-up. The urban performances referred to here should be situated in opposition to the traditional ways of functioning of representative democracy and institutional urban policy. The leaders of urban movements and activists can be described as spokesmen who speak 'on behalf of themselves and others' and not 'instead of others'.

Urban performativity takes very diverse and complex forms. Nevertheless, at the most basic level, it is necessary to take into account the element that is referred to as the double dimension of the spectacle – that is, the 'responsiveness' of power. The concept of interactivity of performative activities related to the co-presence in the same space (also understood politically and axiotically) and time of performers and participants – defined by Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008) as the 'autopoietic feedback loop' – must take into account the strategies and practices used by the authorities (i.e. those governing within representative democracy and in various ways representing its bodies). We have already mentioned that the category of performativity is not only connected with the categories of performance or theatre. The performance can be understood even more broadly than Guy Debord did, who, paraphrasing Marx, claimed that 'the whole life of societies in which modern production conditions reign promises to be a gigantic accumulation of performances' (Skórzyńska, 2014: 387). Lefebvre, on the other hand, believed that 'the city-spectacle is entirely subordinated to fueling and satisfying consumer needs only' (Skórzyńska, 2014: 388). Performance, of course, was not and is not a form of articulation reserved exclusively for grassroots urban movements seeking new forms of democracy. It also perfectly serves the authorities elected within the framework of representative democracy. As Polish cultural expert Agata Skórzyńska notes, referring to one of the works of Baz Kershaw, 'neoliberal democracies and consumer capitalism [...] is the social order in which performances are a mode of articulation of economic relations and medialized power relations – largely dependent on the procedures of executive action, carried out in front of others. Kershaw still sees performance as an opportunity for political and cultural radicalism: thanks to the logic of participation, not representation, which performance introduces into the public space' (2017: 392).

So far, activists, artists, and animators of culture and social life have been referred to as actors important for the creation of new forms of urban democracy. A significant role in this context is also played by the NGOs with which the abovementioned actors cooperate. It is NGOs who often animate cultural life and operate as disposers of public funding. However, as we indicate in the previous subchapter, the activity of NGOs can hardly be seen as free from influence or dependence on local and state authorities. The term 'projectosis' has been coined to indicate an environment of people who, as part of their work for non-governmental organizations, implement various projects financed from public funds. It refers in particular to the method of creating NGO activities based on grants awarded for the implementation of specific (targeted) social, cultural, educational projects, etc. This type of funding is unstable because its granting is determined each time by the opinion of the selection board, the number of points awarded by its members, as well as the priorities that have been set by the grantor for a given call. Funds are allocated for a certain amount of time, often for one, two or three years. This state of affairs is conducive to conducting business 'from project to project', and thus adjusting it to the expectations of the creators of competitions. The implementation of the project should also bring specific effects (in the application), which should

usually translate into specific numerical indicators, e.g. the number of direct and indirect recipients, the number of workshop hours completed, the number of mentions in the press, the number of printed promotional materials. Grant funding does not always allow for experimenting or making mistakes. The most important in this context seems to be the final result, which must be consistent with the priorities adopted in the competition.

According to Edwin Bendyk, a Polish columnist and head of the Stefan Batory Foundation, the situation of NGOs as urban actors concerning the phenomenon of projectosis presented here reproduces 'a model that is spreading along with the neoliberalization of the state and the public sector, which entrusts the provision of public services to the market and the third sector – in search of greater efficiency (read – lower costs). However, it is not only about cutting costs and using the precarious work of social organizations, they bring not only work but also competencies that public sector employees often do not have' (Bendyk, 2016). This neoliberalization of the state is strongly connected with the transfer of market relations to the way of shaping and implementing projects important for the production of new forms of urban democracies, and thus also for the implementation of axial democratic values. Focusing on the specific effect of the projects, i.e. various forms of profit for the grantor, does not leave too much space for taking into account the individual needs of project recipients. The use of the logic characteristic of the free market operation may also result in obscuring systemic inequalities and ignoring the power of their impact on the situation of citizens. Therefore, it is common for art and culture to be subsumed under the influence of authorities or other hegemonic actors, and preserve inequalities and injustices, rather than point them out. When talking about democratic management of culture, the interests of authorities and funders very often clash with these of the wider public.

