Participatory democracy

Participatory democracy or **participative democracy** is a model of democracy in which citizens are provided power to make political decisions. Etymological roots of *democracy* (Greek *demos* and *kratos*) imply that the people are in power, making all democracies participatory to some degree. However, participatory democracy tends to advocate greater citizen participation and more direct representation than traditional representative democracy. For example, the creation of governing bodies through a system of sortition, rather than election of representatives, is thought to produce a more participatory body by allowing citizens to hold positions of power themselves.[1]

Some scholars argue for refocusing the term on community-based activity within the domain of civil society, based on the belief that a strong non-governmental public sphere is a precondition for the emergence of a strong liberal democracy.[2] These scholars tend to stress the value of separation between the realm of civil society and the formal political realm.[3]

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Overview

Participation is commonly defined as the act of taking part in some action. 'Political participation', hence, is largely assumed as an act of taking part in 'political' action. However, such definition often varies in political science due to the ambiguities surrounding what can be conceived as 'political' actions.[4] Within this general definition, the perception of political participation varies by differing modes, intensities, and qualities of participation.[4] From voting to directly influencing the implementation of public policies, the extent to which a political participation should be considered appropriate in political theory is, to this day, under debate. Participatory democracy is primarily concerned with ensuring that citizens are afforded an opportunity to participate or otherwise be involved in decision making on matters that affect their lives.[5]

Participatory democracy is not a novel concept and has existed under various political designs since the Athenian democracy. The theory of participatory democracy was developed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and later promoted by J.S. Mill and G. D. H. Cole, who argued that political participation is indispensable for the realization of a just society.[6] Nevertheless, the sudden invigoration and popularity on this topic in the academic literature only began in mid-19th century. One conjecture is that the revival of political participation's significance was a natural progression from the growing assessment that representative models of democracy were in decline; increasingly inorganic relations between the elected elites and the public, diminishing electoral turnouts, and ceaseless political corruptions are often considered as the rationales behind its alleged crisis.[7] Another, as argued by David Plotke, is that the proponents of participatory democracy were originally the critics of 'minimal democracy', a theory popularly established by Joseph Schumpeter.[8] Plotke claims, "In the Cold War, nonCommunist left critics of minimal democracy tended to define their positions by reversing the [proponents of minimal democracy's] claims. [...] Given [an] unappetizing menu, critics of minimal democracy advocated a sharp and sustained increase in political participation."[8] Regardless of its origin, the recent resurgence of participatory democracy has led to various institutional reforms such as participatory budgeting, steadily challenging the traditionally predominant form of liberal democracy.[9]

The proponents of participatory democracy criticize liberal democracy and argue that representation is inherently deficient for truly democratic societies, leading to the fundamental debate on democratic ideology. Benjamin Barber, an advocate for 'individual democracy', has denounced liberal democracy because "it alienates human beings from each other and, more important, because the epistemological basis on which liberalism stands is itself fundamentally flawed."[10] Barber's notable significance is the return to the epistemological basis of politics and democracy, and in that vein, Joel Wolfe reinforces his hypothesis: " [...] strong democracy should be a form of government in which all people participate in decision-making and implementation. While recognizing that the complexity of modern society imposes limits on direct democracy, participation by all is imperative because it creates shared interests, a common will, and community action, all of which inevitably give legitimacy to politics."[11]

All modern constitutions and fundamental laws contain and declare the concept and principle of popular sovereignty, which essentially means that the people are the ultimate source of public power or government authority. The concept of popular sovereignty holds simply that in a society organized for political action, the will of the people as a whole is the only right standard of political action. It can be regarded as an important element in the system of the checks and balances, and representative democracy. Therefore, the people are implicitly entitled even to directly participate in the process of law making. This role of linking citizens and their government and legislators is closely related to the concept of legitimacy. The exercise of democratic control over the legislative system and the policy-making process can occur even when the

public has only an elementary understanding of the national legislative institution and its membership. Civic education is a vital strategy for strengthening public participation and confidence in the legislative process.[12]

History

Origins

Members of the Occupy Movement practicing participatory democracy in a general assembly held in Washington Square Park, New York City on October 8, 2011

