EUARENAS

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

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Structural background and theoretical challenges

JUNE 2021

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.

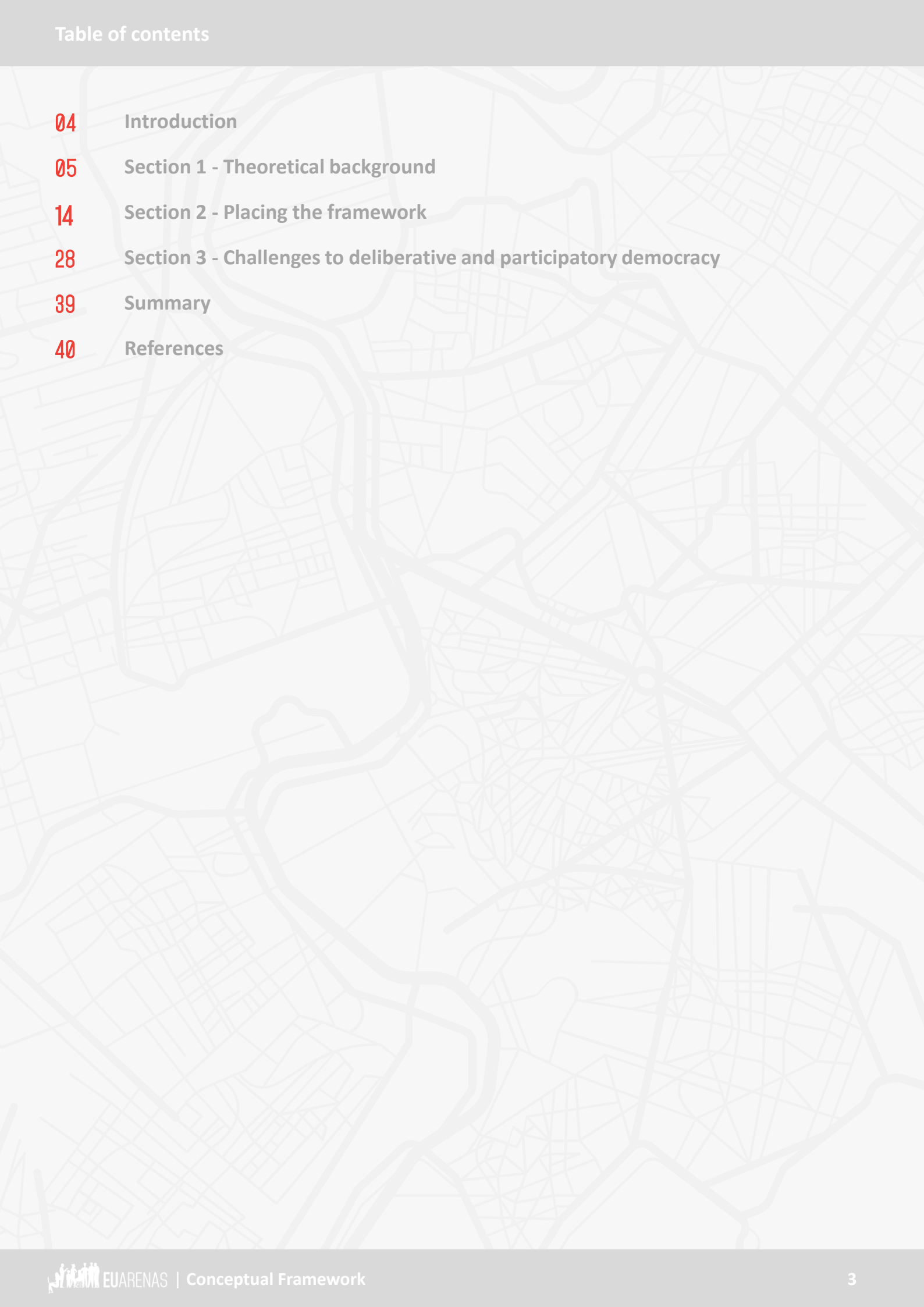For more information:

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About the document:

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Crafting a well balanced conceptual framework for a project such as 'Cities as Arenas of Political Innovation in the Strengthening of Deliberative and Participatory Democracy' (**EUARENAS**) requires a very precise, yet multilayered approach. The project scope ranges across multiple disciplines of social sciences and - moreover - engages numerous actors from different professional and national backgrounds. Social scientists, NGOs, local activists and civil servants from countries across Europe work together to foster understanding and capabilities of cities as major proponents of democratic innovations.

Such a task requires a conceptual framework that is intelligible and intuitive for all project partners, but that also does not cut corners on the current state of debate within numerous sub-fields of political philosophy and theory. From representative to participative models of democracy, from deliberative to agonistic ontologies of politics, and from (trans)national to local arenas of democracy - all those dimensions are accounted for in our report. By introducing elements from each of these various fields we ensure that the framework is both coherent and complete, i.e. sufficient to carry out numerous tasks designed for the project.

By placing **EUARENAS** project within a well-defined, up-to-date theoretical framework, we want to achieve the following:

1. Connect **EUARENAS** project to the most recent scientific debates, providing for its impact within social sciences and public policy;
2. Challenge existing concepts to identify potential pitfalls or gaps in theory and practice. These can be addressed by combining further conceptual and empirical research;
3. Provide partners with conceptual tools that will help them prepare for practice-oriented tasks and possible challenges they might face.

To prepare a simple, but not simplified, conceptual framework, this report combines brief essays, infographics and lexicons. Our approach is to take the very essence of numerous overlaying concepts and present them in a way that will help further the readers understanding of all the entangled relations that they form.

OUR AIM IS TO ENSURE THAT ALL PROJECT PARTNERS HAVE A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE MOST RECENT CONCEPTS IN THE FIELD, TOGETHER WITH THEIR MULTIPLE CONNOTATIONS AND MEANINGS
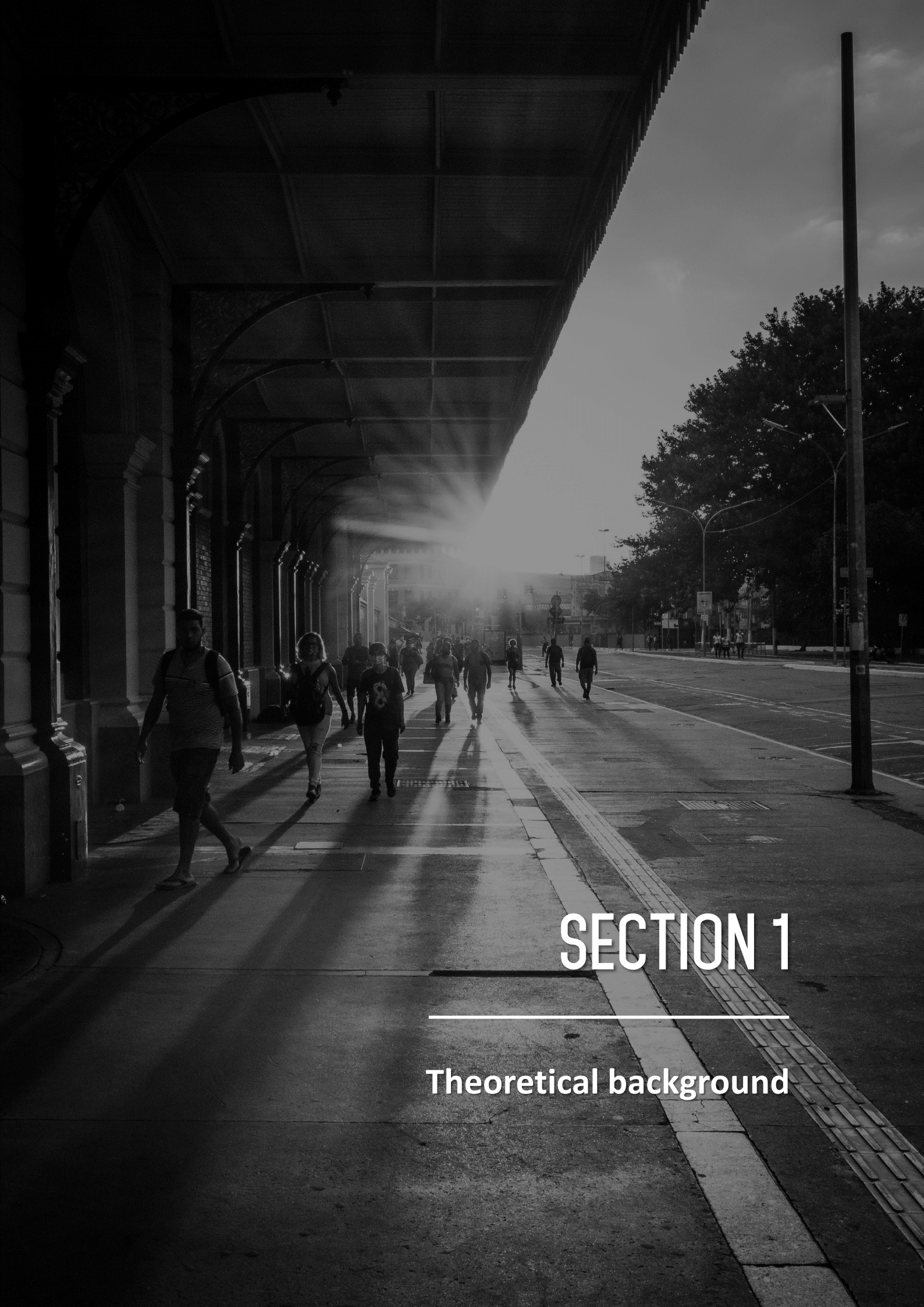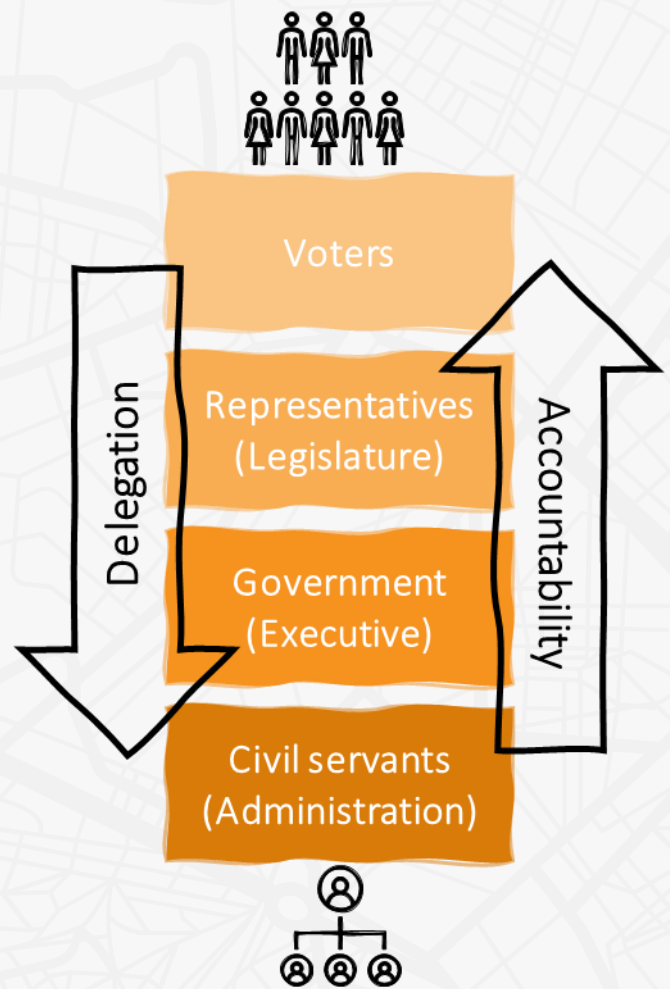
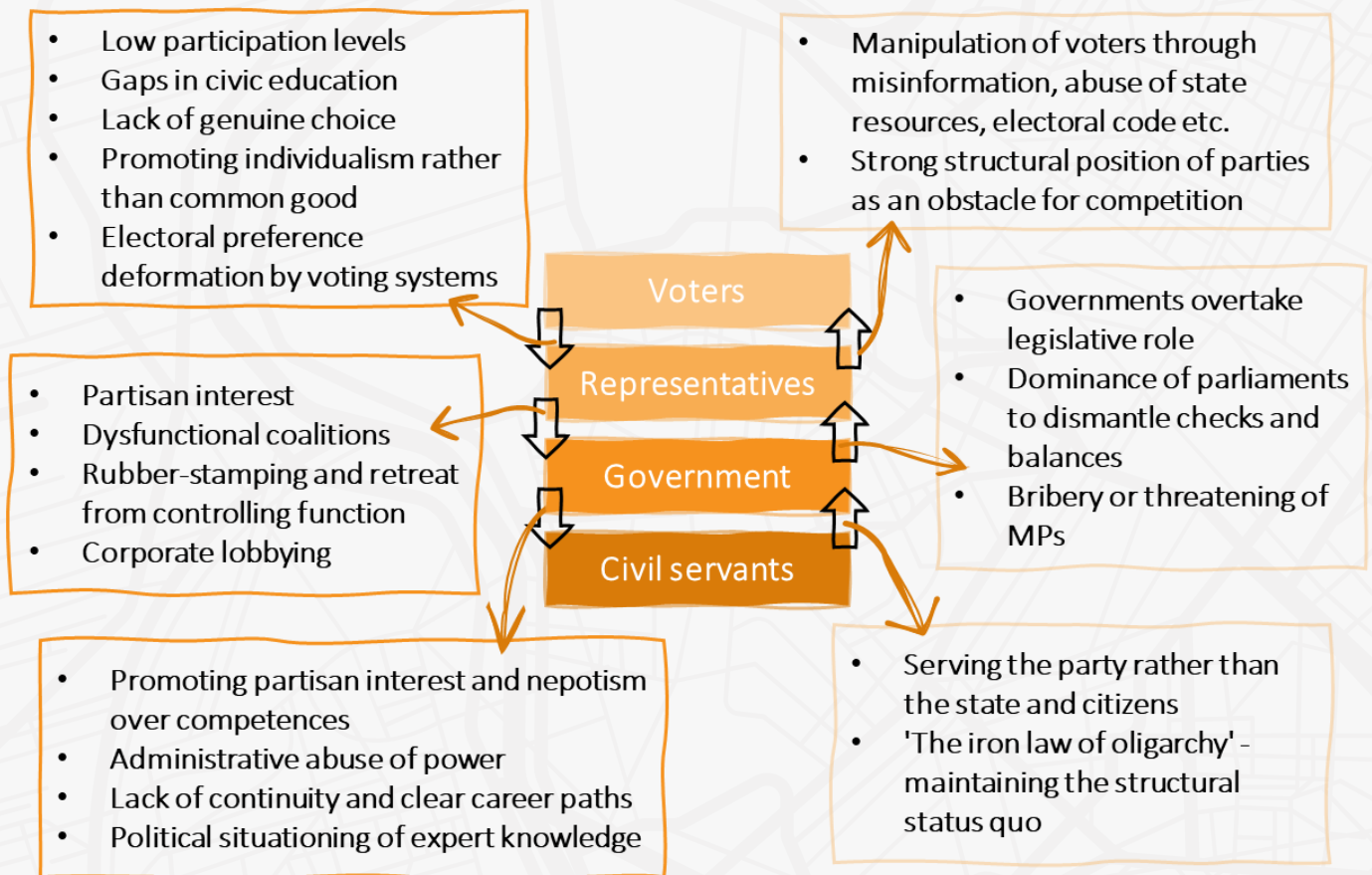# SECTION 1

