Civic Creativity:
Democracy as a Platform for Our Public Projects

A thesis presented
by
Peter D. Davis

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Introduction: A New Paradigm Shift in Democratic Theory

"Alas, the public has no hands
except those of individual human beings."
-John Dewey

I. Strange civic actions

There exist strange civic actions that defy today's commonly understood modes of citizenship.

In the early 1990s, when educator Geoffrey Canada was, as one journalist put it, 'just your average do-gooder', he began to notice that – although there had been one-off success stories of organizations being able to educate "one disadvantaged child, or one classroom full of kids" -- no one had "any idea how to change a whole school system or a whole housing project, or for that matter a whole neighborhood." He decided to figure out how, aiming to prove that "poor children, and especially poor black children, can succeed...and not just the smartest or the most motivated or the ones with the most attentive parents, but all of them, in big numbers." He chose a 24-block zone in central Harlem, declared it the Harlem Children's Zone, and began to provide an interlocking web of educational, social and medical services to children and parents inside. The idea was to build "a safety net woven so tightly that children in the neighborhood just can't slip through."[1]

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[1] Paul Tough, "The Harvard Project," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 20, 2004, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/20/magazine/the-harlem-project.html.

Robin Chase says she wants to spend her life "building the world" in which she wants to live: one with "high integrity, where we care about sources and consequences of our lifestyle, where individuals and companies thrive in a mutually beneficial and delightfully efficient system, where opportunities to participate and engage abound."[2] Disappointed that society was focusing too much on fuel efficiency technology – and not lifestyle changes – as the way to reduce carbon emissions, she founded ZipCar in 2000, which is now the largest car-sharing system in the world. She negotiated the placement of a fleet of Zipcars in dense urban environments across the country, managed the development of a wireless key system, an internet billing infrastructure, a wide variety of sophisticated web-meets-car technologies and a publicity campaign that made, as the Boston Globe put it, "*not* owning a car the club people wanted to join."[3] Together, the efforts produced her desired result: fewer cars and less carbon emissions.

Stanford law professor Lawrence Lessig became increasingly worried about the future of creativity – and specifically creativity on the internet – when he began to see that powerful media companies much older than the internet (which he calls "the cultural dinosaurs of our recent past") were "moving to quickly remake cyberspace so that they can better protect their interests against

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[2] "Robin Chase," RobinChase.org, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.robinchase.org.

[3] Globe Staff Writers, "150 fascinating, fun, important, interesting, lifesaving, life-altering, bizarre and bold ways that MIT has made a difference," *Boston.com*, May 15, 2011, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.boston.com/news/education/higher/specials/mit150/mitlist/.

the future."[4] This 'counterrevolution' to the internet's "free culture" revolution culminated in 1998 with the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act, which extended by twenty years the legal protection of cultural works copyrighted after 1923. Lessig saw a "perfect storm" brewing between *"changes in [software] code"* – technological changes that allowed for digital creativity and a vibrant remix culture online – and *"changes in [legal] code"*— statutory and regulatory changes that allowed for copyright owners to assert evermore control over online cultural exchange. When his legal team lost *Eldred v. Ashcroft* – a case challenging the constitutionality of the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act – Lessig and others formed Creative Commons – a coalition devoted to promoting the public availability of literature, art, music and film – and began work on deriving a solution to what he called "the copyright wars" of the Internet Era.

The Creative Commons licensing system, which Creative Commons launched in 2002, made available, in their words, "flexible, customizable intellectual-property licenses that artists, writers, programmers and others can obtain free of charge to legally define what constitutes acceptable uses of their work." The new licenses, co-founder Hal Plotkin explained in the announcement of Creative Commons licenses, "provide an alternative to traditional copyrights by establishing a useful middle ground between full copyright control and the unprotected public domain." Because of Creative Commons, artists, writers and

[4] "About *The Future of Ideas*," The Future of Ideas, accessed March 5, 2012, http://the-future-of-ideas.com.

programmers can now “go online, select the options that suit them best and receive a custom-made license they can append to their works without having to pay a dime to a lawyer.” To put it simply: Creative Commons licenses allow artists to find a “some rights reserved” middle ground between “all rights reserved” and “no rights reserved,” thus allowing for others to remix and build on their work without giving away all the rights to profit from their work.[5]

Creative Commons licensing has expanded rapidly as major websites began baking Creative Commons licenses into their content sharing architecture. When you upload a video to YouTube, for example, you now have a choice of swapping “All Rights Reserved” copyright terms on your video for CC-licenses that allow others to remix your work as long as they post an attribution to your source video. This exhibits the genius of Creative Commons’ strategy: they have upended copyright law without ever changing statutory law by simply making it easier for artists to *opt-in* to their alternative copyright system. "One of our goals is to lower the cost to give something away,” explained Lessig in 2002. With over millions of creative works holding Creative Commons licenses today, Lessig has made great strides towards that goal. In doing so, he’s created an innovative alternative to the ‘copyright wars’ of our time.

There are Geoffrey Canadas, Robin Chases and Lawrence Lessigs in towns and cities across the country, flexing their civic muscles through their own

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[5] Hal Plotkin, “All Hail Creative Commons: Stanford professor and author Lawrence Lessig plans a legal insurrection,” *SFGate*, February 11, 2002, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/g/a/2002/02/11/creatcom.DTL.

unique modes of civic action. Manhattan resident Hector Canonge had been noticing that Spanish-speaking immigrants in his neighborhood wanted to learn English, but were intimidated by public schools and libraries. He had also noticed that the Magic Touch Laundromat in his neighborhood was a relaxed environment for the immigrants, where people make connections and have excess time as they wait for their clothes to dry. Putting two and two together, he began teaching weekly ESL classes in the laundromat and eventually founded The Laundromat Language Institute to promote the idea.

In 2006, two dozen residents of Harrisonburg, Virginia formed a steering committee with the mission of developing a full-scale, natural and organic grocery store that put a premium on using local farmers and producers. Over the next few years, they developed a business plan, raised money, hired a lawyer and web developer, secured a start-up loan, and held a membership drive, selling over a thousand shares in what eventually became The Friendly City Food Co-op. In 2010, they opened up on 150 East Wolfe Street in downtown Harrisonburg, with 4,000 square feet of retail space, which is, to them: "big enough to meet your needs" and "small enough to meet your neighbors." In addition to selling natural, organic, and local products, the Co-op hosts community classes on cooking and nutrition for member-owners and customers, as well as space for local schoolchildren to learn about healthy foods, sustainable agriculture, farm-to-table concepts, and cooperative community-based business ventures.[6]

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[6] "History," Friendly City Food Co-op, accessed March 5, 2012,

II. A disconnect between such actions and common civic concepts

I call these civic actions 'strange' because they do not resemble the examples of civic actions we talk about when generally discussing what makes one a 'good citizen.' Our democratic theory, our civic education curricula and even our commonplace civic phrases – like "Rock the Vote," "Raise Your Voice" and even "Fight the Power!" – do not speak to the types of civic action taken by Geoffrey Canada, Hector Canonge, and those like them. Our democratic theory focuses itself on questions of voting, deliberation and protest— the last century years of debates in democratic theory have filled volumes debating rational choice models in voting, the standards of equality in the procedures of deliberative bodies, and the democratic legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of protest movements. Our civic education curricula, when it discusses civic action at all,[7] usually explains to

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http://www.friendlycityfoodcoop.com/history/.

[7] Many times, civic education curricula does not focus on civic action, but rather on personal civic responsibility. For example, the Virginia Standards of Learning cite "obeying the laws," "respecting the rights and property of others" and "voting" as the responsibilities of a good citizen. ("Citizenship: Home, School and Community – Session 6: Rules in the Community," Virginia Standards of Learning - Everyday Civics, accessed March 5, 2012, http://civics.pwnet.org/K/K.1.6.html.) For the Virginia standard Civics and Economics curricula, a "responsible citizen" is only defined as practicing: "trustworthiness and honesty," "courtesy and respect for the rights of others," "responsibility, accountability, and self-reliance," "respect for the law" and "patriotism." Again, there is no reference to civic action. ("Attachment F: Traits of a Responsible Citizen," under "Citizenship: Duties, Rights, and Liberties –

students that their responsibility for civic action is preparation for voting, deliberation, and – if they are a particularly activistic school – protest. The Virginia Standards of Learning, for example, say that examples of responsibilities of citizens are to:

- Register and vote.
- Hold elective office.
- Influence government by communicating with government officials.
- Serve in voluntary, appointed positions.
- Participate in political campaigns.
- Keep informed regarding current issues.
- Respect others' rights to an equal voice in government.[8]

Notice how three (register and vote, hold elective office, participate in political campaigns) involve voting and elections; three could be said to be involved with the process of deliberation ("Influence government by communicating with government officials; keep informed regarding current issues; respect others' rights to an equal voice in government")[9] and one involves participating in others' organizations in static positions to which you are appointed. A sample assessment question in the same curriculum includes this question:

> **8. Identify five responsibilities all United States citizens have.**
> *Possible answers may include:*

Session 9: Traits of Responsible Citizens," Virginia Standards of Learning – Everyday Civics, accessed March 5, 2012, http://civics.pwnet.org/pdf/Traits.pdf.)

[8] "Citizenship: Duties, Rights, and Liberties – Session 5: Civic Responsibilities," Virginia Standards of Learning – Everyday Civics, accessed March 5, 2012, http://civics.pwnet.org/CE/CE.4.5.html.

[9] I define the "process of deliberation" as any civic action involving having informal and formal conversations in public with the aim of framing public thought and affecting government action. This includes the process of 'informing oneself,' for one is presumably informing oneself so as to have informed public discussions.

A. Obey the law
B. Pay taxes
C. Serve as jurors
D. Register and vote
E. Perform public service
F. Keep informed
G. Respect the opinions of others[10]

It was based on this curricular goal:

> The student will understand that thoughtful and effective participation in civic life is characterized by:
> a) obeying the law and paying taxes;
> b) serving as a juror;
> c) participating in the political process;
> d) performing public service;
> e) keeping informed about current issues;
> f) respecting differing opinions in a diverse society
> g) practicing personal and fiscal responsibility[11]

On another unit that aims to cover the "Benefits and Responsibilities of Citizenship," the standards recommends that teachers take students to view and discuss tax forms and voter registration cards, followed by asking students to read newspaper editorials and discuss the importance of respecting others' opinions.[12]

If Geoffrey Canada or the folks who created the Friendly City Food Co-op did not obey the law, refused to serve as jurors or even did not vote, we might discount them from being 'good citizens.' However, the reason we honor them as

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[10] "Citizenship: Rights, Responsibilities and Liberties – Session 8: Civic Responsibilities," Virginia Standards of Learning – Everyday Civics, accessed March 5, 2012, http://civics.pwnet.org/GOVT/GOVT.10.8.html
[11] "Citizenship: Rights, Responsibilities and Liberties," Virginia Standards of Learning – Everyday Civics, accessed March 5, 2012, http://civics.pwnet.org/GOVT/GOVT.10.html.
[12] "Citizenship: Rights, Responsibilities and Liberties – Session 7: Benefits and Responsibilities of Citizenship" Virginia Standards of Learning – Everyday Civics, accessed March 5, 2012, http://civics.pwnet.org/GOVT/GOVT.10.7.html.

exemplary citizens – the reasons we ask children to look to them as civic role models – has little to do with the responsibilities listed above, nor the areas of civic action that democratic theory addresses (voting, deliberation, and protest). There is no "Rock the Vote"-like t-shirt design equivalent for inspiring a sequel to Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone; a "Raise Your Voice" poster does not capture what Robin Chase did with ZipCar; a call to "Fight the Power!" against copyright extension would not have produced Creative Commons.

In short, some of the most exciting and productive civic actions of the past decades remain uncaptured by our common definitions of what 'civic action' is and what makes one a good citizen.

III. Paradigm shifts in democratic theory

Indeed, there is a disconnect between our theoretical understanding of standard modes of civic action and the vanguard of civic action today. Such a disconnect between democratic theory and civic reality has happened before. In 1942, economist and political scientist Joseph Schumpeter outlined a critique of the democratic theory of his day in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. He explains how Americans in his age believed in the 'Classical Doctrine of Democracy,' which he describes as the method by which political decisions in the Common Good are arrived at by "making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its [the

people's] will."[13] To put the democratic model simply: the people put forth a Common Will, which is executed on by elected officials, thus realizing the Common Good for all. Schumpeter took aim at this doctrine, arguing: (1) that "there is, first, no such thing as a uniquely determined common good that all people could agree on;"[14] (2) that even if there was a common good, it would not provide definite answers to individual issues;[15] (3) that if there is no common good towards which all individual wills could gravitate, than there could be no common will;[16] and (4) that there is not even a concept we could call an individual will in citizens that is more than "an indeterminate bundle of vague impulses loosely playing about given slogans and mistaken impressions."[17] He cites his understanding of how citizens relate to politics in the real world of the 1940s, arguing that when citizens get together to decide things politically, they exhibit a "reduced sense of responsibility, a lower level of energy of thought and greater sensitiveness to non-logical influences."[18] Even more, he adds, we are susceptible to advertising, where "mere assertion, often repeated, counts more than rational argument."[19]

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[13] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1976), 250.

[14] Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 251.
[15] Ibid., 252.
[16] Ibid., 252.
[17] Ibid., 253.

[18] Ibid., 257.
[19] Ibid.

Having illustrated how the dominant democratic theory of the day[20] failed to match up with the reality of civic life, Schumpeter addressed this disjunction by proposing a completely new model of democracy that, to him, better fit reality. His model, which has become known as Schumpeterian or competitive democracy, reverses the Classical Doctrine's roles, swapping a system where the people decide on issues and find representatives to implement those 'wills' for a system where politicians decide on issues and find citizens to vote them into office. The role of the people is not to produce a Common Will for a Common Good— the role of the people is now "to produce a government." Put another way, his democratic system is one where individuals acquire the *power to decide* by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.[21]

By describing how democratic theory failed to capture reality and putting forth a major alternate democratic theory, Schumpeter's thought brought about a paradigm shift in democratic thought. It was not simply a reform to a model, but was a great reversal of roles, calling into question major civic myths and bringing new language and clear thought to both theoretical discussions and our everyday understanding about the relation between the citizen and her government.

However, Schumpeter is not alone in ushering in a paradigm shift in

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[20] Some, like Carole Pateman in *Participation and Democratic Theory*, have argued that Schumpeter's entire "Doctrine of Classical Democracy" was a straw man. The focus here is not on the content or validity of Schumpeter's argument, but rather the model of how Schumpeter brought about a paradigm shift in democratic theory.

[21] Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 269-270.

democratic theory. In the 1960s and 1970s, some democratic theorists began to notice that *it was Schumpeter's democratic theory* that was failing to fully capture reality, as the mass protest movements of the era called into question a model of democracy where citizens' only responsibility is to periodically select among leaders. Illustrating this model of paradigm disconnect perfectly, one activist theorist writes:

> Screen and song celebrate social justice movements that protested in the streets when they were convinced that existing institutions and their normal procedures only reinforced the status quo. Many fights have been won in democratic societies by means of courageous activism—the eight-hour day, votes for women. the right to sit at any lunch counter. Yet contemporary democratic theory rarely reflects on the role of demonstration and direct action.[22]

Indeed, like Schumpeter, they pointed to a disconnect between the political reality and the dominant theory of the day and addressed the disconnect by putting forth a new model of democracy. Their model – participatory democracy – asserted that a democratic polity needed a participatory society to exist— a society where, in the words of Carole Pateman, "all political systems have been democratised and socialisation through participation can take plcace in all areas."[23]

Indeed, both Schumpeter and the participatory theorists identified a disconnect between the dominant democratic theory of the age and the modes of citizenship in reality. They both addressed the disconnect by shifting the

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[22] Iris Marion Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," *Political Theory* 29 (2001): 670.

[23] Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 42-43.

theoretical paradigm to a new democratic model— and with it, a new language to describe citizenship, politics and democracy.