In 7th and 8th century BCE Ancient Greece, the informal distributed power structure of the villages and minor towns began to be displaced with collectives of Oligarchs seizing power as the villages and towns coalesced into city states. This caused much hardship and discontent among the common people, with many having to sell their land due to debts, and even suffer from debt slavery. Around 600 BCE the Athenian leader Solon initiated some reforms to limit the power of Oligarchs and re-establish a partial form of participatory democracy with some decisions taken by a popular assembly composed of all free male citizens. About a century later, Solon's reforms were further enhanced for even more direct involvement of regular citizens by Cleisthenes.[13] During its tenure, Athenian democracy used its system of popular assembly in tandem with the selection of magisterial positions by lot and the election of a small number of high level government officials. Athenian democrats supported the use of sortition on account of the Aristotelian belief in the importance of ruling and being ruled in a democratic system.[14] By using sortition to assign citizens to one year magisterial offices, and not permitting them to hold a particular office more than once, the Athenian system distributed power amongst a greater number of citizens who intermittently led and followed throughout their lives. Athenian democracy came to an end in 322 BC. When democracy was revived as a political system about 2000 years later, decisions were made by representatives rather than by the people themselves. A minor exception to this was the limited form of direct democracy which flourished in the Swiss Cantons from the later Middle Ages.

19th and 20th centuries

An ephemerous but notorious instance, taking place in the Modern Age, was the Paris Commune of 1871, which married the universal political engagement of participatory democracy with a correspondent collective ownership and management of the means of production, which, like participatory democracy itself, was a demand of the nascent organized left-wing. In the late 19th century, a small number of thinkers, including Karl Marx,[15] Friedrich Engels, Mikhail Bakunin[16]—all highly influenced, along with their International Working Men's Association, by the Commune–and Oscar Wilde[17] began advocating increased participatory democracy. It was in the 20th century that practical implementations of participatory democracy once again began to take place, albeit mostly on a small scale, attracting considerable academic attention in the 1980s.[18][19]

During the Spanish civil war, from 1936–1938, the parts of Spain controlled by anarchist members of the Spanish Republican faction was governed almost totally by participatory democracy. In 1938 the anarchists were displaced after betrayal by their former Republican allies in the Communist party and attacks from the Nationalist forces of General Franco. The writer George Orwell, who experienced participatory democracy in Spain with the anarchists before their defeat, discusses it in his book *Homage to Catalonia*, and says

participatory democracy was a "strange and valuable" experience where one could breathe "the air of equality" and where normal human motives like snobbishness, greed, and fear of authority had ceased to exist.[19]

The mystic and philosopher Simone Weil, who had helped the Spanish anarchists as a combat soldier, would later promote participatory democracy in her political manifesto *The Need for Roots*.[20]

Students for a Democratic Society organized around the principles of participatory democracy in the 1960s.

In the 1980s, the profile of participatory democracy within academia was raised by James S. Fishkin, the professor who introduced the deliberative opinion poll. In 1996, in response to the emergence of renewable energy technologies, the Texas government commissioned an informed public opinion poll, also known as a deliberative poll, to gage citizens' willingness to pursue alternative energies.[21] Prior to deliberation, a raw opinion poll was taken in which Texans were asked whether they were willing to pay more on monthly utility bills to support renewable energy. After the initial poll, a representative sample of citizens was provided non-partisan briefing books and invited to deliberate in the presence of moderators. Following a weekend of deliberation, the participants developed informed opinions that significantly diverged from their raw opinions. Before deliberation, fifty-two percent of participants supported a two to five dollar increase on monthly utility bills to support renewable energy. By the end of the experiment, participant support increased to eighty-four percent.[21] The results of the informed public opinion poll deeply influenced the actions of the Texas government and electric power industry; though Texas was the forty-ninth largest producer of renewable energy in the United States in 1996, it now leads the nation in the production of the wind power.[22]

Experiments in forms of participatory democracy that took place within a wider framework of representative democracy began in cities around the world, with an early adopter being Brazil's Porto Alegre. A World Bank study found that participatory democracy in these cities seemed to result in considerable improvement in the quality of life for residents.[19]

21st century

Social Movements

In the early-21st century, low-profile experiments in participatory democracy began to spread throughout South and North America, to China and across the European Union.[23][24] A partial example in the USA occurred with drawing up the plans to rebuild New Orleans after 2005's Hurricane Katrina, with thousands of ordinary citizens involved in drafting and approving the plan.[19]

In recent years, social media have led to changes in the conduct of participatory democracy. In the 2016 United States elections social media spread news and many politicians used social-media outlets like Twitter to attract voters. Social media has helped to organize movements to demand change. Mainly through hashtags, citizens join political conversations with differing view-points.[25] To promote public interest and involvement, local governments have started using social media to make decisions based on public feedback.[26] Though it requires much commitment, citizens have organized committees to highlight local needs and appoint budget delegates who work with the citizens and city agencies.[27] In the Russian Federation, President Vladimir Putin's annual *Direct Line* television Q&A sessions, wherein he answers a selection of the hundreds of thousands of questions which Russians submit via telephones or social media, provides a degree of participation for ordinary citizens[28] - an updated, more interactive version of fireside chats.