Theoretical background

Representative democracy as a concept emerges from a need to realize a political idea of giving voice to every citizen. While direct participation of every eligible person is technically impossible, a model of a decision-making process that provides for both representative delegation of power, and accountability of politicians and civil servants have been implemented in all parliamentarian democracies in the second half of the 20th century.

Every few years citizens take part in an electoral process where they choose their representatives to legislative bodies - parliaments. The majority of representants later vote to elect Prime Minister and his cabinet and which creates legal boundaries for them to act. Government then implements those actions by appointing civil servants and instructs them with executive orders. Such an administration is responsible for direct contact with citizens - organizing public services, providing safety or executing legal measures. Civil servants however are not directly accountable to citizens. Within this sphere the chain of delegation turns back, and accountability is instead enacted through executive and legislative bodies during next elections.

This mechanism serves as a universal justification for representative democracies' legitimacy. The model here presented is, of course, simplified - it does not take into account different forms of regimes (shared executive and legislative power), intertwining levels of authority (local, state, international), or does not explicitly indicate the transformation of roles and structures of modern political parties which fuel the mechanism of such representation. But it is enough to present the very conceptual core of representative, liberal

democracy, and delivers a starting point to discuss the main problems it generates.

- 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

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

Government

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

Civil servants

- 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

Multiple challenges posed to the **'chain of delegation'** stem either from the imperfections of political systems and human behaviour, or from the corruption and misfunction of political actors - especially political parties. Issues in the first group range from natural consequences of representative voting, such as a deformation of preferences by an electoral system or coalition agreements, to lack of interest, organization, mobilization and public competences of voters. These are common traits of humanity and our social order, therefore need to be accounted for in every political system, though there are ways to reduce or reshape their impact, such as investments in education or enhancing voting systems. It is, however, more difficult when it comes to the dysfunctionality of political parties and their ties to big business and corporate lobbyist.

Parties are key actors in the system of representative democracy. Transformations that occurred in the last few decades (professionalization of parties, mediatization of politics), disturbs the delegation process especially through manipulations of the public, promoting partisan interests and nepotism, and putting PR above policy reforms.

The role of political parties is even more striking when it comes to disrupting the **'chain of accountability'**, where political parties with strong leaders and centralized structures yield effective control of governments and MPs, disrupting their roles in the system of political checks and balances. These measures, together with modern political campaigning, can seriously impair the final step in the accountability of representative democracy - electoral fairness, especially by influencing voters' choice and genuine public knowledge of state affairs.

Liberal democracy

A common name for a range of legal, institutional and structural designs that respect basic ideas of human rights, rule of law, separation of powers, market economy and democratic legitimacy. According to Chantal Mouffe, it is an area of a constant tension between two exclusive notions - personal freedom and democratic equality - that through political praxis 'contaminate' each other, creating a space of bargaining between different types of political systems. There is a broad range of 'liberal democratic' institutional solutions in different aspects of power, e.g. parliamentarian or presidential regimes, majoritarian or proportional electoral systems, neoliberal or social-democratic economic approach etc. Liberal democracies rely on democratic representation which is confirmed in regular elections, but is also supposed to be strengthened through public participation either in referenda or public consultations, or through organizations such as labour unions working within a state-regulated field of industrial relations and lobbying.

Professionalization of political parties

Since the formation of first parliaments and political parties, their structures and roles went through numerous transformations. Hence, the functioning of the representative model of democracy has been severely impacted, and while political parties may appear more effective, it is justified to say that they are less democratic.

The first major transformation led from 'mass' to 'catch-all' parties. This phenomenon was described around 50 years ago, though some first observations were made already in the first decades of the 20th century. As the effect of this process party programmes, elite recruitment and campaigning methods were less determined by their class origin and interest, and more by professional knowledge and expertise in fields of management and marketing. Electoral victory became the main goal of political parties, and therefore PR professionals became more important than policy experts or 'tribunes of the plebs'.

The second major transformation, though intertwined with the first, was the emergence of a 'cartel' party model, ie. parties that are heavily relying on state finances and donations from the biggest business branches. Together with a further professionalization of political campaigning, cartel parties proved to be more effective in winning elections because of the amount of controlled assets - financial, organizational, institutional - they amassed. Cartel parties are more likely to represent the interest of the state rather than that of their voters while maintaining domination over potential new competition trying to emerge in an electoral game.

Industrial relations, trade unions and lobbying

The term industrial relations in the field of policy relates to an institutional framework within which negotiations and decisions on the relations between employers and employees are being made. In some cases, this extends to state-wide laws and regulations that influence all work- and production-related issues. Such organized industrial relations were the bedrock of participation that supplemented elections in the representative model of democracy.

However, with the neoliberal revolution in policies and discourses that started in the late 1970s, industrial relations became less relevant for at least two reasons. First is that as a result of politics of flexibility, platform digitalization and precarization of labour, fewer workers can organize in trade unions and therefore exert their interest in negotiations. Second, the deregulation of big business and capital flows immensely strengthened the employer side, additionally encouraging direct lobbying with 'cartel' parties and hence making industrial negotiations obsolete.

The 'Iron Law' of Oligarchy

A term coined by Robert Michels. According to this theory, any complex bureaucratic organization will, in time, establish an elitist, oligarchic structure. The 'leadership class' will then develop and maintain tactical and technical solutions and modes of operating that are parallel to their primary functions. Organizations act in order to justify their existence, secure continuous operation (even if their original tasks are fulfilled) and ensure the growth of assets and power. Such organizations are usually more conservative, resistant to changes (internal and in their environment) and generally aim at maintaining the status quo.

The 'Iron law' affects all kinds of organizations - from private corporations and labour unions to public administration (also on municipality level), political parties and large NGOs. While it is not a 'law' as in natural sciences, it should be perceived as a widespread tendency that can be realized to a different extent. Nevertheless, this process has a negative impact on representative democracy, as it develops

alternative elites and sources of influence, operating outside of the chain of delegation and accountability.

Policy paradox in public decision making

Policy paradox refers to a theoretical orientation based on criticism of decisionism, which stated that general objectives of a well-designed public policy are pursued through objective and unbiased analysis delivered by experts. On the contrary - as Giandomenico Majone and Deborah Stone claimed in their major works in the field - the very process of expertise, argumentation and communication is embedded in rhetoric, persuasion and the multilayered political game of interests. Hence, every *policy goal* is underlaid, put through and realized in a close connection to the *political goal*. For the sake of policy analysis, Stone proposes to move from market-oriented model to a community model, which embraces both power-oriented, self-interest driven coercion AND altruistic, community-oriented motivations as inseparable sides of the same, incomplete and imperfect political/policy-making process.

### Mediatization and the era of 'post-politics'

Various types of media have played a crucial, though ambiguous role in modern democratic systems since their very beginning. From printed outlets that fostered bourgeoise debates on public issues, to mass media that reshaped leadership styles, political actors use them to achieve their goals. However, despite bringing a technological revolution in communication and access to information, media outlets have many times proved to be deceiving in terms of genuine knowledge and civic virtues. Electronic media -

traditional and new social media - can be used as a tool for disinformation, smear campaigning and fake news. But this is not the only problem - commercialization of media and consumerism they invoke impairs civic virtues, making people disengaged with policy-oriented politics. They either retreat from voting or follow 'political soap-operas' precisely crafted by professional marketers and spin doctors.

At the same time, mainstream political parties focused solely on winning elections, tend to address a median voter. This invokes avoiding any controversial issues, most likely acknowledging that they are a matter of private sphere. This 'post-political' approach dismisses most factual, political problems, keeping them outside of the scope of the public debate. In recent years this strategy has led to a radical reaction of populist 'total politics', which in turn tend to politicize all controversial issues. However, their goal is not to address them through policy, but to achieve the mobilization of voters disenchanted by 'post-politics' and radicalized in social media.

