Hannah Arendt's Democracy: Action, the Social and Democratic Participation Today

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this project is to examine what Hannah Arendt's insights on the nature of democratic participation reveal about contemporary participatory innovations. The analysis is centered on Arendt's conception of Action, and the unique ontological arrangement of society she sees as a necessary precondition to it.

I will examine four of the most prominent participatory mechanisms being discussed today: accountable autonomy, mini-publics, participatory budgeting, and popular assemblies. My hope is to illustrate that Arendt's unique views bring a different perspective to the radical democratic tradition. Directly channelling Arendt's principal insights on participation, I develop a set of criteria to examine and evaluate these mechanisms.

On this basis I argue that Arendt's insights provide a unique and valuable perspective on contemporary democratic innovations. The emphasis on the opportunity for Action in Arendt's framework leads to strikingly different insights than the traditional concerns of contemporary democratic theorists.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt; political participation; mini-public; accountable autonomy; popular assembly; participatory budgeting.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary democracies in the developed world, especially the United States, find themselves locked in an increasingly bitter, vitriolic, and hardened polarization between egalitarianism and the economic sovereignty of the individual (Baldassarri & Gelman 2008; Dunlap & McCright 2008; Bafumi & Shapiro 2009). The somewhat remarkable rebirth of the classical liberal position, especially in America, has left politics divided between a Lockean vision of limited government and a hobbled leftist tradition. It is in the face of this widening ideological divide, the resulting decline in functional discourse and bipartisanship, and growing measurable cynicism on the part of the public that democratic theory has found a revival in pushing possible new frontiers for renewing citizen participation in democratic systems. This effort is an earnest attempt to establish more effective and legitimate policy outcomes by involving citizens in decision making through a variety of often innovative and at times historically nostalgic mechanisms. These are centered on objectives that can be placed into two primary categories. The first is the utilitarian objective of achieving more effective policy outcomes. The second is the normative objective of ensuring democracy is inclusive, responsive, and representative of the citizens that comprise it.

Beyond these two orientations in democratic theory, a broader theoretical re-examination has been focused on identifying the authentically political (Kateb 2000). Max Weber argues the authentically political is “deciding for others, commanding them, wielding power over them, and affecting the course of events”

(Kateb 2000, 132). Carl Schmitt alternatively takes the political as the struggle against the enemy, not by individuals, but by sovereign societies (Kateb 2000). Arendt can be placed in the same tradition, but she holds her unique concept of political participation called Action, as authentic politics. With nostalgic fervour, Arendt praises participatory democracy, from 5th century Greece and revolutionary America, because it created conditions of human plurality and an arena for the practice of political Action. For Arendt, it is action that is the paramount aspect of politics.

In this paper I apply Arendt's unique understanding of political participation to recent proposals for innovation in democratic participation. I will examine four participatory mechanisms: accountable autonomy, mini-publics, participatory budgeting, and popular assemblies. My hope here is to illustrate that Arendt's unique views bring a different perspective to the radical democratic tradition. My method in doing this is quite simple. I develop a set of criteria to examine these mechanisms by directly channelling Arendt's principal insights. The purpose of these criteria is to shed a useful, perhaps distinctive, but unquestionably demanding light on proposals and practices of contemporary democratic participation. These criteria are not intended to be synthetic criteria directly improving on any others used in democratic theory; they are meant to be as true to Arendt's insights in The Human Condition (1998) as possible.

I pursue this goal in four sections. Section I lays out the problem of democratic participation as presented in Arendt's The Human Condition. Section II outlines the Arendtian diagnosis and develops a theoretical framework with

which to examine contemporary participatory mechanisms. Section III applies this framework to the primary mechanisms of democratic participation that are most discussed by contemporary thinkers. Section IV offers a brief conclusion, rounds out the analysis, and looks at the path forward.

I. THE PROBLEM OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

Through her collected writings, Arendt is engaging in a massive attempt to reexamine the broad context of how, and key questions in relation to which, we think about politics today. For Arendt, part of the foundational problem can be traced through the western canon as far back as Plato. Specifically, it is the use of politics as a means, rather than as an end unto itself. According to Arendt, this is a practice at least as old as Plato's Republic, and one that is taken to new heights by most moderns. For Arendt, politics has an intrinsic rather than instrumental value, and properly formulated is an end itself. Creating the Political for Arendt means creating conditions for debate and dialogue in which participants are equal to one another as participatory citizens.

Arendt seeks to make us "think what we are doing" (Arendt 1998, 4) through an examination of the traditional *vita activa,* which refers to a life devoted to public-private matters. Arendt links the *vita activa*'s genealogical origin with the Aristotelian term *bios politikos* which described the political life as one of three ways of life in which man[1] might choose freedom from a life of necessity and the related relationships originating from that. This ruled out the ways of life

[1] I adopt Arendt's non-gender specific usage of the terms 'man' and 'men' in this paper. These terms are not meant to carry with them any exclusionary meaning.

in which one was primarily concerned with keeping oneself alive, a way of life which Arendt characterizes in terms of the category of Labor. It also ruled out the ways of life in which one was primarily concerned with what Arendt develops into the category of Work, namely the "working life of the free craftsman and the acquisitive life of the merchant" (Arendt 1998, 12).

These two categories, while occupying a large part of The Human Condition, are only relevant to this analysis as those activities that Arendt believes have outgrown their proper place in the *vita activa*. *Praxis*, or as Arendt further develops it, Action, is the highest and final category of the *vita activa* and the primary concern of this paper. It is perhaps Arendt's most conceptually intricate category, corresponding to the condition of plurality and all political life. Arendt's inquiry contains with it a rejection of the Socratic tradition trumpeting contemplation (theōria) as the highest activity and likewise the reversal of the hierarchy of activities within that tradition by Marx and Nietzsche. That rejection is however *not* based on the rejection of the underlying truth or experience of the contemplative life (*vita contempativa)* or life of the mind. Rather, it is because Arendt (1998) feels the "enormous weight of contemplation in the traditional hierarchy has blurred the distinctions and articulations within the vita activa itself" (17). In other words the fascination with the Platonic ideal of the contemplative life has blurred and disregarded the phenomenological categories within a political life. As such, she embarks to rediscover these aspects of the *vita activa.*

The necessity of Action to the human condition is found in that it is both the only enduring mark of our individuality as human beings as well its place as

the only thing that is an exclusively human activity. Action is how we make our appearance in the world, and what distinguishes the life of human beings from the life of animals. It is the process by which we disclose 'who' we are, through public word and deed. It includes the capacity of man to do something truly new and unexpected in the world, to seek immortality through disclosure in a human common world that he entered in birth and will outlast him in death[2].

Action requires a common world, one that is not as natural in its configuration as has been commonly assumed by many since and including Aristotle, but rather is the artificial product of a distinctive ontological human arrangement. For Arendt, this is created through a protected separation between her categories of the Public and Private. It is through this arrangement that a common world -in the Arendtian sense- can be created allowing for human action. A Public realm that is separate from the Private makes life understandable to us as human beings, both by separating us and by bringing us together in an organized understandable way. Arendt adeptly uses the metaphor of a table, separating us apart, but also organizing the way we interact by connecting us in a comprehendible fashion. This is the Arendtian condition of plurality, notably distinct from the liberal concept of pluralism. For man to make his appearance in the world he must be both equal and distinct: equal in his entrance, distinct in his Action.

[2] This refers to Arendt's general assumptions of a permanent realm, but neither is an absolute. This doesn't exclude the possibility of other forms of entry or exit.

For these conditions of plurality to exist, citizens cannot enter into the Public for the purpose of addressing the concerns of the Private, namely the concerns of Labor and Work. The beasts of the world all share such private concerns, and even bees and ants engage in such efforts collectively. Rather, it is the faculty of Action, free from these essentials, that is uniquely human. For this purpose, the Private and its concerns must be kept separate from the Public. As Arendt (1998) notes in reference to the Ancient Greeks that for her are the model of a properly organized vita activa, "the very term 'political economy' would have been a contradiction in terms: whatever was "economic," related to the life of the individual and the survival of the species, was a non-political household affair by definition" (29). This separation, in Arendt's view, was the basis of ancient law. Ancient law was to provide a firewall between the two spheres, as each was recognized to be inherently dangerous to the other, for not only is the Private destructive to a Public realm, but the Public can be equally destructive to the Private. For Arendt, some experiences, such as love, are inherently of a Private nature and are destroyed and disfigured when displayed publically. The separation between the Public and the Private is thus essential not only so that man can enter the Public and mark his place in it as a human being, but also so that he can retain the proper integrity of his Private life from which he makes his entry into the Public.

Modernity destroyed this distinction between Public and Private through the rise of what Arendt calls 'the Social'. Arendt speaks of the Social as a noun, almost, as Pitkin (1998) notes, as a living monster. There is always, in any

reading of Arendt, the question of what her use of 'the Social' equates to. The most common reading, and the reading to which I am partial, equates it roughly with economics (Pitkin 1998, 16). This interpretation posits that by having the public realm focus on issues of the Private, it binds an individual to their economic position upon entering the private sphere, and their Action, far from revealing their true self, is merely the product of their relative position and interests. Without entering the public sphere in total equality of freedom from one's private concerns, there is no plurality and there can be no Action.