In 2011 participatory democracy became a notable feature of the Occupy movement, a movement largely started by a Tumblr post (titled "We Are the 99 Percent") protesting and claiming that a few individuals held all the power. Occupy camps around the world made decisions based on the outcome of working groups where every protester had their say, and by general assemblies where the decisions taken by working groups were effectively aggregated together. Their decision process combined equality, mass participation, and deliberation.[29][30][31][32]

Citizens' Assemblies

Participatory democracy has been practiced more frequently as of late on account of a rise of government commissioned citizens' conventions that seek to address specific policy or constitutional issues. Participants in citizens' assemblies are typically chosen through sortition with stratified sampling to increase the representative nature of the body. Assemblies are then divided into groups to explore specific topics in greater depth, guided by the testimony of experts. Deliberation is led by professional facilitators and legal experts aid in the formulation of policy proposals or constitutional amendments in legal language. The reports of the assemblies are often put to referenda or used to advise government bodies.[33]

In 2011, in response to growing distrust between citizens and the government following a 2008 economic crisis, Ireland authorized the use of a citizens' assembly titled "We the Citizens" to pilot the use of a participatory democratic body to increase political legitimacy. Having found an increase in efficacy and interest in governmental functions, as well as significant shifts in opinion on contested issues like taxation, Ireland sanctioned a citizens' assembly with legal remit.[34] In 2012, Ireland held a Constitutional Convention to discuss proposed amendments to the Constitution. Ten issues were discussed in total with proposals ranging from reducing the voting age to 17 to including a provision for same-sex marriage.[35] The citizens' convention embraced a hybrid model: participants included sixty-six individuals from the greater population, thirty-three legislators from the Irish Parliament, and chairman Tom Arnold. At the end of the fourteenth month of the Constitutional Convention, several of the citizens' recommendations were put to referenda. The Thirty-fourth Amendment to the Irish Constitution, the Marriage Equality Act, was signed into law following a successful referendum with success attributed in part to the deliberation of the 2012 Constitutional Convention. In the next iteration of citizens' assemblies in Ireland in 2016-2018, the Assembly, now composed of ninety-nine ordinary citizens and one chairperson appointed by the government, was tasked with considering whether the Eighth Amendment should be removed from the Constitution, along with other issues of referendums, population aging, and climate change. The Eighth Amendment banned abortion in nearly all instances by recognizing a constitutional right to life. Debate occurred over a five month period and a secret-ballot vote was held at the end of the convention with members voting to replace the Eighth Amendment with a new provision authorizing the Irish Parliament to legislate abortion.[35] The proposals of the assembly were put up to a countrywide referendum and sixty-six percent voted to repeal the Eighth Amendment. The two-thirds vote in favor of repealing the Eighth Amendment closely aligned with the vote taken internally in the citizens' assembly, suggesting the representative nature of the randomly chosen participants.

In response to the Yellow vests movement, the French government organized the “Grand National Debate” in early 2019 to allow one hundred randomly selected citizens in each of eighteen regional conventions to deliberate on issues that the citizens valued the most to inform government action.[36] At the end of the Grand National Debate, President Macron committed to the creation of a dedicated citizens' assembly to discuss climate change: the Citizens' Climate Convention (CCC). The CCC was designed to serve as a legislative body, guided by the question of how France may reduce its greenhouse gas emissions with social justice in mind.[33] One hundred and fifty citizens, selected by sortition and stratified sampling, were sorted into five sub-groups to discuss individual climate themes such as housing and consuming. The citizens were guided by the experts on several steering committees that worked to inform the participants on the specifics of climate issues, help citizens formulate their ideas in legal language, and facilitate discussion.