Rubber-stamping legislature

A recent phenomenon observed in most democratic systems that refers to a diminishing role of Parliaments as independent, deliberating legislative and oversight bodies. It is one of the effects of centralization and professionalization of political parties and campaigning. MPs, usually strictly dependent on the party leadership, withdraw their legislative initiative and restrict themselves to confirm acts of the law prepared directly by governments.
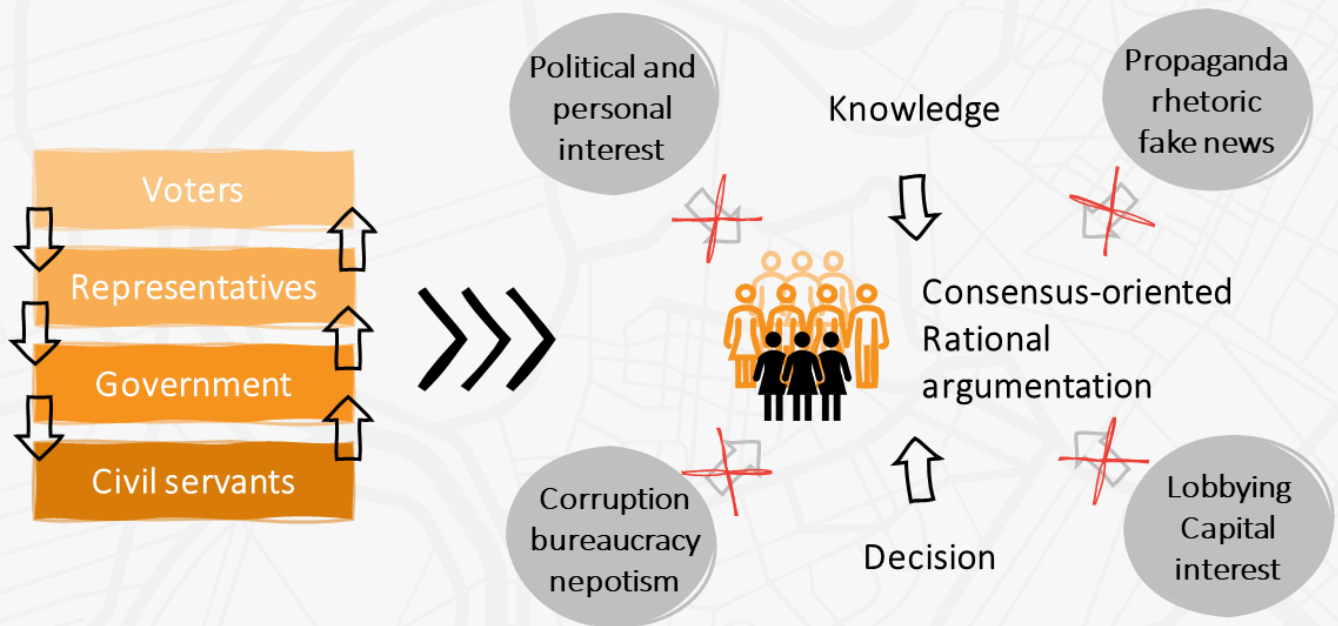
The question of enhancing democracy has occupied philosophers ever since the beginning of modernity. Thus, it is no surprise that they have continued their questioning of the model of representative, liberal democracy, especially after recognizing the numerous challenges it faces.

This is how the idea of deliberative democracy was born. It first originated from writings of Jurgen Habermas and Joshua Cohen, with the latter building his model upon the writings of John Rawls. The main idea of deliberation was to substitute representation and majoritarian voting in parliaments with direct involvement and consensual decision-making. Such an ideal model would satisfy the radical principle of democracy - that is that everyone is involved in making the law - with individual freedom, where everyone affected by the law can voice their concerns and veto the solution. By eliminating the need for representation, deliberation also gets rid of the most problematic elements of it: political parties and their appetite for power that distorts democratic delegation of power and accountability.

How to achieve such a consensus on policy terms? For political philosophers, the essential move was to overcome egoism, political emotions and self-interest. While Rawls presented it through a famous thought experiment with the veil of ignorance, Habermas and Cohen embedded it in their theories by allowing only rational, logical argumentation based on facts. In such communication, individuals can arrive at a consensual agreement on a specific issue, thus assigning it intersubjective (therefore universal) legitimacy.

The emergance of such a concept is not a surprise. It is a late-20th century realization of essential modern concepts of democracy, such as the "general will" of Rousseau or the enlightened, rational republic of Kant. It is organized around the concept that citizens ought not only to be ruled with their input collected every election, but that they should also be the ones partaking in the decision-making process. This genealogical heritage is a key to understanding why deliberation became broadly accepted as the next step in the evolution of liberal democratic theory and practice.

Veil of ignorance

A thought experiment proposed by John Rawls, that put citizens in a hypothetical situation (so-called original position) where they had no information on their status, social position, the order of the society and even their personal conceptions of the good. Discussing beyond the veil of ignorance, citizens were able to act impartially and arrive at a universal conclusion regarding what is justice and how it should be implemented in a just, well-ordered society. The idea of impartiality became the key element in deliberative theories, indicating that based solely on reason, legitimate political claims can be made and assessed in a democratic and universal way.

Ideal speech situation

This term was introduced by Jurgen Habermas and it is a more formal representation of Rawls' original position. It describes a situation in which people are able to discuss and solve issues based only on transparency, rational arguments and evidence, thus being free from the coercion of non-rational elements of speech (such as emotions or rhetoric). A similar situation has been described by Cohen, however in a fuller concept of the ideal deliberative procedure. In both concepts what is constitutive of this ideal situation is also that all participants of the public sphere are allowed (formally) and able (substantially) to take part in the discussion and voice their arguments, as long as they are reasonable, non-coercive and based on evidence. Any participant can ask - or be asked - to further argue on his own reasons for particular claims until everyone is satisfied with the answer. In the ideal speech situation, a consensus is reached by all participants after a certain amount of time that is enough to weigh on all evidence and corroborate all presented arguments. What underlies the possibility (or even inevitability) of a consensus under those ideal conditions is a primary illocutionary function of language, i.e. that in every speech act we first want to be understood by others. It is only after that other functions - perlocutionary - can be expressed. Hence, every use of language aiming at manipulation or coercion is parasitic to its primary mode of understanding.

Discourse (D) and Universalization (U) principles

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'. On the other hand, the 'universalization principle' (U) ('All affected can accept the consequences and the side effects that [the norm's] general observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of everyone's interests, and the consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities for regulation') supplements these claims by reconstructing an impartial, moral point of view. This is how a reconstruction of the substance of 'general will' can be justified as democratic, bridging moral cognitivism with a political procedure.
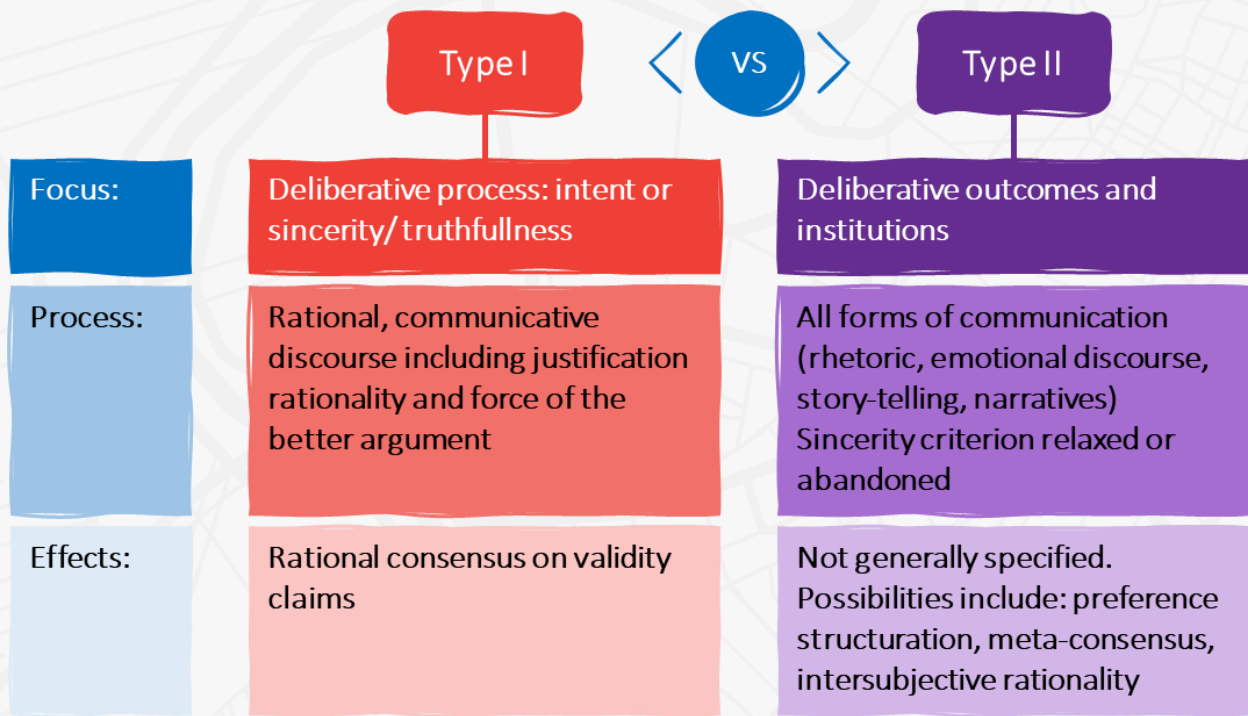
The informal and formal public sphere

The public sphere is the discursive area where the political will and opinion of the people can be forming. It is a mediator between the state and society. For the last two hundred years, the public sphere has undergone several transformations from bourgeois to mass and bureaucratic public sphere, where capitalist consumption and welfare state substituted lively, emancipatory debates that were forming citizens as a counterweight to the state power. To resist the process of colonization of the public sphere by capital and bureaucracy, Habermas proposes a deliberative model of politics that is based on a reconstruction of a robust, discursive public sphere, constructed in accordance with (D) and (U) principles. It should originate from a broad range of informal associations and everyday talks and in this way generate 'influence'. Subsequently, it should be supported by media and other channels to reach the formal public sphere, allocated near the core of modern political systems (i.e. parliaments). That's how influence is transformed into a 'communicative power', maintaining its democratic potential without a distortion coming from political representation. Arguments conceived this way form what is called a 'public reason'.

SECTION 2

Placing the framework

	Type I	Type II
Focus:	Deliberative process: intent or sincerity/truthfullness	Deliberative outcomes and institutions
Process:	Rational, communicative discourse including justification rationality and force of the better argument	All forms of communication (rhetoric, emotional discourse, story-telling, narratives) Sincerity criterion relaxed or abandoned
Effects:	Rational consensus on validity claims	Not generally specified. Possibilities include: preference structuration, meta-consensus, intersubjective rationality

The promise of reviving liberal democracy facing multiple crises of representation through deliberation attracted multiple philosophers and theorists. Ideal models of deliberation presented by Rawls, Cohen and Habermas sparked numerous debates both in the US and in Western Europe. The idea seemed quite radical from the beginning and therefore invited fierce criticism. It was not long before the ideal models of deliberation were discussed in order to adjust them to the requirements of a non-ideal political practice. In the literature, they are called type II deliberations.

Type II deliberations focused mainly on two issues: 1) ideal, all-encompassing rational consensus, which is usually impossible to achieve and occasionally even undesirable; and 2) purely logical argumentation, which sometimes needs to be supplemented with rhetoric, greetings etc. to foster the deliberative process. By accounting for these discussions, the concept of rational deliberation had been stretched. Thanks to this, deliberation started to be considered a viable political practice.