This insight may in some ways be foreign to us, entrenched as we are in the liberal paradigm. This is in part because we remain conceptually muddled by the difficulty of separating what Arendt conceives of as the Public and the Private, not just in practice but even theoretically. Rousseau, for instance, can be seen as expressing a very similar sentiment to Arendt in regards to the role of government in economic affairs. In his first discourse, Rousseau states in reference to the Ancient polis that "the politicians of the ancient world were always talking about morals and virtues; ours speak of nothing but commerce and money" (Rousseau 2007, 89). Rousseau's concerns about civic virtue and citizenship are often only viewed in terms of the modern liberal paradigm's emphasis on economic issues. Interpretations of Rousseau's insights often focus on his attacks on private property, and often do not adequately treat his sentiments on morality and society. Rousseau's insights on private property are consequences of his thought, not the primary motivation. It is quite difficult to approach Rousseau with this mindset. This highlights well the way in which the

Social not only pollutes the Public sphere, but even constrains our ability to theoretically approach it with any separation from economic issues.

Rousseau is worth mentioning in that he represents one of the few places in the western canon where we find at least some semblance of support for Arendt's insights (other than perhaps the debt Arendt owes to Heidegger's concept of being with others and Machiavelli's virtù). Rousseau saw human beings as having a basic natural compassion that was stamped out through the permeation of the social into man's being, this especially being the product of the role of private property in society. At its heart Rousseau is sensing the same effect of modernity that Arendt is sensing. Arendt sees the same forces of socialization as changing people into calculating self-interested actors. Arendt however sees this as stamping out more than compassion, for her it ends true human plurality and with it the authentically political. For Rousseau however the ideal is impossible, as the ideal is a return to nature. Such a return to a more primitive nature he thinks impossible for it would mean that one would have to un-domesticate the social beast. While impossible it is still an important benchmark for his ideal, providing an interesting contrast to Arendt who sees an artificial rather than natural ontological arrangement as the highest and most ideal state of human existence.

Returning to Arendt's primary insights and definitions, her concept of Action refers to how one can mark one's place in a plural community. Action in the constructed human common world is what we *do* among equals that is new and unexpected. Keep in mind that distinction here between *praxis* and *poiesis,*

between doing and making. It is not what we make in the common world; it is what we do in the common world that allows us to express our distinct humanity. This is important because contrary to the beliefs of many other thinkers it is not the consequences of our actions, merely our actions themselves that are important. The consequences, like the actions, are unpredictable. Arendt states that ”[t]he fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable“ (1998, 178). The importance of action is partly that it has a “revelatory character“ (Arendt 1998, 178), which is to say it is a process in which individuals “show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and make their appearance in the human world” (Arendt 1998, 179). In this sense, the common world exists through the appearance of these stories, and likewise humanness can only exist in the common world, for “a life without speech and without action...is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men” (Arendt 1998, 176). Action is the foundation of the human experience and is how we situate ourselves as individuals through our relative positions within a pluralistic community.

As noted modern declines in formal political participation testify to, motivation is an important theoretical component of any conception of political participation. Arendt thinks it essential to remove the concerns of the Private, of wealth and necessity, but she does not simply replace these concerns with pure altruism. That is to say, they are not replaced only with concern for the common good. Rather, the common world provides the arena to achieve immortality

through Action. This does not mean immortality in terms of everlasting life. Rather, Arendt argues human immortality is based on the capacity for "immortal deeds" (19). This is contrasted with animals who achieve only the anonymous immortality of species. She relates the motivation for pursuing such deeds to Hobbes' sense of *vainglory*, but likewise it could be related to Rousseau's use of *amour-propre***.** Rousseau's particular conception of amour-propre may in fact be more in keeping with the artificiality of Arendt's politic arrangements than Hobbes' vainglory, as Hobbes views vainglory as simply natural where as Rousseau sees it the product of social arrangements (Hobbes 1985, 183-188; Rousseau 2007, 119-121). The key for Arendt is that this vainglory motivates Action, heroism in the Public realm, rather than what it has become under the social, the desire to accumulate and engage in fabrication in the Private sphere.

Action and a constructed common world are thus mutually dependent for Arendt. The enemy of this configuration of human life is the Social. And it is in part the Social that is the definitional feature of modernity. Arendt believes that the rise of the Social will result in the disappearance of the common world and action. For Arendt (1998), the Social is the result of that breaking down between the Public and the Private, and thus includes the destruction of both. Man's Private experiences are trampled, but more importantly man loses his unique place in the world. Nothing separates and brings together man in a political manner, and as such, man is both lonely and never alone. The higher capacities of man are no longer exercised – these are of the political experience – and we are left with a society of laborers, of, as Arendt puts it, *animal laborans*. We are

enslaved by our necessity, not only physically, but cognitively. The rise of the Private into the Public has prevented us from being able to speak and act in the Public in a political manner because our public disclosure is not purely the product of our inner self, but rather is largely the product of our own self-interest and our accidental lives. This for Arendt is the monster of the modern age. The rise of the Social means the full transformation of politics from a pluralist arena for Action into a national instrument of housekeeping.

I do not think that the direness with which I portray in Arendt's diagnosis of society is overstated. What is so troubling about her assessment is how difficult the path back to the political seems from today's perspective and our actual experience. It requires not only institutional rearrangement, but a change – from the ground up, as it were - in the very way we think about issues. However, this is well beyond what Arendt would hope for or even want. Such changes would need to come from a pluralistic process, and as she admits they never can or should never come from a single theorist. Beyond the self-awareness of our modern alienation that Arendt wants us to engage in, we can look at how we rebuild an Arendtian public space through democratic institutions. So to examine how we can establish mechanisms that allow for moves back towards Arendt's conception of the vita activa, I will attempt to outline here a brief theoretical framework with which to examine such innovations.

In adopting Arendt's concepts, I am not asserting that they are without theoretical problems and practical difficulties. I fully acknowledge that her work is built on concepts that are densely intertwined and open to a great deal of

interpretation. Her conceptual division between the Public and the Private entails very deep normative, theoretical, and practical problems. Those that have come to regard democratic participation as a leveller of economic and social differences may find this divide elitist, aristocratic, and naive. The normative emphasis on Action runs against the grain of a great deal of the emphasis in contemporary theory on economic and social justice.

I do acknowledge these complaints and their normative foundations. Highly robust alternative perspectives focusing on deliberative practices can be seen in Habermas's ideal speech situation in his book Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action (1990), in Rawls's concept of public reason presented in his book Political Liberalism (2005), and in Gutmann and Thompson's conception of reciprocity, publicity, and accountability in Democracy and Disagreement (1996). I do not assert that Arendt's concepts are more defensible than the deliberative theorists just noted. Rather, my intention in applying Arendt's insights to these practical mechanisms is to see what light her unique perspective can shed on these democratic mechanisms. It is also to examine whether there is room in today's institutions for concept of Action, and her view on the intrinsic value of politics.

It is also worth noting in regard to my lack of engagement with deliberative theorists that one should not assume that the criteria for democratic participation are simply the same as, or even obviously compatible with, those of democratic deliberation. Joshua Cohen (2009) identifies participatory and deliberative democracy as two different strands in the radical democratic tradition.

Deliberative democracy is primarily focused on political reasoning (Cohen 2009, 256). Alternatively, participation is "particularly important in connection with achieving fair political equality, because shifting the basis of political contestation from organized money to organized people is a promising alternative to the influence conferred by wealth" (Cohen 2009, 256). Participation and deliberation at times may be in tension with one another.

Cohen (2009) identifies three such tensions between participation and deliberation (256- 257). The first of these posits that there is a tension between improving the quality of deliberation and retaining participation. By increasing the quality, it may necessarily require limiting public pressure and, by effect, participation. The second tension between the two is that broadening participation ultimately diminishes deliberation. This is because including more people often focuses the issue on a yes/no proposition, and as such diminishes deliberation, "as discussion dissolves into posturing, recrimination, and manipulation" (Cohen 2009, 257). The third tension Cohen identifies is that "[m]ore fundamentally, social complexity and scale limit the extent to which modern polities can be both deliberative and participatory" (Cohen 2009, 257). In other words, deliberation often requires a certain degree of interest and knowledge held only by a limited number of individuals. Increasing participation beyond that group diminishes the quality of representation. It can be argued that deliberation can increase knowledge and interest in practice, but this can only mediate and not eliminate this tension.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Plurality

The first criterion for these innovations is the degree to which they are truly pluralistic, that is to say, the degree to which participants enter in and have equal status in the Arendtian sense. This is perhaps one of the most difficult conditions to establish in practice. It is not equality of ability, and Arendt's heavy use of the Greek and Roman examples makes it likely that it is not even equality of social standing. Rather, it seems to be equality to act freely without concern over one's own private affairs. This is contrasted by the animal laboran who is marked by their incapacity "for distinction and hence for action and speech" (Arendt 1998, 215). To engage in a pluralist politics and attain distinction, the Public must be constituted on an equality formed by autonomy from the life of Work and Labor. This equality in formal structures necessitates formal procedural and legal equality. This equality is perhaps best encapsulated by the Greek term *isegoria* which means "the equality of all citizens in the right to speak in the governing assembly" (Dahl 1989, 14). This equality was the foundation of Greek participatory democracy, and, while not often explicitly referenced by theorists, and not at all by Arendt, it is the underlying normative intuition drawn on by many contemporary democratic theorists seeking to expand the frontiers of participation in representative systems.