4.4 Agonism and non-consensual dialogue

Doubts about the classical form of liberal democracy have led to alternative models of a democratic society that extend beyond deliberative democracy. As Hans Asenbaum states, recognizing them is important especially in the systemic approach to deliberation (or democracy in general), as other models might serve as a theoretical inspiration to (urban) utopias, fueling imaginations and narratives in a deliberative process, as well as inspiring democratic innovations (Asenbaum, 2022). This radical/agonistic perspective is also recognized within the EUARENAS project, not only as far as it criticizes deliberative democracy (which has been described in chapter 3.1 of this document), but also in terms of the new political imaginary of politics that it offers (Grant Proposal: 11-13). In the following section, we approximate some arguments that the theorists of 'difference' make about democracy, as we see them as both inspiring and drawing limits to inclusiveness and justice of politics and policy-making processes.

One of the best-known forms of this trend is the concept of agonistic democracy developed by UK scholar Chantal Mouffe, called agonistic democracy or radical democracy. Developing her concept, she refers to the views presented in her book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), which she wrote with her husband – the late Ernesto Laclau. The central notion of this book is the concept of hegemony, which was adopted from Antoni Gramsci. Hegemony occurs when a certain group or social class is able to present its own goals and values as universal, as an expression of the realization of far-reaching goals or the realization of universal emancipation. Laclau considers two ways of constituting the hegemonic relationship. The first option assumes that society is a conglomerate of groups pursuing their particular goals. Then these far-reaching goals are the result of a shaky consensus, which in no way abolishes the

identity of the groups involved. The second, extreme understanding of hegemony is that it is the realization of the pre-established essence of society. Then, however, hegemony loses its consensual character; it becomes an imposition of a given rule from above.

It is plain to see that the first way describes a liberal society, in which individuals and groups negotiate their place in the broader organization of society while taking care to protect their identity. The second way of constituting hegemony, on the other hand, describes the communitarian vision - here the values established by tradition constitute the organizing principle of the community, to which all particularisms existing in the community must succumb. Both options are rejected by Laclau. The first one is because the notion of community it adopts is extremely weak, almost non-existent, while the category of hegemony refers to a much stronger understanding of it. The second, on the other hand, presupposes a notion of community that is pre-given and in which no mechanism of agreeing on hegemony can emerge.

For Laclau, the community is, like any discursive formation, organized around an empty space and thus its existence can only be accomplished by filling that space. This filling is always hegemonic in nature, as it requires the substitution of some particularistic view with universal concepts such as order, unity, liberation, revolution etc. However, a consequence of the establishment of hegemony is the instability assumed in it and the ambivalence that permeates it. On the one hand, the victory of a certain hegemonic political option leads to the exposure of its partisanship. The concrete implementation of political slogans must reveal their limitation, and thus the mechanism of differentiation begins to work, which makes hegemony increasingly illusory. On the other hand, if a certain partisan political program becomes hegemonic, its victory also leads to a dilution of its original content.

The concept of hegemony served Chantal Mouffe to create a coherent and descriptive theory of democracy. Her starting point is a critique of liberal democracy conducted by the German right-wing jurist and philosopher Carl Schmitt. He presented the concept of politics as a clash of pure collective identities. The basic dimension of enemy/friend of the political does not need to have references to any value systems. It is enough that it is simply a decisive fact for determining the internal antagonism of society, as well as its external relations with other states. Thus, there can no longer be liberal illusions that consensus within the state is possible, all that can be done is to civilize antagonism, to turn war into politics. Moreover, the basic principle of liberal democracy, i.e., a universally binding legal order, is also an illusion, since the sovereign always has the power to change it, i.e., by creating it, he himself is not subjected to it. For Schmitt, the arguments were proof that liberal democracy is an illusion, that its key categories of consensus and legal order do not actually work. The democratic state is thus essentially a state of exception, which can of course be expressed to a greater or lesser degree. Chantal Mouffe took Schmitt's objections to liberal democracy seriously but disagreed with his final conclusion that democracy is impossible. Moreover, she considered that the German philosopher showed the weaknesses of the democratic system, which, however, can be made up for. Schmitt's ideas can therefore be used to improve the current form of liberal democracy.