Numerous valuable contributions in the form of books and journal articles have been made to construct type II deliberation. Among the first major positions are John Dryzek's books *Discursive Democracy* (1990) and *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond* (2000), Amy Gutmann's & Dennis Thompson's *Democracy and Disagreement* (1996), Iris Young's *Inclusion and Democracy* (2000), a series of articles by Jean Mansbridge and a great collection of essays edited by Seyla Benhabib *Democracy and Difference* (1996).

In these texts, the Authors defended the relaxing of strict rigours of the deliberative ideal by referring to weakened or partial forms of consensus (e.g. by agreeing on a range of acceptable solutions, rather than on a particular one) and non-rational forms of communication. Interestingly, by making those 'concessions' to the deliberative form of the political process, they do not compromise on its democratic dimension. Quite the contrary, the argument goes, by making deliberation more practical, it can also become more inclusive.

2nd Gen

Adjusting theory to practical requirements

3rd Gen

Institutional turn: deliberation in mini-publics, deliberative experimenting

Empirical turn: studying deliberation in practice, developing new methods

4th Gen

Systemic Turn: designing deliberative practices into non-deliberative systems of institutions; integrating private interests, emotions and expert bias

With a theoretical background ready for bridging the ideal theory with requirements of the socio-political *praxis* (delivered by the so-called **2nd generation** of the theory of deliberative-democracy), scholars and politicians started to experiment with deliberation. Under what is known as a **3rd generation** of the theory, deliberation focused on small-scale events - mini-publics. Institutions and practices gathering usually around 25 randomly or carefully selected citizens became models for testing real-life deliberation. Many ideas such as Citizen's Assembly, Deliberative Polling, Planning Cell etc. emerged and has been implemented on different levels of public and private management. They have been crafted and shaped according to the needs, hence also adding to the development of methods and indicators of the empirical study of deliberation. Some concepts - such as a Deliberation Day, which projects a nation-wide deliberation in small, local groups in place of traditional presidential campaigning - were clearly just thought-provoking literary experiments, but others gained in popularity and inspired other innovations, such as the Citizens' Initiative Report.

With shifting focus from a popular deliberation available to virtually all interested citizens, the deliberative theory needed to bridge a gap of scale, since only a small fraction of the overall population could take part in mini-publics. That's where the **4th generation** of the theory was crafted - the systemic turn. It is a general approach to democratic regimes that aims at designing the system in such a way that synergizes nondeliberative and deliberative institutions, facilitating rational public discussions and channels transforming this 'communicative' power to 'administrative' decisions.

By incorporating discussions of the 2nd and 3rd generations of the theory, as well as recognizing other, nondeliberative actors, the systemic turn is challenged by the need of incorporating into the deliberative analysis private interests, emotions and the bias of expert knowledge. There is, unfortunately, no simple way to overcome those issues. Every instance of deliberation contains its own constraints, dynamics and problems, therefore further challenging theoreticians and practitioners of deliberation to improve their methods.

Mini-publics

The concept proposed by Archon Fung to describe deliberative practices that take place in small groups of about 25 citizens. This number of participants allow for a direct, quality deliberation among all while (if structured properly) maintaining the minimum requirement allowing for scalability of the deliberative outcome. Bigger mini-publics, containing hundreds or thousands of participants, are usually divided into smaller subgroups.

Deliberative systems

In this approach, connected to the systemic turn, deliberative democracy is understood as a set of interrelated parts, such that a change in one tends to affect another. In this system, a 'division of labour' occurs between deliberative and non-deliberative institutions, practices and actors. Precisely designed deliberation can have a positive, democratic impact on the system as a whole. Similarly, a range of nominally non-deliberative elements or actors can directly foster deliberation, therefore should not be left out of the scope of interest of deliberative democrats.

The systemic approach incorporates every-day talk (so-called 'societal discussions'), meta-deliberations on the political system, and an interplay of private interest and a bias of the expert knowledge into what is conceived as deliberation. This broad approach invites going beyond the strict procedure and structured deliberation, and to focus on the positive effects of open and reasonable debates on public issues.

Rhetoric

A mode of speaking that contains persuasive figures, aimed at going beyond pure rational logic. Since Aristotle, the rhetoric is disputed as having both positive and negative effects. Positive rhetoric provides means supporting rational argumentation, making it clearer and deeper by adding ethical and emotional dimensions to pure *logos*. This kind of rhetoric is not only accepted but even invited in type II deliberations. Many authors praise its deeds in training an understanding of practical discourses, bridging the argument with different contexts of the audience, and bonding the existing public coalitions of common interest. On the other hand, manipulative and exclusive rhetoric can be deceptive and detrimental to any deliberative process.

Emotions and narratives in deliberation

Similarly to rhetoric, the emotional discourse was primarily viewed as a constrain to deliberation. However, even pure rational argumentation is underlined by emotions of calmness and distance. In type II deliberations, emotions and passion are welcome to the extent to which they allow previously unnoted voices to be heard and discussed in public. A similar role is often ascribed to personal narratives. Together, those non-rational modes of communication can become effective means of empowerment, especially to those who are excluded from the cultural capital carrying education and understanding of the context proper for modern rational argumentation.

Greetings

Alternatively called 'public acknowledgement'. It is a mode of speaking that goes beyond argumentation. This includes literal greetings and saying goodbye, but also politeness, flattery, handshakes, hugs, small-talks, the offering of food and drinks etc. All these forms of greetings help in creating a positive approach of participants of deliberation to each other. In consequence, it also fosters

rational communication, since it strengthens the feeling of sincerity and reciprocity.

Preference structuration

It is one of the possible effects of deliberation, useful especially for the social choice theory. When consensus is not achievable in a particular deliberation, the sole process might change the structure of preferences of the participants, therefore making decisions based on their aggregation more optimized and democratic. For a social choice theorem, it allows surpassing the impossibility indicated in its traditional version by Keneth Arrow.

Meta-consensus

John Dryzek analyzed the complexity of the notion of consensus and pointed to its three dimensions: normative (agreement of the values that should predominate the decision), epistemic (agreement on a belief about the impact of a policy), and preference (agreement on expressed preference for a policy). According to that view, even after achieving a consensus, its subjects need to determine if they share common reasons for that. Needless to say, this makes already difficult ideal type of deliberation three times harder.

Instead, Dryzek proposed to turn the focus of deliberation to the meta-consensus in all three discussed dimensions. Meta-counterparts are easier to achieve when one or more dimensions of the consensus are disputed. This would be, respectively, a 1) recognition of the legitimacy of disputed values; 2) acceptance of credibility of disputed beliefs; and 3) agreement on the nature of disputed choices. Reaching a meta-consensus in one area can foster full agreement in others, therefore bringing deliberation to a successful end.

Deliberative disagreement

Similarly to Dryzek, Amy Gutman and Dennis Thompson recognize the positive aspects coming from a kind of meta-consensus. They see deliberation as a process that in some cases is unable to resolve deeply rooted, moral disagreements, but nonetheless are helpful in soothing the conflict in the community. This creates a condition of reciprocal understanding. Citizens reasoning about politics can find opposing positions as worthy of moral respect, even if the find them morally wrong.

If deliberation ends with this kind of disagreement, it will shift its democratic focus from the legitimization of the policy to recognition, identity politics and social inclusion.

Deliberative negotiations

In an attempt to combine deliberative theory (which in its classic formulation is insufficient for a policy based on diversity of opinions and interests) with a classical theory of negotiations, the role of initial and transparent conflict of interests is stressed. As long as such negotiations remain non-coercive, they can be called 'deliberative'. They can end with one of four effects: convergence (agreeing on a single outcome for the same set of reasons); incompletely theorized agreements (participants agreeing on a single outcome for different reasons); integrative negotiations (finding new solution dissolves the conflict of the interest); and fully cooperative distributive negotiations (the conflict of interests is maintained, but a distributive agreement that all consider fair is adopted). To meet the regulative ideal of deliberation, participants of negotiations need to share equal status, treat one another with respect and concern, listen carefully to each other and speak truthfully.

TOOLBOX OF DELIBERATIVE PRACTICES

Deliberative Poll

A short experiment containing two rounds of polling intersected by a round of deliberation lasting for a few hours or days. A sample of randomly selected citizens - e.g. 200 - is divided into smaller groups deliberating on the issue. After that another poll is taken and the shift of opinions indicates the direction towards which further deliberation could lead. This method is relatively easy and cheap, but only indicative of the substantive discussions.

Citizen Initiative Review

CIR is a tool that accompanies local referenda or elections. A small group of randomly selected citizens take part in deliberation and after a few days, they deliver a 1-page long recommendation report that is dedicated to all voters. The report is supposed to be consensual, but in case of disagreement, a brief mention of its reasons can be presented as well. CIR were proven to reduce the effect of political heuristics and bias, as well as enhance the social levels of trust.

Consensus conference

A mini-public consisting of carefully selected, most active citizens and experts in the specific field(s), usually disputing issues on the verge of technology, medicine and ethics. The deliberation itself is preceded by a few days of preparation when the details of the agenda are discussed, external experts and relevant witnesses invited, and general rules of deliberation are set. Consensus conferences might be the tool least open to public participation, but this approach is justified by the complexity of issues trying to be solved in a short time.

Citizens' Jury

Similarly to Consensus Conferences, Citizens' Juries are small mini-publics deliberating on important civic issues. However, they consist of randomly selected citizens, but are rooted in local communities by their activities: they organize public hearings, call for local witnesses and simply just talk to the people in the preparatory period of deliberation. They are common in the US and, with some modifications, also in the UK. They can be called to respond to a specific issue, but they also often work on a constant basis.

Citizens' Assembly

Perhaps the most common method of deliberation in recent years. It gathers a relatively large (75-200) sample of randomly selected citizens for a deliberation that lasts for a few days. In the first - educational - phase, citizens listen to experts and parties to the dispute, usually recruited from local NGOs. The deliberation itself aims at a consensual resolution to the issue, but the recommendations are usually accepted as binding to authorities when they reach a majority of 80%. Because of scale in number of participants, experts and lasting time, it is one of the most expensive and difficult methods of deliberation in mini-publics.
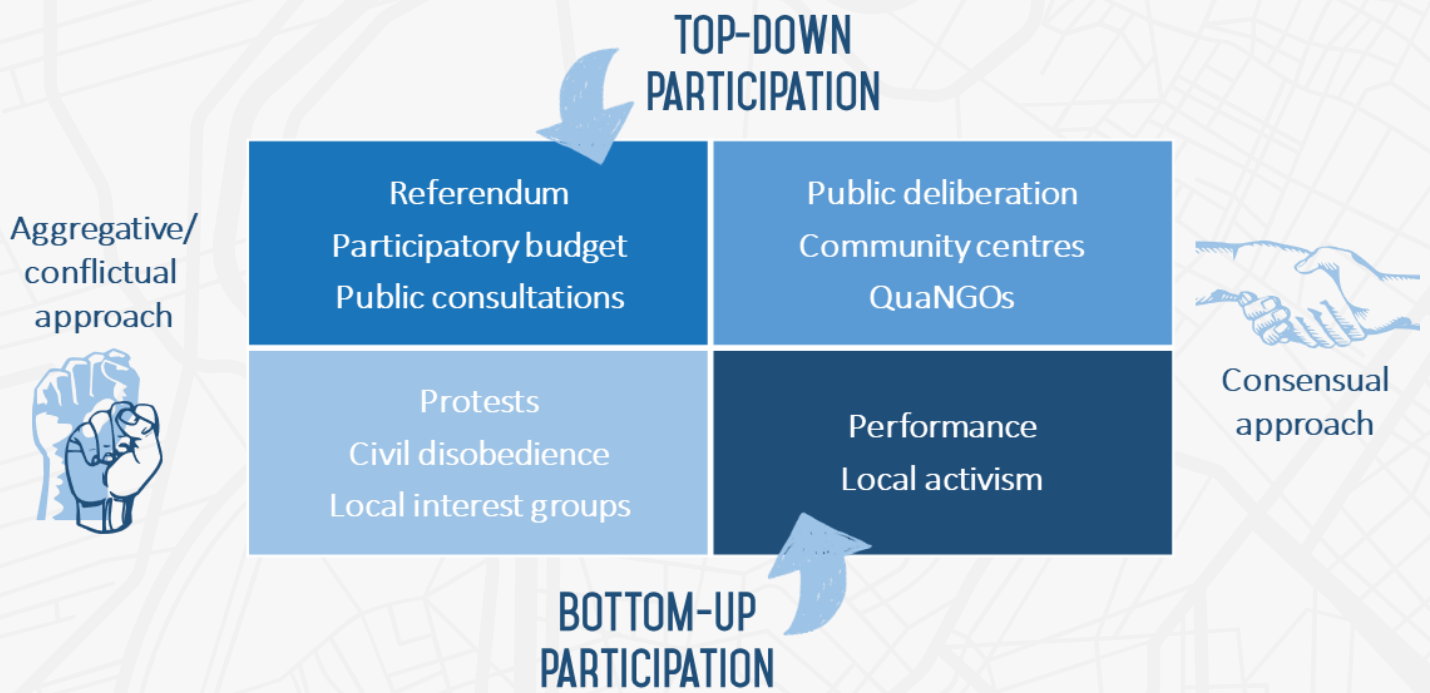
Public deliberation, which has been the main focus of this conceptual framework so far, is only one of many types of participation in the modern, liberal democratic spectrum. Different means of participation are also often employed when a need occurs to strengthen the peoples' voice in representative systems.