At the end of the nine month long process, the deliberation of the CCC culminated in 149 measures outlined in a 460-page report, ranging from the decarbonization of the car fleet to reforming environmental labeling on food packaging. The proceedings and results of the CCC have garnered national and international attention. President Macron has committed to supporting 146 of the 149 measures proposed by the CCC, and a bill containing the 146 suggestions was submitted to Parliament in late 2020.[36]

The UK, like France, also held a citizens' assembly in 2020 to discuss paths to address climate change following the Extinction Rebellion.[33] The framing question of the UK Climate Assembly (CAUK) asked how the UK should approach reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050. Rather than functioning as a political chamber as in the CCC, the CAUK was used more as a supplemental, advisory body with stricter rules of engagement. The UK brought 108 citizens together to deliberate over four months, resulting in more than fifty recommendations outlined in a 556-page report. The findings of the citizens' assembly helped advise the government's next steps in combating climate change.[33]

Evaluation

Strengths

Main advocates of participatory democracy view it as an appropriate political development considering the inherent democratic deficiency in representative models. Generally argued as an intermediary between direct and representative democracy, participatory democracy's alleged strengths lie in greater citizen involvement, popular control, and egalitarian and non-exploitative social relations.

The most prominent argument for participatory democracy is its function of greater democratization. Although the extent of how 'democratized' societies should be may rely on sociocultural and economic contexts, Pateman claims, "[...] the argument is about changes that will make our own social and political life more democratic, that will provide opportunities for individuals to participate in decision-making in their everyday lives as well as in the wider political system. It is about democratizing democracy."[9] In such a democratized society, individuals or groups can not only pursue, but also realistically achieve their interests, ultimately "[providing] the means to a more just and rewarding society, not a strategy for preserving the status quo."[6]

Another proposed advantage participatory democracy over other democratic models is its educative effect. Initially promoted by Rousseau, Mill, and Cole, greater political participation can in turn lead the public to seek or accomplish higher qualities of participation in terms of efficacy and depth: "the more individuals participate the better able they become to do so"[6][9] Pateman emphasizes this potential because it precisely counteracts the widely spread lack of faith in citizen capacity, especially in advanced societies with complex organizations.[9] In this vein, J. Wolfe asserts his confidence in the feasibility of participatory models even in large-member organizations, which would progressively diminish state intervention as the most crucial mode of political change.[6]

Weaknesses

The negative criticisms of participatory democracy generally align with exclusive advocacy for 'minimal democracy'. While some critics, such as David Plotke, call for a conciliatory medium between participatory and representative models, others are skeptical of the overly leftist democratic ideology. Two general oppositions can be found within the literature, the prior is the disbelief in citizen capabilities, considering how greater responsibilities come as participation grows. Michels rejects the feasibility of participatory models and goes so far as to refute the educative benefits of participatory democracy by delineating the lack

of motivations for extensive participation to begin development: "First, the self-interested, rational member has little incentive to participate because he lacks the skills and knowledge to be effective, making it cost effective to rely on officials' expertise."[6] In other words, the motivation, or even desire, for participation is a misconceived understanding of the general will in politics.[6] By analyzing that the aggregate citizenry is rather disinterested and leader-dependent, the mechanism for participatory democracy is argued to be inherently incompatible with advanced societies.

Other concerns largely rest on the feasibility of effectively managing massive political input into an equally meaningful, responsive output. Plotke condemns the ideological element of universal participation since any institutional adjustment to employ greater political participation can never exclude a representative element.[8] Consequently, neither direct nor participatory democracy can be truly themselves without having some type of representation to sustain realistically a stable political system. Such examination derives from the supposed impossibility of achieving equitably direct participation in large and populated regions. Plotke ultimately argues in favor of representation over participation and criticizes the misconception by participatory democrats of "representation [as] an unfortunate compromise between an ideal of direct democracy and messy realities."[8]

A third category of criticism, primarily advanced by Dr. Roslyn Fuller, rejects equating or even subsuming instruments of Deliberative Democracy (such as citizens' assemblies) under the term of Participatory Democracy, as such instruments violate the hard-won concept of political equality (One Man, One Vote), in exchange for a small chance of being randomly selected to participate and are thus not 'participatory' in any meaningful sense.[37][38]

Proponents of Deliberative Democracy in her view misconstrue the role sortition played in the ancient Athenian democracy (where random selection was limited only to offices and positions with very limited power whereas participation in the main decision-making forum was open to all citizens). [39][40]

Dr. Fuller's most serious criticism is that Deliberative Democracy purposefully limits decisions to small, externally controllable groups while ignoring the plethora of e-democracy tools available which allow for unfiltered mass participation and deliberation. [37] [41]

