UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

NO TIME FOR REASON:

DELIBERATION, STATUS, AND DEMOCRACY IN THE MODERN SOCIETY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Norman, Oklahoma
2006

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DELIBERATION, STATUS, AND DEMOCRACY IN THE MODERN SOCIETY

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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Acknowledgements

I would like to recognize my wife Linda and my parents Ann-Brit and Gunnar that have helped push me forward when some of my own enthusiasm was lacking; my former adviser Ed that got me going on my PhD-work in an inspiring way; my current adviser Eric that has played an enormous role in my intellectual development; thanks to *Scandinavia* and Mr. Greenberg that made it financially possible to work on this; my host parents Dorothy and Lloyd as well and my housemate Louis that helped make all those years in Norman wonderful; as well as all the graduate students and professors (including those on my committee) that have contributed to a highly stimulating intellectual environment. Thank you all!

However, I also must recognize all those citizens who decided that my schools should include students from all backgrounds and not only those of my own; and that the higher education that I have enjoyed was an investment for the whole community and not only for those who could afford it. I am forever thankful to all those anonymous citizens that helped build the society that I have greatly benefited from.

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Abstract

Economic use of time (efficiency) and democracy are common features in many modern western societies. However, a strong egalitarian democracy requires equal participation in the social construction of meaning, reason and ultimately knowledge. That is, the intersubjectivity that is formed through communication and social interaction is the base of a democratic society. The pursuit of efficiency and status often stand in opposition to broad social interaction and human communication and therefore our ability to build common understanding and reason. That is, the temporal anxiety (the need for constant quantifialble gratification), that is strongly connected to the modern notion of individualism, negatively affects the creation of social bonds. The modern western society is therefore characterized by a quantifiable mass of disconnected individuals rather that a connected group of citizens.

No Time for Reason:

Deliberation, Status, and Democracy in the Modern Western Society

Democracy is denied by neither armies nor powerful figures, but in the moment-to-moment.

Stanley Deetz, 1992, p. 351

With time we create order and shape the kind of world we live in. Yet we take our time values for granted, never stopping to consider the critical role they play in defining the social order. Every culture has its own unique set of temporal fingerprints. To know a people is to know the time values they live by.

Jeremy Rifkin, 1987, p.1

Introduction

Time is money is a common perception in a modern western culture influenced by the economic exchange theory; every minute used for a specific activity has an alternative value. I can play with my daughter for an hour and make $0 or I can spend the same hour working and make $15. It is then up to me to determine whether the hour with my daughter is worth $15 or not: what we do with our time reflects how we value different activities.[1]

Political activity takes time and could therefore be measured in monetary units. How much money can I make deliberating political issues with my fellow citizens? In most cases *nothing,* unless I have the ability to influence political decisions in a way that benefits my narrow self-interest. I could, of course, really

[1] Sleep would, according to this perspective, be one of the most expensive activities. We generally sleep 5-8 hours a night which, according to the above example, would cost $75-120.

enjoy a two-hour discussion about the American health-care system and “pay” the $30 exchange-value rather than spending the two hours at work.

The notion that *time is money* is ultimately a reflection of our values and definitions, the priorities we make as individuals and as a society. The notion that *time is money* is not an absolute fact but rather a cultural representation. A culture helps people make sense of what happens around them, it guides our perceptions. Thomas Kuhn (1996) argued that failures in integrating key assumptions will eventually bring about enough contradiction to force a paradigm shift. Kuhn’s idea primarily relates to the natural sciences but it is not hard to see how competing values in the creed holding a society together could create similar results. It is difficult for a culture to move forward when the tension between two competing assumptions creates constant dissonance and conflict.

Many modern scientists treat “science” as absolute; as if we know exactly how things work. This kind of assumption is not new: Leonardo de Vinci, Galileo, Newton, and Einstein have all effectively disproved some common assumptions regarding the world around us. Jean Gebser (1985) claims that the mental structure guiding modern western societies is deficient in the sense that we generally place ourselves outside the environment surrounding us.

> The authentic relation to psyche, the mental, is perverted into its opposite, to the disadvantage of the ego that has become blind through isolation. In such an instance, man has become isolated and his basic ties have been cut; the moderating, measuring bond, of *menis* and *menos* is severed. . . . The gates to the “demonic forces” have been opened; nothing exists out of itself, everything follows upon something else, everything has become a

> consequence. We may well ask: a consequence leading to what? (Gebser, 1985, p. 97)

More specifically, the modern western culture, with its roots in 15th century Italy, learned early on how to master *space* but we are still struggling with the concept of *time* (Gebser, 1985). Some scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu (1977) claim that perceptions of time are social conceptions that grow out of the communication taking place in social interaction. Others, Jeremy Rifkin for instance, claim that we have stopped perceiving time for what it is, "embedded in natural events", and instead perceive it as an "external symbol, a quantified abstraction." Rifkin continues:

> We have come to see how things fit together by separating ourselves from nature's biological clocks. . . We gained perspective, and in the process we lost touch with the ground of our temporal being. Our knowledge has been our alienation. Our increased understanding of nature has been accomplished by a self-imposed exile from biological time. (Rifkin, 1987, p. 192)

This essay describes how modern society has failed to integrate an inclusive and active *democracy* with our perception of *time* and *status.*[2] That is, there is a strong cultural preference for democracy but we have in many ways failed to integrate this normative idea with the dominant cultural attitudes and practices concerning *time*. The failed integration of *democracy* with *time* and *status* in western culture has created a growing division between those claiming that fundamental democratic ideals are neglected and those claiming that our society is wasting important productive time. This division was especially visible in the

2000 and 2004 elections when some citizens claimed that references to *time* undermined the democratic creed that the U.S. was built upon.

Different solutions have been presented in this struggle with *time*. Jeremy Rifkin argues that we need to exert power over time; that we should "resacralize life" by "resacralizing time". He also claims that we may need to revalue the time we use to socialize and accept "the inherent pace, tempo, and duration of the natural world" (Rifkin, 1987, p. 4). Gebser (1985) claims that the fourth dimension, currently missing in our culture, is *time-freedom*: liberation from all time-forms[3] where "everything becomes present, concrete, and thus integrable present" (p. 356). Gebser claims that the modern western temporal anxiety ultimately is a political issue: references to time-limits, for example in the aftermath of the 2000 Presidential election, are used to suppress democratic processes. That is, time in itself has no agency; it is instead our relationship to time that has important political consequences. Robert Levine proposes that we need to get out of the current *temporal ghetto* and apply a *multitemporality* in which everything does not have to follow the same pace.

> Many situations are best met by a temporal approach requiring a rapid pace of life: speed, attention to the clock, a future orientation, the ability to value time as money. Other domains in life – rest leisure, the incubation of ideas, social relationships – are more adequately met with a relaxed attitude towards time. (Levine, 1997, p. 219)

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[2] Status is, as described later in this essay, ultimately an extension of time.
[3] Gebser argues that we need to be able to include all previous time-forms in our thinking; that is *magic timelessness, mythical temporicity*, and mental *conceptual time*.

A strong and inclusive democracy requires social interaction as well as deliberation. Both are time-consuming activities. Democracy also requires that we treat time as *relative* rather than *absolute* and that time is dependent on democratic activities and not the other way around. In other words, democracy does not function well when we constantly try to limit and plan our use of *time*. However, the primary purpose of this essay is not to present a specific solution to how to best integrate a temporal perspective with our democratic ideals. This dissertation instead describes the problems we face when we try to combine our democratic ideals with our modern western perspective of time. In other words, just because there are problems in a system does not mean that better alternatives automatically exist. However, it is important to examine all aspects of a culture and apply different perspectives in order to have the opportunity to identify better alternatives. The perspectives presented in this dissertation are not based on systematic empirical research. The method used in this dissertation is instead a 'philosophical analysis'; a "process of breaking a concept down into more simple parts, so that its logical structure is displayed" (Blackburn 1996, 14). That is, I attempt to break down the logical structure of common concepts in the modern western society. The content in this dissertation is therefore purposely not restrained to the expectations of one single field since I am attempting to reconstruct rather then support common assumptions. Ultimately I am working under the assumption that democracy ought to be studied beyond the focus of single individuals and instead focus on the bonds between the citizens. Democracy

in the modern western mass society can never be limited to the few people who are able to actively take part in central political decisions – we have to recognize that a large-scale society must find different venues for democratic practices. This perspective therefore breaks with the general strictly individualistic paradigm within Political science and Communication in favor of a perspective where democracy is based on connections and communication rather than isolated individuals.

The literature chosen for this analysis is frequently citied in discussions over social bonds and its relationship with democracy. This is therefore not an extensive description of all the literature on social bonds and communal interaction – it is instead representing the perspectives presented in the current academic debate over civic engagement and social bonds. A large amount of older but yet interesting literature on the same area in many ways are therefore missing. For example, Soren Kierkegaard wrote about *the faith in the "absent" modern god* and George Campbell wrote about *trust and faith* 150 years before James Coleman and Robert Putnam "reintroduced" the same basic ideas. However, Kant, Cicero and even Aristotle had even long before that discussed the same issues.

Robert Dahl (2001) defines democracy ideally as a "political system designed for citizens of a state who are willing to treat one another, for political purposes, as *political* equals" (p. 135). The key question is how we define *political equals*: is it only referring to an equal status on Election Day and in formal political

institutions? Dahl argues that democracy cannot be limited to only institutional arrangements:

> The end of a democratic country cannot depend on its constitutional systems for the preservation of its liberties. It can depend only on the beliefs and cultures shared by its political, legal, and cultural elites and by the citizens to whom these elites are responsive. (Dahl, 2001, p. 99)

This essay advances a thesis that shares Dahl's concern for a healthy political culture. However, I disagree with Dahl's focus on the societal elite because political power is strongly related to the ability to define concepts, reason, and ultimately the way people perceive the world. Political equality needs to be extended to the social interactions taking place in the public sphere. Democracy requires that all citizens have a voice in the process of defining concepts, categories, reason, and ultimately the truth.

This interactional approach to democracy breaks with the assumption that official political institutions, the Presidency for example, are the most important part of the democratic process. Some political science literature, represented for example by Almond and Verba (1963), Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), and Putnam (1993 & 2000), instead focuses on the qualities and attitudes of the general public and the way that citizens interact. Chapter 2 of this essay reviews and discusses literature on democracy from this perspective. The focus is on how citizens relate to each other and their ability to work towards common goals based on common interests.