In most countries, authorities are legally obliged to include citizens in at least some parts of the decision-making process. In other cases, they might also voluntarily make a decision to refer to peoples' opinions in order to solve a controversial issue, strengthen civil virtues or engage citizens in common activities. We call this type of engagement top-down participation, since it is orchestrated and to a large extent controlled and financed by authorities.

On the other hand, when authorities do not listen to citizens' needs, the latter might decide to act upon their own behalf. They can voice their concerns in public fora or organise in groups, increasing their chances to influence politics and policies of their interest. This kind of engagement often starts as a spontaneous action, but in many cases can be formalised and sustained into a form of NGO. That is called bottom-up participation.

Participation initiated both by authorities and citizen 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.

Civil disobedience

This refers to a nonviolent act of conscious and public disobeying of law, government orders or other regulations. It is a manifestation of a disagreement with those norms - either their moral content or legal basis - and is aimed at sparking public discussion and putting pressure on authorities to withdraw them. The act of civil disobedience usually ends with fines or punishments prescribed by law. In some cases, for example when it has a mass character, it aims at clogging the judicial system.

Local activism and urban interest groups

Recent years have brought unprecedented growth in the number and scale of urban movements across Europe. These have become platforms that allow citizens to engage in local activities, vital discussions on their cities and even participate in local elections as increasingly successful candidates. Local activism can be either consensual or adversarial. Consensual forms operate as fora for discussions and the promotion of multiple visions of the development of the city as a whole, with a special focus on well-balanced, smart public services that benefit all. In this approach, the city is conceived as an organism or a machine, in which all parts benefit from it functioning well. On the other hand, some organisations take the shape of local interest groups. They focus on particular issues from a set of underrepresented or unfulfilled demands. Those adversarial groups treat urban politics as an arena of conflicting struggles and are not interested in a systemic view *per se.*

Performance and protest

This category includes various forms of action that motivate common reflection or express resistance to political decisions, contestation of local development strategies, opposition to the acts of the private sector or fighting certain ideologies. The main characteristic of the performative act is to ink visual (aesthetical) and ethical values in a spatial and temporal political act. The symbolism of performativity aims at redefining the hegemonic discourses or filling 'empty spaces' around which other democratic practices and institutions are organised. The aesthetics used in performance are consciously shaped by its initiators and rely upon creative links between existing symbols, proposing new perspectives for a broadening public. Such acts can include theatrical performances, lectures, discussions, happenings etc.

On the other hand, protests, demonstrations and pickets - while often included in the broad category of performance - are more spontaneous and repetitive in their practice. Through these aesthetics, they focus on reinforcing rather than a creative broadening of the message and are more on the side of the conflictual, adversarial spectrum of politics. However, many protests, including recent wave of *Occupy*-inspired actions, combine those two approaches.

Public consultations

Public consultations, in many European states mandatory before making certain decisions, are a mean of inviting civic partners to partake in the decision process. While organised interest groups often use them as an opportunity to lobby for their own interest, urban politics more often refer to 'casual' citizens and different type of local movements in order to ensure democratic support for a given decision.

Referendum

It is a form of direct, aggregative democracy where a certain decision is delegated to be decided upon by citizens in a majoritarian vote. Its primary assumption is that a simple majority of citizens is enough to claim certain norms, values or solutions as legitimate. While usually a discussion around the topic of the referendum occurs in media and everyday discussions among citizens, it is by no means necessary to happen to take a deliberative form of rational, consensual and evidence-based argumentation.

Participatory budget

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a practice that originated in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and it is based on an invitation of citizens to directly decide on how to spend some parts of a local budget. Since the beginning of the 21st century, and especially in the last decade, PB became one of the most popular practices of participation in the Western democratic systems, with almost all major cities in the EU offering this form of shared decision-making to their citizens.

However, there is no single way of preparing and conducting participatory budgets. The original form of PB in Porto Alegre was heavily based on multiple deliberations in different local communities that were upscaled to the city level with the goal of deciding on major policy directions of spending significant amounts of local budget. This practice proved to be inclusive and focused on the needs of some of the most vulnerable groups in the society.

Today PB take on multiple forms, but they are usually much more adversarial. In the most popular form they resemble plebiscites or quasi-referenda: contests in which projects proposed by more or less organized groups of citizens clash in order to gain the biggest support of eligible voters. To reduce the level of conflict in PB, organizers can employ a plethora of tactics such as division of projects to categories based on size and location, preparing platforms for fair information campaigns to all projects, or inviting citizens and experts to prepare an overview of PB applications independent from both local authorities and citizens or organizations directly involved in PB.

QuaNGOs

This term describes a hybrid model of government-funded, but at least partly independent NGOs that have specific, delegated tasks. This model of governance is especially popular in the *New Public Management* approach. They yield a quasi-autonomous position within the political system, being restricted not only by the legal framework, but also by instructions, assignments and expectations of local authorities. However, QuaNGOs always retain a certain level of independence, therefore being able to operate outside of the traditional logic of power and administration. QuaNGOs are also better embedded in the local communities (usually recruited from genuine NGOs), hence they are more open to and trusted by regular citizens.

Modern-day cities are incredibly complex structures. They operate within a perplexing environment including a large number of various actors, networks and obscure relations of power and information. Not all these factors are tangible and measurable, however, the identification of the main actors and their influence is crucial for a proper understanding and a successful implementation of participatory or deliberative practices. European cities differ in size, wealth, political and legal frameworks they operate within and social or natural environments that determine their functioning.

For the sake of our project's most general, conceptual framework, a vast number of actors might be of relevance and influence that will variate how deliberation or participation can occur, what will it bring and how scalable it will be. Therefore we categorize them on two levels - internal and external to the city - that include respectively 5 and 6 categories of actors. This distinction is only conceptual and in reality , these indicated actors need to be

treated as parts of one, broad and heterogeneous structure of the city dynamics.

On the internal level - actors within the city - we distinguish 5 groups of actors. **Political institutions** relate first and foremost to local governments, city councils and public officers who most often have the legal power to initiate participation and are responsible for the implementation of its effects. There are also other public institutions that can have a direct or indirect impact, such as cultural institutions, housing social services or public infrastructure. Some cities are also further divided into districts with some level of autonomy, where policy responsibilities and opportunities are delegated and can also be subjected to more participatory forms of governance.

A counterpart to political institutions is formed by a range of **social actors**, including the civil society and its institutions (NGOs, unions, sports institutions, faith leaders and communities, activists, social movements etc.), but also those who are less engaged in the political life of the city - simple voters or non-voting citizens, non-resident "users" of the city (e.g. those who work there but live in the suburbs or tourists). There is also a range of 'non-citizen' residents, i.e. those who live in the cities but are not fully recognized as its citizens, such as students or illegal migrants.

Other institutions crucial to the political functioning of the city are its **economic actors** (consisting of local business, social enterprises and a range of other economic activities of city residents) and **knowledge hubs** (schools and universities treated as educational institutions, but also as places

that offer local expertise and teaching for administration and policy-makers).

Finally, we recognize **media** and the discursive frames they (re)produce. It is important to differentiate between public media - in this case they are closer to the category of political institutions - and private ones, which can be a part of local or (inter)national economic sphere. Additionally, a growing influence of social media in creating political discourses, also on local matters, is important as a background for deliberative participation.
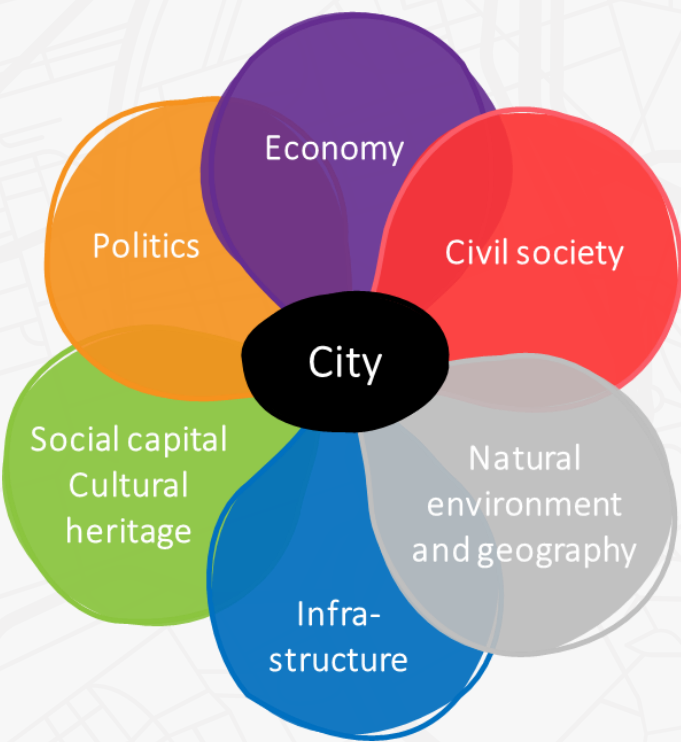

The inner dynamic of relations of power in the city - within its borders - cannot be fully understood without the accounting for external actors, forces, discourses and other contingent circumstances. Although their influence will always wary and have unique characteristics, they also impact the process of deliberation or other forms of citizens' participation and have a great impact on laying the grounds for those events to occur and succeed. We divide these actors into three categories of human (political,

economic, civil) and three non-human (socio-cultural, infrastructural and environmental) actors.

The number of actors that exert external political influence or pressure will vary depending on the internal structure of every country's political system. In some, regional structures will have a more significant amount of autonomy when it comes to funding, public management or legislative powers. In others it will be state governments and central administration that will have more direct oversight over municipal bodies. Additionally, cities within our research project's geographic and political interest need to take the European Union and other international organizations or legal regimes into account. Especially the EU structures consequently seek for more democratic legitimation of the European political process. Those bridges and tensions are determining the overall legal and practical capability of cities to share some of their competencies with their citizens or internal levels of representative democracy (districts).