For this purpose, two axial assumptions must be made. Firstly, society is doomed to constant antagonism, which is only temporarily removed by a hegemonic relationship. Politics is always an activity in which there are antagonistic tensions, and the task of democracy is not to remove them but to give them a civilized form. The weakness of liberalism is its prevailing belief that antagonistic elements and collective identities can be removed from politics. Politics then turns into a kind of discourse either ethical or economic, and instead of political struggle we have the search for rational compromise. Chantal Mouffe firmly rejects such a vision of the organization of society, which leads to the disappearance of the dimension of the political in

social life. According to her, such a vision is theoretically wrong and harmful. Secondly, society cannot be a conglomerate of different, fighting political forces. For its existence, it needs a hegemony that grows beyond all partisanship but always has a temporary, limited character. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the political scene is shaped in such a way that all views can come to the fore. This postulate found its expression in the concept of "radical democracy," which would be a development of liberal representative democracy. This is because the more diverse voices that appear on the political scene, the greater the chance of breaking the existing hegemony and thus consolidating pluralism, which in turn is a condition for the emergence of alternative visions of the social world. For this reason, Mouffe sharply criticizes the consensual-deliberative vision of politics. She writes: 'What the deliberative-democracy model is denying is the dimension of undecidability and the ineradicability of antagonism which are constitutive of the political. By postulating the availability of a non-exclusive public sphere of deliberation where a rational consensus could be obtained, they negate the inherently conflictual nature of modern pluralism. They are unable to recognize that bringing a deliberation to a close always results from a decision which excludes other possibilities, and for which one should never refuse to bear responsibility by invoking the commands of general rules or principles' (Mouffe 2000, 104-105). Instead of the deliberative-consensual model, she proposes agonistic pluralism, in which antagonism is replaced by agonism and the enemy by the adversary. Generally speaking, this transformation takes place since all parties to a democratic dispute accede to the rules of the 'democratic game', i.e., respect the results of elections and other procedures of a democratic society.

Thus, in some simplification, the model of politics proposed by her can be described as follows. In a democratic society, we are dealing with views grounded in collective identities. They are justified rationally, but behind them are deep emotional convictions. Because of this, a discussion is either impossible or radically limited, each side striving for ultimate victory, to achieve the hegemony of its opinions, that is, to impose them on the whole society. Usually, one group achieves this hegemonic position, but it is always temporary and contingent. This is because it is challenged by other social groups that seek to change the situation The advantage of democracy over other systems is that it is always possible to use procedures to replace one hegemony with another. The more social groups can express their opinions in the public space, the greater the likelihood of changing the hegemonic position. Such a 'policy of inclusion' will ensure that democratic societies can deal with the complex problems of the modern world. After all, the more alternative voices are present in the political sphere, the greater the chance of finding the right solutions, and the lesser the danger that democratic institutions will become a mere facade under which authoritarian solutions to social issues are hidden.

Chantal Mouffe sums up her ideas as follows: 'What we need is a hegemony of democratic values, and this requires a multiplication of democratic practices, institutionalizing them into ever more diverse social relations so that a multiplicity of subject positions can be formed through a democratic matrix' (Mouffe 1993: 45. It is in this way – and not by trying to provide it with a rational foundation – that we will be able not only to defend democracy but also to deepen it. Such a hegemony will never be complete, and anyway, it is not desirable for a society to be ruled by a single democratic logic. Relations of authority and power cannot completely disappear, and it is important to abandon the myth of a transparent society, reconciled with itself, for that kind of fantasy leads to totalitarianism. A project of radical and plural democracy, on the contrary, requires the existence of multiplicity, of plurality and of conflict, and sees in them the raison d'être of politics.