Michel Foucault (1980) describes how power and knowledge only exist in social relations. From that perspective, democracy is an issue of knowledge and more specifically the ability to define what is considered to be important knowledge. The process of reasoning depends on the utilization of certain knowledge – of what citizens define as relevant and irrelevant knowledge. Those capable of defining what is considered to be relevant knowledge therefore possess power in the reasoning process. A democratic society is, from that perspective, a society where all citizens are part of the process of defining knowledge and ultimately what is considered reason and truth. This process takes place in the daily social interaction between citizens. Their ability to create understanding through communication affects their ability to reach and work towards common solutions. The social interaction process therefore has to be inclusive since an exclusive process, where only some citizens participate, creates a reason and understanding that is identified by only a few and therefore is undemocratic in nature.

Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action connects democracy with communication and deliberation. He argues that democracy has to start with the social interactions taking place between citizens. Our ability to reach common reason based on common understanding is the base of all democratic activity. Habermas therefore perceives communication to be a tool to build understanding rather than to achieve persuasion; a communication that integrates citizens rather than segregate political winners from political losers.

An effective democracy had to be based on active support for the common norms and ideals that guide citizens' behavior; what Robert Coleman (1988) and later Robert Putnam (1993) refer to as social capital. Chapter 3 therefore connects Putnam's empirical research and ideas on social capital with Habermas' theory of Communicative Action. Putnam argues that the quality of a political culture is determined by the social capital in society and that this extends to the everyday interaction in communities. Social norms that rise out of an active public sphere are more democratic and effective than laws that are forced upon citizens by the political elite.

There are many aspects of the modern western culture that impact our civic engagement and social bonds. Time is, according to Gebser (1985), the most important feature of the modern western society. Gebser describes how the rise of individualism in the 15th century was tied to a quantification of time. Counting became especially important when currency arrived in communities and people were able to "count" their own gratification. Money made it possible to receive instant gratification instead of waiting for the gratification in heaven after death. The ability to receive quantifiable pre-death gratification made every minute important – suddenly an individual could get more gratification through working even more. Gebser (1985) calls this *temporal anxiety*: the feeling that it is always possible to squeeze more out of every minute of your life. Individualism had prevailed and in the middle of it were the quantifiable notions of money and especially time.

The pursuit of efficiency in modern western society stands in conflict with an inclusive democracy based on communication and broad societal interaction. Chapter 4 discusses temporal obstacles to an inclusive communicative democracy. An obvious question is whether citizens are willing to take their time and discuss political matters on a daily basis. However, the major challenge to an inclusive democracy is the constant pursuit of "saving time" in different social interactive situations. Rules, regulations, and practices in the modern society are systematically set up in a way in which everything is predetermined and there is no need for any communication that allows for any common reason and understanding. In other words, the temporal anxiety in the modern society, steer us towards less social interaction where there is less opportunity to find the common understanding and reason necessary for a strong and inclusive democracy.

Traditions and status are temporal extensions. Traditions obviously relate to the past while status is an attempt to extend former accomplishments to the present and the future. They are perceived to be symbols of legitimacy and therefore tend to reduce the "need" for deliberation, which have clear democratic implications. Chapter 4 therefore extends the analysis of time and democracy to include historical references, traditions, and status.

The concluding chapter extends the issue of communication and social interaction in society beyond the direct issue of political democracy. What happens to a society where we don't have to communicate and interact? Are we

decreasing our ability to understand each other? Is a society with less communication and interaction necessarily a more efficient society?

Democracy, Involvement, and Power

> *If citizens are unable to enjoy the conditions of 'effective participation' and 'enlightened understanding', then it is unlikely that the marginalization of large categories of citizens in the democratic process will ever be overcome, nor that the vicious circles of limited or non-participation will be broken. If the 'final control' of the 'political agenda' is out of the hands of the citizens, then 'rule by the people' will exist largely in name only.*
>
> *David Held, 1987, p. 278*

Democracy is generally defined as *rule by the people*, which effectively means that the "people" should posses power over the political process. It is hard to see how this would be possible if the "people" were not actively involved in the political process. The "people" could theoretically chose to leave the everyday practice in the political *process* in the hands of a societal elite but that would effectively mean that the "people" also leave the political *power* in the hands of the same societal elite. That kind of system looks more like an oligarchy or technocracy where a few elevated citizens decide upon all major definitions and set the political agenda.

A broad, inclusive, and strong public sphere is therefore a requirement for the implementation of *rule by the people*. Broad political involvement has turned out to be a major struggle in many western democracies. This chapter presents a perspective where the focus is on social interaction rather than large public institutions – where political involvement includes more than just the participation

in direct electoral activities. However, this chapter starts where contemporary discussions regarding political involvement often start: with a focus on education and rational choices.

Plenty of attention has been given to low levels of civic engagement in America and especially the low voter-turnout in the last 30 years. The fact that only about 50% of eligible voters vote in Presidential elections[4] (and often even fewer in other elections) raises concerns regarding the strength of one of the oldest and largest modern democracies in the world. Even more concerning is the low level of political participation among young citizens[5] (ages 18-24); the group of people that theoretically should be most affected by important political issues like the future of social security, the war in Iraq, and environmental issues.

A recent report completed by the *National Conference of State Legislatures*, the *Center on Congress at Indiana University*, and the *Center for Civic Education* states that young people "do not understand the ideals of citizenship, they are disengaged from the political process, they lack the knowledge necessary for effective self-government, and their appreciation and support of American democracy is limited"(Kurtz et al, 2003). The report suggests that more mandatory civics and government classes focusing on the structure and mechanics of political institutions could help solve this problem.

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[4] 59.6 percent of eligible voters voted in the 2004 presidential election, which is the highest number since the 1968 presidential election. (Source: www.fairvote.org)

Deliberative democracy scholars, like James Bohman (1997) and Joshua Cohen (1986), apply a different perspective to the evaluation of the modern democracy. They instead focus on the deliberation taking place ahead of the formal decisions – from the *quantity* of people participating to the *quality* of the participation and the attitudes that citizens bring to the political process. Some scholars claim that American citizens are socialized to apply a passive "watch-dog" role where they do not need to be active citizens, only "potentially active citizens" who interfere when things get out of control (Almond & Verba, 1963; Conover & Searing, 2000). A deliberative democracy, on the other hand, is assumed to create rational and therefore better political decisions as well as create a more autonomous public sphere. Citizens are expected to actively participate in political deliberation and comprehend the importance and reasoning behind each decision and thus receive a greater interest in the political governing process.

An important question is whether the U.S. public is capable of participating on the levels required for a strong[6] deliberative democracy. Robert Putnam relates this question to a wide range of social scientists (for example Ferdinand Tönnies,

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[5] 32.4 percent of citizens ages 18-25 voted in the 1996 presidential election. (Source: www.fairvote.org)

[6] Benjamin Barber (1984) uses the terms strong and weak democracy when describing the difference between a democracy in which citizens only participate out of their own narrow self-interest (weak democracy) and a democracy in which citizens recognize that they have the power to govern themselves with common interests. A representative democracy is therefore always weak according to Barber since it starts with the assumption that a few politicians know what is best for all other citizens; it is a system in which citizens loose their political autonomy.

Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel) arguing that "the decay of community bonds is inevitable in modernizing societies and that institutions must be created to fill the void" (Putnam & Goss, 2002, p.14). That is, modern, primarily urban, societies generally lack the bonds that come with extensive human interaction; citizens are less united and therefore create a weaker public sphere.

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) summarize their research on voluntary civic activity in American politics by stating that "the public's voice is often loud, sometimes clear, but rarely equal" (p. 509). The relationships between political participation and age, income, and educational levels (all statistically positive) are well documented. Anglo Americans generally participate more than African Americans but the relationship is the opposite if one controls for economic factors (Verba & Nie, 1972). Women voted in lower numbers than men until the 1970's but this trend was reversed starting with the 1980 election (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Research also suggests that citizens that are settled geographically (controlling for voter registration) and socially are more likely to participate in the political process as are people attending a church on a regular basis (Wolfing & Rosenstone, 1980; Shearer, Morris & Doppelt, 1998; & Watters, 1997).

The mechanisms behind the above relationships are not always as clear. Some scholars focus on educational aspects – arguing that education creates interest and ultimately participation (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1989). However, Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry (1996) argue that the increasing general educational levels in the

U.S. during the last 50 years have not been followed by an increase in the political participation levels.

Rational choice scholars like Anthony Downs (1957) explain voting behavior according to a cost-benefit analysis. The government, as represented by politicians, tries to maximize the political support just like consumers and producers in the market economy try to maximize their gains through the application of exchange-theory.

> It [government] carries out those acts of spending which gain the most votes by means of those acts of financing which lose the fewest votes. In other words, expenditures are increased until the vote-gain of the marginal dollar spent equals the vote-loss of the marginal dollar financed (p. 52).

Voters from the same perspective would vote for a candidate if their perceived rewards from voting were higher than the costs of voting.[7] Rational choice theories applied to voting and political participation therefore end up with a ratio between two important variables in the modern western society: *status* (material benefits allow us to increase our relative status in society) and *time*. The cost of voting is primarily related to the time it takes to gather political information as well as the time it takes to physically vote. The direct material benefits of voting are on the other hand generally very limited considering the minimum impact the single average vote has on an election. The investment in time and payback in

[7] Thomas Frank (2004) effectively (and humorously) disproves the notion that citizens make "rational" choices based on their material interests in *What's the Matter With Kansas?* Frank claims that many voters in Kansas, as well as many other states, vote against their own material interest when voting Republican. Values and emotional connections drive voting behavior according to Frank.

material benefits do not come close to the same ratio as it does for most professional occupations and it therefore seems very irrational for most people to vote. For example, voters in Cleveland had to wait up to 10 hours in line in order to cast a vote in the 2004 Presidential election and all they received in exchange was a sticker stating that they had voted. The benefits of voting increase if one considers the emotional benefits from conforming to the cultural norm stipulating a duty to vote; people regard themselves as good citizens if they vote.

However, the same cost/benefit ratio increases drastically if one expands the notion of political participation to *financial contributions*, *volunteering on political campaigns*, and *contacting political representatives*. But this is only the case for the citizens possessing the right societal status as for example determined by educational practices:

> The number of good seats is fixed. Rather, education can change only the composition of the population that is at or near the top of the rank. In the zero-sum game of political engagement, gains in proximity to the social and political center of society by one individual or group means a necessary loss of access to another.
> Education, however, does not create inequality. Inequality of political access is inherent in the competition for what is invariably a scarce resource." (Nie et al, 1996, p. 188)

People therefore pursue an education for a simple reason:

> Individual citizens attempt to attain as much education as they can [rather than civic values] because they desire more challenging and prestigious careers, greater wealth, more desirable mates, socially advantaged organizational positions, and perhaps even greater political influence. Attaining more education than those with whom the individual competes is the most effective way to attain the greatest amount of these scarce goods. (Nie et al, 1996, p. 195)

In other words, education is from that perspective not a part of the process of cultivating democratic values and broader political involvement – it is a tool for the enhancement of social status.