My challenge is to do that again: to shift the language of citizenship, politics and democracy to accommodate the presence of these new, strange, exciting citizens – the Canadas, the Chases, the Lessigs, the Canonges, and the Friendly City Food Co-opers of the world – and their new, strange, exciting civic creations.

IV. Outline of the argument for a new democratic model

I have developed two big ideas to take on this challenge, one speaking from the perspective of the individual citizen and the other speaking from the perspective of democratic society as a whole.

The first big idea is that, for the individual citizen, there is a new mode of civic action – independent of voting, deliberating, and protest – which I call: *civic creativity*. It is defined as "the imagining and implementing of public projects over multiple platforms." In Part 1, I will describe the history of the three commonplace modes of civic action (voting, deliberating and protest), define civic creativity as new mode of civic action, and compare civic creativity to the other three modes.

The second big idea is that the individual act of civic creativity, being a social and collective practice, has ramifications for our understanding of democratic society as a whole— that there is a *new way to understand democratic*

governance that goes hand-in-hand with this new mode of civic action: *democracy as a platform for our public projects*. In Part 2, I will describe this new way of thinking. In this understanding, governance is not just Government— the institution commonly referred to as *the government* is not the only force that governs our lives. Rather, the model acknowledge that a network of various institutions – the media, corporations, religion, web platform architecture, culture, language, neighbors, foundations, universities, civic groups, and more – also govern our lives. Each of these governing forces are themselves governed by rules. To turn a civic creation idea into a reality, you must navigate the various "platforms of governance," convincing various people and entities that your creations and purposes are worthy of their support.

To conclude, I will get poetic, and muse on *generativity*, a concept that best captures both the individual and structural spirit behind the ideas of "civic creativity" and "democracy as a platform for our public projects."

Indeed, I am aiming – like Schumpeter and the participatory democracy theorists before me – to illustrate a disconnect between democratic theory and the most exciting civic actions of our time, emphasize the need for a paradigm shift in civic thinking, and illustrate an alternative democratic model, and with it, an alternative language for describing citizenship, civic action, politics, governance and democracy today.

Part 1: A New Mode of Civic Action

I. Beyond civic engagement finger-wagging

There exists a group of Americans – of which I am a member – that can be referred to as *the civic engagement finger-waggers.* We are a diffuse group, stationed in classrooms, editorial pages, and neighborhoods across the country. We have taken up the cause of increasing American civic engagement and therefore feel it our civic (*if not God-given!*) duty to *wag our finger* at our fellow citizens for not "participating enough" in public life— for not being "active citizens." We blame public problems and government corruption on the lack of engagement of our peers. We go on speaking tours decrying, as one fellow finger-wagger once wrote, "the epidemic of historical and political ignorance" in America— how children no longer know the three branches of government, how a bill becomes a law, or who George Washington was.[24] We write letters to the editor admonishing our neighbors for their disengagement, as illustrated by this excerpt from a prototypical finger-wagger editorial titled "San Diego, We Have an Engagement Problem":

> "A large part of San Diego's problem is us. Well, not you and me necessarily. We read the newspaper, which means we probably participate in civic life. The problem is the hundreds of thousands who are disengaged."[25]

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[24] *See:* "Study: Americans Don't Know Much About History," NBC4: Southern California, last modified January 26, 2009, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/Study-Americans-Dont-Know-About-Much-About-History.html.

[25] John Nienstedt, "San Diego, we have an engagement problem," *Sign On San*

We draw political cartoons juxtaposing how much we participate in certain 'less honorable' things (like shopping, watching sport, or voting in *American Idol*) with how little we participate in town hall meetings or voting in elections. The prime target of our finger-wagging: 'kids these days,' who we admonish for Facebooking away time that could be better spent taking civic action!

Of course I am kidding a bit, but the fact remains: there has been a sustained effort among the civically engaged to convert the non-engaged to their lifestyle of town committee participation, breakfast table newspaper reading and perfect attendance at the ballot box. Irregardless of whether we civic engagement finger-waggers are in the right (most studies indicate that our general spirit – that civic engagement is connected with prosperity – is correct), one thing is true: most of our conventional efforts at finger-wagging – letters to the editor admonishing disengagement, countless reports on declining youth engagement, challenges by older generations to younger generations to be turned on to politics as much as their generation was – have not proven successful. The non-engaged, and especially non-engaged youth, are responding to us like one naturally does when confronted with blanket finger-wagging: *apathetic to our admonitions and uninspired by our demands*.

After having failed to ignite a civic revival in the past twenty years, should we who care about revitalizing civic engagement in America quit? *Absolutely*

Diego, November 6, 2011, accessed March 5, 2012, http://cerc.net/in-the-news/san-diego-we-have-an-engagement-problem/.

not, but the failure of our current model of civic revitalization is a call for innovation among us finger-waggers. To begin that process, we must examine and question the premises that undergird our understanding of what makes one an "active citizen." This project – the project of examining the premises implicit in calls for more "active citizens" – is what has led me to the ideas put forth below about "a new mode of civic action." In fact, *all of the ideas* expressed in this work – though they may contribute to our understanding of democratic theory or of our understanding of real world political trends – are expressed with the *primary purpose* of innovating on the project of civic revitalization in America. Indeed, I hope the reader thinks of the theoretical innovation I eventually put forth below in the same way that Benjamin Barber wished his readers to think of his idea of "Strong Democracy" put forth in 1984: "*less a theoretical ideal drawn ahisotrically from a utopian perspective of the kind useful in criticism and deconstruction than...a reflection of political possibility rooted in American political history and current political practice*"— holding a "*prescriptive edge*" but also being a "*theoretical expression to what a great many Americans are already doing.*"[26]

[26] Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), xxv.

II. The three dominant modes of civic action: *a history of voting, deliberation and protest*

When we are called to be "active citizens," we are being asked to *participate* in certain *modes of civic action*. I define a *mode of civic action* as a standard method or vessel through which a citizen engages in civic life. When one calls on us to participate more, they are generally challenging us to participate in one or more of the three popular modes of civic action: voting, deliberating, and also – if they are an activistic finger-wagger – protest. I will explore each of these modes and describe how each mode's presence in calls for civic engagement today – "Rock the vote!" "Raise your voice!" "Fight the power!" – are the result of historic movements in democratic theory that themselves arose in response to historic trends in real world politics. In laying out a history of the emergence of voting, deliberating and protest, I aim to do two things: first, I aim to get the reader to think about democratic theory not solely in terms of *the system that a model of democracy describes*, but rather in terms of *the mode of civic action a model calls upon individual citizens to participate in*; and second, in doing so, I want to set up the presentation of a new mode of civic action – *civic creativity* – that arises out of this same history.

Voting

Of all civic actions on which those wishing to revitalize civic life in America focus their attention, *voting* reigns supreme. Election after election, the

chattering classes never tire of calling into question Americans' commitment to democracy, citing low voter turnout as a sign we do not appreciate our freedom. In a culture that sees voting – the periodic participation in the choice of leaders of our Government – as the dominant sign of civic virtue, it is no surprise that "Vote or Die!" was hip hop producer P. Diddy's phrase of choice for his 2004 youth empowerment speaking tour. P. Diddy is only one in a long line of figures who held voting up as the dominant way to engage in politics. His "Vote or Die!" t-shirt design reads like a modern day update to 1950s writer Bernard Berelson's assessment that participation in 'political affairs' as participating in elections:

> The democratic citizen is expected to be interested and to participate in political affairs. His interest and participation can take such various forms as reading and listening to campaign materials, working for the candidate or the party, arguing politics, donating money, and voting.[27]

Americans did not always hold electoral participation as the defining mode of civic action. Our national apotheosis of *voting* stems from two waves in the history of democratic thought: Representative Republicanism and Schumpeterian Democracy.

Many of America's Founding Fathers were inspired by the classical republican view of politics, which puts forth that politics, as Jurgen Habermas explains in his "Three Normative Models of Democracy," is "the reflective form of substantial ethical life," and the medium in which members of a community "become aware of their dependence on one another," realizing their role in

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[27] Bernard Berelson, *Voting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 307.

democracy as "an association of free and equal consociates under law."[28] Its emphasis on public solidarity and widespread participation in common goals is a contrast to the British liberal view of politics, which holds the government as "an apparatus of public administration," society as a "market-structured network of interactions among private persons," and politics as the process of "bundling together and pushing private interests against a government apparatus."[29] Republicanism's emphasis on public virtue was of special interest to the Founding Fathers, as illustrated by John Adams' insistence that "there must be a positive Passion for the public good, the public Interest, Honor, Power, and Glory, established in the Minds of the People, or there can be no Republican Government, nor any real Liberty."[30]

With the American Constitution, the spirit of civic republican virtue was mixed with the legislative structure of representative democracy. This resulted in what has become known as the "classical theory of democracy" in America, a model for how our commitment to common goals translates into legislation. In this model: a "united will of the people"[31] is formed; that 'will' exerts influence on the legislature (which itself was elected by the people); the legislature passes

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[28] Jurgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," *Constellations* 1 (Dec. 1994): 1.
[29] Ibid., 1.

[30] John Adams quoted in: Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution, Volume 2* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 23.
[31] Jurgen Habermas, "Popular Sovereignty as Procedure," in *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, ed. James Bohman and William Rehg (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1997), 45.

laws influenced by that will; and, as Habermas puts it, "the members of society receive the benefits and regulations that they thelmselves have programmed in their role as citizens."[32] This allows for the legitimacy of government actions for, as Habermas summarizes, "only the united and consenting will of all – that is, a general and united will of the people by which each decides the same for all and all decide the same for each – can legislate."[33]

Since this model involves elected representatives, voting naturally becomes a significant part of the republican process. However, the civic republican ideal required more out of your participation in elections than simply voting. To civic republicans in a representative republic, our periodic election of representatives becomes the moment where we ensure that our will is transmitted to the government, thus making it imperative that we elect a legislature who will be a vessel for the united will of the people. It is likely that the finger-wagger call for "informed voting" and admonition of "uninformed voting" (which, at worst, becomes the all-too-common call for political aptitude tests as a requirement for voting) is the residue of this civic republican conviction for our representative system— a continued wish that we elect representatives that will be effective vessels for the 'will of the people.'

Until the 1940's, this understanding – voting as the choosing of those who are to represent our will in the legislature – was the dominant lens through which

[32] Ibid., 54.
[33] Ibid., 45.

we understood what we citizens were doing when we voted. Then came Joseph Schumpeter, who turned the republican model on its head. As was explained in the introduction, Schumpeter questioned whether it was even possible to have such a thing as a Common Good, Common Will, or even – given recent psychological discoveries of his day – an Individual Will.

Schumpeter emphasizes how irrational and irresponsible citizens become when discussing national politics. When a citizen is dealing with "his family, his business dealings, his hobbies, his friends and enemies, his township or ward, his class, church, trade union or any other social group of which he is an active member," he is able to think rationally and take serious responsibility for the positions he takes. However, when a citizen moves outside "the little field which the individual citizen's mind encompasses with a full sense of reality," he – according to Schumpeter – exhibits a "reduced power of discerning facts, a reduced preparedness to act upon them," and "a reduced sense of responsibility." When we move even further outside of daily experience – to national or international politics – Schumpeter contends that our "sense of reality is so completely lost." We begin moving in a "fictitious world" as we become members of an unworkable committee of the whole nation. All the while, a 'popular will' is being manufactured by politicians in ways exactly analogous to commercial advertising, with the "same attempts to contact the subconscious" and the same technique of creating favorable and unfavorable associations which are the "more effective the less rational they are." To illustrate, Schumpeter asks us

to consider a lawyer's attitude to his legal briefs at work and the same lawyer's attitude to political facts presented in the newspaper— in one case, the lawyer "has qualified for appreciating the relevance of his facts by years of purposeful labor done under the definite stimulus of interest in his professional competence" and "bends his acquirements, his intellect, his will to the contents of the brief;" in the other, "he has not taken the trouble to qualify; he does not care to absorb the information or to applied to it the canons of criticism he knows so well how to handle; and he is impatient of long or complicated argument." Put simply by Schumpeter, himself: "the typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field."[34]

Therefore, as explained in the introduction, Schumpeter turns away from the classical belief that, in a democracy, the people determine the common will, which is then implemented by elected officials and puts forth a new model for democracy where: leaders compete in a market of votes for the power to control the government; government policy is seen as the creation of the leaders and not 'the people'; and the people's role is simply to choose, in periodic votes, between competing potential government leaders. As summarized by C.B. Macpherson, democracy – to the economist Schumpeter – "is simply a market mechanism: the voters are the consumers; the politicians are the entrepreneurs" and the citizens' role is "simply to choose between sets of politicians periodically at election time."[35]

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[34] Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 260-263.
[35] C. B. Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (Oxford

Schumpeter's model of democracy does two significant things. First, it – as C.B. Macpherson put it – "deliberately empties out the moral content" of republican democracy.[36] In contrast with a republican view of politics that aspires for widespread public virtue and common goals, Schumpeterian democracy arises out of the liberal view of politics, which releases citizens from an external compulsion, asserts that a citizen's only responsibility is to pursue her private interests within the confines of the law, and sees the government as a protector of private rights. As Habermas explains, elections – in the liberal view – "give citizens the opportunity to assert their private interests" which can then be aggregated by politics so as to have an affect on governance.[37]

Second, Schumpeter's conception of democracy greatly limits the role of the citizen in democratic governance. Schumpeter asserts that democracy only means that "the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them."[38] In fact, Schumpeter went as far as to discourage any act of "controlling" government beyond "refusing to reelect them," writing that voters must "respect the division of labor between themselves and the politicians they elect" by refraining from "instructing" a politicians about "what he is to do."[39] He

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University Press, 1977), 78-79.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," 2.

[38] Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy,* 285.

[39] He even argues that citizen lobbying – which he calls "the practice of bombarding them with letters and telegrams" – would be banned under his model. (Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy,* 295.)

wants to cool down politics to the point that it be made up of only legislators, party machine managers and cabinet officers of "sufficiently high quality," whose range of possible political decision is not "extended too far."[40]

It is the first quality of Schumpeterian democracy – draining democracy of public virtue – that likely led to a shift in focus among civic engagement finger-waggersi from promoting solely *informed* voting to simply promoting voting in general. If a vote is not expected to be cast in the public interest, the only task at hand is to drive up voter turnout generally, without emphasizing the public will-formation that originally was expected to precede Election Day.

Schumpeterian thought dominated mid-20th century democratic theory. Studies in political sociology at the time, as James Bohman and William Rehg explain, "suggested that citizens in modern democracies were politically uninformed, apathetic, and manipulable" and the "history of National Socialism" suggested that deeper "participation could be downright dangerous." It was a one-two punch that made political scientists emphasize system stability "at the expense of popular participation."[41] Famous judge Learned Hand begins arguing that we "have surely outgrown the conditions" that traditional democracy assumed: "intelligent attention and capacity in public affairs."[42] Berelson, in his sociological study of voting behavior, *Voting*, piles on, reporting that voters do not

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[40] Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 290-291.

[41] James Bohman and William Rehg, *Deliberative Democracy*, x-xi.

[42] Learned Hand, *The Spirit of Liberty: Papers and Addresses of Learned Hand* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 94.

share in the qualities required by classical theory, and even goes on to advocate for some voter apathy, arguing that "the apathetic segment of America probably has helped to hold the system together and cushioned the shock of disagreement, adjustment and change."[43] He shifts focus even further away from the public virtue of the individual voter and towards the system as a whole, advocating for a system of democracy that meets the requirements of democratic stability. Italian theorist Giovanni Sartori, echoing Schumpeter, explicity argues that the people do not *act*, but must *react* to the initiatives and policies of the competing elites.[44] Political scientist Robert Dahl's theory of democracy – known as 'polyarchy' – equates democracy almost entirely with fairness in voting and elections.[45]

Themes from the Schumpeterian conception of democracy – the restriction of our political lives to voting; the swapping of aspirations to public virtue for static, rational preferences; the emphasis on the electorate's control of government as opposed to its participation in government – have shaped how we understand *voting* as a mode of civic action. 'Voter turnout' has become the main metric of the health of our democracy. It is not by chance that 'petitions started' 'letters to the editor written' or 'public-interest lobbying hours clocked' are not our current metrics for our nation's civic health— when Schumpeterian democratic theory, which limited the role of a citizen to voting, became popular, it was only a matter of time before we began measuring our collective citizenship through how much

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[43] Berelson, *Voting*, 322.