Such participatory mechanisms cannot be about the mediation of different private interests; they cannot, for example, revolve around bargaining between parties. This would predetermine one's position within the dialogue and would

undercut the equal ability of participants to mark their place in it. Rather, the concerns discussed must be of truly common interest. Disagreement and deliberation about what is in the common interest is thus qualitatively different, for Arendt, than bargaining in defence of distinctive interests. This is of primary importance to the Arendtian framework, for without plurality understood in this sense, Action cannot come into being.

Three aspects of the criterion of plurality in application can be identified. It may be noticeable that there is no exclusion of 'team play' within organizations. While individuals organizing into teams, parties, or other affiliations within a participatory mechanism may appear damaging to plurality on the face of it, in reality there is little reason to think that this undermines Arendtian Action if these teams are not organized around Private interests and concerns. If Private interests are excluded (as is discussed ahead), any internal organization is purely the conduct of the individuals participating, and there is no compelling reason to think that the internal discipline of these organizations would have the coercive ability to limit anyone's capacity for Action. As such there is no theoretical basis for limiting such dynamics, and discussions of such dynamics would in fact be the proper role of Arendtian politics.

The first aspect of my criterion of plurality is the presence of formal equality in procedure and decision-making. This can be assessed both in terms of who has access to participation in these institutions and in regard to the internal dynamics of these institutions. The primary question to be posed in

regard to this aspect is whether an institution permits individuals to act and speak as equals.

The second aspect of my criterion of plurality is the degree to which one can retain autonomy from one's private concerns. The economic imperative is quite evident from Arendt's Public/Private divide. The Social has the effect of homogenizing man, reducing him to behaviour rather than Action. It likewise reduces conduct in the Public from Action to mere administration. To free man from these forces means creating a sphere in which the public is free of private interests, "where people are with others and neither for or against them" (Arendt 1998, 180).

The third aspect of my criterion of plurality is that one cannot be understood to be serving as a representative of any defined interest, geographic, social or otherwise identifiable. This is a less self-evident aspect of Arendtian plurality but one that is conceptually necessary to Arendt's understanding of Action. For example, if an individual were to enter a participatory mechanism as the representative of their neighbourhood, state, city, social group or other interest, then their participation would not be simply as a human being whose interests were *tabula rasa*. Rather, both in terms of their conduct and the way that conduct was perceived, they would be tied to private interests rather than public concerns. This is not to say that people shouldn't have a physical place in the world from which they originate; in Arendt's words this is the original purpose of private property, and is an essential precondition of autonomy from Labor in a

public sphere. Rather, individuals should not be *representative* of geographically organized interests.

Any meaning of the four ways 'representative' is defined by Hanna Pitkin (1967) applies here. Pitkin (1967) argues there are four different views on representation: formalistic, symbolic, descriptive, and substantive. These are all complex concepts, each requiring extensive treatment for a comprehensive explanation. However, for the purposes of this framework I will attempt to provide a brief working definition of these concepts of representation for application within the framework of assessment employed in this paper.

Formalistic representation refers to the institutional arrangements that organize processes of representation (Pitkin 1967, 38-59). Pitkin (1967) defines this both in terms or processes of authorization and accountability. As pertains to this framework, this would most likely apply to any procedural or institutional arrangement that formally defines one's role as representing an interest.

Descriptive representation refers to a type of representation in which one resembles those they represent (Pitkin 1967, 60-91). This sort of representation revolves around the representative having common characteristics, interests, or experiences with those they represent. In practice, this often may give rise to quota systems and other types of affirmative action. The danger to Action posed here is that it may imply specific standards of conduct for the participant, or that the participant will be judged as a representative of that interest rather than as an individual.

Symbolic representation is similar to descriptive representation but refers to the way in which something "stands for" something *to* the represented, rather than stands for the represented themselves (Pitkin 1967, 92-111). It refers to "the alignment of wills between ruler and ruled", in which the representative is engaged "as a symbol-maker, making himself into an accepted leader" (108, 107). Symbolic representation is the least problematic to my inquiry because it tends to be the least applicable. It is difficult to untangle how symbolic representation would fit into to a participatory institution, as the representative-represented relationship is not as clearly presented as in a purely representative system of government. Symbolic representation is even less compatible than the other forms of representation because it is almost more applicable to non-democratic systems than to democratic systems. As such, I reference it here for the purposes of fully treating representation as a concept, although its applicability is quite limited.

Finally, substantive representatives "act for" those represented, acting as they would to serve the interests of the represented (Pitkin 1967, 112-143). This may have the representative serve as the agent of, or even as a substitute for, those represented. This view holds the representative to a very specific orientation, the interests of the represented, and as such hardly leaves the representative open to self-disclosure through public Action. It also ensures that the representative is judged *as a representative* of those interests. This destroys the distinction between Public and Private in a very meaningful way, excluding the possibility of Action and Arendtian plurality.

Any of the aforementioned conceptions of representation, alone or together, are damaging to plurality. I will not discuss each type of representation in each of my examples; rather, I will only discuss each concept where it is present.

B. Spontaneous Speech

The second criterion concerns the degree to which participants have the ability to not only decide - decision is not the most important issue here - but rather to bring something new to the discussion. This can be discussed in terms of agenda control, but is perhaps best described as the opportunity for spontaneous speech, or as Arendt would name it, Action. To do this, people need to have some semblance of agenda control. The reason spontaneous speech is related to agenda control is that where agenda control is absent, that is to say where participants have no control over the issues on which they speak, spontaneous speech is highly limited. To this end, the mechanisms need to be more than simple forums to decide specific issues presented to them by others, such a limited topic or range of topics would not allow adequately for Action.

Arendtian Action is rooted in the creation of something entirely new, and this is at the root of her sense of immortality. On this she writes “[t]he life span of man running toward death would inevitably carry everything human to ruin and destruction if it were not for the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something new, a faculty which is inherent in action like an ever-present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin” (1998,

246). An opportunity to create something new, then, is as intrinsic to Action as plurality, and requires the opportunity not just to speak in favour or against something specific, but also for individuals to start us down roads not yet travelled.

In applying this criterion, three aspects can be analytically distinguished. These are in addition to aspects of the condition of plurality that carry over consequences into the criterion of spontaneous speech. Plurality is designed to enable spontaneous speech, thus most of its internal content is associated with spontaneous speech. Three aspects are identified below that have importance to spontaneous speech beyond the aspects of plurality.

The first aspect is the degree to which a mechanism formally allows for speech. This is quite obvious but some participatory mechanisms are more focused around resolving issues through decision, which is to say through yes/no propositions, than to engaging in discourse. The degree to which a mechanism allows for discussion in a meaningful way is an important factor in allowing for spontaneous speech.

The second aspect is the degree to which a participatory mechanism is topical. If a mechanism is topical, then it goes without saying that speech is largely limited to the topic around which it is centered. Participatory mechanisms are in many cases used to resolve specific issues. Such mechanisms may be pluralist in their internal dynamics, but they hardly allow for Action and self disclosure if they are limited to a specific issue. For example, it seems unlikely

that self-disclosure can occur in the context of debates on the placement of dog parks alone. Discourse must be broad enough and flexible enough for the injection of something entirely new. This is often at odds with the highly topical policy focus of some participatory mechanisms.

The third aspect is the degree to which a democratic mechanism's participants are free from accountability to external forces. Creating external accountability interferes with the process of judgement by those pursuing Action in the Public realm, as well as potentially influencing the conduct of participants. The removal of judgement does not remove spontaneous speech, but makes it meaningless. Speech is made into Action through the process of judgement. Judgement is the central condition of memorable public speech because judgement is an ontological prerequisite to defining something as memorable. External accountability also affects spontaneous speech by orienting action towards expected outcomes. This has the effect of removing the independence Arendt seeks for the speaker through her division between Public and Private, undermining the capacity for Action.