Verba et al. (1995) identify education as the key factor in developing political participation skills because it is "training workers, preparing citizens, and transmitting social class around generations. And in all three capacities – not only in transmitting social class – educational differences beget participatory inequalities" (p. 514). Political participation is an individual investment; it is an activity closely connected to social reproduction where economically advantaged citizens invest time and money in politics to keep their economic advantages, which allows them (and their children) to invest time and money in future political campaigns.

Murrer and Sawhill (1998) provide empirical support for this theory: the economic and social mobilities are decreasing in the U.S. and the educational process is an important reason for this. In other words, a better-educated citizenry would probably have a lot of positive societal effects and some of them may involve the political sphere, but the educational process, as it is structured today, does not seem to foster more political involvement among large groups of citizens. Education is instead generally regarded as a tool for status enhancement and therefore effectively separates rather connects citizens – it helps appointing the citizens whom receive exclusive access to the political process. The rest of the

chapter is instead focusing on the democratic aspects of the creation of communal definitions and values.

The Importance and Complexity of Definitions and Values

Verba et al. (1995) rate financial contributions to political campaigns as the most influential yet least equal form of political participation. The negative impact of financial contributions to the political process has been a major focus in the debate over political cynicism during the last 10-15 years. It is commonly argued that the impact of financial contributions to politicians and political parties has undermined the public's confidence and willingness to take part in the political process. The McCain-Feingold bill was an attempt to solve some of these problems. Yet, few of the politicians and political analysts in Washington believed that the McCain-Feingold bill would solve this problem in its entirety; it was widely believed that the financial contributions would find their way around the restrictions. The bill, for example, restricted the financial contributions to political election campaigns ahead of elections but did not restrict contributions after the election. President Bush, for example, expected to raise $ 40 million from the private sector to pay for his inaugural ceremonies and it would be naïve to believe that the contributors did not expect any political favors in return for their contributions.

A common misperception in the debate regarding financial contributions to the political process is that *money is the problem*; that things will get better as soon as financial contributions are outlawed. However, money has no agency; it cannot

act or communicate by itself since it is just a human instrument that enables humans to exchange values and ultimately status. Blaming money for the shortcomings of the political process is like blaming the neighbor's trumpet rather than the neighbor for the noise that comes out of the neighbor's apartment during the early morning hours.

The source of the shortcomings of the political process is not the instrument itself but rather the individual citizen's obsession with status, which triumphs almost any other cultural value (like equality). Individuals are cultivated from an early age to compete for status and recognition, and some individuals are willing to engage in more or less corruptive behavior in order to receive advantages in the competition for higher status. Institutional restrictions on financial contributions to political actors have little direct[8] effect as long as individuals set a high priority to the advancement of their own status compared to the norms condemning the same kind of behavior. A similar historical example was when Protestants and Catholics in 19th century Europe set different priorities to humanistic and status enhancing activities; Catholics prioritized social relationships whereas Protestants were more concerned with the productivity aspects related to time (Max Weber, 1958). Weber traces these value differences back to the structure and teachings of Catholicism and Calvinism but it is still ultimately the priority that we set to

[8] The effects of institutional restrictions on political financial contributions may be more indirect in the sense that it could help redefine cultural norms. That is, laws restricting financial contributions may stop some contributions in the short run but the main impact appears if it contributes to long-term cultural changes.

different values that guides our motives and actions. Weber also related the specific (work) ethic of Protestants back to what Robert Putnam 90 years later defined as *social capital*. Punctuality enabled people to trust each other and therefore lend each other the material resources necessary for economic development.[9]

Another common problem related to political participation is the use of absolute definitions of important concepts like democracy and democratic behavior. That is, members of the societal elite, such as academic scholars and politicians, analyze political behavior based on what they perceive to be an absolute definition of specific concepts regardless of how the broader public defines the same concepts. Different subjective definitions of concepts should not be considered irrelevant since they most likely affect the subject's motives and ultimately her actions; the way we define things is an extension of our values. American legal scholars generally do not consider financial contributions to political representatives to be corruption since there are no explicit favors attached to the financial contribution; from their perspective, the definition of corruption does not include implicit expectations. However, that does not mean that a large part of the U.S. public does not consider the same financial contributions to be corruptive and therefore receives a less favorable view of the political process. The societal elite and parts of the broader public simply do not perceive things in the same way due

[9] Economist Francis Fukoyama (1980) described the relationship between trust and economic development before Putnam attributed the same relationship to the

to differences in values and definitions. James MacGregor Burns experienced a similar type of problem when interacting with a poor family in Mexico City:

> What struck me the most was the sheer impenetrability of their lives. Nothing – government, business, school, church – seemed to connect with them. This profound isolation from the main currents of society, I believe, as much as material privation, defines the world's poor, most of whom are worse off than the Sanchez family members were. Can *anything* reach them? Only the kind of leadership that would enter into their lives, not to preach to them or placate them but to *connect* with them on their terms, as the initial action in helping them realize their human potential. (Burns, 2003, p. 230)

The average US citizen, who possesses a very limited amount of political knowledge, starts his or her political reasoning from a specific value base (Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991); political opinions from that perspective represent values rather than an "objective" or "rational" substantive evaluation. Burns come to the same conclusion:

> Public values are the most powerful of principles because they represent the most broadly relevant, deeply felt, longest lasting, morally grounded commitments humankind can make. They are actually or potentially powerful sources. Public values such as liberty, justice, equality, happiness that have endured, flourished, and evolved over centuries, that are based in human wants and needs, that dominate people's hopes and fears and expectations, that deeply influence their social and political attitudes and shape much of their day-to-day behavior – ultimately such values have a huge causal effect. (Burns, 2003, pp. 205-206)

Values and definitions therefore affect the way we perceive the world around us; a person's perception of the current society is, for example, dependent on how she defines fairness. The idea (ideology) that it is possible to determine an absolute evaluation to every communicative situation is not only troubling but

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economic developments in southern and northern Italy.

also dictatorial. *You are only allowed to use the definition that leads to the conclusion that the U.S. society is a fair society; your perception of what is going on in the U.S. society is therefore not only wrong but also unacceptable.* Our values and definitions come from our cultivation and socialization process as well as our individual experiences and are therefore highly subjective yet inescapable; we can only make sense of a situation from our own subjective perspective. I have not shared your experiences and cultivation process and therefore cannot see the situation from your perspective, let alone from some kind of objective perspective independent of anyone's individual experiences. Eric Kramer (2004) describes the political consequences of this in the following way:

> What if we read history from the point-of-view of the horse, or slaves, or women? What if we read the story of the U.S. Viet Nam War from the point-of-view of a Saigon prostitute or her half African-American child? It will be a very different story than that offered by the Pentagon. Is it therefore wrong? Decidedly not. Instead, reality is suddenly exposed as complex, with infinite perspectives all of which are equally "true" and "false," sometimes contradictory. This discursive move violates the authority of the "official" or original text allowing for a whole new way of seeing and telling the story. It also violates the sacred law of modernity which is the law of non-contradiction and strictly defined truth. Polycentric insight erases the modern line between a singular, self-contained and fixed truth, and falsehood. As one can imagine, it tends to upset those in authority, who want "the story," reality, to be seen only from their perspective (Kramer, 2004, p. 106).

Absolute interpretations are sometimes credited to both academic scholars trying to establish some kind of objective interpretation and to religious Christian representatives advancing a religious agenda, but it is important to highlight the difference between the two. Social scientists claiming that only one objective

interpretation exists tend to assume that all other interpretations are biased and therefore invalid; there is no alternative to the objective interpretation. Christian leaders, on the other hand, generally emphasize that we have a choice: we can either see the world from a Christian perspective or from a non-Christian perspective – that is, we can see the world *with* or *without* Christian values as the value-base for our perception.[10] The former is regarded as a better perspective but it can only be better if an alternative perspective actually exists. There are still many religious leaders claiming that the religious perspective represents the only truth, just as some social scientists claim that their "objective" observations represent the only truth, but if something represents the "Truth" then it effectively means that everything else does not exist and that the one and only "Truth" lacks a relative standing.

However, culture, just like mechanical causes or money, does not have the power to act; it has no agency to act by itself but instead acts through people. People act on motives – cultures do not. A culture helps us put a specific action into context, or rather: culture *is* the context (Geertz, 1973). Culture does not tell us *how* to do things – it tries to explain *why* we do things. People, in places where punctuality and time-efficiency is not as important as it is in New York and Boston, still know how to figure out what time it is; they just do not pay the same attention to it. A culture therefore helps us understand the *what* and the *why* of

[10] See for example John 1: 35-51 in which John describes how John the Baptist invites

values, but that is not to say that culture is the *cause* and accurately *predicts* specific actions. It is the members of the culture through their social interaction that determine the *what* and the *why* of the future, which effectively means that it constantly changes.

The conflict between the intent of achieving absolute interpretations and the intent of recognizing multiple perspectives was exemplified during the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens. Europeans tend to believe that norms and standards change with trends taking place over long periods of time; what happened 3000 or even 100 years ago should not be evaluated based on contemporary norms and standards.

Some American TV viewers complained about the nudity in the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games, which prompted the FCC to consider punishing NBC for airing indecency. The nudity involved actors portraying statues from ancient Greece; a time in which nudity was common both within and outside athletic events. However, some American viewers (at least partly supported by the FCC) implied that standards of indecency are absolute and eternal independent of context. The Chief of the Athens games, Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki disagreed:

> If NBC is punished for airing our opening ceremonies – which in reality depicted Greek contributions to civilization – it would, in effect, label a presentation of our culture on your airwaves as indecent. . . . As Americans surely are aware, there is great hostility in the world today to cultural domination in which a single value system created elsewhere diminishes

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people to come and meet Jesus and discover a new perspective of the world.

> and degrades local cultures (The Norman Transcript, 01-20-05, B:1 & USA Today, 01-18-05, p. C:1)

The complexity and importance of definitions puzzle the legal system, which relies on firm definitions in order to create the highest possible reliability and predictability. What constitutes a crime is dependent on the definition of each criminal offense, which is supposed to be independent of contexts such as time and culture. For example, Justice Stewart in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (1964) defined (or did not define) obscenity in the following way: "I shall not today attempt further to define [hard-core pornography] . . . . But I know it when I see it." In other words, Justice Stewart could only recognize hard-core pornography based on his own subjective perspective which was dependent on his values.