The agonistic conception of politics is undoubtedly an important corrective to liberal democracy. It allows

one to question the overly optimistic view of deliberation, which assumes that it is always possible to find a solution that satisfies all parties involved in a dispute. It also allows one to see that there are elements of arbitrariness in any discussion and in the choice of its final outcome, which are difficult to avoid. Finally, it also makes it possible to understand the inalienable antagonistic/agonistic potential of the political. It thus serves as a warning against disposing of it too easily, which can and often does lead to uncontrolled outbursts of political emotion.

Nevertheless, serious objections can be raised against this concept. It carries over, in a sense, even in a weakened form, Schmitt's tyrannical notion of politics, as Agnes Heller described it.: 'In this vision actions undertaken on behalf of something and not at same time against someone, are, by definition, unpolitical; so are speech acts aiming at mutual understanding. My main objection to Schmitt's version of the concept of the political is not that it is one-sided (…) but that it acquires its philosophical thrust from exclusion. It is, therefore, more than radical: it is outright tyrannical formulation of the concept of the political' (Heller 1991: 333). This tyrannical formulation is at least partly, I think, a consequence of the strict division between the political and the everyday. It is hard to deny that there is room for compromise and negotiation in day-to-day politics, but the concept of the political as constitutive conditions of day-to-day politics leaves no room for such practices. Similarly, one might question Mouffe's thesis that antagonistic/agonistic potential is the sole determinant of the political and that formal democratic rules are sufficient to domesticate it. In our opinion, a democratic society needs 'something more' to exist, and it derives its strength from the daily interactions of life and the daily dialogical relationships that determine the conditions and rules of political struggle. If we look at liberal democracy from this perspective, it appears to rely not so much on consensus, but on mutual understanding and non-consensual dialogue.

Such objections have led one of the authors of this report, Leszek Koczanowicz, to present a model of non-consensual democracy that could serve as a corrective to both consensual (deliberative) and agonistic democracy (Koczanowicz 2015). The proposal seeks to establish a new model of democratic politics, which is referred to as "non-consensual democracy." While agreeing with the proponents of the antagonistic model that conflicts are inevitable in any society, it is not necessary to accept their thesis that it is impossible for antagonistic social forces to understand each other's political positions. Dialogue is in itself a value that changes the trajectory of political struggle. It changes it because it leads to an increasing mutual understanding of the parties involved in the conflict. It should be emphasized here that dialogue is not for reaching consensus, but precisely for better understanding.

The concept of non-consensual dialogue and non-consensual democracy can therefore also correct Habermas' concept of democracy. The German philosopher is convinced that the dialogical character of language stems from its internal structure, from the logic imposed by the procedures of communication. The rationality of communication, its orientation towards understanding, must lead (unless, of course, disruptive factors arise) to consensus. In response to this thesis, it can be said that from the perspective of non-consensual democracy, this is not necessarily the case. Achieving consensus, and here one must agree with Mouffe, is difficult, or even impossible, because not only rational beliefs but also emotions are involved. Mutual understanding, on the other hand, is possible, even if it does not lead to consensus. From this perspective, the real measure of democratic procedures and movements is the extent to which they facilitate mutual understanding between all parties involved.

4.5 The nightmare of participation

A significant contribution to the debate on participation in the context of the city was made by architect Marcus Miessen in his book *The Nightmare of Participation* published in 2011 with the preface by visual and spatial culture researcher Eyal Weizman, and with a record of discussion with aforementioned philosopher Chantal Mouffe. According to Miessen, in the last decades, participation, or 'involvement', in both political and social dimensions, has been considered important for the democratization of decision-making processes, for inclusion of citizens and for negotiation of strategies and solutions. However, this 'inclusion mode' has been reduced by politicians to a convenient tool of domination.

Miessen claims that inclusion in its essence does not indicate an agreement but a conflict of various interests. The search for alternative models of operation is based on criticality which stands in opposition to the choices of the majority (of voters). It is often connected with the rejection of the authority for which egalitarianism is nothing but an axiom of assigning equal weight and value to each vote. Presidents and city councils selected in general (representative) elections do not wish to share their power on the assumption that they received (from a sovereign) a social mandate to exercise it authoritatively, i.e., to make decisions independently.