C. Permanence

The third criterion for viewing these democratic mechanisms is their potentiality for permanence. More specifically, they must be, or have the potential to become, avenues for publicly admirable conduct as judged by one's peers. The public realm for Arendt is one that man enters into at birth, and leaves in death. It is through this permanence that man seeks his immortality, and this is his

motivation for entering into the public realm. To this end, it is useful to consider that these new participatory mechanisms may not establish on their own a permanent Public, but if implemented in a variety of places on a variety of issues, could form a new, enriched tapestry of public life that would in its sum provide this permanence. In such a case, and given the right context, temporary forums might be a part of a new political life of the citizen, even if they are not the sole arena of that life. Permanence would lie in a consistent practice of utilizing such forums as issues emerge on the political agenda. Of course our current structures are permanent and do not lead to Arendtian Action, since permanence is a necessity for building a common world, but on its own is meaningless for achieving Action. It is only in conjunction with the other two criteria above that permanence becomes important.

Once the preconditions of plurality and spontaneous speech are satisfied, permanence can be assessed on two dimensions. The first is the degree to which the democratic mechanism is sustainable. This refers to whether the mechanism can be made into a permanent institutional arrangement, both pre-existing and outlasting the participants who engage in it. The second dimension is the degree to which such a mechanism establishes a coherent public arena. If such mechanisms, alone or together do not form a coherent public arena from which Action can be immortalized into history, then it does not form a permanent common world.

D. Application

In some ways this work will mirror the project of Graham Smith in his book *Democratic Innovations* (2009). Smith outlines the criteria of inclusiveness, popular control, considered judgment, transparency, efficiency, and transferability to evaluate democratic innovations. Another similar framework is developed by Robert Dahl. In *Democracy and its Critics* (1989) he develops ideal criteria for a democratic process. Dahl's criteria include effective participation, voting equality at the decisive stage, enlightened understanding, and control of the agenda. Each of these projects develops a well-rounded theoretical framework for their inquiry, and I hope to do the same here for Arendt's unique concerns.

I would not suggest that my criteria are superior to those aforementioned or the work of deliberative theorists mentioned earlier. These criteria are simply meant to translate Arendt's work into a tool for practical assessment. The point of my analysis is to provide new dimensions to our consideration of these proposals, in the hope that we may expand them in directions along which current performance metrics would not inspire us.

While not my primary intention, a positive by-product of this process will be that it will illustrate how Arendt's concepts of Action, plurality, and the distinction between Public and Private come together in practice to form a distinctive conception of political life. These categories and their interplay are not intuitive for us as moderns, and as such it takes great effort and time to conceptually come to terms with the fact that what we are seeking - Action, plurality, a Public realm, and politics itself – are not present in our current human condition. As

such, this practical exploration may give clarity to the reader on the interplay between these concepts.

III. PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS

A. Accountable Autonomy

Archon Fung has been one of most active thinkers in the push for participation in democratic theory. His worked has often focused on institutional design, and establishing through empirical measures the effectiveness of participatory measures. While he has a strong underlying normative orientation towards empowering the marginalized, this often appears to be a secondary concern in designing his evaluations. I will focus here on the system of institutional design labelled accountable autonomy that he presents in his book Empowered Participation.

Empowered Participation is a heavily empirical book in which Fung seeks to illustrate that participatory democracy is both viable and effective in large urban bureaucracies. It is meant to act as a rebuke to the commonly held thesis that participatory democracy is not viable "in the face of modern governance challenges" (Fung 2004, 4). More than this, Fung hopes to justify participatory democracy by illustrating "that troubled public agencies such as urban police departments and school systems can become more responsive, fair, innovative, and effective by incorporating empowered participation and deliberation into their governance structures" (Fung 2004, 4).

The examples he uses are chosen specifically in part because they are reflective of an institutional design labelled *accountable autonomy*. Accountable autonomy, according to Fung (2004), helps local participatory processes avoid those pathologies that tend to undermine the fairness and effectiveness of governance structures dominated by laypersons. Fairness is undermined because the "voices of minority, less educated, diffident, culturally subordinated participants are often drowned out by those who are wealthy, confident, accustomed to management, or otherwise privileged" (Fung 2004, 5). Barriers to such governance structures achieving effective outcomes are often "[l]iabilities such as parochialism, lack of expertise, and resource constraints"(Fung 2004, 5).

It is worthwhile to explore the *accountable autonomy* approach to institutional design because this specific design, which is really a hybrid approach, is the core theoretical contribution of Empowered Participation. Fung (2004) emphasizes that accountable autonomy does not stress autonomy in terms of independence from central authority. He argues it stresses a conception of autonomy based on "the capacity of local actors to accomplish their own ends, such as school improvement or neighbourhood safety" (Fung 2004, 6). However, central authority is not to retreat in accountable autonomy. Instead, it is necessary for the central authority to help build local capacity without encroaching on the local decision-making process (Fung 2004). Local capacity often needs to be developed in terms of the provision of a mandate over governance decisions, the participatory mechanisms themselves, and resources not only for policies but also for skill development and the facilitation of the

deliberative process. This is especially true in Fung's case studies, as they take place in marginalized urban areas that generally lack resources such as financing, expertise, and agency cooperation.

Central authorities in accountable autonomy are also charged with mitigating the internal obstacles of faction and apathy in participatory processes (Fung 2004). Faction, and corresponding issues like factional domination or group division, can be mitigated by central authority through such mechanisms as external reviews and audits, as well as by measuring outcomes and performance metrics to ensure substantive outcomes. These external reviews and audits trigger intervention by the central authority when these issues arise. This external guidance is also necessary for intervention when apathy results in below-par outcomes.

Fung's reliance on Dewey's pragmatism is interesting in comparison to the disconnect Arendt perceives between Action and results. His belief in this regard is that democracy primarily revolves around realizing the consequences of joint actions, and reformulating future action in terms of maximizing the outcome of that action. In other words, policy learning is a key aspect of Fung's belief in the participatory process. Actors are motivated by increasing collective returns in Fung's framework, as empowered participation is meant to create a feedback loop that will improve returns. As such, Fung's framework is meant to take heed not of the mere fact that people are being heard, but because being heard will improve governance outputs, especially in terms of what Arendt would label the concerns of the Private.

This insight has more important implications than may be first apparent. First, it shows how the underlying theoretical framework ties one's participation in the Public to their position in the Private. Second, it shows that Fung's theoretical underpinning is based on the concept that outcomes can be evaluated in terms of a universal standard, or at least in terms of a universal logic. This is important because it provides the basis for Fung's acceptance of and emphasis on an external assessment of participatory processes.

Being primarily focused on outcomes, Fung spends a good deal of time outlining why and how these deliberative mechanisms are effective, as well as explaining how empowered participation helps reduce inequities in outcomes across groups. While quite persuasive and central to the current theoretical meta-narrative on participation, these points are somewhat irrelevant to my purpose. The Arendtian perspective has much to do with being heard, and very little to do with having your say. In other words, Arendt's participation is not about capturing an aggregate of demands and interests, it is about creating a forum where one can speak, be heard, and have one's speech judged by one's peers.

On the criterion of plurality, Fung's proposal moderately achieves the Arendtian criteria. Accountable autonomy fully achieves the first aspect of plurality, formal equality for those participating. The second aspect, autonomy from one's economic is open to some interpretation. Fung is explicitly aware that participatory mechanisms will quickly become quickly dominated by the less marginalized members of these participatory mechanisms. Part of the role of the

central authority in developing and maintaining these central authorities is to mediate these tendencies by providing support and resources for those within the mechanisms that face background inequalities. As such, Fung clearly aims to do his best to prevent private status and advantage from permeating one's place in the public sphere. We can be sure that the Ancient Greeks didn't do this sort of capacity development, but theirs was also restricted to a privileged class. It is reasonable that this capacity building liberates individuals from the economic position more than it ties them to it, although this is up for some interpretation. Regarding the same aspect, private issues are also somewhat insulated in these particular examples by the topicality of their mandate, although this will prove to be a negative on the next criterion. On the final aspect, accountable autonomy succeeds because it does not make any sort of assumptions about representation. People directly represent themselves, and while part of the purpose of accountable autonomy is to represent specific neighbourhoods, the decision-making is happening at an intra-neighbourhood level. This means individuals are not making claims about representing their neighbourhoods in the process of participation because their discussions are with other individuals from their neighbourhood. The likewise are judged without representative standards by those they are in discourse with, and any such representative assumptions by those outside the mechanism are moot because it is in the internal discussion and internal judgement that is important as it is forming the basis for a common world.

On the second criterion of this evaluation, the opportunity for spontaneous speech, the accountable autonomy design presents a mixed bag. On the first aspect, the design fares well because it does allow for speech and discourse rather than simple voting. The example Fung uses of Harambee Academy is a good example of the importance of this aspect. Harambee Academy was formerly known as Southtown Elementary. It is a school that is almost entirely African –American and low-income. In a move that originated in the school, not in a central authority, the school pushed the school board and had its name changed to Harambee Academy after the ancient North African kingdom of Harambee that had been well known for its scholarly pedigree. While Fung is rightly impressed with the way the collective effort resulted in academic improvements, measurable according to academic metrics, it is also illustrates the way in which deliberative processes can open the door for new and innovative speech. Consider the individual who first stood up and suggested renaming the school, or suggested the name of Harambee Academy. That individual will have achieved the sort democratic honour, the sort of semblance of immortality that Arendt strives for. This is not a trivial achievement for innovative democratic politics in a marginalized community, even by Arendt's standards.