This is not exclusively a legal or social scientific phenomenon. Peter Medawar, Noble Prize winner in Medicine 1960, claims that "there is no such thing as unprejudiced observation." Everything we do, including scientific activity, is based on what Hans-Georg Gadamer refers to as *enabling* or *blind prejudice*. It is impossible to not base our decisions and actions on what we have been exposed to earlier in life. Medawar asks how "a mere act of mind lead to the discovery of new information? It would violate a law as fundamental as the law of conservation of information" (Medawar, 1964).

This essay is based on the assumption that multiple perspectives exist; that definitions and values are not absolute in the sense that everyone automatically shares the same definitions and values when they are trying to make sense of what

happens around them. This does not mean that anything goes – that we can use whatever definition we find convenient at the time. It rather speaks to the necessity of examining, discussing, and deliberating about the values that affect how we perceive the world around us. Michel Foucault[11] claims that truth is not in any way universal but rather a local product of commonly accepted norms.[12] Truth in one society is different from truth in another society because "the types of discourse which it [each society] accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements" (1980, p. 131) are communal rather than universal.

It is therefore impossible to discover any eternal truth that holds against all contextual considerations. People are constantly battling about what should be considered the truth based on what they consider to be logical and reasonable applications of knowledge and language.

> There is a battle 'for truth', or at least 'around truth' – it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true', it being understood also that it's not a matter of a battle 'on behalf of the truth' but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays. (Foucault, 1980, p. 132)

[11] Foucault constantly refers to Nietzsche's ideas regarding truth and knowledge as for example expressed in the Gay Science.

[12] However, Foucault's use of the term "truth" is puzzling. Jean Paul Sartre, for example, claims that is hard to claim that there is no universal but yet communal truth and that the only reasonable conclusion therefore should be that the only truth is that there is no truth (Bernstein, 1983).

Foucault therefore describes truth and knowledge in terms of a regime, "systems of power which produce and sustain itself" (1980, p. 133). Truth is never independent of power – it is produced within powerful regimes. Evelyn Fox Keller (1999) regards the attempt to portray science as a mirror of nature as an attempt to gain societal authority. A person who claims that she knows the absolute truth is "unassailable. But if truth is relative, if science is divorced from nature and married instead to culture (or "interests"), then the privileged status of that authority is fatally undermined" (p. 239). Democracy from that perspective is ultimately an issue of how we define concepts, reason and truth – whether every citizen has the opportunity to actively and equally participate in what Wittgenstein described as the social construction of knowledge. The important matter is therefore not the content of knowledge but rather how knowledge is "produced" (metaknowledge). Martin Kylhammar and Jean-Francois Battail relate to this issue in the following way:

> How do we combine a vision of equal participation with power resting on knowledge? Could a society based on knowledge be a society for everyone, doesn't it risk excluding those who can't or doesn't want to gain reflective knowledge or metaknowledge? This is a genuine, lasting, and increasingly important problem for the modern society. We are ignoring the reality if we refuse to face that dilemma. (Kylhammar & Battail, 2003, p. 57)

The next chapter addresses this problem and presents a thesis holding that the everyday social interaction among all members of society is the key to a strong democracy. The focus needs to move away from the societal elite to the broad public – from formal official deliberation to informal everyday interaction. Only

through broad social interaction can we identify generally accepted common reason; common agreements upon what constitute a good argument and therefore good policies.

Deliberation in the Public Sphere

> *[I]n any political election, even by universal suffrage, the voter is under an absolute moral obligation to consider the interests of the public, not his private advantage, and give his vote to the best of his judgment, exactly as he were bound to do if he were the sole voter, and the election dependent on him alone.*
>
> *John Stuart Mill, 1978, p. 208*

Mill's description of a democracy guided by common rather than private interest was nothing new to Europe in 1862. Rousseau in *The Social Contract* (1968) outlined a more radical version of the same idea. Alexis de Tocqueville (1990) claimed that 19th century American democracy was guided by a "self-interest properly understood;" (p.526) – a self-interest that recognizes that communal progress is necessary for private progress. The idea that private interest is dependent on communal interest and therefore should guide political behavior is also prevalent in the literature on deliberative democracy.

Deliberative democracy has been examined in a wide range of primarily theoretical literature. Many scholars within different fields (Political Science, Philosophy, Communication, etc.) have attempted to present a normative picture of democracy that satisfies our preferences for effective governing with egalitarian democratic procedures. Citizens are expected to actively participate in the whole

decision-making process (especially the deliberation preceding the decision) with their common interest rather then a narrow pursuit of self-interest in mind. They are supposed to use and be persuaded by reason rather than "manipulative, coercive, or emotive appeals"; and they are supposed to honor "political equality of all members of the citizenry" rather than set themselves on top of the political process (Valadez, 2001, pp. 31-32).

Less literature is devoted to examining the practical application of deliberative democracy (Ryfe, 2002); we seem to know how we ideally like to proceed but have little evidence for whether it actually works. However, there is an underlying recognition in a lot of the literature on deliberative democracy that there is a conflict between the *aspirational* and the *attainable;* how much and what kind of participation can we possibly expect from the public? A similar source of conflict involves the nature of the consent necessary for a decision to be effectively implemented yet legitimate. Joshua Cohen (1986) and David Estlund (1997), for example, argue that we cannot expect, nor is it desirable, to achieve full epistemic consensus as described by Rousseau in *The Social Contract*.[13] Yet, Cohen and Estlund do not find a simple agreement on the nature of political procedures epistemic enough but instead propose a combination of epistemic proceduralism

[13] Zev Trachtenberg (1993), for example, argues that Rousseau outlines an ideal political system while presenting contradictive sets of skills necessary to make this kind of system work. Rousseau prescribes active citizens taking part in a debate about what constitutes the common good. However, at the same time, he fears the implementation process and therefore ends up arguing for a citizenry lacking critical evaluation skills.

that “requires obedience, not any surrender of moral judgment” (Estlund, 1997, p. 198). The individual citizen needs to understand that it is in her best interest to respect a decision for the general progression of society. Opposing a majority decision would violate the core principle of an epistemic democracy: the notion that the deliberative process creates the best decision as it is manifested in a majority decision.

Henry Richardson (1997) argues that an effective deliberative democracy requires shared democratic intentions. Citizens need to be committed to the same outcome, which is only possible through rigorous communication. Jürgen Habermas presents a normative version of democracy based on deliberative practices as part of his larger theory of C*ommunicative Action* (1984). Habermas argues that people are able to coordinate their social actions through the institution of communication – that is, communication is the foundation of all social activity. Reason is therefore based on communication; we understand each other and act according to the understanding that occurs through the exchange of communicative symbols. Reason, just like grammar, could not be reduced to any form of probability model or universal and absolute rules – it is determined and learned through interaction.[14]

Habermas is therefore not a conservative; he recognizes that the categories and criteria used to determine the truth are human inventions rather than naturally

[14] See also Noam Chomsky’s (1959) response to B.F. Skinner’s attempt to systemize verbal behavior.

occurring phenomena. However, he still refuses to surrender to the post-modern notion that all perspectives are equally rational. Habermas claims that the same form of understanding that occurs between two interacting citizens can be extended to the public sphere; citizens can agree upon what constitutes *reason* and ultimately the *common good* as well as the *truth* through communicative activities.

> Communicative reason differs from practical reason first and foremost in that it is no longer ascribed to the individual actor or to a macrosubject at the level of the state or the whole society. Rather, what makes communicative reason possible is the linguistic medium through which interactions are woven together and forms of life are structured. This rationality is inscribed in the linguistic telos of mutual understanding and forms an ensemble of conditions that both enable and limit. Whoever makes use of a natural language in order to come to an understanding with an addressee about something in the world is required to take a performative attitude and commit herself to certain presuppositions. In seeking to reach an understanding, natural-language users must assume, among other things, that the participants pursue their illocutionary goals without reservations, that they tie their agreement to the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims, and that they are ready to take on the obligations resulting form consensus and relevant for further interaction. (Habermas, 1998, p. 3-4)

The societal elite has traditionally dominated the communicative process. This has resulted in an elitist version of reason and truth and therefore an oligarchy rather than a democracy. The ultimate communication in the public sphere should therefore be free from references to status and tradition; it assumes that all citizens actively participate in the public sphere on an equal basis. Here, Habermas is influenced by Hans-George Gadamer (1955) and his description of a *genuine conversation*: a conversation in which participants communicate to produce something new and not just reproduce what already exists in their minds. It is a

conversation in which participants communicate to connect in order to create something communal rather than persuade to advance their own self-interest.

From that perspective, reason is inherently inclusive and egalitarian; it evolves directly from the interaction between citizens of equal status pursuing communal rather than individual interests. Citizens both learn and agree upon what is considered good reason through their communicative interaction. Truth and reason are neither natural nor absolute and cannot be explored through individual thinking processes as prescribed by Plato. Rather, truth and reason are social and identified communally when different perspectives are allowed to connect through communication. One person may hypothetically be able to identify an objective and absolute truth but he or she is still dependent on communal definitions and categorizations in order to describe the objective truth to the rest of the world. In other words, a shared truth, regardless of whether it is objective or communal in nature, is dependent on communal communicative structures. An extension of the idea that truth and reason are communal in nature is that only those who participate in the interaction in a specific society know what constitutes good reason – the legitimacy that comes with reason is not a product of formal institutions; it is a product of interaction.[15]

[15] "Since the days of Max Weber this [researchers' refrain from any systematic judgment] has been regarded as a virtue; however, even if one adopts this interpretation, the suspicion remains that legitimacy, the belief in legitimacy, and the willingness to comply with motivation through "good reasons." But whether reasons are "good reasons" can be ascertained only in the performative attitude of a *participant* in argumentation, and not through the neutral *observation* of what

C.P. Snow argues in *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (1961) that natural scientists and traditional conservative intellectuals at British universities do not understand each other due to a lack of interaction. Two distinct cultures exist within the British academic world and these two groups have a hard time finding common ground. Each side fails to understand the other side's perspective and therefore do not agree upon what constitutes good academic activity. The solution to this, according to Snow, is to have the two groups interact more and therefore learn to work towards common goals.

Snow's analysis is limited to the academic community but it speaks to the importance of social interaction in society in general. If different kinds of academic intellectuals do not even understand each other due to a lack of interaction, then what are the prospects of having "ordinary" citizens understand academic intellectuals and agree upon what constitutes good reasoning? There has to be a strong and inclusive public sphere where all members of all cultures and groups learn to understand each other through broad social interaction.

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this or that participant in a discourse holds to be good reasons" (Habermas, 1979, p. 200).