Mechanisms for participatory democracy

Scholars, including Graham Smith in *Democratic Innovations*, have recently considered several mechanisms to create more participatory democratic systems, ranging from the use of referendums to the creation of deliberative citizens' assemblies. As contrasted with the mechanism of elections, these proposals intend to increase the agenda-setting and decision-making powers of the people through giving citizens' more direct ways to contribute to politics, as opposed to indirectly choosing representatives through voting.[42]

Mini-Publics

Also called citizens' assemblies, mini-publics are representative samples of the population at large that meet to advise other legislative bodies or to write laws themselves. Because citizens are chosen to participate by stratified sampling, the assemblies are more representative of the population as a whole as compared to elected legislatures whose representatives are often disproportionally wealthy, male, and white.[43] Mini-publics chosen by sortition thus provide average citizens the opportunity to exercise substantive agenda-setting and/or decision-making power. Over the course of the assembly, citizens are guided by experts and discussion facilitators to ensure meaningful deliberation. The results of mini-publics typically culminate in

reports to be sent to the government or proposals that are directly sent to the people via referendums. Critics of mini-publics have raised concerns about their perceived legitimacy. For instance, political scientist Daan Jacobs finds that the perceived legitimacy of mini-publics is higher than a system in which no participation is permitted but not higher than any system involving self-selection, like elections.[44] Regardless, the use of mini-publics has grown in recent years and they have often been used to pursue constitutional reforms, such as in British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in 2004 and the Irish Constitutional Convention in 2012.[45]

Referendums

In binding referendums, citizens vote on laws and/or constitutional amendments proposed by a legislative body.[46] Referendums afford citizens greater decision-making power by giving them the ultimate choice in the passage of legislation. Citizens may also use referendums to engage in agenda-setting power if they are allowed to draft proposals to be put to referenda in efforts called initiatives. Referendums may be made increasingly participatory by using a mandatory vote system that requires participation amongst all citizens. However, despite providing the people with additional political power, political theorist Hélène Landemore raises the concern that referendums may fail to be sufficiently deliberative, meaning that the people are unable to engage in discussions and debate that may enhance their decision-making abilities and wielding of political power.[47] A rigorous system of referendums is currently used in Switzerland, under which all laws architected by the legislature go to referendums. Swiss citizens may also enact popular initiatives: a process whereby citizens can put forward a constitutional amendment or the removal of an existing provision, if the proposal receives signatures by one hundred thousand citizens.[48]

E-Democracy

E-democracy is an umbrella term used to describe a variety of proposals made to increase participation through the utilization of technology.[49] Open discussion forums, for example, provide citizens the opportunity to debate policy online while facilitators guide discussion. These forums normally serve agenda-setting purposes or may be used to provide legislators with additional testimony when considering the passage of legislation. Closed forums may be used to discuss more sensitive information. In the UK, a closed discussion forum was used to enable domestic violence survivors to provide testimony to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Violence and Abuse while preserving the anonymity of survivors. Another e-democratic mechanism is online deliberative polling, a system under which citizens are provided the opportunity to deliberate with peers virtually before answering a poll question. The results of deliberative polls are more likely to reflect the considered judgments of the people and are thought to be a better way to assess public opinion while encouraging increased citizen awareness of civic issues.[49]

Town Meetings

In a form of more local participatory democracy, town meetings provide all residents with legislative power.[50] Practiced in the United States, particularly in New England, since the 17th century, town meetings assure that local policy decisions are made directly by members of the public without any intermediaries. Local democracy is often seen as the first step in producing a more participatory system; as said by democratic scholar Frank M. Bryan, "For real democracy small not only is beautiful, it is essential."[51] Theorist Graham Smith, however, notes the inherently limited impact of town meetings which focus on local issues and cannot bring about action on larger, national issues. He also suggests that town meetings are not representative of the town as a whole as they disproportionately represent individuals

with free time, including the elderly and the affluent. Nevertheless, New Hampshire continues to use a streamlined version of town meetings in which every voter is a legislator, and all issues may be put to a legally binding vote as long as its subject matter was placed on the warrant, a type of agenda.[52]

Participatory Budgeting

The system of participatory budgeting allows citizens to make decisions on the allocation of a public budget.[53] With origins in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the general procedure of the participatory budgeting involves the creation of a concrete financial plan that serves as a recommendation to elected representatives. Importantly, under the Brazilian system, neighborhoods are given the authority to design budgets for the greater region, with local proposals being brought to elected regional budget forums. The incorporation of deliberative processes in participatory budgeting has allowed for a decrease in clientelism and corruption as well as increased levels of participation, particularly amongst marginalized or poorer residents. Theorist Graham Smith observes that participatory budgeting still has some barriers to entry for the poorest members of the population.[54]