A particular legal and political configuration of division and delegation of responsibilities among actors on these different levels emerges from a process of acquiring competences over a political independence and agency. Cities or states agree to cooperate, but in return they delegate some competences to other political bodies.
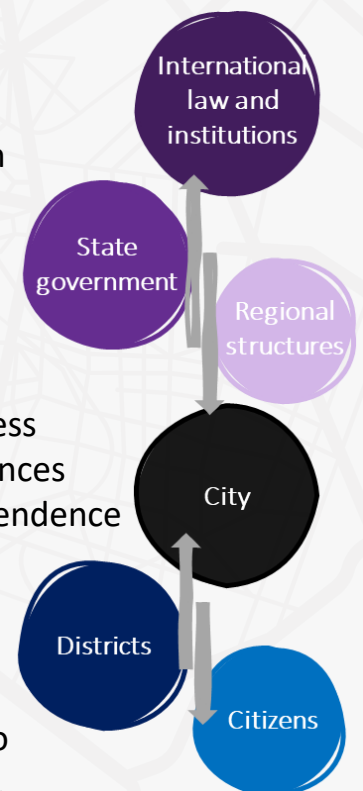
Sometimes actors might organize together to demand more autonomy or - simply - more to say in the public decision-making procedure. These process happens constantly on the verge of many (separated or 'bundled') policy areas, and it is a matter of their 'politization'.

A large part in the division of power and influence (both material and discursive) is also played by large national or trans-national corporations. On the **economic** level, those actors play usually a much larger role than local ones when it comes to having an impact on the quality of employment, consumption and media availability. There is also a lot of private businesses that are directly or indirectly strongly dependant on state structures. It can come either as a part of a new public management doctrine or as an element of a corrupted state. It is not always easy to firmly assess the level of the state/private impact, and it can have a serious impact on the public sphere. This is especially true when it comes to media ownership. Nowadays, the fastest growing social media actors are becoming independent enough to escape accountability for their political influence. At the same time, traditional public and private media are skillfully used by illiberal and undemocratic leaders to exert more control over the discursive sphere and agenda.

The international **civil sphere** consists of several levels of influential actors, depending on the level of formalization and geographical outreach. This is the sphere where most pressure or influence can be exerted by national or international social movements (rather informal) or formalized cross-border networks. Networking - either of citizens beyond borders, or by municipalities themselves on a European or national level - also enhances knowledge exchange between partners. This is how ideas and inspirations, as well as more precise know-how of social innovations, spread and disseminate. This III sector also contains a number of larger and smaller founders who support social projects that enhance participation. While their overall financial impact might be lower than this of the state, such organizations are more likely to promote bottom- up organizations. In many cases, non-governmental organizations operate as mediators between state/EU funds and the civil society that receives them. In most cases, actions funded by international or national NGOs will be organized differently than those emanating from public administration (on any level).

So far, human actors of various kinds have been enlisted and recognized as potentially influential on the participation process. However, non-human actors - even if originated from human actions - also influence how participation and deliberation may occur. Among the most important ones are **social and cultural factors**, such as social capital (knowledge and skills of citizens, but also their civic virtues, feeling of responsibility and empathy, activist potential and levels of trust in government, politics and the common good). We also want to stress the role of cultural heritage, traditions and existing knowledge and experience of participatory endeavours, both distant in time and more recent. Here art and performance play a specific role in stimulating social imagination and informal activities within the public sphere.

Another important category lies in infrastructure, that is all material conditions that organize the life of the city. It is roads and other connections within the city and with other parts of the region/country/World. This determines networking and levels of possible autonomy as well. Material infrastructure also consists of building and public services, such as hospitals, schools and even offices that can be used as venues for participation.

Finally, natural environment or geographical conditions and location influence possible boundaries of actions, as well as cause numerous issues and policy problems which need to be solved. Climate change seems to be a challenge that especially draws the attention of social movements calling for a deliberative and participative problem-solving process. Geographical conditions also determine the economic activity in the city, as they influence tourism, logistics, and industrial investments, therefore creating different needs and conditions for participatory democracy.

The influence of the abovementioned actors also differs depending on the policy area where participation happens. Among the most popular areas that are delegated or shared with citizens are: spatial planning, public investments, management of culture, health care and education, commuting, climate change adaptation, housing policy and other areas related to municipal commons. This catalogue is not, however, enclosed and will expanse or contract under pressure from different political actors. A particular set of competencies that are exclusive to the city - and therefore have the potential to be shared with its citizens - will always fluctuate.

The principle of subsidiarity

Known also as a 'subsidiarity rule', it is one of the core EU principles, referring to its ordoliberal ideological origin. It guides the division of authority within the EU under the rule that decisions - were eligible - should be taken on the lowest possible level of organization (i.e. local, regional, state). This principle grants the autonomy of every level against the higher ones, although it mainly refers to relations between the EU and member states. However, its origins in European law concerned the degree of autonomy of local governments.

Federalism and unitarianism

The level of political independence of the city will also depend on the states internal structure. Two models dominate in Europe. Federalism is a decentralised structure where districts, regions or lands have a relatively large autonomy from the central government. Cities in these states, especially district capitals, will have more influence on their regional governments and more possibilities to act. Unitarianism, on the other hand, is more centralised and any regional activity is more likely to be controlled by the government or its agencies.
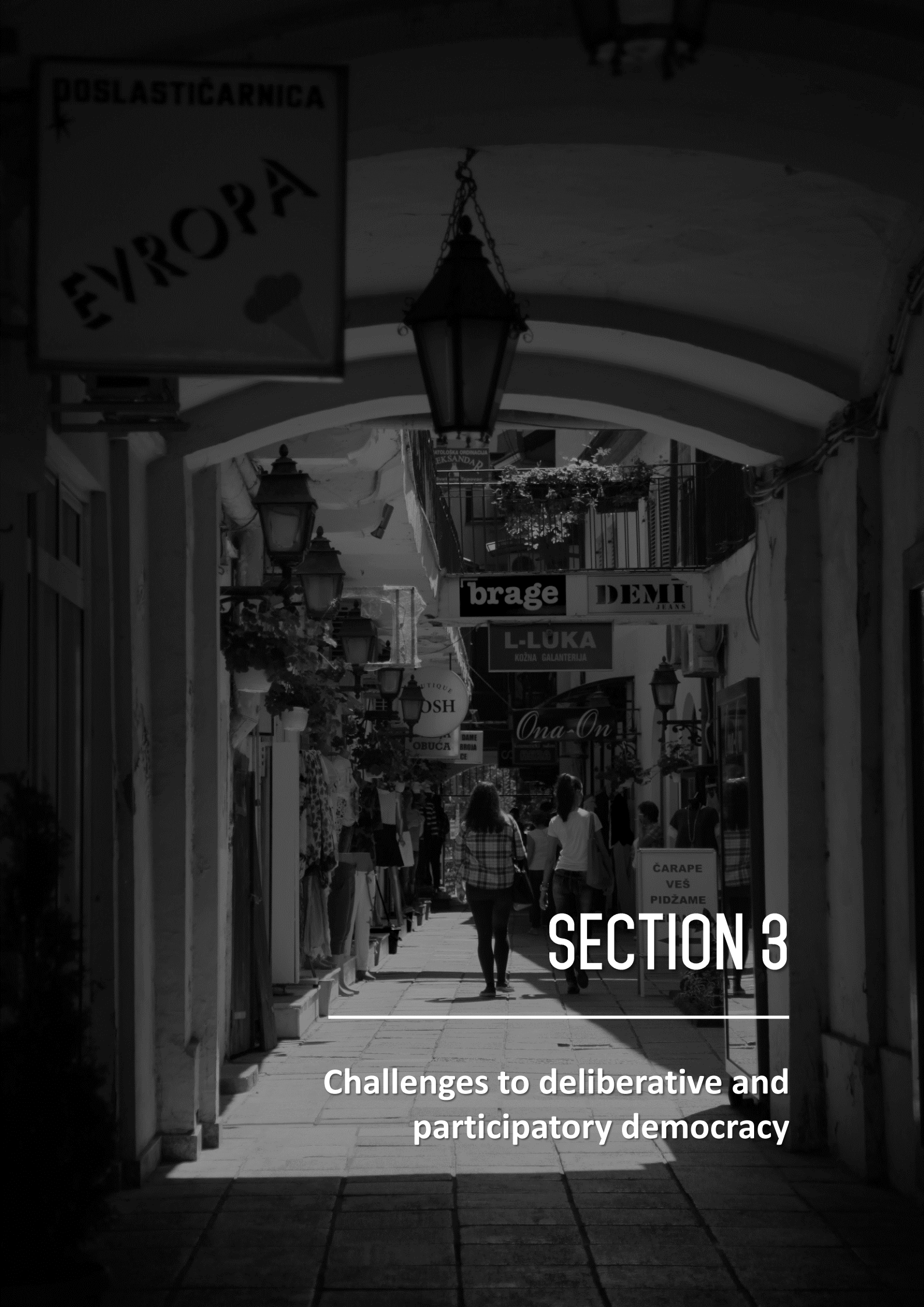
Twin towns and sister cities

This cooperation initiative of politically and geographically distant cities making an agreement to work together for a mutual promotion of cultural and social heritage dates back over thousands of years. It has been fully launched in the 20th century and ever since 1989 is supported and co-funded by the European Union. This cooperation is based on culture, education and civic values. It therefore might play a role in promoting social innovations, effective transfer of knowledge and inspiration for a more participatory approach.

Alpha global cities

This category, proposed by the Globalization and World Cities Research Network think tank, relates to the largest, most influential and interconnected cities across the World. The ranking focuses mainly on their economic impact but takes the cultural and political factors into account as well. Currently, 13 EU cities are ranked as Alpha global cities. Additionally, London is ranked as one of two Alpha++ cities in the World, with New York being the other. Alpha cities will enjoy more resources, autonomy and capabilities to implement social innovations, and thanks to their high networking potential they might be more likely to promote open and democratic public governance. On the other hand, due to their size and position, they will face radically different problems and a number of their citizens might be reluctant to engage on the local level, feeling more like citizens of the World.

The quintuple innovation helix

This is a normative approach that describes how innovations should occur within the framework of knowledge circulation. It uses helices as metaphors for independent but often interacting areas of academia, industry and government (triple helix), surrounded by the public, especially culture-oriented and media-based democratic society, which is further surrounded by the natural environment. The quintuple helix framework can be adapted to policy-making, for example by informing authorities or experts how to design interactions in a way that will foster knowledge circulation, involve the public in social innovations, and conserve its impact. It is also used in academic research on social innovations.