Participation discourse and related practices can be considered as a kind of tactic that only makes appearances with regard to grassroots initiatives. For the motto of his book, Miessen chose the words of Slavoj Zizek for who one of the worst possible scenarios is when an outsider makes our own dreams come true and turns them into a nightmare. This happens when the decision-making process of the city policy in a given area becomes socialized. Unlike guerilla or pirate participation, licensed participation is even referred to by Weizmann as collaboration, in the most negative sense of the word. The government offers citizens a showcase, ostentatious (i.e., populist in one of the meanings of the term) participation in decision-making by offering something relatively small (e.g., on the scale of the finances of the entire municipality). It does not share decision-making or agency but gives a fictitious sense of ethical responsibility. Institutional authority, constituted within the framework of struggling representative democracy, legitimizes its actions through participation which is a hoax of the principle of democratization. In this sense, it can be said that politicians and members of the administration they control have aversion to democracy (which they often do not even hide). Such tools as civic budgets, in the majority of cases, do not change the system of management by any means, but, rather, are at the service of neoliberalism (though it was not the case in their early days). Authorities create the semblance of socialization of politics and a sense of responsibility while in fact serving the interests of global and local capital on which they depend to various degrees. What turns the alliance into the aforementioned collaboration or being at the service of power? The paradox of participation lies in the fact that activists who have so far confronted the government and who are now forced to negotiate with it on common ground. In practice, due to ill-conceived solidarity and political correctness, diverse types of tactical compromises are made here. The responsibility of politicians for their decisions is diffused, even though the agency is still on their side.

This is why Miessen encourages other forms of generating changes. Following Mouffe, he calls for a reversal of the existing way of thinking about participation. He offers a model which transcends the mode of consensus which obscures the real interests of local governments and imposes restrictions on representatives of activist circles. Conflict is here the force that fuels transformation. Contrary to what authorities claim, conflict does not block actions but actually causes them, being their real driving force. There is no need for a mandate or a licensed opposition, what is necessary, however, is critical thinking from outside. For democratic principles consensus is not always constructive, it can be even destructive.

The architect postulates entering politics by aggressively pushing into the existing structures and by doing so creatively transforming the city and the community. He calls this practice post-consensual, echoing Hans Ulrich Obrist that the need to damage the machinery of consensus is constantly increasing. He quotes the Belgian thinker who states

> 'I was already kind of critical and skeptical about the notion of participation last time. I think that one of the problems that I have with this notion is the type of understanding of democracy and of the political that is normally implied when people talk about participation. Usually, the idea of participation connotes that, if everybody were included and would participate, the consensus could be reached, and full democracy realized. There is also usually some kind of opposition between the ideas of participatory and representative democracies – a valorization of participatory democracy, participation, in general, and other things that indicate that, in fact, representative democracy is something that normally works, in the interest of the elite, while participation is more progressive. So, it presupposes a certain understanding of the political which I have been challenging in my work'.

A different approach to conflict and its overcoming than the one presented by Mouffe, perhaps more radical and marked with a more significant anarchistic course (Chambers, 2011; May, 2008), can be found in the political thought of Jacques Ranciere. The main difference is not even in the way the French philosopher defines politics, conflict, democracy etc., but in his approach to those features of modern societies and the conclusions he draws from them. For Ranciere, democracy, as we recognize it in contemporary, Western political systems, is merely a 'conventional name for that bloc of states' (Rancière, 2011: 77), while the other definition of democracy he gives refers to an ideal term of a *demos*, which would be constructed of 'those who have no qualification to rule, which means at the same time everybody and anyone at all' (Rancière, 2010: 52). Such an understanding of democracy, of course, leads to a paradox, that no political system is truly democratic in its existence. It does not mean that democracy can never occur or is some kind of an empty signifier; Ranciere argues that, in certain cases, democracy is a feature of all politics, but 'not in the sense of a set of institutions, but in the sense of forms of expression that confront the logic of equality with the logic of the police order' (Rancière, 1999: 101). The French philosopher, therefore, considers state, government, or virtually any socio-political order as a mode of police rather than politics, which is not designed to bring more equality but to protect the current state of social relations. Together with the impossibility of implementation of a perfect democratic order, this brings the philosophy of Ranciere to radical constatations that there is no way for bettering the situation of every individual at the same time, and that this attempt will always be built upon a lie about some specific social nature, providing the society with 'an *arkhe*' (Rancière, 1999: 16). Hence, every emancipatory struggle (both by individuals and groups) is enrooted with some kind of police, and every breach in the logics of political *arkhe* is at the same moment the construction of a new one. Therefore, participation can be viewed as democratic only temporarily, as a moment of creation of new social relations and identities, or transformation of the rules and norms of an *ancien regime*, and only to the extent when it is confronted and subsumed into the hegemonic system of institutions and norms regulating every-day life. We finish this chapter with an illustration of how this process might look like by briefly presenting how new ecological movements create deliberative spaces of participatory struggle, and how they are confronted with state-led policing of private interests of large corporations.