Liquid Democracy

In a hybrid between direct and representative democracy, liquid democracy permits individuals to vote on issues themselves or to select issue-competent delegates to vote on their behalf.[55] Political scientists Christian Blum and Christina Isabel Zuber suggest that liquid democracy has the potential to improve a legislature's performance through bringing together delegates with a greater issue awareness, thus taking advantage of epistemic knowledge within the populace. In order to make liquid democracy more deliberative, a trustee model of delegation may be implemented in which the delegates are free to vote as they see fit following deliberation with other representatives. Some concerns have been raised about the implementation of liquid democracy; Blum and Zuber, for example, find that liquid democracy produces two distinct participative classes of voters: individuals with one vote and delegates with two or more votes.[56] Blum and Zuber also worry that the policy produced in issue-specific legislatures will lack cohesiveness if each group has separate and independent delegates. Today, liquid democracy is utilized by Pirate Parties, groups known for their support for more democratic reforms and greater internet transparency, for intra-party decision-making.

Deliberative Polling

Trademarked by Stanford professor James Fishkin, deliberative opinion polls permit citizens to develop informed opinions following a period of deliberation. Deliberative polling begins with surveying a random representative sample of citizens to gage their raw opinion.[57] These same individuals are then invited to deliberate for a weekend in the presence of political leaders, competing experts, and trained moderators. At the end of the deliberation, the group is surveyed again, and the final opinions of the group are taken to be representative of the conclusion that the public would reach provided they had opportunities to engage with the issues more deeply. There are many examples of deliberative polling being used around the world: in 2008, Fishkin and team conducted a deliberative poll in Poznan, Poland to decide the fate of a Euro Cup stadium after 2012, and, in South Korea in 2011, a deliberative poll was used to discuss the issue of Korean Unification.[57] Cristina Lafont, a critic of deliberative polling, argues that the "filtered" (informed) opinion reached at the end of a deliberative poll is too far removed from the opinion of the citizenry as a whole, thus delegitimizing the actions taken in the name of the poll.[58] Conversely, Fishkin and other proponents find deliberative polling to be a "poll with a human face" that can be used in tandem with other participatory mechanisms to reflect the normatively desirable informed will of the people.[57]

Mechanisms against participatory democracy

Jason Brennan, in *Against Democracy*, advocates for a less participatory system on the basis of the irrationality of voters in a representative democracy. He proposes several mechanisms to reduce participation, presented with the assumption that a vote-based system of electoral representation is maintained.[59]

Restricted Suffrage and Plural Voting

In an analogy comparing the perils of an unlicensed driver to an untested voter, Brennan argues that exams should be administered to all citizens to determine if they are competent to participate. Under this system, citizens either have one or zero votes, depending on their test performance. Brennan also proposes a plural voting regime in which each citizen has by default one vote (or zero votes) but can earn additional votes through passing voter entrance exams or possessing academic degrees. Critics of Brennan, including Vox reporter Sean Illing, find parallels between his proposed system and the literacy tests of the Jim Crow South that prevented black people from voting in the United States.[60]

Universal Suffrage with Epistocratic Veto

Brennan proposes a second system under which all citizens have equal rights to vote or otherwise participate in government, but the decisions made by elected representatives are scrutinized by an epistocratic council. Brennan notes that this council cannot make law, only "unmake" law, and would likely be composed of individuals who passed rigorous competency exams. He admits that an epistocratic veto could lead to significant gridlock but suggests that the gridlock may be a necessary evil in the process of reducing democratic incompetence. The epistocratic veto would thus serve as a back-end check, as opposed to a front-end check in restricted suffrage, that still allows all citizens to participate in electing representatives. [59]

See also

- Civic intelligence
- Collaborative governance
- E-participation
- E-democracy
- Deliberative democracy
- Collaborative e-democracy
- Demarchy
- Direct democracy
- Green politics
- Inclusive Democracy
- Open source governance
- Participatory budgeting
- Participatory democracy in the European Union
- Participatory economics
- Participatory justice
- Participism
- Public incubator
- Public sphere
- Public participation
- Radical transparency
- Rationality and power
- Sociocracy
- Socialism of the 21st century
- Tax choice
- The 23 objectives of the Australian Democrats
- The participatory approach
- Third International Theory
- Workers' council

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