What constitutes reason and legitimacy is important to the conceptualization of democracy and Habermas claims that democracy cannot be defined in terms of procedures because then "questions of democratization can be treated as what they are: as organizational questions. For it then depends on the concrete social and political conditions, on scopes of disposition, on information, and so forth, which types of organization and which mechanisms are in each case better suited to bring about procedurally legitimate decisions and institutions. . . Democratization can not mean an a priori preference for a specific type of organization, for example, for so-called direct democracy" (Habermas, 1979, p. 186).

The nature of communication is crucial to this issue. Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver (1949) have (unfortunately[16]) been associated with the *process perspective* of communication where a sender sends a message to a receiver. This kind of communication does not produce any meaning or ideas, it only transfers ideas. John Fiske argues that this simplistic perspective may have a few advantages but that it "sees communication as a determinant, and improving communication as a way of increasing social control" (Fiske, 1982, p. 157). Fiske prefers the *semiotic perspective* of communication where meaning and culture is produced rather than imposed. This would also be the perspective that is closest to Habermas's (1984) *Theory of Communicative Action*.

Habermas summarizes his ideas in what he refers to as the *Ideal Speech Situation* with the following elements:

1. Each person participating in a rhetorical situation has the right both to express his or her ideas freely and to examine and criticize other's ideas.
2. There is no use of force or power; reason rather than status determines the strength of an argument.
3. Arguments based on traditions (which tend to superimpose the past onto the present) need to be exposed. That is, something is not necessarily reasonable only because it is the way things traditionally have been done.

[16] Claude Shannon was working for a telephone company and Warren Weaver was professor of Mathematics. They later claimed that their structural modal for communication never was intended to function in the complexity that surrounds general human communication.

4. Consensus (or an adherence of mind) between the members of the rhetorical situation is necessary in order to determine the “truth”.

A democratic arrangement is therefore one in which the public has the opportunity (including time) to freely hear and debate many different perspectives and proposals – where reason grows out of inclusive deliberation. Democracy is enhanced when the public becomes more autonomous in their pursuit of reason – when possible restrictions (coercion, traditions, status, etc.) in the deliberative process are reduced. This does not mean that an argument based on authority or tradition is automatically disqualified since it is impossible to escape our past and our societal structure. It rather speaks to the necessity to constantly and critically evaluate the actual reason that is attached to arguments connected to authority and traditions. Reason is, from that perspective, based in present time and not the traditions and hierarchies that are representations of the past.

Habermas argues that *techne* (academic knowledge and technology) does not constitute *praxis* and he therefore objects to any form of elitist version of democracy. Scientists and other “*techno*crats” are important in society but Habermas strongly rejects the elevated status of scientists as described by positivists like August Comte. The power to define good policies should not be limited to “technocrats”; an inclusive deliberative process in the public sphere ultimately determines what constitutes good policies. In fact, it may be impossible to build common reason when all values and definitions are determined by one exclusive group in the public sphere (like academic scholars). Other members of

the public sphere may not understand and therefore may not recognize the merit of an argument or an idea if they do not agree upon the values and definitions behind the argument.[17]

Habermas has been criticized for presenting a version of authority that is too negative in nature, as if authority could not have any positive influence on a group.[18] What Habermas appears to fear the most is the use of authority to force specific outcomes but also the belief that specific knowledge could be independent of virtue. Goldman (1980) argues that experts within narrow areas (technocrats) tend to look at professional issues from an isolated perspective as if anything taking place in their specific area is independent of wider social judgments and human interests. Having only technocrats dominating the deliberative process is therefore dangerous since it could produce decisions contradicting each other and that are independent of what citizens collectively determine to be good *praxis*.

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[17] Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984) argues that knowledge is anything but absolute in nature. What is considered important knowledge in one context (time, place, etc.) may be considered useless in another. Lyotard questions the notion of academic knowledge that is generally unknown to the public: what is the use of knowledge when very few understand it and it still greatly affects highly politically relevant decisions? That kind of knowledge may give more political power to social scientists (technocrats) and less democratic autonomy to the public sphere.

[18] For example, should we consider Mahatma Gandhi's, Martin Luther King's, and Nelson Mandela's leaderships as negative? The general public would probably say no but Habermas is less interested in the political leadership on the highest level in society than in the leadership that takes place in the every-day-life of people in the public sphere.

Nietzsche (1974) discusses the elevated status of techne (scientific knowledge) in *The Gay Science* and argues that it primarily is a modern phenomenon:

> In antiquity the dignity and recognition of sciences were diminished by the fact that even her most zealous disciples placed the striving for *virtue* first, and only felt that knowledge had received the highest praise when one celebrated it as the best means to virtue. It is something new in history that knowledge wants to be more than a mere means. (p. 180)

Human autonomy and agency are challenged when we treat scientific knowledge as an absolute ideology. Why should people even bother with getting out of bed in the morning if scientific observations are elevated to a status in which everything is predetermined? There is nothing left to discuss and no room for values when scientific findings are treated as the one and only truth. Habermas argues that humans can communicate to agree but that the agreements must be based on more than mere scientific observations. The only eternal thing would be the conversation itself since we are constantly forced to apply new perspectives due to constant changes in our environment.

Habermas has also been criticized for proposing a political system that is impossible to fully implement; that the *Ideal Speech Situation* is far beyond what we can accomplish in any foreseeable future. Yet Page and Shapiro (1992) claim that the American public, as an aggregated collective, acts both rationally and according to the deliberative norms described by, for example, Habermas:

> The system does not require a set of identical, “omnicompetent” citizens, as one brand of democratic mythology seems to prescribe. Instead, some people specialize in policy. Researchers apply special knowledge and technique to produce policy-relevant information. Others – policy analysts, experts and commentators – gather and examine and test those results, put

> them together into coherent solutions to policy problems, and communicate them to each other and to the public. Thus ordinary citizens need not master intricacies of policy analysis, but can learn enough to form intelligent preferences simply by knowing whom to trust for reliable conclusions - assuming, of course, that trustworthy cue givers are available and that the information provided by them is sufficiently unbiased." (p. 365)

Page and Shapiro's notion of collective deliberative rationalism is a major "modification" of Habermas' ideas. Relying on academic technocrats for the bulk of all analysis (without any influence from the broader public) creates an environment in which policies may be based on status instead of reason. This is especially the case if we consider that "truth" can only be recognized through consensus building without the use of authority and force. Page and Shapiro also ignore the fact that broad deliberation increases the public's ability to actively support and implement a policy once they agree upon the reasons behind the policy. More importantly, Habermas claims that consensus can only grow out of conflict – it is the reason which grows out of conflicting perspectives and arguments that enables an effective implementation. Suppressing conflict by, for example, only giving voice to the perspectives of experts does not lead to faith in the actual reason but rather to faith in the expert.

However, Habermas argues that his theory explains how we can build a *stronger* public sphere and a *more* democratic civic culture – we can always attempt to pursue broader societal understanding and better-supported decisions by adding people with additional perspectives and information to a speech situation. The *Ideal Speech Situation* is therefore *aspirational* rather than *utopian.*

The idea that one single policy could make society perfect is from a Habermasian perspective absurd. Many policies pointing in the same direction may help change the cultural values that guide people's motives but only as part of a long-term cultivation process. Habermas is reconstructive in his approach; he believes that a democratic culture could be achieved through the cultivation of specific attitudes and values and that this requires support for institutions that foster political discourse. However, the cultivation process is not aimed at directly reconstructing specific absolute values; rather, it is aimed at directing citizens to actively participate in the public sphere while respecting the equal status of all members of the public sphere and, through the process of communication, determine the common values that direct societal interaction.

Habermas' idea therefore does not constitute a regular ideology[19]; it is a theory explaining how people build understanding, reciprocity, and norms through social interaction. Social interaction could be more or less democratic since democracy ultimately refers to the way people relate to each other in their daily interaction. That is, norms can be more or less democratic but norms are not given *to* us – they are created *by* us.

Let us, for example, assume that two people are about to pass each other on a sidewalk. The coordination of the passing process could lack any references to social norms, which would be a state of *anarchy* where the participants do not

[19] It could be labeled a meta-ideology since it prescribes a specific kind of interaction to every situation.

make any attempt to recognize the communal aspects of the passing event. The passing process could be characterized by status recognition; a *hierarchical* state in which one person is expected to clear the way so that the other person (with the higher status) does not have to make any adjustments. Finally, the passing process could also be guided by a common understanding of the norms guiding the interaction in a *democratic* way. Both persons could, for example, walk to the right of the sidewalk; in that case, they would recognize both the communal nature of the event and that they share an equal status. The norms guiding this form of democratic behavior stem from our social interaction – they are products of the communication that takes place on a daily basis. One person forcing another person to clear the way supports hierarchical rather than democratic interaction; people constantly make small decisions that have great effects on our social norms.

The above example could be extended to communication in the public sphere – the civil society. Social norms and directions are deliberated and determined in the public sphere, and it is an arena extending far beyond formal governmental institutions:

> What is meant by "civil society" today, in contrast to its usage in the Marxist tradition, no longer includes the economy as constituted by private law and steered through markets in labor, capital, and commodities. Rather, its institutional core comprises those nongovernmental and non-economic connections and voluntary associations that anchor the communication structures of the public sphere in the society component of the lifeworld. Civil society is composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations, and movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life spheres, distil and transmit such

> reactions in amplified form to the public sphere. The core of civil society comprises a network of associations that institutionalizes problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest inside the framework of the organized public sphere. (Habermas, 1998, p. 366)

However, there are forces in society that do not benefit from building a stronger public sphere; forces that do not like to see a more active, powerful, and democratic civil society. Some political actors (including some businesses) want to maintain a status quo in which political voices are unequal and where these actors enjoy special privileges and therefore have an incentive to fragmentize the public sphere. Here, Habermas receives supports from Neustadt in his analysis of political distrust in America:

> Deep distrust does serve the purposes of some participants in public policy, limiting action, diverting attention, feeding the permanent campaign. But the result is less capacity for reliable consensus-building and for coalition maintenance (Neustadt, 1997, p. 200)

Benjamin Barber (1984), although not agreeing with the normative aspects, describes a *pluralist democracy* in terms of "bargaining and exchange among free and equal individuals and groups, which pursue their private interests in a market setting governed by the social contract" (p. 143). Some scholars and theories work with the assumption that this kind of competition of interests is natural and that restricting competition is therefore negative. John Locke in the *Second Treatise of Government* (1980) assigned government the role of an umpire; government should make sure that citizens respect the basic rules of the competition but most of all respect the actual (material) outcome of the competition. Robert Dahl (1956)

in his contemporary pluralist model builds his version of democracy on competition between different societal interest groups.