[44] Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, 77.

[45] Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (Yale University, 1971).

we voted. Thus decades later, Alexander Keyssar equates a fifty percent voter turnout rate – paired with no other information about our civic engagement – with "low levels of popular participation" and a suggestion that our democracy "has become dispirited, if not lethargic."[46]

Many of our institutions of youth civic revitalization have the mark of Schumpeter, as they equate democracy with voting. Kids Voting USA, for example, was started when three businessman noticed that Costa Rica had a voter turnout of 90 percent and found that it was because there was tradition of children accompanying their parents to the polls. The organization helps students "learn first-hand what voting is all about" by having the "authentic voting experience" of casting a ballot that mirrors the ballots that adults cast. The program's materials implicitly associate democracy with voting. For example, one piece of the curriculum instructs teachers to "remind your students that a democracy is a form of government in which *policy is decided by the majority of the citizens' votes*."[47] It would be one thing to state that they were limiting their mission to solely increasing voter turnout, but they are acting decidely Schumpeterian when they equate "preparing young people to be educated, engaged citizens"[48] with only

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[46] Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xv.

[47] "Elections & Voting: Suffrage Then & Now," Kids Voting USA, accessed March 5, 2012, http://kidsvotingusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/VotingBarriersFINAL.pdf.

[48] "K-12 Students Cast Ballots in the 2010 Mid-Term Election," Kids Voting USA, accessed March 5, 2012, http://kidsvotingusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Election-2010-Results.pdf.

activities related to voting: filling out a ballot, putting the word 'Vote' up on a bulletin board in an elementary school classroom, and discussing elections.

Rock the Vote was started to use music and popular culture to "motivate and mobilize young people in our country to participate in every election with the goal of seizing the power of the youth vote to create political and social change. Simply encouraging voter turnout is not, in itself, a sign of Schumpeterian democracy's influence. However, with Rock the Vote, as with Keyssar's comments and Kid's Voting USA, democracy is equated with voting. Despite stating that their "goal is to reinvigorate our country's democracy and redefine citizenship for a generation,"[49] Rock the Vote, like others, is simply defining citizenship as Schumpeter had: choosing leaders. Indeed, if Schumpeter were alive today, he would be happy to see his influence in such statements as this one, from Rock the Vote's website: "everything in Millennials' experiences has taught us this fundamental truth: *deciding our leaders means deciding out future.*"[50]

Deliberation

After voting – and excluding acts of passive 'civic responsibility' (like not littering, following the rule of law, etc.) – the mode of civic action next most called for by those aiming to promote civic engagement is *deliberation*. I define this broadly to include: calls ranging from informal participation in public

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[49] "About Rock The Vote," Rock the Vote, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.rockthevote.com/about/.

[50] "Who are young voters?" Rock the Vote, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.rockthevote.com/about/about-young-voters/who-are-young-voters/.

discourse ('speak up,' 'raise your voice,' 'be informed so as to participate in political discussions,' 'have opinions'); formal participation in public discourse (writing letters to the editor, blogging your political opinions, writing letters to Congressman, giving speeches); and participation in explicitly deliberative bodies (such as participating in town hall meetings). Like with calls for increasing voter turnout, today's calls for more deliberative spaces and admonishments for not 'staying informed' are the contemporary residue of historic trends in democratic thought that rose in opposition to the dominant democratic theory of their day. This time, however, it was *Schumpeterian democracy* that was the dominant model being questioned.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, theorists began questioning the presumptions of Schumpeterian democracy and other 'competetive' models of democracy. As Bohman and Rehg outline, theorists started challenging the notions that: "politics should be understood mainly in terms of a conflict of competing interests;" "rational-choice frameworks provide the sole model for rational decision making;" "that legitimate government is minimalist, dedicated to the preservation of the negative liberty of atomic individuals;" and, most significantly, "democratic participation reduces to voting."[51] The waning of the 'competitive-pluralist' trend can be traced in part – as Bohman and Rehg explain – to "broad dissatisfaction with the debacles and anonymity of liberal government," such as the Vietnam War and "the increasing perception that

[51] Bohman and Rehg, *Deliberative Democracy*, xii-xiii.

decision making in government was bureaucratic and beyond the control of citizens." The Leftist political activism of the time also played a role in sparking "renewed interest in the possibilities of consensual forms of self-government."[52]

This critique continued into the 1980s and 1990s as political theorists took aim at the 'bargaining and aggregative' mechanisms of models of democracy that hold the role of politics as the forming of coalitions among different groups of preferences. Jane Mansbridge, in her famous work *Beyond Adversarial Democracy*, argues that the idea of "mechanical aggregation of conflicting selfish desires" is an idea that "verges on moral bankruptcy," because it makes no attempt to change the foundations of selfish desire.[53] She deems Schumpeterian models '*adversarial democracy*,' calling it "the democracy of a cynical society"— one that replaces "common interest with self-interest, the dignity of equal status with the baser motives of self-protection, and the communal moments of face-to-face council with the isolation of a voting machine."[54]

In the 1980s, a positive alternative to Schumpeterian democracy – a model of democracy that would eventually be called *deliberative democracy* – began to take shape. Standing in opposition to, as Maurizio D'entreves put it, the "dominance of aggregative models of democracy derived from economics and the theory of rational choice,"[55] deliberative democracy was a call to have political

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[52] Ibid., xii.
[53] Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversarial Democracy* (New York: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 18.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, *Democracy as Public Deliberation* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 1.

decision-making be based on *public deliberation among free and equal citizens*. Instead of politics being based on the rationality of the market (in which politicians are entrepreneurs and citizens are customers), it was to be based on the rationality of 'the forum': bargaining was to be replaced with continued deliberative argument, aggregation of private interests was to be replaced with the consensus of transformed interests, and periodic elections were to be supplemented with ongoing deliberation to inform and justify government decisions.

"This development," D'entreves writes of deliberative democratic theory, "is best viewed as a revival of earlier conceptions of democratic citizenship, rather than as a modern innovation." Indeed, in some ways, the deliberative turn in democratic theory was a revitalization of the republican conception of citizenship, with a renewed focus on the deliberative side of civic republicanism (as opposed to solely the aspect involving selecting representatives). As Bohman and Rehg explain:

> [The new deliberative democrats] took their cue from a variety of deliberative contexts and motifs: direct democracy, town-hall meetings and small organizations, workplace democracy, mediated forms of public reason among citizens with diverse moral doctrines, voluntary associations, and deliberative, constitutional and judicial practices regulating society as a whole.[56]

Indeed, it was a rediscovery of time when democracy, as Bohman writes, went past the confines of liberalism and a reaffirmation of the "stronger democratic ideal that government should embody the 'will of the people' formed through the

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[56] Bohman and Rehg, *Deliberation Day*, xiii.

public reasoning of citizens."[57]

The first principle of deliberative democracy is that a lack of general consensus on a public issue should be solved with *continued rational deliberation appealing to public reason*, as opposed to being solved through self-interested bargaining or voting. "Theories of deliberative democracy," Judith Squires writes, "are characterized by the commitment to the importance of arguing in the face of a democratic system largely based on bargaining and voting, and to reason in the face of a society largely motivated by interest and passion."[58] By appealing to public reason in our arguments, deliberative democrats mean that we must justify our decisions and opinions in public forums by appealing to common interests. Appealing to procedure, such as "the majority favors this" or "this is what the politicians we elected have determined is right" is, to deliberative democrats, not sufficient to justify binding laws: decisions must be justified through reasons that are mutually acceptable (based on premises about the Common Good that we cannot reasonably reject) and generally accessible (in terms all who are bound by the decisions can understand).[59] To put it another way, deliberative democrats believe that political decisions are legitimate if they are made for public reasons (appealing to a common good and not simply self-interested premises) and in

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[57] James Bohman, "The Coming of Age of Deliberative Democracy," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* Volume 6, Number 4 (1998), 401.
[58] Judith Squires, "Deliberation and decision making: discontinuity in the two-track model," in *Democracy as Public Deliberation*, ed. Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 151.
[59] Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7.

public ways (in open forums of free and equal citizens, who have the capability to understand, accept and freely respond to deliberative points made).[60]

The commitment to public reason leads into a second principle of deliberative democracy: public virtue and the Common Good is revived. As Bohman writes in "The Coming of Age of Deliberative Democracy," justifications in deliberation "require that citizens go beyond the self-interests typical in preference aggregation and orient themselves to the common good."[61] There is no need to agree on a Common Good to begin a deliberation, but you have to base your arguments in reference to *a* conception of *a* Common Good (and thus not simply advocate for a set of private interests). Because you are committing to the search for a common consensus, deliberative democrats insist that participants practice "the principle of the economy of moral disagreement," which means deliberators should attempt to, in the words of deliberative democrats Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompsons, "accommodate the moral convictions of their opponents to the greatest extent possible, without compromising their own moral convictions."[62]

Deliberative democrats believe that a third principle arises out of citizens' commitment to public reason and openness to common consensus: *the possibility of changing one's preferences*. "Deliberative democrats conceive of preferences as endogenous"— formed "during the political process, rather than prior to it,"

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[60] James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy* (The MIT Press, 2000), 26.
[61] Ibid., 402.
[62] Gutmann and Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, 3.

writes Stephen Elstub. "Through consideration of differing reasons, existing preferences can be transformed and new preferences formed."[63] This 'transformative deliberation' conception is a significant break from the 'aggregative' elements of Schumpeterian democracy, which accept static preferences as a given and only sees politics as the process of the government maximizing the appeasement of current preferences.

Deliberation is a process of, in the words of Gutmann and Thompson, "dealing with moral disagreement in politics."[64] To deliberative democrats, deliberation becomes a *source of legitimacy* when making binding decisions, treating people "not merely as objects of legislation" but as "autonomous agents who take part in the governance of their own society."[65] It is a belief in a reciprocity among citizens, where each believe they "owe one another justifications for the institutions, laws, and public policies that collectively bind them."[66]

To deliberative democrats, this legitimacy is not ensured through an "unmediated popular will," but rather through, in the words of Habermas, "a disciplined set of practices defined by the deliberative ideal."[67] Therefore, deliberative democrats are interested in the particularities of the deliberative process (the details about how agendas are set, how speaker time is allocated, etc.)

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[63] Stephen Elstub, "The Third Generation of Deliberative Democracy," *Political Studies Review* 8 (2010): 294.
[64] Gutmann and Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, 10.
[65] Ibid., 3.
[66] Ibid., 133.
[67] Quoted in Gutmann and Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, 9.

and the institutions that embody the deliberative ideal (town hall meetings, citizen juries, etc.). If done right, deliberative democrats argue that deliberation has numerous beneficial effects, including: creating community solidarity through talk, improving fairness of democratic outcomes, the educative effect of improving the moral and intellectual qualities of participants; promoting toleration as citizens are forced to empathize with other's perspectives; and encouraging publicly-spirited perspectives on public issues.

There are various debates within deliberative democratic theory. As Bohman and Rehg explain, deliberative democrats can disagree (and have disagreed) over: whether a deliberation's goal should be consensus or compromise; what the process of deliberation is; what conditions are necessary to deliberation to be democratic; and how deliberative democracy applies to current social conditions such as pluralism and social complexity.[68] Gutmann and Thompson outline other debates: *instrumental vs. expressive* (is deliberation solely about making good policy or should we also partake for the expressive value it has as a "manifestation of mutual respect among citizens"?); *procedural vs. substantive* (should principles of deliberative democracy address solely the procedures of deliberation or also the substance of the final decisions?); *consensus v. pluralist* (should we expect to find a 'thick common good' or "live respectfully with moral disagreements?"); *representative vs. participatory (*does deliberation have to involve ordinary citizens or will representatives suffice?); and

[68] Bohman and Rehg, *Deliberative Democracy*, xvii,

governmental vs. civil society (should deliberation only have to apply to governmental decisions or should it take place in a "far wider range of political and civic associations," including "corporations and labor unions, professional and residential associations, and even families and friendship circles"?).[69]

Stephen Elstub argues that the waves of responses to these internal debates can be understood as distinct 'generations of deliberative democracy.'[70] The first generation is dominated by Jurgen Habermas, who asserts that public deliberation is successful if its *procedures* are legitimate (if "relevant actors are included in a substantively equal and unlimited discourse") and result in consensus.[71] To Habermas and other "first generation deliberative democrats," the publicity of deliberations will ensure that arguments made are publicly interested, thus ensuring that a deliberation will eventually result in consensus on what decision will lead to the common good.[72]

The second generation of deliberative democrats can best be defined by their aim to "take complexity seriously" while also holding on to the aspirational deliberative ideal, fusing the deliberative theory of Habermas with practical requirements.[73] James Bohman, for example, argues that a realistic conception of deliberation must acknowledge: cultural pluralism's challenge to unitary public reasons, the exclusionary pull of social inequality, the presence of large-scale

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[69] Gutmann and Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, 21-32.
[70] Elstub, "The Third Generation of Deliberative Democracy."
[71] Ibid., 293.
[72] Ibid., 295.
[73] Ibid., 291.

organizations that could distort the deliberative process, and the bias that each community brings into deliberations.[74] Other deliberative democrats have brought attention to the fact that, though deliberation may be formally "inclusive," it is not a "neutral procedure," but rather one that faces the same biases against marginalized groups – the poor, women and ethnic minorities – that all institutions face.[75] Bohman points to three inequalities facing all deliberations: power asymmetries (which affect access to the public sphere); communicative inequalities (which affect the ability to participate and to make effective use of opportunities to deliberate in the public sphere); and 'political poverty' (the inability of a group to make effective use of the opportunities to influence the deliberative process).[76]

To address these problems with deliberative democracy, second generation theorists have put forward a few corollaries to Habermas' thought. First, they lift the requirement of consensus for final decisions, and allow for alternative decision-making mechanisms – such as voting – after deliberation has been exhausted. With this, they swap the claim that legitimate decisions require consensus for one where legitimate decisions must only be 'sufficiently acceptable' enough that "citizens continue to participate in deliberation" after a majority decision is made.[77] Compromise is acceptable after deliberation has

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[74] Baber and Barlett quoted in Elstub, "The Third Generation Deliberative Democracy," 293.
[75] Squires, "Deliberation and decision making: discontinuity in the two-track model," 151-152.
[76] Bohman, *Public Deliberation*, 110.
[77] Elstub, "The Third Generation of Deliberative Democracy," 294.

shown that there is "no common interest to be found."[78]

Second, they have come to accept – in contrast to Habermas' claim that deliberation must be based solely on the exchange – that 'non-reasonable' forms of communication can be included in deliberation, for "the complete dependence on rational forms of communication privileges dominant social groups."[79] Indeed, as second generation deliberative democrats point out, when a member of a marginalized group is attempting to get a dominant group to see an issue from their perspective, it is difficult to catalyze that empathy without both passion (which is excluded by strict 'rational discourse') and an explanation of a problem facing only marginalized people (which is implicitly excluded by deliberation's call for shared interests and 'public' reason applying to all). Thus some have proposed allowing other forms of discourse into deliberation, such as *greeting* (the recognition of one another during discussion), *rhetoric* (forms of speech that evokes symbols and values so as to motivated people to act), and *storytelling* (the presentation of a personal narrative).[80]

Just as *Schumpeterian democratic theory* shaped our understanding of *voting* as a mode of civic action, *deliberative democracy* has shaped our understanding of *deliberation* as a mode of civic action. First, Habermas' conception of the "two-track model of public deliberation" has informed our

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[78] Baber and Bartlett quoted in Elstub, "The Third Generation of Deliberative Democracy," 296.
[79] Elstub, "The Third Generation of Deliberative Democracy," 297.
[80] David Miller, "Is deliberative democracy unfair to disadvantaged groups?" in Maurice d'Entrèves, *Democracy as Public Deliberation*, 208.

understanding of how and why public deliberation plays an important role in determining government outcomes. The two-track model works as follows: public deliberation and legislative governance exist in two spheres; our deliberation takes place in, in the words of James Gordon Finlayson, the 'informal political sphere, which consists of a "network of spontaneous, 'chaotic' and 'anarchic' sources of communication and discourse';[81] the public sphere influences, as Bohman puts it, the "agenda and pool of reasons on which formal debate in the legislature draws;"[82] and this influence thus shapes legislation. Habermas' two-track model and ideas like it inform why there is a pressure to 'stay informed' and 'participate in public discourse' to people who and for conversations that will never have a direct impact on legislative process. If our participation in informal, public deliberation adds to the public sphere that eventually influences legislation (as Habermas' model says it does), than our informed and reasonable participation in public deliberation will lead to more informed and reasonable governance. Thus we have the imperative for everyone to stay informed and 'raise our voice' whenever we get a chance— be it in a cocktail party conversation or a letter to the editor in our local newspaper.