On the second aspect, the degree to which a mechanism is topical, accountable autonomy doesn't fare as well. The accountable autonomy design is meant to be highly topical. The close relationship between central authorities and the local mechanism also serve to make it highly inflexible in terms of its topic. This severely limits the possibility of spontaneous speech. Even if a

number of them were used in tandem for a range of issues, speech would always be limited to the topics selected.

Finally, on the third aspect of external accountability, the outcomes from these mechanisms are measured solely on metrics determined by a central authority. The Harambee example happens to work out because the changes caused measureable success on the academic metrics. However, had Harambee excelled tremendously in other areas, such as civic engagement, creativity, or even African history, then under the accountable autonomy design model, the exercise would have likely been deemed a failure, and intervention by the central authority would likely have been pursued.

This points to a critical shortcoming from an Arendtian perspective, because it is the orientation for judgement that the Ancient polis was so focused on, and which the Public must be concerned with. Making one's appearance in the Public realm is significant because it entails the judgement of one's peers. Without judgement, the spectators have no value, and the act has no value. It is the value determined by the polity that is significant, and can render immortality for the individual. Failure in this area means failure in the entire exercise because it means that politics remains a means rather than its own end. When we consider the individual who came up with the idea to rename the school Harambee Academy as an Arendtian success, we understand it as such because we assume the local community will judge his Action not on the central metric but based on their own judgment. The centrally devised metric happened to allow such a process in this case, but it could just as easily have been the grounds for

intervention, even if the individuals involved locally judged the exercise to be a success. Thus we have a mechanism which functions contrary to an important aspect of the Arendtian preconditions for Action, judgment by one's peers.

Finally, these structures' have some potential to live up to the Arendtian criterion of permanence. They have some potential to be used as permanent governance tools, and as such, become permanent arenas for Action. It is more difficult to determine whether they could form a coherent public realm, as an attempt to allow for spontaneous speech would likely require multiple instances of the mechanism to be used simultaneously on a range of issues. This is problematic not only for the obvious difficulty of multiple processes, but also because who was in what process would be fluid. It would not be feasible for citizens to participate in all forums, just as it would be infeasible for parliamentarians in a Westminster system to serve on all committees. Under such a situation could we untangle the different arenas into one common world? It may be possible, but not without careful minding of the issue when instituting accountable autonomy. Accountable autonomy, however, largely fails the preconditions for permanence, so the importance of the issue is quite limited.

In considering Fung's proposal, we must appreciate the degree to which it actually creates avenues for exercising the human capacity of Action. It creates public forums for individuals to stand up and be heard by their peers, on issues outside the concerns of Labor and Work. However, it hinges critically on a central authority assessing performance based on centrally determined performance metrics. This is of critical importance, and leaves Fung's proposal

in our context to be most optimistically described as an important step to rediscovering human capacity for pluralistic deliberation. It is not terribly difficult to imagine how Fung's framework could be adapted to our purposes, although the degree of modification would be so great that it is doubtful that we could still label it accountable autonomy.

B. Mini-publics

A new wave of enthusiasm for mini-publics, assemblies by random selection (also known as selection by lot), has emerged in theoretical literature in recent years. My account of this innovative tendency relies on the work of Mark Warren (2008), Graham Smith (2009), Bernard Manin (1997), and Archon Fung (2004).

The use of random selection was the hallmark of Athenian democracy, and did not disappear from republican thought until the 18th century (Manin 1997). Manin notes that for Aristotle "this alternation between command and obedience even constituted the virtue or excellence of citizens" (1997, 28). The use of random selection and alternation for the Athenians meant that they were not only able to understand issues as rulers, but as the ruled, and had to rule with knowledge that soon they would be on the outside looking in (Manin 1997). Alternation served as check that ensured those who ruled did so for the collective good (Manin 1997).

Warren provides some of the most articulate work in this area. He discusses mini-publics in terms of their 'citizen representative' participants. Warren uses this term to refer to lay citizens representing other citizens. The

major difference between citizen representative and traditional representatives is that citizen representatives are not elected (Warren 2009). They are selected or self-selected to serve a diversity of functions (Warren 2009). The most prominent example of this is the selection of jurors (Warren 2009). Increasingly, though, we find these citizen representatives in a growing range of governance bodies (Warren 2009).

Warren's work focuses on what is probably the most notable recent use of citizen representatives, the British Columbia Citizen's Assembly (BCCA). The BCCA consisted of 160 randomly selected (or nearly randomly selected) citizens, a male and female from each electoral district, and two individuals with Aboriginal backgrounds. The BCCA was responsible for reviewing the province's provincial electoral system and if necessary recommending an alternative (Warren 2009).

Warren is primarily interested in citizen representatives as a mechanism for governance structures to overcome "the imperatives of the election cycle" (Warren 2009, 57) that have the effect of creating representative deficits. Warren describes the four largest of these problems as:

> 1. Owing to the electoral context, representative institutions respond better to intense and well-organized special interests than to latent interests, unorganized interests, and public goods.
>
> 2. Because representatives function within a context that combines public visibility and adversarial relations, they must weigh the strategic and symbolic impact of speech. Thus, representative institutions have limited capacities for deliberation, which requires a suspension of the strategic impact of communication in favor of persuasion and argument.
>
> 3. Because of the electoral cycle, representative institutions have limited capacities to develop and improve public policies over long periods of times.

> 4. Because representatives must attend to vested interests, representative institutions have limited capacities for innovation and experimentation. (Warren 2009, 54).

It is to flesh out and compensate for these deficiencies that Warren believes the citizen representative is necessary to accomplish better representation. This of particular interest to us, as a close reading of the problems of representative government he seeks to overcome through this mechanism are highly related to what Arendt would call the problem of the Social in modern politics.

The BCCA provides a good example and functional test for mini-publics, but cannot be used to assess mini-publics more generally. The BCCA is in part a good example because as a particular instance, it scores very well in terms of my participatory evaluation framework. The BCCA discussed public issues, the shaping of the public sphere, and the value judgments important to it. It was highly pluralistic, and members retained general equality with one another. It was not a permanent structure, but its results had the potential to be a permanent. However, in terms of mass participation, we are discussing an institution that gave the opportunity for participation to only one hundred and sixty-two out of three million people. Many more offered submissions, but this is not of the same nature as the participation of the citizen representatives. This problem of scale, and the inability to expand something like the BCCA to anything of even moderate inclusiveness, is indicative of the larger problem of mini-publics, which I will discuss later.

Starting in the 1970s, the independent Jefferson Center has run and promoted 'citizen juries' in the United States (Smith 2009, 76). These citizen juries typically involve between twelve and twenty four citizens (Smith 2009, 76). Its adoption in America has been extremely limited, although the practice has been adopted in other countries (Smith 2009, 76). A modification of this practice in the UK came in 2003 when the Citizens' Council was established by the UK's National Institute for Clinical Excellence (Smith 2009, 77). The Council deliberates on ethical and moral questions in health priority setting, sitting twice a year for a long weekend (Davies et al. 2006, in Smith 2009). The Council consists of thirty members, and operates on the rotation principle, with citizens stepping down after a set number of weekends to be replaced by new citizens (Smith 2009, 77).

Another, and perhaps for our purpose the best example to date of the usage of mini-publics is the use of planning cells in Germany, as well as in Spain and Israel. The planning cell was established by Peter Dienel of the Research Institute for Citizens' Participation at the University of Wuppertal in Germany since the 1970s (Smith 2009, 77).

These planning cells typically include twenty-five citizens, but run either multiple sessions at once or run sessions in a series, and as such involve larger number of citizens then the aforementioned citizen juries. The largest to date utilized five hundred citizens. The planning cells involve formal training sessions for the participants. These planning cells do rely on the influence of a more formal structure than do citizen juries. Their choice of facilitators is based on the

ability of those facilitators to provide technical expertise. As well, because there are multiple sessions in these planning cells, facilitators are required to bring together and collate the information from each session into a final report. Finally, and quite critically, the organizations commissioning the planning cells, which are usually public authorities, are required to contractually enter into agreements to not only take into account the recommendations, but also to provide an explanation to the public as to how and why recommendations were or were not followed (Smith 2009, 77-79)

The use of these planning cells has been used in a variety of areas in Germany, as well as the Basque region of Spain and in Israel .This example may be particularly relevant because it is the closest we have come in recent times to the mini-public going from oddity to common practice, although even in Germany it is still closer to the former than the latter (Smith 2009, 77).

One difficulty in the assessment of mini-publics is that the despite their high potential, few instances have been conducted and reported. This may be partially the result of the fact that the policy-related benefits or achievements, the sort of metrics Fung uses in accountable autonomy processes, are less clear in establishing the utility of these mechanisms. Regardless, I will engage slightly more with the theoretical possibilities in assessing mini-publics as it is necessitated in the spirit of fairness.