However, the question of whether human competition is a product of *nature* or *nurture* is irrelevant to the question of whether a society *should* allow for, or even encourage competition between citizens. It appears natural for babies to slap, push, or even bite each other (or their parents) when someone resists their will. People have also through all ages (at least in western societies) enjoyed watching other people hit each other in one form or another (wrestling, boxing, football, hockey, etc.). Still, most western societies attempt to restrict fighting rather than encourage it; society does not encourage people to solve their differences and conflicts with physical fighting based on the premise that fighting is "natural" for humans.[20] In other words, competition, just like fighting, is a normative issue. Society may allow or even encourage it based on assumed positive effects and not because it is something that people cannot be cultivated to resist: it is an indication of a culture's hierarchy of values. It is ultimately an issue of praxis rather then techne.

Deliberation, Social Interaction, and Social Capital

The idea that a strong civil society is formed and maintained through citizen interaction in voluntary organization is essentially the same idea as advanced by

[20] Cicero introduced *"humanitas"* to the ancient Roman culture in order to distinguish well-cultivated citizens from barbarians. A *humane* society is from Cicero's perspective a society where people are taught to interact peacefully.

Robert Putnam in his analysis of civic life in Italy (1993) and America (2000). Putnam refers to the norms and trust that develop through civic interaction as *social capital;* a term earlier used in academic research by James Coleman. Coleman (1988) attempts to bridge two common social action perspectives: the social norm governed perspective and the maximizing utility (rational choice) perspective. He argues that people make choices, they have agency, but these choices are based on the perceived power of community norms: social capital.

> Just as physical capital and human capital facilitates productive activity, social capital does as well. For example, a group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish more than a comparable group without trustworthiness and trust. (Coleman, 1988, p. S101)

Coleman identifies three forms of social capital: (1) obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness: the credit that we owe each other; (2) information channels (communication): social relations and trust cannot develop without the potential for exchange of information, and; (3) norms and effective sanctions.

> A prescriptive norm within a collectivity that constitutes an especially important form of social capital is the norm that one should forgo self-interest and act in the interest of the collectivity. A norm of this sort, reinforced by social support, status, honor, and other rewards, is the social capital that builds young nations. (Coleman, 1988, p. S104)

This obviously relates back to Tocqueville's notion of "enlightened self-interest" as described in *Democracy in America* (1848). Robert Putnam argues

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Primatologist Desmond Morris (1985) argues that humans have succeeded as a

that social capital is strongly related to the concept of civic virtue but social capital is a communal institution that develops through social interaction:

> Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals –social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." The difference is that "social capital" calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital. (Putnam, 2000, p. 19)

In other words, Putnam and Coleman, just like Habermas, focus on the interaction between citizens rather than formal political rules and institutions. Democracy starts with the way that people relate to each other and can only be sustained through the bonds and common understanding that develop through social interaction.

Putnam (2000) argues that the lower levels of social interaction (in voluntary organizations for example) have caused a decrease in the social capital levels in the U.S.; that we have lost the foundation for a healthy democracy. People, for example, tend to bowl individually instead of in bowling leagues and individual private activities do not create the bonds that enable citizens to work together effectively in communal arrangements.[21]

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species because of our ability to communicate and cooperate.

[21] Putnam's analysis of social capital in the U.S. is based on his research on the development of social capital in Italy. He describes in *Making democracy work* (1993) how northern Italy developed strong political (and economic) institutions out of the trust and norms that developed in voluntary organizational activities. The people that interacted frequently in different organizations learned to trust

The ideas that Coleman and Putnam present on communal trust are nothing new to the scientific community. Steven Vaitkus (1990), for example, building on the work of George Herber Mead, claims that social order is totally dependent on trust but that trust develops without the ability to confirm motives and intentions. Eric Kramer (1992, p. 45) therefore concludes that cooperation and community "is the behavioral expression of integrality" where "integrality yields a sense that is neither temporal nor eternal" but rather an appreciation of what Martin Buber refers to as *the Other*. In other words, temporal perspectives are important to the issue of social trust (which also is the focus of the next chapter).

Anthony Giddens relates trust to time-space distanciation. "Because of its inherent connection with absence, trust is always bound up with modes of organising "reliable" interactions across time-space" (Giddens, 1990, p. 100-101). Trust in the pre-modern society was based on kinship, local community, religious cosmologies, and traditions where members of the society had relatively few but yet deep social encounters. Trust in the modern society is related to personal relationships of friendship, abstract systems and is future oriented. Giddens claims that especially the abstract expert systems require high levels of trust since it is impossible for the modern citizen to ignore the pronouncements of often-unknown experts.

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each other enough to work together in political institutions as well as in communal credit unions.

Putnam's theory of social capital has received plenty of attention both inside and outside the academic community. Levi (1996) argues that it is hard for social trust to develop in a situation of competition between citizens and that Putnam is therefore discrediting the role of government in the creation of trust. Governments that protect merit and property, but also help create an environment in which citizens are protected from the most brutal part of the competition, help facilitate trust. People can afford to trust each other once they know that their own success does not stand in direct conflict with someone else's success. Another critique of Putnam is that the mechanism in the theory is unclear: what is it about participation in voluntary organization that makes people trust each other? (See Brehm & Rahn, 1997 and Claibourne & Martin, 2000)

Alan Wolfe's (2002) critique of Putnam has a normative rather than a mechanical focus. Wolfe claims that Putnam's argument regarding the importance of civic participation is unclear about what civic participation is supposed to do for society: "to call for more democracy without raising the question of democracy for what is to leave morality out of the picture entirely." (p. 130)

What Brehm and Rahn, Claibourne and Martin as well as Wolfe are missing in their critiques of Putnam is that civic participation in an active public sphere, creates the same commonly agreed upon moral standards and norms that Wolfe claims are missing in society today. Active and inclusive social interaction creates meaning that people agree upon; people determine (inclusively) what is considered right or wrong; what makes a good argument, etc. An extension of this

is that less civic participation creates a moral decline; not because people 'objectively' behave more immorally but because there is less communal agreement upon what constitutes meaning and therefore, moral behavior. From the same perspective, the loss of morality in society is a result of increasing societal segregation where people spend less time together determining (often unconsciously) what constitutes reason and ultimately moral standards.

Those criticizing Putnam generally fail to fully recognize Habermas' theoretical framework[22] – the idea that communication and social interaction is necessary for the development of understanding, reason, and norms. We cannot reach common understanding regarding what constitutes meaning and norms unless we interact and communicate about these issues. It is impossible to trust other citizens unless there are expectations regarding specific behavior because trust involves actions that affirm expected behavior. It is therefore unlikely that social capital can only develop inside voluntary civic organizations since most social interaction takes part outside formal organizations. That is, all social interaction has an affect on the social capital levels in society. Putnam here distinguishes between the social capital formed in formal organizations *(formal social capital)* and social capital formed when citizens just happen to be in the same pub or in the same intramural

[22] Putnam's ideas regarding social capital (both in definition and function) are clearly related to Habermas' description of the public sphere, but Putnam seldom recognizes these similarities. However, Habermas, especially in his early work like *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society,* focuses a lot on the interaction in which 'serious'

basketball game *(informal social capital).* Both forms of social capital are important: we need to create understanding and bonds beyond those that we directly choose to interact with.

The concept of informal social capital is closely related to what Putnam refers to as *thin social capital:* "almost invisible filaments of social capital, such as the nodding acquaintance you have with the person you occasionally see waiting in line at the supermarket, or even a chance encounter with another person in an elevator" (Putnam & Ross, 2002, p. 10). What makes voluntary civic organizations so powerful is that they (at least they used to) have the ability to create *bridging social capital* (social capital bridging geographical and socioeconomic divisions) and therefore develop the bonds that support a unified public sphere.

A methodological reason for the focus on voluntary civic organizations is the ability to measure this kind of activity. It is harder to measure the spontaneous and/or non-organized interaction taking place in every day life. For example, David Ryfe (2002), when examining deliberation processes, focuses entirely on formal organizations with a specific purpose (like abortion or race) in which individuals self-select themselves. These kinds of formal organizations make it easier for the researcher to select a specific setting, but these settings also exclude those who do not actively seek a venue to deliberate about a specific issue, which

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intellectual discussions are taking place and fails to fully recognize 'ordinary' social interaction as a part of the public sphere.

generally are a great majority of the population. Deliberation needs to be inclusive, which requires the inclusion of non-formal settings, in order to avoid a divide between the minority that has a great interest in a specific subject and the majority that does not. Ryfe (2002) claims that small groups tend to work better, from a deliberative perspective, since they "are by nature more intimate and informal. Organizations that work with very small groups stress the necessity of maintaining group cohesion through moderation, reciprocity, and reflection" (p. 368). The best climate for deliberation therefore seems to be one in which people know and trust each other; where people dare to speak their mind and criticize other's opinions. Formality tends to segregate people; make them pay more attention to the rules than to the content of the deliberation. We therefore should not ignore but rather actively explore the informal social interaction taking place in our daily lives when studying the impact of deliberation and social capital.

Social Capital and Social Segregation

Social capital is a product of societal integration; it requires that citizens work together to create and enforce communal norms. Trust, for example, would not develop unless norms exist that are respected in everyday actions. However, the development of social capital has to extend beyond the local community in order to build a strong and unified democracy capable of dealing with broader societal problems.

Putnam (2000) recognizes that social capital in the U.S. is negatively correlated to economic inequalities. States with the highest levels of economic inequalities

(primarily in the South) also have the lowest levels of social capital, and the same states have historically experienced the highest levels of racial segregation. Gamarnikow and Green (2000) claim that social capital requires horizontal networks and relationships, and therefore works best in egalitarian communities. Those involved in specific networks tend to be from the same socioeconomic background and they learn to trust each other through a common understanding that other groups are not part of. Bellah (1996) relates to the same problem in his analysis of American individualism:

> Residential segregation is a fact of life in contemporary America. Even leaving aside the hypersegregation of urban ghettos, segregation by class arising from differential housing costs is becoming increasingly evident in suburban America. It is quite possible that in "getting involved" with one's neighborhood or even with one's suburban town one will never meet someone of a different race or class. One will not be exposed to the realities of life for people in circumstances different from one's own. One may even succumb to the natural human temptation to think that people who are different, particularly those lower in social status, are inferior. The anxious class does not want itself to be confused with the underclass. One of the least pleasant characteristics of the over class, including its lower echelons in the educated upper middle class, is that they do not want to associate with middle Americans, with "Joe Six-Pack", and others who lack the proper attributes. (p. xxiv)

In fact, many academic scholars assume that different cultural norms and values exist in different communities; that we do not have a unified set of social capital in America. Alan Wolfe, for example, in his search for an American creed (1998), targeted specific middle-class communities in his research, assuming that one cannot find a unified creed by randomly selecting a sample that could include citizens from totally different socioeconomic conditions.