Deliberative theory has also produced concrete *deliberative institutions*. Some have conducted deliberative polls, where a random sample of citizens have been invited to "engage in a weekend of small group discussion" where they "get

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[81] James Gordon Finlayson, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005), 108.
[82] James Bohman, "The Coming of Age of Deliberative Democracy," 414-415.

information, exchange competing points of view and come to a considered judgment."[83] Bruce Ackerman has put forth a blueprint for "Deliberation Day," a national holiday where we are called into neighborhood meeting places one week before national elections, hear competing 'informercials' from rival parties, select a few issues to discuss, and deliberate in small and large groups.[84] Despite the fact they rarely used the phrase 'deliberative democracy,' the descriptions by members of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement of how their "General Assembly" decision-making process worked echo points made by first generation deliberative democratic theorists:

> "GAs are local gatherings of people participating in direct democracy, making decisions based on a collective agreement or "consensus." There is no single leader, and everyone's voice is equal. Anyone is free to propose an idea or express an opinion. With all perspectives heard and all concerns addressed, the result is a decision that nearly all in the community have contemplated and are committed to.[85]

The same spirit is emphasized in other community empowerment movements and in various 'diversity dialogues' on college campuses.

Just as Schumpeterian democrats try to craft civic education curriculum to fit their model of what makes a good citizen, deliberative democrats do, as well. Thopmson and Gutmann argue that schools should teach students the capacity to "understand different perspectives, communicate their understandings to other

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[83] Bruce Ackerman and James S. Fishkin, "Deliberation Day," *Yale Law School Legal Scholarship Repository* 10-2 (2002), 134.
[84] Ackerman and Fishkin, "Deliberation Day."
[85] "Consensus and Direct Democracy," Occupy Brooklyn General Assembly, November 4, 2011, accessed on March 5, 2012, http://occupybk.org/2011/11/04/consensus-and-direct-democracy/.

people, and engage in the give-and-take of moral argument with a view toward making mutually justifiable decisions."[86] When Virginia teachers are informed that they must teach students in civic education classes how to "influence government by communicating with government officials," "keep informed regarding current issues" "respect the opinions of others," they are experiencing the effects of the late 20th century's deliberative turn in democratic theory.

Protest

Schumpeter questioned the foundations of classical republicanism and put forth competitive democracy. The deliberative democrats questioned the foundations of competitive democracy and put forth deliberative democracy. The emergence of "Activist Democratic Theory" continues the chain, adding another critique and alternative model to democratic theory.

The movements of Mohandas Gandhi in India, Martin Luther King, Jr. in the American South, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, and millions of young people on college campuses during the Vietnam War emblazoned mass protest into a generation's consciousness. The nation had a new glossary of civic actions – sit-ins, boycotts, civil disobedience, teach-ins, vigils, draft resistance, and direct action – and came to see participation in 'social movements' as an effective way of changing government policy.

Deliberative democracy did not capture these new movements. As Iris

[86] Gutmann and Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, 61.

Marion Young puts it:

> The theory of deliberative democracy should be critical of typical tactics of activism such as street marches, boycotts, or sit-ins on the grounds that there activities confront rather than engage in discussion with people the movement‘s members disagree with.[87]

The editors of *Protest, Power, and Change: An Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action* even go as far as to say explicitly that nonviolent action is a method that "*does not* consist of the use of reason, discussion, or persuasion exclusive of direct contentious action."[88] Indeed, as argued in one of the founding documents of protest – Hendry David Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" – the point of protest is purposeful 'counter-friction' to the machine of government— a stance antithetical to the deliberative principle of "the economy of moral disagreement."[89] As more and more movements throughout the second half of the twentieth century secured rights for marginalized communities, pushed back against war, and coalesced identity groups through the employment of such tactics – and not through conventional deliberative appeals to 'public reason' – theorists began questioning whether deliberative democracy was an incomplete model.

Put simply, an activist's critique of deliberation is as follows: as long as society remains structurally unequal, deliberation will be biased towards the powerful, thus requiring those who care about justice to, in the words of Young, "engage primarily in critical oppositional activity, rather than attempt to come to

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[87] Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," 670.
[88] Douglas Bond, et al., *Protest, Power, and Change: An Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action from ACT-UP to Women's Suffrage* (1997), 320.
[89] Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government," Accessed March 5, 2012. http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/thoreau/civil/.

agreement with those who support or benefit from existing power structures."[90] To the activist, the formal inclusion of deliberation – the stipulation that everyone must be explicitly allowed to participate – is not enough. As Young puts it, people who wish to speak at deliberations need to "be able to arrange their work and child care schedule to be able to attend, be able to get to them, and have enough understanding of the hearing process to participate."[91]

Even if a deliberative process is able to counter-balance all the *de facto* exclusion (by providing child care, sharing briefings on the issues at hand to level the knowledge-gap, etc.), there still remains – to activist theorists – the problem of society-wide 'distorted communication.' Bohman poses the question: "What if communication itself becomes so restricted that it is no longer cognitively reliable or normatively appropriate?" With this, he is referring to the idea that "linguistic-symbolic meanings are used to encode, produce, and reproduce relations of power and domination," resulting in an implicit inequality in discourse despite the explicit equality of the rules of deliberation.[92] Put another way, the result of distorted communication, according to Bohman, is that "some dissenting reasons will not become topics to be recognized or respected," because the social power of powerful groups will allow them to "define the scope of deliberation and restrict communication by defining those topics that can be

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[90] Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," 671.
[91] Ibid., 680.
[92] James Bohman, "Distorted Communication: Formal Pragmatics as a Critical Theory," in Perspectives on Habermas, ed. L. Hahn (Indianapolis: Open Court, 2000), 12-13.

successfully introduced and made to become the subject of public agreement."[93] For example, if a language of racial hierarchy is widespread in a nation, explicitly fair deliberations might still be biased against proposals for racial equality because the language used in the deliberation and the culture in which the deliberation takes place distorts the argument to one side.

A similar critique is the concept of 'hegemonic discourse,' which puts forth that the discursive systems that frame the deliberative process constrain discussion of imaginative alternatives, deeming "fringe thought" anything outside of the thin window of the "possible" (as determined by those in power). As Young puts it:

> To the extent that such constrains assume existing patterns of class inequality, residential segregation, and gender division of labor as given, the activist's claim is plausible that there is little difference among the alternatives debated, and he suggests that the responsible citizen should not consent to these assumptions but instead agitate for deeper criticism and change.[94]

Deliberative democrats – or at least 'first generation' deliberative democrats – have two critiques of *protest* as a mode of civic action. First, protest is *non-reasonable*, in the sense that protestors are not limiting themselves to the exchange of public reason in a deliberative forum. "Reasonable political engagement," Young writes, "consists of the willingness to listen to those whom one believes is wrong, to demand reasons from them, and to give arguments aimed at persuading them to change their view." Protestors often decline to

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[93] Ibid., 13-25.
[94] Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," 683.

engage with the people they disagree with and – rather than rely on reason – rely on "emotional appeal, slogans, irony and disruptive tactics to protest and make his claims."[95]

The second deliberative critique of protest is that, as Young puts it, "activists engage in interest group politics rather than orienting their commitment to principles all can accept." Protest, from the perspective of first-generation deliberative theory, harkens back to the same pressure group, interest-based politics of bargaining that deliberative democracy intended to transcend. Young describes interest groups as follows, illustrating how deliberative democrats might view protest movements as interest groups:

> An interest group approach to politics encourages people to organize groups to promote particular ends through politics and policy by pressuring or cajoling policy makers to serve those interests. By means of lobbying, buying political advertisements, contributing funds to parties and candidates, and mobilizing votes for or against candidates who hold positions on certain issues, interest groups further their goals and defeat their opponents. They feel no obligation to discuss issues with those with whom their interests conflict to come to an agreement they all can accept. They simply aim to win the most for their group and engage in power politics to do so.[96]

Indeed, to many deliberative democrats, the resemblance between interest group tactics and the boycotts, sit-ins and direct actions of protest movements is too striking. The good citizen therefore should, as Young puts it, promote social justice by seeking "to criticize and debate with those with whom she disagrees…in public settings where she tries to persuade others that some policies

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[95] Ibid., 675.
[96] Ibid., 674.

or interests have unjust or harmful aspects of consequences." Stephen D'Arcy adds: "The model citizen," to the deliberative democrat, "would be a reasonable interlocutor whose political participation consists mainly in the effort to seek resolution to political conflict by joining with her fellow citizens in a cooperative process of inquiry into the common good."[97]

To the claim that protests should reason with those they disagree, the activist responds that it is, in fact, *the opponents* who refuse to reason—explicitly, such as when they refuse to meet with protestors; or implicitly, when they meet with protestors, but only provide 'lip service' to protestor's arguments. "The powerful officials have no motive to sit down" with protestors, Young writes, "and even if they did agree to deliberate, they would have the power unfairly to steer the course of the discussion."[98] If an institution or person is believed to be perpetuating major injustice or harm, then it becomes – to the activist – almost irrational to waste time in fruitless deliberation that legitimizes an unjust institution, especially when stopping injustice is urgent.

Protestors also often believe they *are participating in discourse* when they protest, arguing that there is a need to allow 'non-reasonable' modes of conveying ideas, because, as Young explains, "discursive arguments alone are not likely to command attention or inspire action."[99] They also argue that such 'non-reasonable' appeals – such as grand displays of popular passion or ironic

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[97] Stephen D'Arcy, "The Militant Protestor as Model Citizen," *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 20-3 (2008): 293.
[98] Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," 673.
[99] Ibid., 676.

depictions of injustice – are what is necessary to open up alternatives to hegemonic discourse. To activists, such displays are the only way we can open up alternatives in public consciousness, such as when the Civil Rights movement made us imagine a racially integrated South, the Gay Rights movement made many open to the possibility of gay marriage for the first time, and the environmental movement dramatized the need for a sustainable future. The Occupy Movement chant "we are unstoppable, another world is possible!" illustrates the point: dramatic, 'non-reasonable' protest actions are not meant to simply 'convince;' they are meant to open up possibilities in the public imagination.

In response to the charge that activists are another interest group, the activist, in the words of Young, argues that his "stance differs from that of simple interest advocacy because he is committed to a universalist rather than partisan cause."[100] Ideal activists are not motivated by personal gain or even only by the potential gains for the specific group for which they are advocating. They rather see injustice against a marginalized group as an affront to not just the group, but to 'justice,' illustrated by the famous Martin Luther King, Jr. quote that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Interest groups – such as industries – tend to view private-interest public engagement through the lens of cost-benefit analysis: *is lobbying this state legislature a worthwhile investment for our bottom line?* The ideal activist does not think in these terms, rather committing above

[100] Ibid., 675.

and beyond to the cause to which she is committed.

This stance puts forth a new model citizen, one that, as Young puts it: "is committed to social justice;" understands that the ordinary rules and practices of powerful institutions can perpetuate injustice and thus injustice cannot be redressed within those rules; and "believes it important to express outrage at continued injustice to motivate others to act" in the face of indifference and resignation among fellow citizens.[101] D'Arcy, in his work "The Militant Protestor as Model Citizen," speaks specifically to the ideals of *militant* protest theorists, describing how, to them, the ideal citizen participates in the political life of her community not through "the articulation of reasons and argument," but rather through "the disruption of summits and intergovernmental negotiating sessions by means of organized defiance and civil unrest."[102]

Since protest actions are made outside of deliberative bodies – which gain legitimacy, under deliberative theory, through mutually acceptable conclusions stemming from fair deliberation – and outside of government – which gains legitimacy, under Schumpeterian theory, through being duly elected – protest theorists have had to develop their own claims of how extra-institutional protest is legitimate. The *Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action* describes the "moral principle" as the basis of activist legitimacy: the civil disobedient legitimizes his actions by appealing to a 'shared moral principle' that he believes is shared by the majority

[101] Ibid., 673.
[102] D'Arcy, "The Militant Protestor as Model Citizen," 293.

of the community.[103] This principle might appeal to "natural law, divine law, conscience, and secular moral principles" and, as protestors will point out, "virtually all religions have insisted that their devotees must refuse to obey human laws when they clash with divine laws."[104] This is not a blank check: as the *Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action* argues, the general consensus among non-violent activists is that the constraints are as follows: "the target of protest must be a basic injustice;" "legitimate methods of public protest must have been tried and seen to be ineffective;" "protestors must agree that others in their society…also have the right to engage in civil disobedience" and "there must be some reasonable prospect of success resulting from the protest."[105]

Despite the differences between the two models of democracy, it seems that most protest theorists and deliberative theorists do agree on one thing: deliberation should be the dominant mode of civic action in an ideal world (where there are no structural inequalities), and non-deliberative protest actions are necessary to establish such conditions for fair deliberation. As Young puts it, the activist believes "exhorting citizens to engage in respectful argument with others they disagree is a fine recommendation for the ideal world… where everyone is included and the political equal of one another."[106] As Bohman writes, citizens create social movements for the purpose of "restoring the conditions of a free and

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[103] Douglas Bond, et al., *Protest, Power, and Change,"* 84.
[104] Ibid., 85.
[105] Ibid., 95.
[106] Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," 676-677.

open public sphere."[107] Deliberative democrats Thompson and Gutmann admit that "nondeliberative politics," such as "antiwar marches, sit-ins, and workers' strikes," are sometimes "necessary to achieve deliberative ends."[108]

If the above are the theoretical critiques and basic principles undergirding activist theories of democracy, what specifically is this mode of civic action to which they refer— *what does an activist do? What is protest?*

When one examines various descriptions of what activism is, the first thing that stands out is that activism is, for the most part, framed in two terms: (1) activism is *resistance to the status* quo; and (2) activism is *practiced outside of powerful institutions* and directed at *powerful institutions*. As Lonnie Sherod writes in *Beyond Resistance*, activism is "generally thought to include protest events and actions, advocacy for causes, and information dissemination to raise consciousness."[109] John Wilson writes that a social movement is "a conscious, collective, organized attempt to bring about or resist large scale change in the social order *by non-institutional means*." They are organized, in Wilson's words, to "do to something about concerns, fears and terrors" that are common to a particular group of people.[110] John Lofland writes in the book *Protest* that protest must be "dissent or objection" that is "relatively extreme in the context" and

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[107] Bohman, *Public Deliberation*, 133.
[108] Gutmann and Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?,* 51.
[109] Lonnie B. Sherrod, "Promoting Citizenship and Activism in Today's Youth," in *Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change: New Democratic Possibilities for Practice and Policy for America's Youth*, ed. Shawn Ginwright et al. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 291.
[110] John Wilson quoted in Melvin F. Hall, *Poor People's Social Movement Organizations: The Goal is to Win* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995), 2.

directed "to some person or institution with power over one."[111]

Concretely, activists' practices fall into roughly three types of methods, which the *Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action* list as:

- *Methods of nonviolent protest and persuasion*, which is "primarily symbolic expression with communicative content" and is exemplified by speeches, mass marches, protest vigils, and guerilla theater.
- *Methods of noncooperation*, which is "active withdrawal of customary or expected participation in a setting or relationship or conjoint activity;" and is exemplified by the 1960s table grape boycott led by Cesar Chavez in support of California farm workers.
- *Methods of nonviolent intervention*, which is an attempt to disrupt established behavior patterns and is exemplified by hunger strikes, blockades and the practice of *monkeywrenching*, where environmentalists sabotage logging, by – for example – hammering nails or other objects into trees so as to break saws and make logging prohibitively expensive.[112]

Another way to organize our understanding of protest is to see all actions of protest as applying pressure to a target and/or educating the public about a cause. Pressure-based activism – ranging from literal blockades and boycotts to the more indirect pressure that happens when, say, picket lines lower the approval rating of a business – raises the cost of an action by a powerful institution.