The use of the mini-public design in practice makes assessment in regard to plurality difficult. Even the first aspect, formal equality, is somewhat difficult to

evaluate. The internal dynamics quite evidently accord participants procedural equality. The assessment difficulty stems from two possible views on random selection. It could first be argued that rotation offers an *equal chance* at being included, and if that chance entailed a reasonable or strong chance at being selected to serve in the public duty, then the mini-public satisfies the formal requirements of my framework because it ensures that everyone has an equal chance to make their public appearance. However one could argue that a permanent public sphere requires sustained and equal access to the public sphere. I am more partial to the latter argument, as is Arendt, because to leave the possibility of realizing one's humanity to lot seems below reasonable expectations. More than this, it would mean that the rest of the time, the majority of one's life one would have to live - as I quoted earlier - a life that is "is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men" (Arendt 1998, 176). It is only reasonable to side with the latter, and as such mini-publics alone are not adequately inclusive. Like accountable autonomy, the potential to succeed on this score lies in using them in tandem with other instances of the mechanism.

On the second aspect of plurality, the autonomy from one's private position, they score anywhere in a range from failure to success depending on the specifics of their implementation. Plurality is most affected by the topical mandate of the mini public and on the legal nuances of the system. On the former issue, if the mini-public is topical in a way that is not focused on issues of the Private, as was the case in the BCCA, then the mini-public may score well on

the plurality issue. Like accountable autonomy however, this solution again foreshadows problems on the criterion of spontaneous speech. Of course, if the role of mini-public is explicitly to deal with economic issues, then it will fare very poorly on the issue of plurality.

In regards to the legal nuances, Ancient democratic Athens used lot to select magistrates, but had in a place multiple safeguards to ensure that the system was not used to further private interests. There was constant monitoring of the magistrates by the Assembly and the courts (Manin 1997, 12). On leaving office the magistrates had to render a public account of their service (Manin 1997, 13). During their term and at any time, any citizen could lay a charge against them, demanding their suspension (Manin 1997, 13). At each of the ten meetings of the Assembly each year, voting on the magistrates was a mandated agenda item, and any citizen could put forward a vote of non-confidence at this time (Manin 1997, 13). If the magistrate lost this vote, he was immediately suspended and the issue was put before the courts (Manin 1997, 13).

The high standards and scrutiny placed upon those selected for any Athenian office could have maintained a strong practical barrier between private interests and the public sphere, not only out of fear of legal reprisal but also social disgrace. This however is not a very durable separation institutionally, for legal and social pressures could just as likely line up on a redistributive bent without personal interest at play. In other words, institutionally it does not itself provide enough of a separation from one's economic status; it must be coupled with another social or legal protection. For example, Arendt cites that for the

Greeks the law itself provided a wall between the public and the private (1998, 63).

On the final aspect of plurality, representation, I again face the difficulty of assessing something in theory rather than practice. Mini-publics often do not include representative claims, and do not necessitate them. However, the BCCA included very explicit representative claims. By selecting one male and one female from each electoral district, as well as two people on the basis of their aboriginal status, descriptive and substantive representative claims are built into the system. Participants are expected to provide some sort of representation to their regions, their gender, and in the case of the aboriginal representatives, First Nations. This has the potential to greatly undermine any effective plurality established by the first two aspects of the criterion. As such, mini-publics have a potential to succeed on this aspect of plurality, but also the potential to score very poorly.

In terms of the criterion of spontaneous speech, the mini-public is a very well-equipped mechanism. On the formal aspect, mini-publics are based on discussion in a meaningful way. On the second aspect, the mini-public faces the same issues as accountable autonomy in its implementation. The BCCA offers one unique example, however, of opportunity beyond a topical implementation or multiple topical implementations. The mandate of the BCCA really has much to do with the general values of a society, and perhaps accomplishes the criterion of spontaneous speech, although somewhat narrowly.

In terms of the final aspect of the criterion, external assessment, the scoring of a mini-public again can vary greatly. Most do not have any form of external assessment. However, this is sometimes implicitly achieved when the outcomes of the body are non-binding. The non-binding nature is not necessarily serious, as this is subsequent to what transpires within the mini-public. The danger of the non-binding nature of a mini-public lies in that it has the potential to make mini-publics meaningless to the participants within them if they are ignored. The BCCA, for instance, likely did not suffer this fate, as their recommendations resulted in a major referendum. However, if one participated in a mini-public whose recommendations were always ignored and never penetrated the public consciousness, then the exercise would potentially become meaningless. Action, after all, entails memorable speech, and an ignored mini-public is not likely to permeate the annals of history.

On this issue of permanence, mini-publics are an excellent example of what I discussed earlier, in that individually they may be quite limited, but taken as a common mechanism forming a new public life they have potential to contribute to a permanent public life. A citizenship premised on engagement in mini-publics as a primary, or at least secondary, form of governance that gave all citizens the opportunity to speak among equals, is a polity that would both predate and postdate that citizen's life. On the second aspect of permanence, the coherence of that common world, topical mini-publics seem more likely to form a coherent public life than parallel systems of accountable autonomy because of

how accountable autonomy is rooted in local issues. This locality would mean little coherence across localities, compared to more broadly topical mini-publics.

C. Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a unique democratic innovation that finds its origins not in the West, but in Brazil. PB was first implemented in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989 (Smith 2009, 33). PB has spread a great deal in the short time between its implementation and now, and it is estimated that around 250 cities now use some form of participatory budgeting (Cabannes 2004, 24 in Smith 2009, 33). Participatory budgeting involves the use of popular assemblies, but because they can be identified as having a coherent and distinctive institutional arrangement of their own it is reasonable to address them separately from popular assemblies. Unless otherwise indicated, my account of PB's characteristics is taken from Graham Smith's Democratic Innovations, chapter 2 (Smith 2009, 30-71).

PB is a participatory process by which citizens allocate a significant portion of their local budget. I will describe PB here as it is organized in Porto Alegre, although it can and has been organized differently in different locales. In Porto Alegre the amount allocated is usually between 9 and 21 percent of the total municipal budget, which in 2000 equaled $160 million dollars (Baiochhi 2005, 14 in Smith 2009, 34). This process takes place on an annual cycle, and has three levels of citizen engagement.

The first level consists of popular assemblies at the regional level, with regional in this context referring to an intra-city region consisting of multiple

neighborhoods. These popular assemblies have three functions. First, they act provide a level of scrutiny and accountability for the municipal administration. The administration, including the mayor, must report on the implementation of the previous year's budget and then are subject to questioning by the assembly. Secondly, the assembly votes on setting priorities areas for investment in the region, such as sanitation, paving, etc. Thirdly, the assembly elects representatives to sit on the regional budget forum and on the Council of the Participatory Budget (COP) (Smith 2009).

The process of electing representatives to the regional forum encourages citizens to participate because the more votes the better represented a neighborhood's interests will be in spending priorities. For the COP, each region elects two representatives, regardless of size, wealth, or participation. The COP has two primary functions. First, it is responsible for producing the budget based on the priorities developed in the budget forums. Second, it develops the rules according to which resources will be distributed in the following budget year.

The COP has a set of mechanisms for accountability similar to those I discussed in regard to the Greek system of lot. They follow the Greek principle of rotation, with councilors only being eligible for election for two consecutive terms. Councilors are also open to immediate recall.

Alongside this budgeting process and as another component that contributes to the makeup of the COP are a series of thematic popular assemblies. These thematic assemblies deal with issues that are less neighborhood-specific, such as environment, health, and social services. They

are more focused on long-term planning than the regional assemblies. They are not as well attended as the popular assemblies, but are also responsible for electing thematic budget delegates to a thematic budget forum and for electing two COP councilors to the COP. The relative influence of each thematic budget forum is equivalent to each regional popular assembly, although in Porto Alegre there are only six thematic budget forums compared to sixteen regional forums.

It is worth noting that decision-making within these regional budget forums is largely done through discussions and negotiations between the delegates elected to them. These delegates are also given training on technical issues and make visits to different neighborhoods. Only elected delegates can vote at these budget forums, although the meetings are open to all citizens.

On the criterion of plurality, participatory budgeting fails on all three aspects. While participatory forums are often subject to domination by those who are more educated and generally better off in socio-economic, participatory budgeting is often an example of the opposite being true. Smith identifies four incentives inherent in the structure that contribute to this. First, there is a clear relationship between the level of neighborhood mobilization in regional assemblies and the representation of the interests in those neighborhoods when budget priorities are set in the budget forum. Second, there is a distributional bias in favor of the poor that is the product of the criteria of the distributional rules of the COP. Third, there has been an active effort by the administration to engage the economically marginalized through community organizers and through the promotion of civic organizations. Fourthly, participation by those in

marginalized communities has been motivated based on the results they have seen or experienced stemming out of participatory budgeting (Smith 2009, 43).