4.6 Concluding illustration – forest as a deliberative and participatory laboratory of a city

The forest may seem like the opposite of the city. In many respects, this is indeed the case, but in some circumstances, the two spaces have important similarities. Let us look at forest occupation. This is a form of direct action in which people block logging by living in the forest. They usually oppose in this way the construction of a road, the expansion of a mine or other situations where industrialization contributes to the destruction of valuable ecosystems.

The best-known initiative of this type in Europe is the Hambach occupation, which is described as a crystallization of the fossil fuel conflict in Germany. The first protests began in 2012 and lasted until 2020 when the authorities decided to protect the remnants of the forest. At its peak, 50,000 people took part in actions against the expansion of a nearby mine, creating a broad, supportive network of regional, state-level, and international organizations and individuals.

Hambach forest and surface mine

Source: Google maps

Hambach protests in 2018

Source: Greenpeace Polska, flickr.com

Hambach surface mine

Source: Wikimedia.org

Hambach protests at the mine

Source: Ende gelande, flickr.com

The politics of forest blockades can be understood on two levels: large and small. The first sets the protest in the context of local, regional, and state politics – external to the occupation. The second, usually not analyzed, is the internal politics of the blockade. The occupation becomes home to a community sometimes for years. It faces the same challenges as others – food supply, division of duties, organization of events, and expansion of the settlement. In order for the blockade to last, they need to develop a workable system

for making decisions and putting them into practice. In this sense, the occupation of the forest is a micro-city.

Most of the occupiers are anarchists. For them, the forest blockade becomes a Temporary Autonomous Zone, that is, the impermanent space of insurrection described by Hakim Bey (2003). The creator of this concept compares it to pirate utopias and argues that only in this way can modern people experience freedom. Due to the ideological assumptions of anarchism, the system developed should be radically equal. Anarchists oppose unjustified hierarchies. In addition, the concentration of power can have serious legal consequences. The person responsible for organizing or leading such a protest is exposed to serious reprisals. Hence, the blockade policy must be structured ahierarchically. Every member of the community should have an active part in solving its problems, everyone should participate in the political life of the blockade.

Most decisions are made through deliberation, which is an attempt to reach a consensus through conversation based on rational arguments. In this process, each person should be able to share their own perspective. Anarchist groups differ in the ways they moderate such meetings. Most try to introduce rules that prevent individuals from dominating the space. Some use hard-core facilitation, where the moderator can interfere in the discussion with words such as: 'I noticed that only people with higher education have spoken so far. Would anyone outside this group like to speak?'. Before deliberation starts, participants also openly discuss their privilege, making others aware of how it may play out during the debate and allowing moderators to point it out in order to counter-balance it with less privileged voices.

The forest blockade can be understood as a form of political performance. During the Hambach occupation, activists used wild animal masks. During actions fraught with the risk of repression, anarchists often cover their faces, but the choice of the animal mask here is not only pragmatic but also artistic and symbolic. The occupiers are no longer just defenders of nature, they want to show that they are a part of it. This changes not only the narrative of the action and the political discourse built around it but reconstructs the entire identity of the inhabitants of the blockade.