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[111] John Lofland, *Protest* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 2.
[112] Douglas Bond, et al., *Protest, Power, and Change,* 321.

Education-based activism – such as when a vigil makes people acknowledge a problem, a mass march makes people recognize an identity group, or a work of guerilla theater or speech makes people learn about an issue – attempts to utilize the drama of protest to put a cause on the public agenda.

Though universalist protests – such as environmental, anti-globalization, and the 2011 Occupy movement protests – have played a major role in activism's history, activism has come to be associated strongly with the advancement of marginalized groups. Mary Bernstein discusses how 'identity' for marginalized groups has become a goal for many social movements, as "activists may challenge stigmatized identities, seek recognition for new identities, or deconstruct restrictive social categories."[113] In *Beyond Resistance,* one activist argues that a 'critical self-awareness' for the sake of shedding "light on dominant discourses that contribute to [one's] marginalization and oppression of others" is a key aspect of any youth action.[114] Some have gone as far as to say that something is not 'social change' if it is not performed by a marginalized group. For example, Manuel Castells, in *The City and the Grassroots*, argues that: when a dominant class restructures urban social forms, it is to be called "urban renewal"; the term "urban social movement" is only to be applied to changes in urban meaning that are *against* the "logic, interest, and values of the dominant class."[115]

The emergence of protest and activism as a legitimate – and, to some,

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[113] Bernstein quoted in Shawn Ginwright et al., *Beyond Resistance*, 23.
[114] Shawn Ginwright et al., *Beyond Resistance*, 22-23.
[115] Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 305.

required – part of citizenship has greatly affected our public understanding of civic action. First, dozens of new methods of civic action entered our public discourse. In addition to voting and deliberating, we now have the option of (to take a few of the *198* types of civil disobedience listed in the *An Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action*): sit-ins, sit-downs, marches, building occupations, blockades, boycotts, 'collective disappearances,' pickets, protest voyages (and suicides), vigils, guerilla theater (including 'zap actions': short skits to deliver a public message), demonstrative funerals and political graffiti.[116] In addition, we now have the understanding that we need not limit ourselves to single *acts* of protests— we can also participate in protest gatherings (like mass rallies), protest events (like boycotts, strikes and vigils), protest campaigns (a series of events and gatherings), protest waves (a series of campaigns, such as the case with sit-down strike waves in the Civil Rights movements), protest movements (organized collections of protest waves), and protest cycles (such as the internal general heightening of social conflict in the late 1960s or the protest cycle of 2011 that included a worldwide Occupy movement, an Arab democracy movement, and a string of European movements, such as the Spanish 'Indignados').[117] Indeed, if one wants to participate in politics, they now have dozens of new forms of political action.

This understanding of *protest* as a mode of civic action has also led to an increase in organizations that attempt to catalyze youth activism. The majority of

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[116] Douglas Bond, et al., *Protest, Power, and Change*.
[117] Lofland, *Protest*, 3.

these organizations work with the same presumptions about activism that were outlined above. First, they presume that all activism must be in 'resistance' to something, leading many youth activist movements to be protest-centered. Second, they presume that activism should be typically done outside of major institutions so as to put pressure on those institutions. Third, they presume that activism includes only pressure-based and education-based activism, leading many youth activist organizations to restrict their actions to either organizing for the sake of putting pressure on more powerful institutions to change their policies, or running campaigns to raise awareness about an issue. College campuses are peppered with 'awareness' campaigns, and – from the more radical protest groups – the occasional pressure campaign, such as the 2001 Living Wage Campaign occupation of a Harvard administrative building[118] and a 2009 New York University campaign, where 18 NYU students took over a dining room and demanded "a thorough annual reporting of the university's operating budget," "13 scholarships a year to students from the Gaza Strip," and permission for "graduate teaching assistants to unionize."[119]

Today, protest is increasingly become a conventional mode of civic action— a standard method through which a citizen engages in civic life. The methods that defined left-wing politics in the late 1960s have now even – with the

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[118] The Harvard Living Wage Campaign, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~pslm/livingwage/portal.html.
[119] Clara Green, "18 Students Are Suspended as Protest at N.Y.U. Ends," *New York Times*, Febraury 20, 2009, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/21/nyregion/21nyu.html.

rise of the 2010 Tea Party movement – been utilized by American conservatives. The 1999 Battle of Seattle against the WTO, the mid-2000s protests against the Iraq War, and the 2011 Occupy Movement have reintroduced protest to a new generation of Americans. Time Magazine declared "The Protester" the 2011 Person of the Year, declaring that "citizen multitudes took to the streets without weapons to declare themselves *opposed*."[120] Indeed, *protest* is quickly joining the ranks of *voting* and *deliberation* as major practice of citizenship.

III. Another turn in democratic thought

I have outlined three transformational movements in democratic thought, each which popularized three distinct modes of civic action. We began with a classical theory of democracy that posited a public will being transmitted to government through representatives who were vessels of that public will. Then Schumpeter questions the foundations of this classical theory, arguing that politicians have ideas and compete for votes so as to be elected to implement their ideas (as opposed to voters coming up with ideas and forcing leaders to implement them). As Schumpeter reduced the role of a citizen to choosing among leaders, *voting* became our most revered civic action.

Then the deliberative theorists arose to question the foundations of Schumpeterian thought, arguing that a democratic model that restricts civic action

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[120] Kurt Andersen, "The Protestor," *Time Magazine*, December 14, 2011, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101745_2102132_2102373,00.html.

to periodic voting and drains it of public virtue was not enough to provide legitimacy to binding laws. They proposed an alternative model where citizens exchange reasons publicly and come to mutually agreeable political decisions. As the deliberative democrats reclaimed the republican ideal and discussed methods of ensuring fair deliberations, the call to *deliberate* – to stay informed and participate in public discourse – gained prominence.

Then activist theorists arose to question the foundation of deliberative thought, arguing that deliberation is not the path to justice in a world with major structural inequality. They proposed an alternative model where it was legitimate for citizens to both educate fellow citizens and pressure powerful institutions through 'non-reasonable' direct action tactics, such as mass marches, sit-ins, and boycotts. As these methods proved successful and theorists legitimated them as actions with civic virtue, the call to *protest* joined *voting* and *deliberation* as a dominant mode of civic action in the national consciousness.

Here, I aim to join this history by putting forth another turn in democratic theory: another critique of the dominant modes of civic action of our time; another proposal for an alternate mode of civic action; and another modeling of democratic governance to accompany it.

Gaps in the three dominant modes of civic action

The need for a new turn in democratic theory is called forth in two ways: first, in response to developments in the real world of civic action; and second, in

response to a gap in the three theories. First, a new democratic theory and understanding of civic action is required to address the new, real-world civic actions illustrated at the beginning of this work. When Geoffrey Canada imagined and created the Harlem Children's Zone, was he deliberating— *taking part in the public exchange of reasons to come to binding decisions that inform the law*? Did any aspect of his creation of HCZ involve voting in an election? Was his creation an act of protest— an act of, in Lofland's definition of protest, 'dissent or objection' directed at 'some person or institution with power over one?' True, the founding of the Harlem Children's Zone might have involved public deliberation— Canada surely must have pitched the idea to various deliberative bodies. It might have needed the support of an elected official that Canada would be happy to vote for next elects. Its creation might have even required some popular pressure against large institutions or a rhetoric of 'resistance to the status quo.' And yet, no one would describe the civic action taken by Canada in his imagining and creation of the Harlem Children's Zone as *voting*, *deliberating*, or *protest*. The same holds true for the creation of Zipcar, Creative Commons licenses, Canonge's Laundromat ESL class and the Friendly City Food Co-op. The founding of each of these are clearly civic actions— actions through which a citizen engages with his or her community. Yet, they are not captured by the three dominant modes of civic actions and are an odd fit in Schumpeterian, deliberative, and activist democratic theories.

Second, there is an explanatory gap in our understanding of all three

dominant modes of civic action. All three modes – voting, deliberating and protest – are characteristically reactive, leaving no room for the citizen-agent who aims to actively co-create the future. Voting only allows you to hand power to someone else. In deliberating, you are asked for your reasonable arguments (indeed a start!), but you are then asked to subsume any ideas to the eventual common consensual will, watering down any unique, distinct idea into something that is 'reasonable to all' at the point of explanation. In protest, you are often pressuring other, more powerful people and institutions to act, and not acting in your own right.

Each mode also leaves us with questions about the origins of public ideas. *Who generates the ideas to be reacted to in each of the three modes? Who comes up with the ideas that inform who we vote for? Who sets the agenda of the public sphere? Who comes up with the ideas that are entered into deliberations? Who initiates the protests and imagines the ideas that inform our protests? Who creates the institutions that we protest or the ideas that we protest against?* Our accounts of voting, deliberating and protest fail to adequately address the *origin* of the repertoire of ideas in public life.

Here are two examples – one imagined and one from American history – to illustrate these gaps. First, *imagine you are a member of a collective, democratic house*, like a fraternity house. What are modes of civic action you can take as a member of that house? You can vote to elect a President. You can deliberate on house decisions, sharing opinions on cutlery to buy and discussing

what the theme of the annual house Halloween event should be. You can organize your housemates to confront the President about changing a decision he made about house finances.

You can also, too, imagine a garden for the backyard, pitch the idea around to members, get the committee in charge of yard maintenance to approve of it, draft up a blueprint, buy seeds, fill out paperwork to get funds from the general house fund, and rally people together for a launch event. Was the imagining and implementation of the garden an act of voting? You might have needed votes to get parts of it passed, but the whole conception resulted in a garden, not a checkmark on a ballot. Was it an act of protest? Not by any contemporary conception of protest. Was it an act of deliberation? True, you probably had to pitch it and get a deliberative body to approve of aspects of it, but the act: (a) was much more than simply adding your reasonable arguments to discourse; and (b) arose less out of 'public reason' than out of 'public imagination.' Indeed, it was none of these: *it was something completely different*.

Scenarios like this happen all the time in real-world history. Take the example of Jane Addams and the Settlement House movement. In 1880s Chicago, when Jane Addams was troubled by the public problem of conditions in American immigrant lower class life, what could she have done to take 'civic action'? She could have voted for someone to 'deal with the problem' or recruited someone to run for office on the platform of solving the problem. She could have written a letter to the editor or raised the issue at a town hall meeting. She could have held a

protest march against conditions, hoping that it would pressure a large institution to 'deal with the problem.' However, she chose to partake in none of these modes of civic action. Instead, in 1889, she co-founded Hull House, a "community of university women" whose purpose was to provide social and educational opportunities for working class people in the surrounding neighborhood by holding classes in literature, history, art, sewing and many other subjects, holding free concerts, free lectures and operating clubs. Like the implementation of the frat house garden, the founding of Hull House is definitely a civic action, but it is also something *completely different*.

How the three dominant modes capture and fail to capture the new civic actions

There are hints of these new civic actions in our accounts of each of the three dominant modes and the democratic theories in which they are based they are based.

The three dominant modes and these new civic actions			
	Voting	Deliberation	Protest
Similarities	+Acknowledges the role leadership in public idea implementation	+Demands public virtue +Expects citizens to change static preferences through participation	+Acknowledges limits of collective reason +Extra-institutional +Need for extra-procedural legitimacy +Mission-based action versus

			participation in an institution
Differences	+Centralizes leadership in the elected +Drains citizenship of public virtue +Restricts citizenship to choosing between leaders	+Centralizes decision-making in deliberative body +Does not acknowledge differences between reason exchange and idea vision +Emphasizes situations with deep moral conflict +Separates action from decision	+Restricts action to demands of more powerful entities +Restricts action to resistance

Schumpeter, for one, acknowledges the role of leadership in collective action: "collectives act almost exclusively by accepting leadership— this is the dominant mechanism of practically any collective action which is more than a reflex."[121] Leadership and vision clearly play a role in the new civic actions I have identified. However, Schumpeter only acknowledges the leadership of elected officials, which would exclude the political leadership of people like Geoffrey Canada or Robin Chase— citizens whose only role in governance should be, according to Schumpeter, consumers of government. Schumpeter also assumes we are resigned to act self-interested in politics, an assumption proven wrong by these new civic actions, all of which were done in the spirit of the Common Good.

Deliberation too shares some aspects with these new civic actions. For one, it brings back republican virtue, a call for the common good that assuredly motivates the actions of people like Canada, Chase and Lessig. Also, deliberation opens up the possibility for people's preferences to change through their

[121] Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 269.

interaction with politics. Those partaking in this new mode of civic action also change their preferences through their participation— the demanding process of gathering and managing the resources to form a cooperative in Harrisonburg assuredly changed The Friendly City Food Co-op leaders' views about cooperatives, commerce, community and food.

However, other aspects of the new civic actions do not fit with deliberation. For one, deliberation is about centralized, binding decision-making: *centralized* in the sense that decisions must go through the deliberative body; and *binding* in the sense that the decisions of the deliberative body are about binding policies and laws. All of the new civic actors acted without the permission of a centralized deliberative body. The decisions they made in the process were about the design of actual, concrete things they were going to make in the world, not about laws they were going to abide by or force others to abide by.[122] Plus, they did not simply decide and then let another body administer their decisions— they administered them themselves, by acting after deciding. This stands in opposition to Habermas' deliberative model, where "only the administrative system" – separate from the deliberative system – "can 'act.'"[123]

Deliberative democracy focuses on the resolution of deep moral conflict, whereas these new types of civic actions do not necessarily involve resolving fundamental disagreement: in fact, many involve implementing ideas that realize

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[122] Even the case of Lessig and Creative Commons, which pertained to the law, did not have to do with binding law— Creative Commons licenses were things that artists *opted-in* to.

[123] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," 9.

foundational principles on which most in the community agree. Even more, the language that explains these ideas to the public is not exactly the same language that deliberative democrats describe when they talk of the "exchange of reasons." Take the example of John Rawls, who holds Supreme Court deliberations as an example of what the public exchange of reasons involve. Would anyone think that the closing arguments of a Supreme Court case resemble in form Robin Chase's pitch of the idea of Zipcar to potential supporters?[124]

Pitching ideas – like the ones in the examples of new civic actions given thus far – and engineering details of the implementation of those ideas is simply a different practice than deliberating foundational issues. There must be room for personal vision that cannot be articulated in the exchange of reasons. Second generation deliberative democrats are willing to allow extra-rational discourse when it comes to including marginalized groups – as is the case when they introduced 'greeting' 'rhetoric' and 'storytelling' to discourse – but they seem to not notice how deliberation, as it is conventional designed, partly restricts those who aim to pitch ideas.