SECTION 3

Challenges to deliberative and participatory democracy

Inspiring and Authoritative

Mobilizing and Hierarchical

Encouraging and Manipulative

A double face of political leadership

Persuasive but Facilitating

Exclusive but Inviting

Limiting but Connecting

Directive but Creative
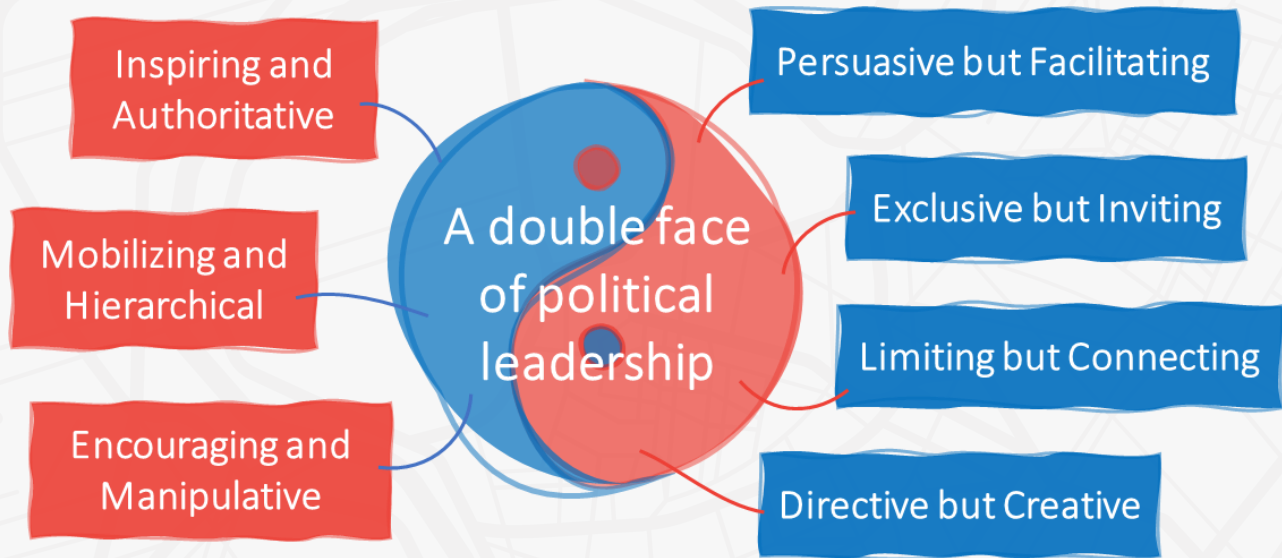
It is often assumed that 'power' or 'leadership' is something that does not fit into the model of civic participation, especially the one focused on rational consensus. In fact, there is a sound argument that leadership is in its essence anti-democratic, as it exerts influence, creating a hierarchy between persons. On the other hand, the very same phenomenon is also being praised as a key factor in mobilizing participatory attitudes, facilitating dialogue, or creating and inspiring communities.

To some extent, both of these approaches adhere to different interpretations of leadership. The first one can be understood as an authoritarian and coercive behaviour that disturbs equality between people. The other reading of leadership builds on its democratic model, in which an inspiring leader can have a positive impact on the creation of inclusive communities or can make the previously unheard voices appear in the public sphere.

It is important to remember that those two ideal models focus on sets of features of leadership that are inseparable. In actual democratic politics, it is impossible to eliminate leadership and hierarchy, as they are imminent to every political relation.

It can be, however, shaped in a more balanced order that reduces its negative impact on the autonomy of democratic subjects. A dispersed multitude of leaders exerting multiple roles (e.g. organizers, moderators, facilitators, gatekeepers, discussion leaders, tribunes or idea promoters) is one of the proposed methods, where those exerting influence on others can not only focus on realizing their tasks and goals but also on countering coercive behaviour coming from leadership. It is especially important for consensual, deliberative participation, where undue influence is supposed to be minimized.

On the other hand, in the more aggregative, adversarial and bottom-up participation, strong leadership can be more important and influential also in democratic terms. Leaders play a crucial role in mobilizing others to commit their time to protests or activism, and to keep high engagement levels throughout the long time needed for a political process to come to a conclusion. It is also important to see their role as those who are capable of changing the individualistic approach to more community-oriented ones, hence contributing to solving the 'free-rider' social dilemma.

The problem of all-encompassing leadership hints from a broader discussion of 'power'. Ever since the works of Gramsci, de Saussure or Foucault, politicians, social scientists and activists have gained a powerful tool for analysing, planning or influencing public life. The famous Foucauldian conjunction of knowledge/power reveals an obscure world of discursive authority and symbolic domination that - similarly to leadership - underlie all social relations. This approach extends the field of politics far beyond the 'traditional' methods of legal or institutional analysis. It indicates why and how politics is equally important and influential in the field of science (especially those focused on humans, their biology and environment), economy, culture and so on. On the other hand, it also reveals how politics can be shaped by those respective fields, intervening in the development of new techniques of government and fostering its constant expansion to the new fields and areas.

Yet a narrow, institutional understanding of politics - especially in the form of public policy - prevail among most social scientists, politicians and activists. Analysis of models of participatory and deliberative democracy are hence vulnerable to getting trapped into an 'apolitical mirage', in which every civic activity is opposed to politics as operating beyond disciplining relations of power. It is dangerous in a double sense: not only can it lead to overseeing some dominant relations in the dynamic of civic participation, but it can even lead to unwilling conservation or strengthening those political or discursive elements, that are countering goals claimed by citizens.

This traditional field of public policy has been subjected to an extensive discussion throughout the pages of the so-called 'argumentative turn', where Authors argue for a broad understanding of politics, including acknowledging the coercive and biased nature of information and communication, and an intertwining of political and policy goals. Some Authors of the argumentative turn argue that deliberative participation - through cooptation of regular citizens as 'non-partisan' policy experts - answers those concerns of the purely meritocratic decision-making process. However, they - and all other participants of deliberative procedure, such as experts or facilitators - are also subjected to other relations of discursive power and domination. Those forces - known as the micro-physics of power - should also be recognized in all forms of participatory democracy, as they influence the order and manner of its functioning.

Dispersed/distributed leadership

An idea first proposed in the field of economy and management, where a multitude of leaders sharing the process of leadership without strict assignment of roles and tasks proved to be effective and bearing potential to innovation and change. This style of leadership has been further studied and adapted in policy and public management as a promising tool for reducing or overcoming the coercive impact of leadership in the democratic process of group decision-making. It assumes that different members of the participatory process will dynamically fill in for roles where their skills and capacities can be used at their full potential, while at the same time limiting each other from a strong and biased impact of a single person.

Free-rider dilemma

This describes a well-known problem in social sciences connected to the market economy, in which beneficiaries of public goods are unwilling to pay for them or contribute to the society that makes it possible in other ways. For activism and participation, it is especially important as numerous people supporting the cause are unwilling to participate in deliberations, protests or other activities involving the community. This impedes mobilization in numbers, therefore lowering the chance of success of small groups, staged against a passive public. Effective leaders can inspire people to give up their personal interest or comfort and engage in community work

Micro-physics of power

A term coined by Michel Foucault to describe the intricate relation of knowledge and power, showing that scientific disciplines constitute and at the same time are constituted by the oppressive technology of government and institutional power. His famous examples - prison or psychiatric ward - are one of the most striking, but since his books, numerous critiques and analyses have been conducted to reveal new ever-expanding areas where power is discreetly extended and introduce new tools of surveillance and propaganda.

Media broadcasters and commercials, universities and their affiliated experts, cultural institutions, education, traditions and even laws - all those factors have a normative influence on the discourse, therefore framing its possible outcomes and constituting the general, democratic will and opinion. In deliberative communication, they also play a role in defining basic assumptions behind which arguments considered rational or reasonable, and gives limits to their imaginative and creative potential.

Argumentative turn in policy analysis

The Authors of this proposal note the two-dimensional context of the analysis in public policy, i.e., the substantive and political dimensions of the term 'argumentation'. To this end, they draw on an eclectic range of theories related to such philosophers and philosophies as Wittgenstein, Austin, Gadamer, Habermas, Foucault, and Derrida, postmodernism, post-empiricism, post-structuralism, post-positivism, etc. It benefits from carefully selected elements of the abovementioned trends, which provide tools for critical analysis of specific political practices, separating them, at least in part, from their idealistic assumptions.

The core assumption of this approach is that rational, policy argumentation is always embedded in psychological, sociological and

political bias. Public deliberation brings an intervention to the latter arena, as it to some extent substitutes professional politicians and advisers (and their electoral goals) with ordinary citizens. However, they still remain within other dimensions of argumentative bias.

WHAT IS POPULISM?

Folkloric leadership style?

Irresponsible fiscal and economic policy?

'Thin' ideology?

Strategy of popular mobilization?

The essence of democratic politics?

Populism is arguably the most inflated notion in the public discourse and science of politics in the recent decade. Indeed, worldwide liberal democracy goes through a crisis that is unprecedented in the post-War era. A number of illiberal or autocratic parties and leaders are gaining relevance and in many cases - not only in developing but also well-established democratic systems - have taken over national parliaments and governments. The term 'populist' clearly has negative connotations and is often used to describe any instance of politics that is disregarded by the speaker, be it in everyday talk, media discourse or even academia. Yet the plethora of its ascribed meanings makes populism difficult to precisely describe, analyse, and - notably - assess as explicitly undemocratic.

The current context of the emergence of populist politics is the crisis of liberal democracy. This brings many commentators to juxtapose irresponsible fiscal and economic policies, based on social transfers and building clientelist networks that help the populist incumbent win consecutive elections, with liberal austerity politics. While this neoliberal discourse is still strong in many European countries, the recent critique of this fiscal orthodoxy is becoming more mainstream, and the pandemic-driven economic backlash seems to be a step away from such an absolute definition of 'rational economic policy'. But liberal democracies have more values and qualities that are often attacked by populist leaders in order to mobilize voters.

Populist leaders tend to view themselves as true representatives of 'the people', but also as strong, authoritarian commanders or ruthless managers that are not bound by lberal constraints such as the rule of law, division of powers or international norms. In the most famous definition of populism, Cas Mudde proposes to call this a 'thin' ideology that divides the political class into two homogenous groups - the corrupted elites and the people - and spreads the belief that politics should be the emanation of the will of the latter. Nadia Urbinatti stresses that populists are not in general aiming at revoking representative democracy, but rather at reconstructing a new elite focused around a leader, based on a (supposedly) direct representation of the people.

A more nuanced look at populism is proposed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who see it as a strategy of mobilization of multiple demands - actual or imagined - that have no chance of being satisfied within the current, hegemonic political system. Populist politics constructs a common front - chain of equivalence - that is directed against the unjust political order. While it recognizes the difference and heterogeneity of 'the people', for the time of the struggle they are set aside thanks to the 'empty signifiers', unifying symbols, events or people that can have a fluid meaning to each and every participant of the populist moment.

Most scholars of populism agree that the economic conditions have an impact on the emergence of populist movements, however, the empirical research indicates that it is never the only reason, and moreover it cannot be explained by poverty or difficult material conditions in absolute terms. Rather it is a relative feeling of deprivation and injustice that drives people to support populist movements. A feeling of loss, insecurity or uncertainty can also refer to cultural values. This is what drives a lot of conservative and religious far-right extremism in the wake of emancipatory revolutions against racism, women oppression, and religious minorities or LGBTQ discrimination. Far-right populists - often white, heterosexual men - tend to view these movements as a threat to their traditional way of living, which they defend as the core of the 'Western civilization'. On the other hand, left-wing populism is traditionally more likely to be found in Latin America, where its origins are in the struggle against the colonial oppression of the USA. Its reluctance to globalization has therefore economic roots, but more often combines the material inequality with the symbolic oppression obscured by the liberal ideology of the free market.

Both right- and left-wing populisms are therefore anti-liberal, though they define liberalism in different ways. For the right-wing populists, liberalism lies in leftist values of unbounded tolerance, sexual freedom and the transformation of the family model. For the left-wing populists, liberal values are the exact opposite - by anchoring liberalism in economic freedoms, they maintain the conservative status quo and slow down the struggle against racism, sexism or discrimination.

In both cases, populisms attack the hegemonic ways of thinking about politics, society, economy or ethics. They disagree with the core assumptions between the dominant (i.e. liberal) discourses, therefore are often seen as irrational. The 'populist reason' - as named by Laclau - is a creation of a different logic of what is accepted as 'reasonable' or 'normal' politics precisely because it attacks the (undemocratic) foundations of contemporary liberalism. Therefore it needs to create different rationality as a new way of conceiving politics. The discursive strategy of populism is to redefine 'the centre' of the political spectrum, what can be done without forming the government or even taking part in elections. In this sense, populism can be juxtaposed to deliberation, which does not aim at challenging the existing frames of rationality, but rather find a more accommodating solution within its boundaries. On the other hand, some participatory forms of democracy are clearly populist, as they aim at forcing new perspectives into the actual modus operandi of state or municipal politics.