The occupation of the wilderness is thus a deeply democratic endeavor from both an external and internal perspective. It should be noted that the understanding of democracy here is broader than the common use of the word and has little to do with its liberal counterpart. Participation and deliberation are not only grassroots and bottom-up, but they are also directed against the state and large business, who are not seen as partners but oppressors. By choosing performance, protest and direct action as means of political activity, forest blockades emphasize that there is no space for compromise in case of protection of the planetary ecosystem. They use deliberation as a means of internal management but refuse to enter into a debate and compromise with stakeholders oriented on using forests for private (or state) profit.

While the Hambach Forest blockade ended up with partial success, initial declarations of the German government were diluted in the actual policy in favor of the energy companies (Mohr and Smits, 2022: 9). Moreover, the policy-making process was not peaceful at all, and before the German Coal Commission prepared the Final Report that recommended

phasing-out coal in a timeline allowing for preservation of the Hambach Forest, four evictions of the site have been carried out by police and private security companies (Mohr and Smits, 2022: 3). The use of violence to suppress democratic protests and performances in the name of profit or state security is not unfortunately rare, and while the persistence and scale of Hambach protests allowed for relative success in bearing impact on environmental policy, many other forest occupations – such as Wilczyce (the 'Wolfens Collective') occupation in the Polish Karpaty Wildforest – have been violently disrupted by the state police, border guards, and private security companies.

Pocztówka z Nory 219A - terenu okupacji Wilczyc
[Postcard from Burrow 219A - the occupation area of the Wolfens Collective]
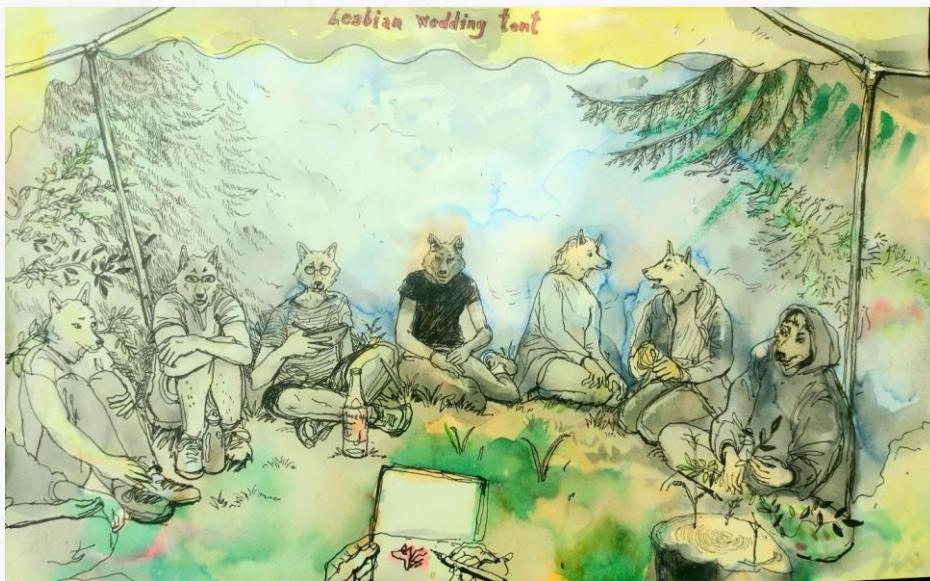
Source: anonymous Author

Pocztówka z Nory 219A - terenu okupacji Wilczyc
[Postcard from Burrow 219A - the occupation area of the Wolfens Collective]

Source: anonymous Author

While the above are extreme examples of democratic participation and the creation of deliberative sites, they are real-life cases that show how bottom-up participation is disrupted by the police and the logic of the state and profit-oriented capitalism. This also indicates certain limits to democratic participation and especially its ability to influence state politics when it contradicts its hegemonic logic of operation. The persistence of Hambach occupiers, and especially their resistance to violence, shows that it is possible, but requires exceptional organizational and communicative skills and networking resources, especially on the transnational scale.

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