David Ryfe (2002) claims that future research on deliberation needs to address the question of whether *deliberation produces better political outcomes.* However, the answer to that question is dependent on the perspective and values that we base our evaluation upon. Frank Fisher (1987) refers to this problem with identification of values and definitions when discussing political policy evaluations:

> Although policy analysis had generally been identified as part of the Democratic Party's approach to policy formation, particularly as manifested in the Great Society programs, conservatives recognized the necessity to develop and fund policy research suited to their own political needs. In sharp contrast to the use of policy analysis by liberal administrations to innovate new governmental programs, conservatives discovered the *same* empirical-analytical tools could be employed to eliminate public programs, often the very ones policy analysis had helped to create. (Fisher, 1987, p. 5)

In other words, we can evaluate a specific policy from different perspectives based on different values and definitions and therefore receive different results. The process of evaluating policies therefore becomes more effective if we, as both Putnam and Habermas suggest, attempt to build inclusive communities in which people naturally interact and integrate (rather than segregate) and where they indirectly build common bonds, values, and definitions.

The crucial issue regarding social capital in relation to deliberative democratic procedures is the quality (rather than the quantity) of the social capital. Robert Wuthnow found that the levels of social capital in the U.S. have remained rather steady for the last 50 years but the quality of the social capital has changed in a negative way:

> With association levels and volunteering at comparatively high levels by cross-cultural standards, the United States may well have enough social capital left to function as a democracy with little loss of effectiveness. What kind of social capital is society able to create is probably the more important question. At present, significant attention in the United States needs to be devoted to creating social capital that does a better job of bridging between the privileged and the marginalized. (Wuthnow, 2002, p. 102)

Theda Scocpol (2002) describes a related trend when analyzing the scope of civic organizations. She describes old-fashioned cross-class membership federations (like the Elks, Veterans organizations, General Federation of Women's Clubs, and PTA's) as generally being racially exclusive and/or gender segregated. However, Scocpol claims that these organizations still were important to the creation of social capital: they attracted large amounts of people that often joined the organization for the basic purpose of socially interacting with other people. New civic organizations are increasingly advocacy oriented where members often share the same political interest but seldom meet to physically interact. A lot of the communication is now taking place over the Internet where the leaders of the organization ask the members for different forms of support.

Scocpol, supported by the research of Verba et al. (1995) as well as Nie et al. (1996), claims that the new advocacy-oriented organizations are heavily dominated by the upper class, which have both the necessary financial resources and time resources to effectively take part in these types of activities. There are few civic organizations capable of bridging the upper class with the rest of society:

> Ordinary citizens have fewer venues for membership in associations with real clout. Meanwhile, the most powerful Americans are interacting – and arguing – almost exclusively with one another. (Scocpol, 2002, p. 135)

Formal organizations are of course not the only place in which this kind of social segregation is taking place at the expense of a unified social capital. William Julius Wilson (1996) and Jonathan Kozol (1991) have both examined the effects of the residential segregation taking place particularly in large cities: people from affluent suburb communities seldom interact with people from poor inner city areas. Michael Sandel (2002) uses the example of a sports arena to illustrate the same kind of segregation. Sandel describes how he used to go to Celtic's games in Boston where he sat side-by-side and interacted with very affluent members of society as well as members of the blue-collar working class. That is all gone now when the new sports arenas have separate skyboxes, seats, food-venues, and even rest rooms for affluent spectators, leaving no room for any bridging social interaction.

The main question for the evaluation of deliberative procedures should therefore be whether the deliberation helps bridge differences, whether deliberation could create more democratic decisions (than for example a simple *shut-up-and-vote* decision), and whether deliberation could inspire higher levels of political participation? These three questions are strongly interrelated; more democracy is generally a requirement for a better democracy, which also requires less segregation. The quality of the policy outcomes then has to be determined communally according to the common standards that develop in an inclusive

social interaction process rather than by any predetermined absolute standards identified by technocrats in the academic community. In other words, the only way to determine, in a democratic way, whether a decision is good or bad is to have as many citizens as possible involved in the process of determining the criteria for a good decision. This requires broad social interaction, including members of all socio-economic and ethnic groups.

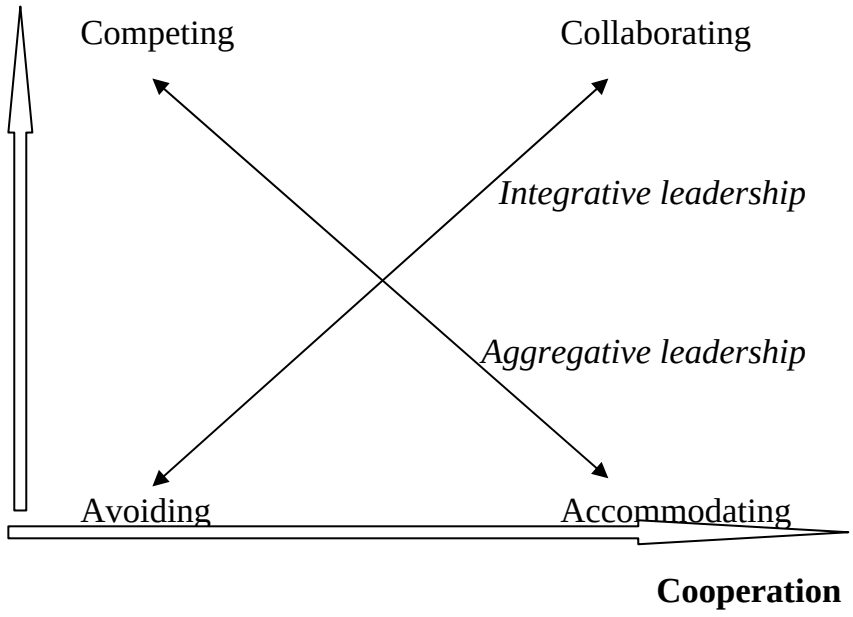
Leadership and Democratic Deliberation in Professional Organizations

Robert Putnam, in his analysis of social capital in both Italy and the U.S., focuses on activities in voluntary organizations; he is interested in the organizational interaction in, for example, bird-watching clubs and bowling leagues. The role that leadership plays in organizations is widely debated and most likely varies with context. However, it is hard to fully ignore the impact of leadership in the process of building strong and democratic norms and other forms of social capital. The question is whether the leader, through his or her practices, supports inclusive, democratic ideals as well as communicates and interacts in a way that helps build strong and egalitarian social norms.

Kenneth Thomas (1975) evaluates leadership based on how leaders score on scales for *assertiveness* and *cooperation*. (See figure 1, p. 53) Thomas claims that the *aggregative leadership dimension* ranges from *competing* (high on assertiveness and low on cooperation) to *accommodating* (low on assertiveness and high on cooperation). The competitive leader only cares about his or her individual interests; the accommodating leader will do whatever people want him

or her to do. The *integrative leadership dimension* ranges from *avoiding* (low on both assertiveness and cooperation) to *collaborating* (high on both assertiveness and cooperation). Someone who avoids leadership shows that he or she does not care about the collective outcome. The collaborating leader works towards an integration of different interests (the opposite of the competing leader who only tries to enhance his or her individual interests); he or she brings all members into the deliberative process in order to solve the problem in a way that satisfies all members of the organization.

Figure 1. Assertiveness and Cooperation in Leadership



(From Thomas, 1975)

Cindy Simon Rosenthal (1998) applies Thomas's dimension when examining political leadership in state legislatures. Rosenthal claims that women more often than men try to collaborate in their political leadership; they are more likely to

listen and are more concerned about the well-being of all members of the organization. The organization from that perspective is more than a simple aggregation of individual interests. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to treat politics as a zero-sum game where you either win or lose and where it would be irrational not to take advantage of a leadership position in order to advance your own interests.

The aggregated, competitive, zero-sum perspective of leadership makes sense from an exchange-theory perspective. There is no room for anything else but highly individualistic leadership behavior if government (as for example Locke and Friedman prescribe) should do nothing but secure the rules and outcomes of competition for scarce societal resources. There is no motive for the leader to encourage deliberation if the cultural values always assign a higher priority to individual competition than to common action and understanding – when the private always is more important than the communal. These differences in leadership styles between men and women reflect differences in our values and attitudes rather than structural arrangements or any kind of rational choice causes (see Burns, 2003). The political structure that male and female leaders act within is the same; we do not have separate legislative chambers for men and women. Men, from that perspective, seem to be more concerned about their own individual status while women seem to be more concerned about the creation of inclusive social bonds.

John Dewey (1997) claims that a democratic culture should reach far beyond large official decision-making institutions; that democracy relates to the everyday practices of social interaction. It should, as also prescribed by Stanley Deetz, go far beyond the definitions of democracy focusing on Election Day practices.

> One does not have to diminish the significance of elections in the least to still say that the focus on expression and election rather than on socially produced conceptions and decisions provides a remarkably narrow democracy. (Deetz, 1992, p. 46)

Both Habermas's and Putnam's theories, as examined earlier, hold that effective democracy requires democratic social interaction at a micro level. It is hard to build a strong democracy if citizens do not conduct their daily interaction in a democratic manner. A strong and inclusive public sphere therefore relates to the interactions taking place far beyond the official legislative arena and voluntary organizations.[23] People generally spend at least 40 hours of their week in a professional environment; a time that influences democratic norms and social capital as much as any other time of people's lives.

Deetz argues that corporations in many ways have become the new public sphere. It is the "corporate development of the obedient normalized mind and body" (Deetz, 1992, p. 58) that accounts for the largest threat to democracy in the private sphere. The privileged position of management in relation to the work-

[23] Dewey, for example, argues that the educational process is especially important when building a strong democratic culture. The way that children learn to relate to each other and their teachers affects the way they relate to each other in the public sphere as adults. Children who are socialized to apply a passive role in their

force not only allows for managerial absolutism but it also gives the manager power to define reason, meaning, language, and even the worker's personal identity. In other words, the individual worker is stripped of his or her ability to autonomously define his or her own reality; he or she loses the most essential part of his or her freedom.

Neo-capitalistic responses to the lack of democratic procedures in business organizations are often based on freedom of association and material compensation. The former is based on the assumption that a citizen has the right to join whatever organization he or she wants to; an argument that Deetz opposes:

> But in what ways is the modern employee meaningfully "free," and where is the democracy this provides? The freedom is frequently reduced to the right to leave (assuming that is even realistic), but the right to leave does not make the workplace any more free or democratic for those who stay. (Deetz, 1992, p. 54)

Employee stock options have increased during the last 20 to 30 years: workers are given a very limited financial ownership in the organization. But, these kinds of plans are often met with little enthusiasm since "employees do not see themselves as beneficiaries of these changes" (Butcher & Clark, 2002, p. 35). The fundamental problem with stock-option plans from a democratic perspective is that money cannot deliberate. The fact that an employee owns a microscopic proportion of a company does not mean that his or her needs and perspectives are automatically communicated to the management and the majority owner. The

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relationship with their teachers are likely to retain the passive role in future relationships with political authorities.

absoluteness in the world of management is still present regardless of whether an employee owns .001 or .02% of the stocks in a company.