The pertinent question of whether populism is a cause or a symptom of a crisis is still disputed, but it safe to assume that it is both. Populism should not be dismissed as purely anti-democratic, as many of its manifestations are the only way in which the previously unheard or disregarded voices can be made clear in the public sphere. While many recent leaders - usually not even coming from the outside of the establishment they criticize - abused the populist sentiments to their own political goals, it should not be overlooked that populism is, at least to a very small extent, the essence of democratic politics.

Empty signifiers and chain of equivalence

Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau propose those terms in order to describe how populist movements are formed and maintained. A chain of equivalence is a description of a coalition in which every different sub-group or identity recognizes each other as equal, but also equally excluded by the hegemonic, mainstream politics. Chains of equivalence are formed when the demands of those groups are not met and cannot be realized through their singular struggle. Therefore only in a common action of the excluded group - 'the people' - basic material and discursive conditions of the society - 'the hegemony' - can be tackled and reformed as a whole.

In order to achieve such a level of organizational unification and the feeling of solidarity, so-called 'empty' (or in fact 'floating') signifiers are employed. This refers to signifiers - words, symbols, people, etc. - that bear no exact, direct meaning, and therefore can be 'filled' by different ideas, depending on the particular group that refers to them. Truly 'empty' signifiers rarely occur in practice, therefore it is more accurate to talk about the 'floating' ones, for whom the meaning is only vaguely ascribed and still can be shaped according to one's needs. Examples of these kinds of signifiers may include broad ideas such as 'freedom', 'equality' or 'justice', but also context-specific buzzwords or war cries, such as 'MAGA', 'Take back control', or 'In the name of the people'. A popular and charismatic leader, such as Trump or Bolsonaro, can be a 'floating signifier' as well, as long as he can represent different qualities or values to different segments of his electorate.

Thin and thick ideology

For Cas Mudde, populism does not have a substantial content except for the division of the political spectrum to the 'pure people', whose will should legitimate the politics of the state, and 'corrupted elites' who should be removed from the political system and the public sphere. This constitutes a 'thin' ideology, which can be 'thickened' by the cooption of other ideologies.

The most popular populist movements in Europe are far-right, nationalist extremists, who fill the populist ideology with nativist ideas. For them, 'the people' are equivalent to 'the nation' understood in either ethnic or cultural terms. On the other hand, the elites are not only connected to the political class, but also different others - immigrants, other nations, but also supporters of pro-European, liberal parties. It is socially conservative and beliefs that it is the last defence against the corrupted, liberal ideologies that dismantle the 'Western civilization'.

Left-wing populism, more often found in Latin America than Europe, refer rather to the class foundation of 'the people' and construct it against the capitalist, neoliberal elite, especially against global corporations and superpowers. It has a strong anti-colonial approach and is sceptical of globalization, environmental destruction and global inequality. In Europe those traits usually define the left-wing, populist reluctance of the European Integration process.

SHADES OF ONLINE ACTIVISM

Cyberwarfare Trolling Cyberterrorism	Filter bubbles Echo chambers Slacktivism
Online deliberation E-voting Public transparency	Digital listening Watchdogs Hacktivism

Public life in the XXI century moves towards the Internet and online platforms. This trend, already rapid, has even sped up during the COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside learning and working, we also spend more time communicating, getting our news, discussing politics and engaging in social activities. Online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or TikTok, which are primarily profit-oriented businesses, radically transformed our online behaviours, even if it happened unintentionally. The market logic of those entities is now driving another development of the society by adding another layer distorting its perception of the public sphere. But it also allows for breaches in this logic and adaptation of subversive tactics. Wisely used, online tools can also foster participation and deliberation, at least as long as they take the digital exclusion into account. But for such a design to be truly inclusive and effective, threats and challenges posed by online communication and social media need to be well-recognised.

Social media has been recently recognised as the creators of filter bubbles and echo chambers. Advanced algorithms detecting our preferences are limiting the users' experience to what they are most presumed to like. This increases our attention and time spent using the apps, what in the effect turns into more profit from advertisers. Those filters create social bubbles, where users only encounter similar-minded people. When it comes to politics or ideological discourses, such a situation causes polarisation and detachment from a common, public sphere. Such an outcome biases the perception of reality, alienates people from each other and eradicates the common space for a debate, causing detrimental damage to democracy. Surprisingly, this imitates deliberation, although in a somehow tainted way. Discussions in the filter bubbles are thorough, logical, and evidence-based, or at least it is believed so by its participants. But since they occur within a limited and already similar group of people, the consensus they reach tends to be more extreme than moderate. The example of those echo chambers points to a potential weakness of deliberative practices, when the deliberating group is not heterogeneous and representative enough.

The polarization of society caused by social media is likely to be instrumentalized for achieving goals of politicians and political parties, not only those populists. Online tools of political communication and marketing are used extensively, and the case of Brexit and tools designed by Cambridge Analytica reveal the dark side of intentional online deception, sometimes depicted as trolling. It has been adapted by many extremist and populist parties, but also by governments in many countries as well. Some recent studies revealed a common foreign involvement in social media, which could be considered as a brand new tool of cyberwarfare. Those measures are directed at the discursive

sphere of societies, so they do influence ideas and attitudes that people bring to deliberation, or motivations that drive their public activity.

However, well-designed online tools might increase participation both in terms of quantity and quality. Online voting is now a common feature of participatory budgeting, and public information is more accessible than ever before. The pandemic-induced lockdowns caused also a rise in new online communication and collaboration technologies, primarily designed for remote work. However, sanitary reasons forced some organizers of deliberative practices, such as Citizens' Assemblies, to move them entirely online. It is still little known about the dynamics of deliberation in such groups, as the learning curve for digital competencies differs for people according to their occupation, education, age, wealth etc. While promising to some, online deliberation might be unreachable to those who are digitally excluded and lack material and cognitive means of participation. Given the constant digitalization of our World, those might be crucial issues for citizens, politicians and researchers to learn about and settle.

Online platforms have also proven to be a fertile ground for innovative, subversive participatory tactics. The accessibility to information and the speed of its spread strengthen the position of watchdogs - people or organizations that control the government and public officials and raise awareness of corruption, crime or political misconduct. Access to knowledge and evidence - even in the times of post-truth - democratized the nature of political and policy debates. Even in non-democratic regimes, social media might provide alternative news and opinion sources. On the other hand, those alternative sources of

information might spread lies, absurd conspiracy theories or manipulate their readers. Just like a regular press, the Internet and social media might be both an opposition to autocratic regimes and vehicles of undermining the core of democracy.

The emergence of ICT technologies and social media also altered activist tactics and approaches. With new networking possibilities, immediate and mass communication, and simple ways to design new tools, social movements can organise much faster and global than before. The Occupy, #MeToo and BLM movements quickly spread across borders and influenced protests and activities that took distinct forms in various countries. Social media allow for a spontaneous, immediate organization on the scale of the whole country, region or even a continent, and introduces new modes of dispersed or shared leadership.

With the digitalization of public life, two types of activism emerged. The first is slacktivism, which occurs when people restrict their engagement to private, online statements. It is considered less valuable than active participation and organization of protests or performances, but on the other hand, it might help in building momentum or spreading awareness. In contrast to that, hacktivism uses digital tools to seek innovative ways of invoking political change. It is sometimes considered illegal, especially when it comes to leakage of secret documents revealing corruption or misdemeanours, or hacking into virtual spaces (webpages, online billboards) to alter them. On the other hand, it might also mean just a smart use of public data in order to draw attention to important issues or gather proofs against politicians calling upon violence or non-democratic tactics.

Filter bubbles

Caused by social media algorithms that enhance UX by filtering content that they are not attracted by, dislike or disagree with. Aimed primary at commercial objectives, it affected political and social discussions as well by filtering out ideas and opinions that differ from those of users' own. As an effect, the common public sphere and recognition of different political worldviews disappear.

Echo Chambers

Connected to filter bubbles, echo chambers amplify, reinforce and distort beliefs and worldviews through an intense communication occurring within a narrow, closed social environment. While this phenomenon is typical to all kinds of media, echo chambers within marginal filter bubbles tend to create polarized groups with extreme worldviews and no intention to discuss and compromise with others.

Trolling

An intentional tactic of online deception, in which users spread worldviews and opinions that are not their own, but are crafted to spread disinformation or alter the discourse of their readers. According to a so-called 'Poe's law', without a clear indication of irony - such as the use of emoticons - it is impossible to write an ideological statement that will not be treated seriously by at least some readers. While it is not a 'law' per se, it indicates how easy deception becomes online. Another form of trolling is sealioning, a strategy of intentional provoking discussants that aims at their emotional exhaustion. It is a bad-faith activity that repeatedly asks for more evidence (even if it is actually provided) and new arguments. The goal of sealioning is psychological harassment of people who are perceived as political enemies and would otherwise spend this time on other means of online activism.

Trolling is not always applied by single users on their genuine or fake accounts, but by troll farms, i.e. multiple accounts run by automated programs or groups of hired workers. This strategy can influence opinion formation, access to information or even electoral results.

Urban hacktivism

This describes a set of innovative tactics that combine the use of digital tools and urban space in a way that involves citizen in city planning. Recently, urban hacktivism is more and more offline, combining cheap materials and innovative ideas to fix local communities problems. Urban hacktivism tactics include 3d printing of small architecture, online platforms for immediate information about infrastructural problems such as potholes, hacking electronic billboards, altering signposts, guerilla gardening etc.

Digital listening

The involvement of automated tools for collecting multiple users' data has been initially used by marketing companies but has quickly been adapted by citizens. Digital analytics - aggregation and interpretation of immense amounts of data - is used to monitor public sentiment, measure supporters' reactions and experiment with innovative tactics of communication and organization. Digital tools can also be directed against authorities, as it gives NGOs and activists a creative, technological edge over slowly adapting, bureaucratic institutions.

SUMMARY

Conceptual framework for the
EUARENAS project

This Conceptual Framework results from the first 6 months of our engagement in the EUARENAS project. Its final shape is formed by a careful reading of the main themes in our Grant Agreement and the requirements of the call to which the project responds. But it is most importantly informed by our project partners. The frames of their activities and their conceptual needs have been identified throughout many workshops, consortium and bilateral meetings, formal and informal discussions.

A multitude of approaches delivered by a diverse set of partners in the EUARENAS project dictates a need for a similarly complex, but still coherent conceptual framework. We see it not only as a 'background check' for the project empirical research and participatory institutional design of tools and practices. A Conceptual Framework creates a structure within which those empirical questions are going to be asked, driving their motivations and expectations. Therefore such a framework should not only properly acknowledge the current state of the debate, but also challenge it by provoking debates, disagreements and recognition of uncertainties that all policy and social projects need to take into account.

This framework also aims at identifying potential problems within the scope of our project. Based on philosophical, theoretical and empirical evidence from the most up-to-date research, we were able to recognize several potential issues that the EUARENAS project will most likely face, at least on the theoretical level. Philosophy here might play a supportive role for practical challenges of policy design, as it highlights inconsistencies and helps in translating most difficult theoretical or ontological debates into helpful, problem-solving approaches to the practical implementation of deliberative solutions.

The main areas of interest and expected challenges outlined in this Conceptual Framework will direct our attention and sensitivity throughout the rest of the project. Those most important discussions will be reconstructed and once again analysed in the state of the debate report. However, towards the end of the project, this Conceptual Framework will also be updated by new ideas, solutions and challenges that will emanate from other empirical and practical tasks and endeavours carried out throughout the course of the EUARENAS project. This update will be an excellent opportunity to summarize the theoretical progress made in the project.

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