The problem of domination by the marginalized is highly problematic in relation to my criterion of plurality, even more so than domination by the upper classes usually is. The economically and socially empowered often dominate participatory mechanisms not necessarily because they speak on behalf of their class, but rather because of the byproducts of their status such as education, available time, and management or public speaking experience. In this case however, the poor are empowered precisely because of their interests are those of a larger class, and the enterprise is almost entirely devoted to pursuing those class interests which are properly the concerns of the Private for Arendt. Participatory budgeting, both through its assemblies and through its levels of representation, includes people as vehicles of private interests, and as such binds their participation to those interests in a meaningful and very concrete manner. As such, there is limited opportunity for people to define themselves free of their economic position. Only in the thematic forums is there the possibility for any degree of Arendtian plurality.

For the purpose of clarity it is worth breaking this problem down into the aspects of plurality I have identified. Formally, mini-publics treat participants equally in entry and in deliberation. On the second aspect, people are concretely tied to their Private concerns and position. Finally, people are representative of their neighborhoods, and their conduct is dominated by their substantive

representative claims. This example helps bear out in practice why Arendt's conceptual arrangement is necessity for retaining an arena of plurality.

On the second criterion, the opportunity for spontaneous speech is somewhat open but highly topical and interest-specific. The first aspect is satisfied as people have the opportunity to voice their opinions on budget issues, but this is likely to be polluted by the lack of plurality, and as such is seen in terms of their neighborhood and class. The second aspect, the issue of the topicality of the mechanism, also fails to live up to the standard. Speech is fairly limited to topical issues, but these do cover a large range of issues. The problem is that they cover precisely the wrong issues, most of them being the proper concerns of the Private. External judgment is the only aspect of the spontaneous speech criterion on which participatory budgeting doesn't seem to fail, although this is of limited concern because the outputs are so highly constrained by the nature of the mechanism.

In laying out the conceptual framework I noted that team dynamics are not intrinsically incompatible with the Arendtian framework. Participatory budgeting is a team game of neighborhood against neighborhood, region against region, but it should be noted that this team dynamic is of an entirely different nature because it is not occurring in a condition of plurality. In this case the team dynamic is highly limiting to plurality and spontaneous speech precisely because it is grounded in distinctive interests.

On the final criterion, the possibility of permanence, participatory budgeting does well, but its failure in the division of public and private renders

this a moot point. It may contribute to a new a coherent public life, but this life would be very impotent in terms of providing opportunities for Action.

The failure of participatory budgeting to meet the Arendtian standard, despite its intuitive attraction to many contemporary democratic theorists, raises an important question about the framework itself, namely, its justification. To begin with, the framework's harshness regarding participatory budgeting should be taken in the precise context of the specific question posed. The question is not making a comparison with the existing representative systems of democracy used. The question also is not asking whether mechanisms such as participatory budgeting are inclusive and participatory. What the question is asking is whether these mechanisms create a very specific and distinctive ontological arrangement that allows for Arendtian Action. Justification, as such, must ultimately come from a normative commitment to Action, which participatory budgeting does not satisfy.

Participatory budgeting provides a very good example of just how far my criteria and those of more a mainstream analysis of participatory mechanisms can diverge. Participatory budgeting shows the degree to which a heralded and respected democratic innovation that meets many ideals discussed by contemporary democratic theorists would be counterproductive to achievement of the Arendtian ideals of participation.

D. Popular Assemblies

Popular assemblies are the commonly held ideal of participatory democracy. They are what has so long been revered about Greek democracy, and they are

what Tocqueville found when he came to America. Yet they are almost completely absent in the modern democratic experience.

The New England experience that Tocqueville came upon is the closest experience in modern times to the almost fabled Greek experience, and as such it stands nearly alone. New England town meetings were open to all residents and had legislative power over a broad range of local issues. The meetings allowed citizens to elect their local town officials, and likewise provide a mechanism of accountability over those officials (Smith 2009, 30-71). Graham Smith likens these to the experience discussed by Fung regarding urban Chicago, not in the educational example I discussed earlier, but in terms of Fung's other example of neighborhood policing. However, I maintain that Fung's examples are distinctive from a popular assembly because of the level of external control and evaluation. A popular assembly finds its purest form in the Greek Assembly. It incorporates a full range of mandate, a full inclusion of citizens, with judgments rendered only from within.

Such popular assemblies are commonly dismissed because of the scale and complexity of modern democracies. Scale seems to be a primary theoretical problem in shaping contemporary democracies. Radical democrats argue that this problem can be solved through the tool of confederation (Smith 2009, 32). Rousseau, in writing on the social contract, noted that only the small island of Corsica was suited to his conception of democratic government (2007, 46). Scale is a practical issue, but we should not disregard popular assemblies on this

count alone. Meaningful decentralization, among other options, may be radical but not impossible.

Popular assemblies are rightfully treated with nostalgic reverence because they appear as the most direct and obvious route for mass participation. I would contend that what really should be expected in the Arendtian condition is not that amour-propre appears as an otherwise undisclosed aspect of the human experience, but rather that that creating arenas for Action establishes a sense of citizenship by *directing* one's amour-propre towards the pursuit of immortality in the Public through word and deed.

Amour-propre no doubt exists and is exhibited by human beings in all social conditions. Even in the societies where piety and humility are the highest virtues, individuals strive for the public recognition of excellence through the display of this piety and excellence. In capitalist societies, Ayn Rand may take the place of God as the arbiter of human excellence. Mass assemblies are held in high regard because by creating an arena for Action they direct amour-propre towards Public rather than Private deed. This tells us something about the intuitive appreciation that we have as human beings for Action. We see this in the antiquity of Ancient Greece, an era in which, as in no time since, so many names gained immortality from a pool of so few. The error on the part of some republican thinkers, however, is to ascribe to antiquity a reverence for civic or national pride, such as would emerge in the twentieth century as an ugly brand of nationalism.

This error is apparent in Rousseau's reverence for Sparta over Athens, with the mistake being obvious once one considers that beyond Lycurgus, few names from Sparta survive. Citizenship took on no meaning in Sparta, because people saw and heard from the same place and perspective, destroying any semblance of plurality and thus destroying any capacity for Action. The example is born out in the example of ancient Rome also, for this is why names like Cicero had so much company in Roman Republic, and why the death of Julius Caesar on the Senate floor ensured that with very few exceptions, only the names of emperors and generals would be remembered from the Roman Empire that followed it.

Mass assemblies are not overly complex, but can be fitted with a range of legal requirements and protections. These often take the form of restrictions on participation, and educational restrictions or provisions. This may include specialized training opportunities, or even, as is the case in much of the developed world, even the universal provision of primary education. These requirements and provisions can be tailored to the specific instance of assembly and as such are secondary concerns in the evaluation, as they can be changed and are not intrinsic to the core concept of mass assemblies. More importantly however, mass assemblies have been realized in practice on such few occasions one cannot reasonably assess the specifics as being indicative of a universal character; rather one must approach mass assemblies in somewhat broad strokes.

One might expect that popular assemblies, being so close to the Greek experience Arendt is describing, would almost automatically score very high in our assessment. The reality, however, is that mass assemblies have the potential to easily degenerate into the sort of democracy that Aristotle called mob rule (Aristotle 2000). Arendt claims that the Ancient Greek model she referenced upheld this division through the law itself. She argues that the law was not the product of political action but the protector of the public sphere. She notes "[t]he law of the city-state was neither the content of political action…nor was it a catalogue of prohibitions, resting, as all modern laws do, upon the Thou Shalt Nots of the Decalogue. It was quite literally a wall, without which there might have been an agglomeration of houses, a town (asty), but not a city, a political community" (Arendt 1998, 62).[3]

In New England, Tocqueville notes the importance of what he calls "the spirit of religion" (2003, 55) in this regard. Tocqueville worried about the rise of materialism in a democratic society, and saw religion as one possible protection against this. Tocqueville's concern over the rise of materialism bears a strong parallel to what Arendt considers the danger of the Social, and so religion here is a somewhat novel conception about how to address this issue. Tocqueville notes that "among all the passions conceived and fostered by equality, one in particular is sharply appreciated and set deep in the heart of man, namely the

[3] It is worth noting that this distinction between town and city is also found in Rousseau's Social Contract. He notes in reference to the term city "[t]he real meaning of this word has almost been wholly lost in modern times; most people mistake a town for a city, and a townsman for citizen. They do not know that houses make a town, but citizens a city" (2007, 33).

love of comfort which forms the prominent and indelible feature of democratic ages“ (2003, 515).

Likewise, it is the “main concern of religions to purify, govern, and restrain the overly fervent and exclusive taste for comfort which men experience in times of equality“ (Tocqueville 2003, 517). Tocqueville thought religion was necessary to protect the public sphere because this taste for comfort had a tendency to become so exclusive and because of his concerns over what would later be called nihilism. In the case of New England, it was the Puritan nature of the settlers that protected it from the dangers that Aristotle saw, that the American founders attempted to avoid through a separation of powers, and that Arendt sees as the product of the Social.