Protest resembles these new civic actions in the sense that protest is non-reasonable and non-institutional action. It is non-reasonable in the sense that it does not, in acting, limit itself to exchanging reasons with fellow citizens. This is similarly the case with the new civic actors, who are not making new

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[124] John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason," in *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* ed. Bohman and Rehg (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1997), 108.

arguments, but making new institutions. Protest is non-institutional in the sense that it is action that is not mediated by a structure— like how voting is with elections and deliberation is with deliberative spaces (town halls, conversations, newspapers, etc.). These new civic actions are also non-institutional— like protest, they can occur anywhere. In being extra-institutional, both modes also differ from voting and deliberation in that you do not simply *participate in an institution* (an election, a deliberation) to be active, but rather have to act with a mission, independent of fixed structures. Take this description of protest work in the late 20th century:

> They worked together in a dingy basement stuffing envelopes for a direct mail campaign, wrote letters to their political representatives urging support of their views, canvassed door to door, or planned fund-raising events to buy television and radio time to promote their candidates or causes.
>
> There was a level of enthusiasm and passion borne of shared purpose, and a camaraderie that emerged from the sheer amount of time spent together. Discussions among those who shared political views helped spur one another on to still high levels of involvement, rallied the 'troops' in times of discouragement, and buoyed spirits among the like-minded, convincing them that win or lose, promoting their candidate or cause was truly worth their time and efforts.[125]

This small-group cause work of protest assuredly resembles the focus, passion and camaraderie that came with the founding of the Friendly City Food Co-op or the Harlem Children's Zone. Because they are extra-institutional, both protest and these new civic actions require legitimacy outside of institutional procedure— both appeal to the belief that the civic actor believes his actions are based on a

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[125] Diana C. Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16.

principle shared with the majority.

However, other aspects of protest do not capture these new actions. For one, protest tends to restrict action to resistance against more powerful institutions. Protestors tend to utilize their creativity to imagine more ways to pressure powerful entities to enact their ends instead of imagine more ways to achieve their ends on their own. Take the example of Creative Commons— if Lessig had only a protest mindset, he might have directed his creative energy towards dramatizing the inefficiency of the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act to the masses, inspiring people to shame their Congressmen into repealing the Act. True, he gave speeches to get people to do just that, but – more significantly – he invented a completely alternate path through which to revolutionize copyright, all without asking the permission of any powerful entity.

Protestors often talk of how critical discourse can break open hegemonic thought, making way for alternatives. True, viewing thousands shout "we are unstoppable, another world is possible" has a romance to it that can increase our public imagination. However, well-implemented ideas can, too. The belief that car ownership is a necessity is called into question not only by environmental activists, but also by Zipcar. The belief that the very poor 'just can't go to college' is called into question by anti-poverty activists, but also by the Harlem Children's Zone.

Protests are also often tied to fighting injustice, whereas these new civic actions are not necessarily 'fights.' Each are driving by a cause – aiding

assimilation among immigrant communities, increasing access to healthy food in Harrisonburg – but one can not accurately say that Canonge at the Laundromat or the Friendly City Food Co-Op founders in Harrisonburg, in the words of Time Magazine, 'took to the streets' to 'declare themselves opposed.' Both marginalized groups and the very privileged can participate in these new civic actions.

Despite the partial accounting for these new types of civic actions in each of the dominant modes of civic action, there is still a need for an integrated understanding of them. There is need for a mode of civic action that leaves room for: (a) a citizen-agent who actively shapes her world; and (b) an explanation for how ideas originate in the public. Some might see this as the need for a fourth mode, while others might see it as the need for a foundational mode that sets the stage for the utilization of the other three. The rest of this work is an account of this new mode of civic action.

IV. Civic Creativity: *A New Mode of Civic Action*

Civic creativity is the imagining and implementing of public projects. It is about generating public ideas and working to gather and manage the resources to realize those ideas so as to add to or change the commonwealth. A civic creator sees needs, puts forth (or appropriates) ideas, and works to bring said ideas into reality over multiple platforms of society. The civic creator sees herself (or a group of civic creators working together see themselves) as a *citizen firm*— a

mission-based entity with the aim of executing on a specific idea in a specific area of the public world. When one is compelled to vote, deliberate or protest, he is wedded to a form of democratic expression through which variable ideas are channeled. When one is in a *citizen firm*, he has imagined an idea and utilizes various tools and forms to execute on said idea (such as voting, deliberating, protest and much more).

As a civic creator, your level of 'active citizenship' is not defined by how much you have engaged with 'democratic institutions' – the amount of times you have voted, the amount of letters to the editor you have given or protests you have attended – but rather by how much you have contributed to: the development of public ideas; the realization of public idea into public projects; and the public work required to execute on those public projects. One does not want to execute on their idea *at all costs*— rather, like how deliberation can transform one's original preferences, the process of pitching one's idea to fellow citizens and gathering the resources to implement one's idea can transform the original idea.

Civic creativity differs from voting, deliberating and protest in three major ways: it involves *spearheading instead of participating; problem-solving rather than binding law;* and *decentralized work instead of a focus on the state on other large institutions*.

Spearheading instead of just participating

Civic creativity involves *integrated individual (or group) invention and problem-solving rather than fractured participation in 'democratic institutions'*

like elections, town halls, and protests. It challenges you to take on a problem wholesale, or at least, understand the projects in which you are participating.

Take the example of Robert Hammond. When he read an article indicating that an abandoned elevated rail line in Manhattan known as "The High Line" was set to be demolished, he connected with Joshua David to form Friends of the High Line, which coordinated the resources, approval and design necessary to turn the High Line into a dynamic, elevated park (which now has millions of visitors annually and has generated $2 billion dollars in tax revenue). This was all because they decided to imagine and *spearhead* this initiative from idea to implementation.

Brazilian thinker Roberto Unger speaks of three different types of relationships to our productive vocations: instrumental vocation, or working so as to make money; honorable vocation, or working because it is valiant to have a steady career; and transformative vocation, or working so as to actually produce things of purpose and value. One could categorize our relationship to civic work in a similar way: instrumental citizenship, or acting so as to bend policy to your private interests; honorable citizenship, or acting because it is honorable to go to town hall meetings, vote and write letters to Congressmen; or transformative citizenship, or acting because you aim to directly transform the world for the better. When one acts as a civic creator, she is committing to transformational citizenship.[126]

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[126] Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *Social Theory: its situation and its task* (London: Verso, 2004), 29.

A culture of civic creativity would break open the idea that our present world is simply a stop on the natural progression of history, determined by processes outside of the control of human, and replace it with an acknowledgement that most everything that exists in society today is the civic creation of someone of some group in the past. It puts institutional possibility back into human control, clearly demarcating the deterministic processes of nature and the creative human processes of society. In giving an unnatural starting point to all present civic creations (by showing that they are *imagined* and *spearheaded* by people), it plasticizes society, giving us the power and inspiration to change and add to it.

Problem solving rather than law

Civic creativity is less focused on binding law, government-granted rights, and the legitimate use of government's coercive force and more focused on mustering various forms of power to implement public ideas.

Take the example of Wendy Kopp. When Kopp founded Teach for America – an organization that places high-achieving college graduates in two-year stints as teachers in disadvantaged public schools – she made great waves across American education without ever having to change major statutes. She was putting forth and implementing an idea as a solution to the public problem of education inequities, instead of deliberating in government about changing binding laws. The same can be said of Lessig's Creative Commons

licenses— he saw himself as a problem-solver, and put forth a solution that did not involve convincing either an elected official or deliberative body that his solution was worth legislating. Whether or not Teach for America or Creative Commons are beneficial ideas, they illustrate how civic creativity acts independently of voting, deliberating and protesting; and in doing so, deal in the politics of problem solving rather than the politics of legislation.

Much of the literature on deliberative democracy focuses on the deliberations of foundational questions—*What is the proper role of government? Is abortion justified? Is this a just war? Do we have a responsibility to our fellow citizens' economic well-being?* Though acts of civic creativity can inform these foundational questions (and *are informed by* the result of public discourse), this new mode of civic action is mostly devoted to the questions that arise after there is certain agreement on more foundational questions. Civic creators ask: *Given that we all mostly agree that global warming is a problem… how do we solve it? Given that we think inequality of education is a problem... do you think this solution might work? Given that we're trying to find a way to minimize the tax burden while still fixing the health care crisis... what about this set of ideas?* Many times, civic creativity lies in a middle process between deliberations that happen in culture about foundational questions and the deliberations that happen in resource-filled committees about the minute details of policies and projects. It is an alternative, second track of Habermas' two-track model— instead of the public deliberating so as to apply communicative power to a legislature, our

public deliberation can apply communicative inspiration to teams of civic creators.

Decentralized work instead of a focus on the state

Civic creators do not presume that political ideas necessarily need to be implemented through the state (or any large entity). Rather, public projects can be implemented in decentralized fashions, utilizing horizontal networks to amplify them.

Take the case of Jimmy Wales. When Wales wanted to create the world's best encyclopedia, he did not – like Microsoft had done with Encarta – convince a big entity to fund the massive payment of thousands of experts. Rather, he created a platform – Wikipedia – that allowed for the task to be done in a decentralized fashion. Wikipedia is now the largest encyclopedia in human history and has been shown by the science journal *Nature* to be just as accurate – at least when it comes to scientific articles – as the *Encyclopedia Britannica*,[127] all without the help of a well-resourced centralized entity.

There is a popular phrase in tech circles called "The Long Tail," which describes how online businesses can sell "less of more" by being able to sell a few copies of millions of obscure books or movies, as opposed to the pre-internet model of selling millions of copies of a few popular books or movies. This "long

[127] Dan Goodin, "'Nature': Wikipedia is accurate," *USA Today*, December 14, 2005, accessed March 5, 2012, http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2005-12-14-nature-wiki_x.htm.

tail" captured by Amazon or Netflix is as profitable as the popular works stored in brick-and-mortar stores. A widespread, decentralized culture of civic creativity would unleash the Long Tail of Public Projects, and – like its commerce counterparts – would prove to be as 'profitable' (socially beneficial) as the large scale public projects put on by the state and large institutions, as the collection of small-town community gardens and biking initiatives add up to be as equally beneficial in rolling back global warming as national carbon reduction initiatives.

It has been said that there used to be two ways to take ideas and make them big: (1) through bureaucracy, by having large pyramidal institutions implement them top-down; and (2) through markets, by having an open market of independent person-to-person, firm-to-firm contracts result in profitable ideas being replicated. There is a popular third idea emerging: *amplifying ideas through networks*. Unlike bureaucracy, which enforces amplification from the top; and unlike markets, which only allows immediate, personally profitable ideas to amplify, network amplification functions by easing information transfer about a good idea across large networks, resulting in interested network members who hear that information to voluntarily join in the propagation and implementation of the idea. Though civic creations can be implemented through bureaucracy and through firms in the market, the power of networks allows for widespread, decentralized civic creativity.

Habermas hints at such a concept in his 'discourse theory,' when he calls for a theory in contrast with liberal democracy – which applies the "rule of law to

many isolated private subjects" and which make "individual actors function as dependent variables in system processes that move along blindly" – *and* republican democracy – which ascribes the "praxis of civic self-determination to one encompassing macro-subject" and views "the citizenry as a collective actor that reflects the whole."[128] Civic creativity, too, presumes that civic action need not take place only in the market of private one-to-one contracts, nor in bodies that presume a whole polity must act in common. Rather, action can take place in various corners of the 'decentered' network of civil society. However, unlike Habermas, who only talks about how this decentered network allows for discourse, civic creativity asserts that this decentered network can also allow for decentralized civic creativity— the decentralized imagining and implementing of public projects.

In decentralizing politics away from a focus on statecraft, civic creativity greatly expands the realm of politics to include more types of people. It does this in two ways. First, it frees political action from being constrained to *outsider revolution* and *insider reform*. Roberto Unger has described how the belief that there is a single, natural, totalizing flow of history— that anything new is simply a limited set of institutional possibilities we will pass as we flow stream through history. This idea, paired with the centralizing of politics into only determining state actions has split citizen change-makers into, as Unger outlines, two camps— *reformers and the revolutionaries*. The reformers, aiming – as Unger explains – to

[128] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," 7-10.

slightly modify and humanize this 'natural flow' of history, attempt to slightly fortify the vessel of society against the eventual events downstream as well as steer towards the bank of the river more accommodating to their values. The revolutionaries, aiming to reject in total the current flow of history and replace it with another totalizing flow, attempt to either paddle against the current or destroy the vessel in the hopes that some swim to share and build another ship to head down another river.[129]

Horrible metaphors aside, citizens are left to choose between two poles of politics if they want to make change— an elite reformer class of politicians and governmental experts who are well-versed in the minutiae of elections, government and policy to make small reforms to the mostly-static institutions they manage; and a smaller, outsider 'revolutionary' class who defines themselves outside and against all political and cultural institutions. The entire definition of the limits of politics gets distorted by these two poles, as people begin to believe that politics is either: (1) *insider electoral campaigning and governmental policy in-fighting*; or (2) *outsider agitation and rallying.* All the while, a middle group – the hundreds of millions of people who all have the capacity to partake in politics yet are un-seduced by the vocation of elite, insider reform or righteous, outsider revolution – disengage from politics all together.

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[129] *See:* Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *Democracy Realized* (London: Verso, 1998), 18-19; Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 163-165); and Robert Mangabeira Unger, *False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 172-246.

We are left with the revolutionaries unsuccessful at their primary goal (revolution), the reformers – lacking vision and providing the illusion of change-making – contributing to the institutional stasis, and the rest disengaged from (and, for the most part, disgusted with) politics all together. Thus the task at hand is to craft a politics that is: (1) susceptible to true newness, freed from a belief in a totalizing, 'natural' flow of history, and open to changes not in the 'script' of institutional context; and (2) open to more players than simply the outsider revolutionary or the insider reformer and, thus open to more actions than minor reforms and totalizing revolution.

A culture of civic creativity unbounds civic participating from residing only in insider reformers and outsider revolutionaries, presenting a third way to engage. Unlike electoral policy or governmental policy in-fighting, one need not be an insider to make change in the public sphere. Likewise, a culture of civic creation accepts Unger's criticism of revolutionaries in acknowledging that society's institutions are not a total package that needs to be accepted or rejected in full. Rather a culture of civic creation sees public life as the main street of a city: not a single inseparable whole, but rather a variety of proverbial shops that can be opened, a variety of proverbial infrastructural aspects that can be improved upon— a larger creation made of little, flexible creations.

In doing so, the insider-politics/outsider-politics debate is solved, because everyone is an insider in a culture of civic creation— (1) everyone feels like an owner of their world around them and responsible for imagining ways they can be

improved; likewise (2) everyone has the opportunity to put forth ideas, needing no insurmountable permission to open up a civic firm on the main street of the public sphere. Democracy is not simply the debating of values, the protecting of rights, and the representing of the people's will in a separate government— it is also a platform, that – like ideal capitalism, for examples – allows any and all citizens to implement their individual creative ideas in the public sphere. This greatly broadens the realm of political action (and thus participation in politics) from those who reform inside and rally outside, to every single citizen who has an idea about making their community and nation better.

A broader understanding of civic creativity

There's a limited understanding of civic creativity: the making of new, discrete institutions in civil society, like the Boy Scouts or Teach for America.

There is also a broader understanding, too, though: civic creativity is a lens by which we see any action in politics and governance. Instead of looking at how public policies and goods are made through their reference to elections, deliberative functions, or popular pressure, we should analyze them with a focus on the person or group who thought them up and is trying to execute on them. It is to see new policies and public goods as projects, from idea to execution. In this broader understanding, government programs, policies and even laws can be seen as the result of civic creativity— the imagining and implementing of public projects.

In some cases, such as when perfect deliberation makes the public will 'rise' out of discussion or when a task force is assigned to passively determine what should be done, this does not happen. Indeed, sometimes procedures, committees, or masses produce a project that has no specific creator's or set of creators' fingerprints on it. But behind *most* features of the public sphere, you can find a creator who is (or was) attempting to implement a vision. Even a project like the Occupy Movement – which was defined by its spontaneity and aversion to leaders – can be analyzed not as a subject-less phenomenon, but rather as a project that was imagined and catalyzed by the Vancouver-based publication Adbusters.

Seeing public life through the lens of civic creativity is a purposeful attempt to take changes in the public sphere and try to attribute them to integrated projects over multiple platforms that were imagined and are being realized by real people. Take the case of the High Line mentioned above. One could interpret the existence of the High Line through the lens of elections— describing how New York City Council Speakers Giffor Miller and Christine C. Quinn helped secure $50 million for the park's development. You could view its existence through the lens of the deliberations in the New York City Council that eventually resulted in the funding. From a civic creativity perspective, however, you see it as a project that was being executed on by two civic creators: Joshua David and Robert Hammond. They may have utilized deliberation, elected officials or even protest to realize their idea, but viewing its implementation from only the perspective of

how each individual aspect of it arose out of government procedure is – according to the lens of civic creativity – failing to see it as the integrated, human-created project it actually is.