Even if we take Tocqueville’s use of religion as a plausible substitute for the legal separation of the public and the private, religion is not a workable sociological or theoretical tool today. Not only does it seem in retreat and division in most of the developed world, but perhaps more importantly, religion seems to be consumed in the Social blob as much as the rest of society. Religion today, unlike the post-Cromwellian Puritan exodus to America, has immersed itself in mass culture, partisan movements, the Public, the Private, and the economic. Likewise, few in our liberal society would endorse restricting the franchise to the economically independent, and Arendt’s own normative orientations seem also to lean against this. She is, at the least, notably uncomfortable with the full implications of her position on economic independence as a condition of democratic participation. The question for us, then, is how can establish this

firewall between the public and private and protect it from mob tyranny? The answer is not an easy one.

Some classical liberals of a libertarian bent would be happy to legally restrict government - local or otherwise – from dealing with issues of private property. Likewise, some Marxists and communitarians might argue we can accomplish Arendt's public-private distinction either through redistribution or by eliminating private property. Arendt's work seems not to be a manifesto for either radical left or libertarian right. The peculiar answer from Arendt seems to be that The Human Condition is almost written in anticipation of the effects of a somewhat miraculous, and to her mind dangerous event, namely, the dawn of automation, "which in a few decades probably will empty the factories and liberate mankind from its oldest and most natural burden, the burden of laboring and the bondage to necessity" (Arendt 1998, 4). Being too impetuous - and more honestly too pessimistic – to wait for this unburdening, I suggest ahead that mass assemblies can be conceived of in such a way as to allow for both the Arendtian ideal and the housekeeping necessities of modern mass societies.

Most calls for participation, from theorists and activists alike, are focused on giving citizens power, and power in an economically focuses society means economic and budgetary power. The unique nature of Arendt's analysis is that she is precisely not concerned with such issues. She wants to create an arena for self-definition contained within a community with what Tocqueville called "the spirit of the township" or "community spirit" (2003 80, 81) that likewise was the center of the ancient polis. This I think provides the opportunity to establish local

participatory institutions such as mass assemblies to plant the seed of this spirit and this capacity for action.

These new institutions would be well suited for rural communities, but could also be adopted in ward size districts in urban locals. Let them start with the limited mandate of local issues – most of which do not blur the Public/Private distinction- and see if they give root to larger calls for democratic participation. Local issues often have the ability to avoid the dangers of crossing the Public/Private distinction because they deal with issues that are distinctly Public, such as issues of collective identity, environmental, athletic and cultural issues. Local issues are often local precisely because issues of the Social are the mandate of higher levels of government.[4]

The reality of the developed world is that interest in the democratic system among the general population seems to be in decline rather than reaching new heights. New mass assemblies could spark in the population a new democratic fervor, could perhaps buck the decline of civil society that Putnam observes in Bowling Alone (2000), and may lay the groundwork with which to overcome the hardening partisan divide. Such assemblies would fulfill all of the participatory criteria of this project. The only shortcoming of these prospective assemblies is that individuals may not be equal in the amount of time they are able to dedicate to assembly politics, as some would be more burdened than others with

[4] An interesting section in Democracy in America on the mandate of townships in the United States notes "townships submit to the rule of the state only in those matters I shall term *social*; that is in those matters that are of common concern. They have remained independent in everything which relates to them alone" (Tocqueville 2003, 78).

economic time constraints. This is a minor compromise, however, in stepping towards a more pluralistic politics.

IV. CONCLUSION

The modern history of the west has been about individual political inclusion and collective political autonomy. The long battle for franchise in Britain, the civil rights movement, the suffragette movement, the French revolution are all examples of the former, while the history of Ireland, Scotland, and the American colonies are all examples of the latter. The strangeness of today is that where such inclusion has been granted, and almost universally, people are rioting still in much the same manner (in the case of the riots this year in London it is also on the same streets) as hundreds of years ago. These riots, such as those this year in London and Vancouver, seem senseless to us as they have no named motivation and take places in wealthy industrial capitals. They are hollow and violent re-enactments of noble movements, zombie actions reanimated without the soul or spirit of their original movements.

Like Arendt's analysis of Adolph Eichmann, what is striking about these riots is the extreme thoughtlessness that underlies the violence (Arendt 1994). It would be optimistic for us to attribute these riots to the underlying angst over the lack of meaningfully inclusion in political participation. What is more likely is that we may be in the process of being confronted with the troubling first signs of the condition that Arendt described as "a society of laborers without labor, that is, without the only activity left to them" to which she cryptically added '[s]urely

nothing could be worse" (1998, 5). Action is not about the protection of rights, it is about the exercise of the highest capacities of man. Now more than ever men look for their connection to Man, for meaning in an increasingly nihilistic world. Arendt offers the most optimistic and inclusive route for such a search, and as such it is worth considering what she has to say. I have attempted here to develop a framework by which we can evaluate the ability of a range of institutions to inject Action back into society, and have applied that framework to the leading mechanisms we may turn to for this.

Of all of these mechanisms discussed here, the assessment criteria developed and applied in this analysis suggest that mass assemblies hold the greatest potential. They require real consideration about how we consider citizenship and perhaps a move from an emphasis on local rather than national consciousness if amour-propre is expected to propel us into participating in such mechanisms.

All real changes requires such shifts, however. The rise and fall of empires, the rise of the nation state, moves toward colonization and independence have all given rise to radical changes in political thinking, to which the implementation of local mass assemblies pale in comparison. If nothing else, real discussion in society on mass assemblies may spark in the populace recognition of just how limited political participation currently is. Mass assemblies do offer the possibility of fulfilling all three criteria. They offer, as was evidenced by the Ancient Greeks but is more problematic today, the opportunity for plurality. They offer the opportunity for spontaneous speech. Finally, they also can serve

as the cornerstone of a vibrant Public realm that will predate and outlast its citizens. This high potentiality coincides with very few corresponding concerns over normative downsides by those who believe in citizen participation. The primary challenge in practice is how they can fit into a modern institutional context, which remains a difficult but not hopeless task.

Accountable autonomy may be an improvement over the status quo, but for our purposes is not an altogether satisfactory choice. It provides on one hand avenues for marginalized groups to come together and develop the skills necessary for deliberation and participation, but on the other it lacks the ability for local assessment as was captured in the criterion of spontaneous speech. Accountable autonomy succeeds in terms of plurality, or at the very least has the potential to, and in this way it may be an important step to start rebuilding our capacity for mass participation. It also has the potential to succeed on the final criteria of permanence, as its forums do have the potential to contribute to a permanent common world. That success is of little importance however if it cannot foster Action through spontaneous speech.

Mini-publics are an interesting case because they at times satisfy aspects of all three criteria. They do offer the opportunity for plurality, but the plurality is only opened up to a select few. They do offer the opportunity for spontaneous speech, but at times can be highly and narrowly topical. Finally, alone they do not offer a semblance of a sustained Public realm, but used in a larger system of mini-publics they could succeed in going some way to satisfying this criterion. As

such, mini-publics have the potential to be the next best option to the mass assembly, although the distance between the two remains significant.

Participatory budgeting, despite being one of the most successful democratic innovations in the last century, fails our criteria greatly. Its emphasis on tying people to their economic condition destroys the possibility of Arendtian plurality. The opportunity for spontaneous speech is likewise diminished by the topical nature of the discussions, along with the emphasis on bargaining rather than dialogue. The issue of permanence is irrelevant because of the failure of participatory budgeting on the first two counts.

However, all of these mechanisms - including accountable autonomy, mini-publics, and even participatory budgeting - offer us opportunities to begin building our participatory capacity as individuals. They likely will all aid in holding off Arendt's predicted disappearance of that capacity. Were Man confronted today with the same political system as the Ancient Greeks that Arendt discusses, then likely he would know not what to do with it. Incrementalism, a process that Arendt argues worked very well in the transition from the aristocracy of the 17th century to the democracy of today, may not be a wholly unsatisfying route in the pursuit of Action.

One generalization that I can draw from this analysis is that in any attempt at innovation, we must allow for failure. The Arendtian criteria demand that we cannot organize participatory bodies around pre-determined metrics seeking specific economic or social outcomes. Action is evaluated through the exercise of judgement, and as such we must establish mechanisms through which a full

process of deliberation and judgement is allowed to run its course. More importantly, Action is about doing something wholly new. There is no way to create metrics to judge what we cannot predict; as such we must rely on judgement as an intuitive human capacity.

If room is to be made for Action in modern democracy, there may be the possibility of creating such an arena in tandem with the traditional politics of modern democracy. While the psychological barriers may be the greatest to overcome, there may be room, for example, for a national representative institution for administration, and local participatory mechanisms for Action. Such possibilities require reconsideration of our political units and activities, but these are precisely the types of considerations Arendt seems intent on provoking.

I have attempted to show that as we think about the nature of our democracy going forward, there is more to consider than economics and social welfare. Man is zoon politikon, and he is unique as a human being because of this characteristic. Politics is what ties men to Man, and at the same time separates them. As such, the least we can do in its consideration is to think what we are doing.

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