Despite the spirit of decentralization, this broader view of civic creativity includes government programs, policies, and laws. The Peace Corps was an internal civic creation within the government. Without a lens of civic creativity, one might see The Clean Water Act of 1972 as the mindful governing decision of an elected leader (as Schumpeterian thought would see it) or as the result of the deliberative exchange of reasons in the public sphere or Congress (as deliberative democrats would see it). However, through a lens of civic creativity, you would see that it could be more accurately described as the culmination of a project by citizen David Zwick. Zwick, working with consumer advocate Ralph Nader, published *Water Wasteland* in 1971, a study of the nation's water pollution problems and a set of recommendations on how to fix the power imbalance between polluters and victims. He founded Clean Water Action to enact as many of Water Wasteland's recommended changes into law. Much of the 1972 Clean Water Act was drafted by Zwick's team. Indeed, one gets a clearer picture of what is going on with the passage of the Act if they view it less as the result of a legislative process and more as a public project being spearheaded by a citizen.

One might worry that separating legislation and other public action from institutionalized democratic procedures is dangerous, because institutionalized democratic procedures can ensure that outcomes are legitimate, fair and

agreeable. *Having elected Congressmen examine and deliberate on an issue, exchange public reasons and work to craft an agreeable piece of legislation together must assuredly be a better system than having rogue outsiders try to execute on their own ideas through Congress, right?*

The idea of civic creativity does not presume a normative stance on which system – one where a legislature produces and implements its own ideas or one where it is a platform that approves, disapproves and amends outsiders' ideas – is better. However, it does assert that, objectively: *the latter is happening*. A legislature is not simply a system that internally sketches out and produces legislation— it is also in the trajectory of citizens' and organizations' public projects; it is a platform that *processes others' ideas*.

With the explosion in private-interest (commercial) lobbying and ideological think tanks over the past fifty years, it is likely that it is the case now more than ever that most legislative outcomes are arising out of outsiders' initiatives rather than internal deliberations. In "A Theory of Political Parties: Reconsidering Party in the United States," a group of political scientists showed how this even happens with political parties, providing evidence that swaps the common understanding of political parties – in which a party is a team of politicians whose paramount goal is to win electoral office – for one which places interest groups and activists as the key actors— in which parties can be "best understood as coalitions of interest groups and activists seeking to capture and use the government for their particular goals, which range from material self-interest

to high-minded idealism."[130]

Acknowledging that this is happening is important because it allows us to understand political outcomes more keenly. An assumption that there is no original instigator to legislation or electoral action – that it must have arose out of reasoned debate – leaves us blind to the reality of both private interests and ideological movements at work. Once we acknowledge that this is happening, we can begin to participate in it, too.

Conclusions

This chapter was an attempt to: (1) answer the question of what we civic engagement finger-waggers meant when we demand that our neighbors to be more active citizens; and (2) re-examine that definition in light of new civic actions. To Schumpeterian democrats, an active citizen votes, and not much else. To deliberative democrats, an active citizen is informed and participates in the exchange of public reasons in informal and formal deliberative forums and 'public spheres.' To activist democrats, an active citizen stands opposed to injustice through protest and non-violent direct action. Indeed, when one calls on fellow citizens to be 'active citizens,' one is generally calling on them to vote, to have opinions about and participate in reasonable discussions about public issues, and to participate in protests when justice is threatened.

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[130] Kathleen Bawn et al., "A Theory of Political Parties: Reconsidering Party in the United States," January 28, 2012, accessed March 5, 2012, http://masket.net/Theory_of_Parties.pdf.

This chapter has been an attempt to unpack a fourth understanding of what an active citizen does. To creative democrats, an active citizen helps in the imagining and implementation of public projects. They help with: the thinking up of new public ideas that address public problems; the implementation of public ideas into public projects; and the public work involved in realizing public projects into manifested civic creations.

Part 2: A New Understanding of Democratic Governance

I have presented a new mode of civic action— civic creativity, the imagining and implementing of public projects. It puts forth that citizenship is not simply the participation in democratic institutions, but also the having one's own agenda (that can be implemented through multiple institutions). It places democracy's center of gravity in the citizen-actor and not the institutions that are the arenas for civic action.

Nevertheless, modes of civic action do not exist in isolation. They are social and collective practices that exist within communities and theoretically fit within larger models of democracy. Voting is part of a democratic model based on politicians periodically earning votes so as to legitimize their control of government. One does not simply deliberate— we deliberate within various formal and informal 'deliberative bodies.' Our deliberations ideally connect to decision-making mechanisms that eventually affect legislation and the administration of government. Even the protester – who is generally acting extra-institutionally – must interact within a larger system of recruiting fellow protestors, public support and the eventual compliance of the institution she is protesting. It is thus important to account for how a civic creator interacts with the public outside of the ideal conditions of his own imagination. Here I will put forth a new understanding of democratic governance that accounts for how civic creativity is a social and collective practice.

I. The restricted spectrum of democratic models

To begin, let's look into dominant models of democracy. Much of the debate over democrat models involves a spectrum between, on the one side, *minimalist, Schumpeterian democracy* – where we elect *one person* (or group of people acting in concert, like a political party) to make all governing decisions – and, on the other side, *participatory democracy*, where we *all* participate in making collective governing decisions. One way to think about the spectrum is to think of a 'governing committee,' and ask: *should the committee have one member we elect or should all of us be on the committee?*

The benefits and drawbacks of each side of the spectrum can be defined against each other by three criteria: the *feasibility* of a political reality ever matching the model; the *breath of participation* among citizens in the polities addressed by the model; and the *center of gravity* of the model, by which we mean *where the action is in the model* and *who creates and executes on ideas in the model*.

Schumpeterian democracy has grown in popularity due to its *feasibility*— it is a minimalist model, well suited for low-energy democracies with declining popular participation. Indeed, with every passing election cycle, American democracy evermore resembles the competitive model, as candidates for high office appear more and more like competitive market firms, packaging platforms and candidates with marketing campaigns that become evermore eerily similar to their consumer product counterparts— complete with focus groups, logos, fans,

and brand management.

To Schumpeter, the *center of gravity* of democracy – the place where decisions about and ideas for the public are made and executed on – is in the halls of the leaders who have been chosen to manage the government. All the eyes of politics are directed towards the elite firm that manages the government, a single firm which is able to implement and execute on a unified and totalizing vision for how the government should be run— a firm only separated from its dictatorial counterparts by the fact that it must compete again for government control in periodic elections against other political firms.

With regard to *the breadth of participation*, the Schumpeterian model of democracy chooses present reality over ambition. The working assumption is a low-energy democracy, where the people are content with being passive choosers and consumers of leadership, where their relationship with government mirrors their relation with market goods. There can be civic heroes, grand visions, and big lives in the arena of Schumpeterian democracy, but the heroes are the few, the grand visions can only be put forth by those in the firms that win a unitary governance, and the big lives through politics can only be lived by an elite political class.

The participatory democratic model has gained popularity in part due to its role as a striving counterweight to political realities that have come to resemble Schumpeterian democratic minimalism. Participatory democracy is defined most strongly by its attempt to greatly widen the *breadth of participation* in

governance. To do so, participatory advocates aim to maximize the number of people incorporated into decision making processes in government by creating institutions ranging from open deliberation forums to direct democracy tools (initiatives, referendum, recalls) to increasing the amount of positions in legislation and governance bodies.

Though most applaud the ideal of wide participation in democratic governance, participatory democracy faces criticism with regard to its *feasibility*. It is seen as too ambitious to believe that every citizen is capable of governing on every issue. First, members of a polity simply do not have enough time to be governing on every issue— their role as a citizen must fight for time with their role as a parent, as a worker, as a neighbor, as a hobbyist, etc. Second, members of a polity vary in expertise and passion— should not the citizen with the expert, coherent and popular vision of how government (or a section of government) should be run be in charge, as opposed to a committee of everyone? Finally, critics point out, participatory institutions that work well on a small scale (like a neighborhood or a small town) tend to fall apart as the size of the polity increases.

Despite its emphasis on broadening the range of democracy to more individuals, the individual people to which participatory democracy expands governance are not the *center of gravity* of the model. Rather, the action of this democratic model – the place where ideas are created and executed upon – is in the common will that those people form in entering deliberations with other people. Ideas are not attached to visionary people or groups— the ideas that make

up the policy of governance trace back to inclusive deliberative procedures. Individuals are expected to lend their voices to governance, but only at sites where their ideas are to be assimilated with others into a deliberative common will. There is no room for civic heroes, for personal political greatness.

Both participatory democracy and Schumpeterian democracy leave us, in part, dissatisfied. Schumpeterian democracy is feasible, but it leaves a vast majority of citizens as passive consumers of the forces that govern their lives. It allows for visionaries to create ideas and execute on them, but restricts access to such opportunities to an elite group of firms competing for total governance. Participatory democracy has the ambitious aim of extending access to governance to more people, but it seems infeasible to have all the people governing on all the issues. Even more, even if we could come up with a feasible participatory system, such a model bars ambitious personal public visions from being a part of politics, for the individual is expected to raise his voice only to assimilate it into the common vision and will of the polity.

II. The restrictive assumption of the two models

What is to be done, then? If participatory democracy is one end of the spectrum of democratic models and Schumpeterian democracy is the other, are not we bound to finding a solution in the middle, a compromise between the extreme ends where some decisions are made collectively and others are given to elected leaders? I aim to argue here that we are not bounded in such a way— that

there is an incorrect and restrictive assumption about governance inherent in both seemingly opposite models; and that, when that restriction is lifted, there is another dimension on which one can move in crafting a model of democracy.

The restrictive assumption that both participatory and Schumpeterian democracy hold is that *all democratic governance occurs in a single institution – the governmen*t – and conversely that *that single institution must govern everything that is to be governed*. It is the assumption that one body and one set of rules are going to make and implement all governable decisions for polity— that we *cannot* break governing power into parts and have each part placed in different bodies and governed by different sets of procedures.

To illustrate the ramifications of this understanding of democratic governance consider this thought experiment: *let us say that there was one committee that was going to make and implement all governable decisions for a polity.* And let us say that in this polity, we understood "the workings of democracy and politics" to be synonymous with "the working of this committee." In such a polity, the committee is restricted by two parameters: (1) it would have to be, given that it is a *democratic* governing committee, understood to be governed 'by the people' in some form; and (2) it was the only committee governing everything that was governable.

Given that everyone takes the second parameter for granted (as I am saying we do in the real world), discussions regarding how the polity should craft the set up of the committee would center on interpretations of the first

parameter— *how much should the committee be governed 'by the people'?* You would eventually produce an apparently wide range of interpretations of the first parameter, ranging from a model that says one person (or group) runs the committee (only regulated by occasional and minimal connection to the public will) to a model that says everyone in the polity should be a member of the committee. Most would turn to middle ground models where the committee governance is staggered through various representational schemes and procedural systems. You would have completely divergent models with regard to the first parameter, but a complete convergence of all models with regard to the second— they all still assume that one committee governed everything, no matter how the committee was set up.

Since the committee was governing everything, politics would become unifocused on the happenings of the committee— discussions about new ideas for the political community, policies that should be implemented, and projects that should be worked on would give way to questions about the committee: *Who is on the committee? What are the procedures for the committee? How do we choose who is on the committee? Who's going to be on the committee next year?* Who can blame us for having such a focus? If the committee is the sole point of governance, our role as citizens should be about our orientation to the happenings of the committee.

With all eyes focused on the committee, the center of gravity in democracy would move away from the ideas and dynamic people (and groups)

that execute on said ideas and towards the totalizing committee and our participation with it. Some people, who notice that, in this framework, all individual public initiative is either limited to a select few or subsumed by demands that it be assimilated into a common will, will begin to advocate for the complete diminishment and abolition of the committee, angered by the fact that they have to ask permission from one institution to put forth an idea into the world.

This is not a far cry from our current orientation to democratic governance. When people begin to take for granted the parameter that *democracy is about, and only about, the institution called the government*, we develop models of democracy not unlike the polity in the thought experiment. Political scientists are left to debate endlessly the merits of Schumpeterian, representative, participatory and direct democracy. Citizens are left to think of themselves as only consumers, voter-lobbyists, and committee members, respectively, with all their eyes pointed towards the government. The seal of democracy comes to have the voting booth etched into one side and the floor of Congress on the other. Ideas put forth by those outside of power are ignored, as the news begins to converge towards a never-ending discussion of who is going to be elected next, what the elected are deciding, and who is protesting the elected. And some – who see periodic votes as too small a voice in Schumpeterian democracy; who see their connection to their representatives as too thin and distant in representative democracy; who are tired of asking for permission from everyone else to realize

their public visions in participatory democracy – begin to advocate for the shrinking of all government, or even all public life, in exchange for the totalization of the only area of life where they do not have to ask permission to create— the market.

Indeed, all these consequences – the quixotic quest for a model of democracy that is a perfect balance on the spectrum between Schumpeterian and participatory democratic model; the replacement of political conversations being about ideas to political conversations being about the current make up of government; the rise of government abandonment and advocacy for the market to take over where government used to be – stem from the restrictive assumption that democratic governance is synonymous with one institution: *the government*. Current dominant democratic models vary with regard to how they interpret the parameter 'government is run by the people,' but converge with regard to the parameter that 'governance is government.' If we break open that second parameter – if we can imagine models where governance is not necessarily government – we have a whole new dimension on which to move in crafting a democratic model.

III. Democracy as a network of platforms of governance

Governance is more than government

What then is governance if it is not the actions of the government? To believe that *governance is more than Government* is to assert that the belief that

all governance is from Government unnecessarily restricts the location and function of governance in society. It restricts the location of governing decisions to only decisions by the state, and restricts the functional types of Governance to decisions about law and state administration. One who asserts that governance is more than Government acknowledges that the government may be the only entity that has a monopoly on force, but insists that there are thousands of decisions that govern our lives that: (1) are decided by entities outside of the state; and (2) are not pertaining to law or state administration. In asserting that 'governance is more than Government,' we are of course not defining 'governing' to mean 'actions done by the Government' (as in the state). Rather, we are defining 'governance' to mean any institutional power outside of our own that affects, controls, grants power to, restricts, sways – or to take from the Greek origin of the word, *steers* – our lives.

Defining governance this way leads us to see the various ways we are governed by entities outside of the government. The rules, procedures and regulations of our workplaces govern our lives for eight hours a day. The governing decisions of our religious leaders steer our spiritual lives. There are industry practices that govern who can and cannot be, say, a practicing lawyer or doctor. The architecture and policies of web platforms direct the flow of information on the internet. The American Psychiatric Association governs the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (the DSM) which, in turn, greatly affects the diagnostic decisions of psychologists nationwide. The decisions

of Wal Mart's management to stock or not to stock a product greatly affects industries that produce consumer goods. University administrative decisions affect research and student life. Even our culture is governed, in part, by decisions by media organizations.

This is neither a profound nor new thought. In *Participation and Democratic Theory*, Carole Pateman describes how many participatory theorists believe we should treat "spheres such as industry" as "political systems in their own right,"[131] for they "are organs which regularly shape in authoritatively allocating values for society."[132] Jean Cohen describes how new social movements in the late 20th century targeted "the social domain of 'civil society' rather than the economy or state, raising issues concerned with the democratization of structures of everyday life."[133] Feminists have discussed how the personal is the political, indicating that the decisions of the state are not the only governance decisions that are of importance. Lawrence Lessig – the civic creator featured in the introduction – has even expressed thoughts in a similar vein, famously arguing that "Code is Law"— the source code of computer programs can be an instrument of social control.[134]

Even if you circumscribe governance in the entity we know as the

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[131] Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, 43.
[132] Bachrach quoted in Ibid., 84.
[133] Jean Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 11 (1985): 667.
[134] Lawrence Lessig, "Code is Law: On Liberty in Cyberspace," *Harvard Magazine*, January-February 2000, accessed March 5, 2012, http://harvardmagazine.com/2000/01/code-is-law-html.

government, thinking about multiple platforms of governance is still not a stretch, for the 'separation of powers' already indicates that governance can be split into multiple platforms. Each of the branches of government has its own procedures and is in charge of different aspects of the government's authority. Whenever there is a bicameral legislature, a constitution is splitting governing functions into two different procedures that administer those governing functions. The decisions of executive branch entities – like the Federal Reserve and the EPA – can be said to govern us, too, in a way partially independent of the way the legislative branch governs us. Federalism, too, is a testament to how the idea that governance emanates from only one entity – 'the government' – is wrongheaded. Indeed, whether its the internal disunity of how 'the government' decides on how it governs or how various non-governmental institutions govern our lives, the case has been presented that we are – in the terms of the thought experiment earlier – not governed by a single 'committee,' but rather by a network of multiple committees.

Platforms of governance have their own specific rules and procedures

Each of these forces of governance is administered through rules and procedures specific to each platforms of governance. Put another way: each piece of governing power emanates from an entity whose administration of that power is governed by a set of rules and procedures. It is not just that we are governed by multiple committees— we are governed by multiple of committees each of which

are governed by their own, specific, varied rules and procedures.

Some platforms of governance have strict, formal rules and procedures. The American Psychological Association meets periodically to re-assess the DSM and follows a specific set of rules and procedures to change it. The same goes for the American Bar Association and its criteria for its various bar exams. The United States Council of Bishops has a specific set of rules and procedures to amend the practices of American dioceses of the Catholic Church. Philanthropic foundations generally have strict procedures through which they doll out grants.

Some platforms of governance have moderately formal rules and procedures. There is generally a rough procedure within corporations that is followed when making major decisions. Civic organizations have rules by which they receive members, spend money and support projects. News rooms have a procedure through which they take in news stories and publish or air them. Wikipedia has rules about what can and cannot be posted.

Some platforms of governance have informal, abstract rules and procedures. The internet has various pathways through which information flows and is amplified, governed by the architecture of Reddit (which ranks web content), aggregation blogs (which curates web content), and Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr (which transmits web content through social networks). Our public sphere, generally, too has abstract 'rules' through which ideas synapse through the culture— the sociological phenomena that explain how traditions, styles, and projects spread. Various sociolinguists have written about how language governs

our thought and culture and how, in turn, certain phenomena explain how we can change language.

Indeed, to commandeer a force of governance for your own ends – to utilize an entity's resources or power to help realize a public idea into a public project – you must navigate the rules of that force's platform of governance. If you want to secure funds for a community garden from a foundation, you have to navigate the grant process of a local foundation. If you want to change psychologists' understanding of something – as gay rights advocates did in the early 1970's when they wanted to take 'homosexuality' off the list of sexual identity disorders – you have to convince the APA trustees and broader membership to go through the procedures necessary to change the DSM. If you want to publicize a new institution you are building, you have to convince a media organization to cover you or navigate new media platforms.

Multi-platform governance and civic creators

The model of democratic governance outlined above can be thought about as three ideas: (1) we are governed not only by 'the government' but by a variety of formal and informal institutions; (2) the various 'forces of governance' emanate from 'platforms of governance,' each of which has different rules and procedures through which that force is utilized; and (3) we have different levels of access to different platforms of governance. Through this model, one can begin to understand how civic creativity becomes a social and collective practice. Civic

creators need resources, relationships, support, and channeled power to realize their public projects. Some public projects even need the approval, permission or change in policy of some institution to be implemented. Some civic creators' entire project is the change of an institution's procedured, policies or law.
To get this, they have to persuade various platforms of entities (be they foundations, the media, a legislative committee, the public at large, a neighborhood council, a rich person or a religious group) to agree to give them that resource, relationship, support or decision. Thus, civic creators must interact in the platforms of governance that adjudicate how those entities wield their power. Since each platform of governance has different rules and procedures by which it determines how to govern, a civic creator might have to deliberate, persuade, win over, make deals, market, lobby, publicize, popularize, campaign, pay, bargain and much more to secure resources from various platforms of governance.

The ramifications of multi-platform governance

These ideas above are not meant to be normative— they are only meant to describe what is already happening, while re-defining politics and 'democratic governance' to describe a wider range of institutions that wield power and projects that engage with those institutions. They form a language – one of 'governance,' 'platforms of governance' and a platform's specific 'rules and procedures' – with which to describe how those who are spearheading projects

engage with entities that provide them with necessary resources and permission to realize ideas in public. However, if one begins to think about politics in this language – and, even more, begins to support the mindset and structures that this language presumes – there are, indeed, interesting conceptual and real-world ramifications.

To begin, let us return to the original three criteria that was utilized to contrast Schumpeterian and participatory democracy: *breadth of participation, feasibility,* and *center of gravity*.

A model of democracy as a decentralized network of platforms of governance would have a wide *breadth of participation*, because 'participating in politics' is liberated in terms of location and function: one need not be interested in the working of *the state* nor the workings of *binding laws* to be political. To be 'civically engaged' means that you are attempting to improve and innovate on *any and all* parts of public life— be it in your work, your school, your neighborhood, your industry, your practice, your culture, or even your corner of the internet.

You, as a civic creator, also have a wider set of spaces through which to achieve public goals. Most models have only considered legislative and state administrative options. Now, in addition to the state, you can implement public idea in civic society, as well, navigating culture and extra-governmental institutions so as to achieve a public end. Also, you can implement public ideas in the market, creating sustainable firms that are defined by their social mission. Take Nobel Peace Prize winner and civic creator Mohammad Yunus as an

example: his creation of Grameen Bank has extended micro-credit to poor women across Bangladesh, raising thousands out of poverty. His description of a 'social business' illustrates how the market can be an arena for public-interested projects:

> A social business is designed and operated as a business enterprise, with products, services, customers, markets, expenses and revenues – but with the profit-maximization principle replaced by the social-benefit principle. Rather than seeking to amass the highest possible level of financial profit to be enjoyed by the investors, the social business seeks to achieve a social objective.[135]

Though Zipcar does not follow Yunus' rule of 'no-profit,' it and other businesses less interested in making money and more interested in adding something to the world – ranging from clear example such as OPower (which uses the internet and beautiful data design to encourage people to use less energy) to recent examples from the tech world where some CEOs speak and act as if they are more interested creating value and making their mark than they are about maximizing profit[136] – illustrate how the market can be an arena for public projects. Indeed, by acknowledging a wide set of public platforms with varying rules, we allow civic creators more spaces through which to implement their ideas. If they are denied

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[135] Muhammad Yunus, *Creating a World Without Poverty* (PublicAffairs, 2007), 13.

[136] For example, in Facebook's IPO filing, CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote: "These days I think more and more people want to use services form companies that believe in something beyond simply maximizing profits," adding "We don't build services in order to make money…we make money in order to build better services." He even went as far as to start his letter to shareholders with the clear statement: "Facebook was not originally created to be a company. It was built to accomplish a social mission – to make the world more open and connected." Apple's Steve Jobs appears to have had similar sentiments, stating to the Wall Street Journal in 1993: "being the richest man in the cemetery doesn't matter to me…Going to bed at night saying we've done something wonderful…that's what matters to me."

access to the platform of the government, they can implement their idea through the market or civil society.

A model of democracy where civic creators navigate multiple platforms to realize their public projects is also *feasible*. It does not demand that one need to be an expert in all public issues nor does it resign citizenship to being only the consumption of others' leadership. Rather, it is a system that echoes Benjamin Barber's call in *Strong Democracy* for a democracy that involved "the participation of *all the people* in at least *some aspects of self-government* at least *some of the time.*"[137] However, instead of Barber's solution – that we achieve this goal by allowing more people to occasionally partake in crafting participatory common wills together for the government to implement – this model of democracy advocates that people can participate in some aspects of self-government some of the time by 'taking on' some aspects of public life by spearheading a public project in that area of public or joining a group that is working on a public project. Instead of all people participating in all of governance in one institution, this model has all people participating in some of governance across many institutions. Over time, the piecemeal agendas of citizen everywhere together make up our collective governance— not a single institution that makes all decisions.

In a way, a democracy of civic creativity and multi-platform governance is a challenge to "crowdsource our commonwealth." Crowdsourcing is a term,

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[137] Barber, *Strong Democracy*, back cover.

originating from social internet theory, that means "outsourcing tasks, traditionally performed by an employee or contractor, to an undefined, large group of people or community (a 'crowd'), through an open call."[138]

Crowdsourcing America (or any democratic polity) would be outsourcing the task of making America a more perfect union— away from a select group of elite government workers and elected leaders and towards the entire citizenry. Unlike direct democracy, which only emphasizes crowds *making decisions*, a democracy of civic creators would ask citizens to go beyond making decisions, but to rather to put in the *work* for the entire process of change. More like the creation of Wikipedia (created by multiple writers and editors who freely choose to create and edit articles when they want) than like a referenda, a crowdsourced America would be an open platform for everyone to create our public world, not just make collective decisions about it (or even less active: just make decisions about *which leaders* should create the world). For those who hate the specific act of deliberation or following electoral politics, they are not excluded from being able to be an active citizen. "Public officials" matter much less than the rest of us "public unofficials."

This model moves the *center of gravity* away from institutions, constitutions, procedures, and towards people and their ideas for making the community better— *towards the civic creators and their civic creations*. If the work of political governance is about playing an active role in determining the

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[138] "BrandsEye: Crowdsourcing," BrandsEye, accessed on March 5, 2011, http://www.brandseye.com/crowd-crowdsourcing.

forces that govern our lives, then our democratic model should be centered directly on that work— not solely on the institutions that surround that work.

IV. Democracy as a Platform for Our Public Projects

We now have a new mode of civic action: *civic creativity*, which is the imagining and implementing of public projects over multiple platforms. We now have a democratic model that allows us to understanding civic creativity as a social and collective practice: *multi-platform democracy,* which is an understanding of democratic governance as a decentralized set platforms each with partial governing power and each with their own set of rules and procedures that control its governing power. A civic creator navigates the platforms of governance necessary to gather the resources, relationships, privileges, permissions and channeled power needed to realize their public ideas into public projects. It is a view of democracy as an open platform for our public projects.

More concretely, what does 'democracy as a platform for our public projects' look like? I will put forth two images to answer. First, one way to understand democracy as a platform for our public projects is to see politics as 'civic firms' in a 'civic economy.' In the regular economy, teams of people form firms that aim to maximize profit by filling gaps in society's production of goods and services that are in demand. Increased demand in a type of product drives multiple firms to begin to supply that product. Firms gather resources by looking promising with regard to future earnings and are rewarded with profit when they

fill gaps in good and service production. In a civic economy, teams of people form civic firms that aim to address a public need by filling gaps in a community's public life— be it holes in our communal safety net, a lack of dynamic institutions of community connectedness or really anything that is 'missing' from the life that we share in public. Increased attention to a public need drives multiple civic firms to begin to address that need. Civic firms gather resources, in part, by looking promising with regard to eventually addressing those public needs and are rewarded with personal pride, communal praise and existential fulfillment when they create lasting solution to pressing public problems.

projects is simply to see democracy less as *a unitary committee governing a unitary society* and more as *multiple committees governing parts of a multifaceted society*. The latter understanding – as has been described throughout this section – provides much more of an opportunity for civic creators to realize public ideas into public projects. It is a refutation of the belief that, as Robert Unger puts it, society "forms an indivisible system, which stands or falls as a whole."[139] With this new understanding, a democratic community comes to be understood less as a unitary entity and more like the *main street of a town*. True, main street at the center of town may be thought of as one place— many people say, "this is a good place to be" or "do not go down to mains street…it's all rundown." And yet, main street is not governed by a committee— it is governed by multiple bodies and in multiple areas, and its prosperity is determined by the

[139] Robert Unger, *The Left Alternative* (London: Verso, 2009), xi.

piecemeal efforts of multiple players on multiple platforms. There are various independent shops, there is a road, there are side walks and benches, there is a park, there is a culture, there are signs, there are parking lots, there are parking meters, there is art— all these factors make up main street and all these factors are the result of a variety of institutions implementing ideas by a variety of people. One need not have an opinion about all of main street to augment a part of main street for the better— it is an open public platform with multiple governors for multiple facets. So too can be democracy— not a single, totalizing institution but rather an open public platform for people with public ideas to experiment with their ideas in various areas of public life.

Conclusion: On Generativity

This work is a response to the feeling that something does not feel right about today's politics. Voting, deliberating and protest – the dominant modes of civic action of today – conspire to turn active politics into reactive politics. As citizens feel evermore like the passive objects of societal forces, the democratic dream of equal citizens co-creating their world moves further and further out of reach. Even the most romantic of civic movements today – ones that call you to "FIGHT BACK" – are still reactions to the powerful's moves.

At the same time, politics has become conceptually centralized, a specific vocation for specific people who interact with a specific set of institutions. The dream of politics as the exciting, big project of all of us adding to and augmenting that which we share in public has given way to an obsession with the management of one public institution— the government. People who do not know who the Speaker of the House is, how a bill becomes a law or why Iowa and New Hampshire are 'important' feel as if they "aren't that political," even if they have great ideas about how make their neighborhood, or our energy system or their workplace better for all. Instead of being the universal practice of contributing to the production of good ideas, projects and work for the public sphere, politics has become a subculture— something to list under your 'interests' on Facebook.

To cure the malaise that comes from constant reactivity, individuals need – at least some of the time – be able to generate their own ideas and work to realize them in the world. To experience the genesis of an idea and to translate it into

something to share with others is the reason we love art and music— the reason we have an urge to make, to create and to build. If politics does not welcome that process – that creative spirit – our attention will be turned elsewhere, where we can experience creativity. Plus, if we do not teach a new generation how to be the generators of civic ideas and public projects, the only civic ideas and public projects will be produced by the powerful, and we will continue to just react.

If reactivity is countered by creativity, a political culture of unitary focus on a single institution – the government – is countered by decentralization. Decentralized organizations have proven to be flexible, empowering, resilient and difficult to destroy, because – in decentralized organizations – power, intelligence and creative action is spread throughout the entire body of the organization. Is this not what we want our democracy to be— a nation with its heart, mind and muscle not housed in a single institution, but rather spread throughout the body politic?

There is a word that the sentiment of both the ideas pertaining to individual citizens expressed in part one (civic creativity) and the ideas pertaining to the structure democracy as whole expressed in part two (multi-platform democracy, or democracy as a platform for our public projects): ***generativity***.

When generativity is referring to a system – like democracy, for example – it refers to a member of the system's ability to create, generate or produce new content unique to the system without additional help or input from the system's original creators. It is, as technology theorist Jonathan Zittrain put it, "a system's capacity to produce unanticipated change through unfiltered contributions from

broad and varied audiences."[140] In short: a generative system is built so as to welcome the input and modification of the system by its users. A generative democracy welcomes the creativity of its citizens.

When generativity is referring to an individual, it is referring to – as iconic psychologist Erik Erikson put it – the strength that comes through care for others and "production of something that contributes to the betterment of society." If we do not activity seek be generative – to make our mark, to create something out of love for things greater than ourselves – we fall into self-absortion and stagnation. But, if we are able to develop a sense of generativity – of productivity and accomplishment – we become connected to future generations and overcome our fears of inactivity and meaninglessness. A generative citizen fosters her drive to participate in the co-creation of the future.

"Alas," wrote John Dewey, "the public has no hands except those of individual human beings."[141] To inspire those individuals to generate the projects that will make up the public and to have a democratic system that welcomes those projects with open arms— that is what civic creativity is all about.

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[140] Jonathan L. Zittrain, *The Future of the Internet— And How to Stop It* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008), 70.
[141] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry* (California: Gateway Books, 1946), 82.

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