Another alternative to managerial absolutism[24] is to give workers the ability to participate in decision-making procedures that not only impact what they do but also who they are. Anthony Giddens (1984) relates to this need in the terms of *agency*: the feeling that one has the ability to make a difference and therefore possesses some kind of control of his or her life. From that perspective, the main reason workers should be given a voice is not connected to benefits or other material issues; instead, workers' participation is primarily an issue of giving the individual worker an ability to contribute and influence the practices that affect the way he or she lives his or her life. Deetz (1992) claims that organized laborers are just as guilty as their corporate management in applying a status-driven materialistic perspective; that issues concerning material benefits and power have received a higher priority than issues related to managerial domination and democratic practices. Unions as well as managements have been occupied with fights over benefits rather than ways of creating common understanding and reason within the organization. Communication has been used to win battles rather than to connect different perspectives. That is, status and temporal efficiency, rather then agency, appear to be the main driving forces in professional

[24] Deetz uses the term *managerialism*: "a white, middle-class, male system" that "suppresses the conflicts within even white middle-class males, it transforms the interest and identities of groups in the society who initially were produced as its opposite (Deetz, 1992, p. 335).

organizations. Deliberation takes time and seldom results in material benefits or higher status.

Time and Democracy in the Modern Society

> *The two most dominating scales of the modern lifeworld (Leibenswelt) are money and time, both of which made Europeans become accustomed to using numbers and counting. More fundamentally to be able to count, to measure presumes a spatial mentality. Measured time and value (money) are spatial constructs. Space, time, and money are scalar phenomena. They are cultural artifacts and they have become the primary media for expressing the modern reality or manifold (in the Kantian sense). Time, space, and money, as quantitative continua, are products of scaling in the interest of exactitude. They are the languages moderns live by. They are very useful for those who are obsessed with comparison and measuring variance (rates, masses, volumes).*
>
> *Eric Kramer, 2004, p. 49*

Robert Putnam (2000) claims that the time that people spend in front of the TV is time taken away from social activities that build social capital. However, TV is far from the only thing in society that has changed the way people interact. Buying consumer products in early 20th century America, for example, involved plenty of stops at different main-street businesses. Groceries were purchased in one store, tools in another, clothes in yet another and so forth. And the customer was always served by at least one employee in every store. There were coffee shops and other outlets between the stores in which people not only enjoyed something tasty but also interacted with other members of the community.

Contemporary shopping in the same city is generally a totally different experience. People drive as close as they can to the entrance of a large

supermarket, they run around in the store to pick up everything they need, pay at a self-check-out station and leave the store without interacting with a single individual. Modern shopping is very representative of a modern culture in which the connection between time and money translates into *efficiency*.

Wal-Mart, for example, is very efficient, and no time is wasted: everything is under one roof, so customers do not have to visit multiple stores; customers do not have to deal and interact with different employees; nor do customers sit and interact with other members of the community at the local coffee shop. All this "saved" time translates into saved money – a store with fewer employees is a store that can afford to sell their products for less while still making at least the same amount of money.

Wal-Mart is not the only business that works with the assumption that less human interaction between customers and employees translates into more efficiency. A large part of the service industry, like banks, airlines, insurance, and telephone companies have machines (through internet or telephones) trying to conduct the services that used to be conducted by human beings. It is efficient since programmed machines are much less expensive than employees – that is, it is efficient according to the modern western standard of efficiency. From the same perspective, the ultimate efficient society would be one where citizens never have to interact with any other citizens: where all services are handled by machines and where we could do everything we need in our private environment at home.

However, that would also be a society without common reason, norms, and other forms of social capital that constitute the foundation of a strong democracy. There is no public sphere left – only an economically efficient, yet socially fragmented, group of consumers/workers. It is, for example, impossible to establish a common perspective and reason with a machine given that all definitions, criteria, categories, and critical assumptions are predetermined. A machine is therefore as undemocratic as it gets: it is always going to be the machine's way since the machine simply cannot see things in a different way – there is no escape from discriminating assumptions and criteria.

Ferdinand Tönnies (2001) would have found this pursuit of efficiency representative of what he called *Gesellshaft society:* a mechanical modern society aimed at material accumulation. The opposite side of Tönnies' dichotomy is *Gemainschaft:* a community (rather than a society) in which everything, including individuals, is interconnected and where nothing exists outside the community. Gemainschaft was the predominant form of social organization in Europe, but the development of modern spatial ideas, starting with the Renaissance in Italy, led to a form of Capitalistic industrialization and eventually to the electronic information society. Property and labor were once regarded as essential parts of human survival yet communal in nature – now they are transformed into marketable commodities measured in money that in itself has no value to human survival (humans cannot eat money or use it as a direct tool). Art and culture used to be integrative parts of labor activities; they were part of the communities' identity

and spiritual well-being. Art and culture in the modern society (Gesellschaft) are strictly separated from labor activities– they are now considered inefficient and are taken out of their natural contexts and instead appear as objects at museums and civic halls. All actions in Gesellschaft have instrumental motives – nothing is supposed to exist or happen on its own merits.[25]

Most important for this essay is Tönnies' analysis of reason in the modern society. A person in a community (Gemeinschaft) acted on a "natural will" geared toward communal harmony and understanding whereas a person in the modern civil society acts on a "rational will" geared at separation from the community. Tönnies defined the latter as artificial and sometimes even manipulative; rational calculations aimed at individual advancement are present in almost everything citizens do. The rational will, with its focus on individual advancement, is only possible through the quantification of objects into the concept of money. This constant pursuit of more financial resources is the driving force in society as later described in *rational-choice* theories:

> Every relationship in *Gesellschaft* represents the latent possibility of [the emergence of] an artificial superior person, who will have command over certain quota of means and resources; indeed Society itself is thought to need such a body in order to function as an effective whole. (Tönnies, 2001, p. 186)

Gebser (1985) builds on Tönnies' argument and adds the component of quantified time. A person in the modern society is seeking instant gratification through collecting and comparing quantities of money which leads to impatience and a

[25] Tönnies was clearly influenced by Karl Marx's sociological writings.

great interest in efficiency: a temporal anxiety. The issue of how much money you can make in a life-time became more important than the ability to enter heaven after death. Everything is quantified and in the center of the quantified world is the clock. The question is no more what a person could do to the community but rather how much gratification he could give himself by collecting quantifiable entities and most noticeably money. Individualism is from that perspective an extension of time and especially the temporal anxiety – it rests on the notion that my individual gratification is dependent on my efficient use of time. Civic engagement and politics is from the very same perspective inefficient unless it leads to direct quantifiable benefits. The end result is alienated individuals – the bonds between members of the community decreases when the individual seeks his own gratification through his own use of time. The communal group with strong bonds is replaced by an aggregated mass.

The concept of reason has therefore shifted from the shared intersubjective practical reason (common sense) that existed in communities, to the many fragmented forms of reason that occur when citizens are expected to promote their individual versions of reason, a system where financial objects (money), rather than human subjects, do most of the interaction.[26] Money cannot think and therefore participate in the process of defining communal reason, but that does not

[26] Richard Sennett in the *The Fall of the Public Man* (1974) makes a similar argument claiming that 18th century villages/towns (before industrialization) were places where natural meaningful communication could take place in.

matter since quantitative competition is both more admirable and more time-efficient than communal agreement in the modern western society.

Tönnies made several trips to England to study the work of Thomas Hobbes but he was also well acquainted with Rousseau's and Locke's writings on the "natural" human state and will. I am not going to further speculate about the comparative accuracy of Tönnies's, Hobbes's, Locke's, and Rousseau's versions of the human nature, but Tönnies's description of the human will in the modern civic society, of *Gesellschaft*, is very interesting. A modern individual is expected to seek separation from the community – he or she is supposed to be perceived as an individual object. Time urgency and obsession with efficiency turn everything into instruments. However, the individual citizen still has a desire to be recognized by the very community that he or she tries to separate from – a citizen's status in society has replaced his or her communal identity.

Status is essentially an extension of time; individuals are concerned about their place in present society but also in history. People want to be known, they want to be famous – they want an individual identity that stands out of the ordinary. The ordinary is linguistically related to *the regular, the average, the most common,* etc. For something to be ordinary requires that a majority of the cases/people fit into that specific categorization – a small minority can never create the *ordinary*. Yet, the term *ordinary* has a negative connotation in the modern western society; people do not like to be labeled *ordinary or average* – they would rather receive a label that indicates that they are different from the ordinary.

Kramer (2004) relates the modern fixation with status to the individualistic culture that experienced the Renaissance in 15th century Italy. We know, for example, little about specific individuals during the medieval period prior to the Renaissance; individual status appears to have had less importance in that culture:

> The modern use of fixed surnames for hereditary purposes started among the Venetian aristocracy and spread across Europe so that by 1450, most people regardless of social rank had a surname used for inheritance purposes. Thus, the Modern ego extends itself beyond death to the next generation in the service of property. (p.16)

Time and status often build on each other. Most college campuses, for example, are filled with stadiums, buildings, pathways, fountains, and even bricks that bear the names of individual financial donors who not only try to enhance their status in the current society but also secure it beyond their own lifespan. These forms of donations stand in at least partial conflict to democratic norms. The issue of where monetary donations are used most effectively is seldom settled through democratic deliberation because most donations are made with the purpose of creating an elevated status that lasts beyond the next academic year. There are, for example, relatively few financial donations for physical maintenance or academic advising even if a democratic deliberative process may identify these activities as having the greatest needs.

Another example of the fusion between time and status in American society is the celebration of a single historic individual figure. Americans, for example, recognize George Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr. with federal holidays. However, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and John F.

Kennedy are other historical figures that are considered almost sacred in the American culture. This historical focus stands in contrast to the general assumption that Americans have a rather short memory. The glorification of distant historical figures is possible because of this short memory; some people tend to relate to these figures without considering any temporal contexts. They allow these historical figures to fit into a glorified role (without disturbing aspects such as slavery, adultery, and dictatorial practices) that comprises a very shallow common historical identity. In other words, most Americans do not identify themselves with the culture that they currently share but rather with the time and status that connect these historical figures. The values and norms that they celebrate are assumed to be absolute – they are symbols of historical figures and therefore hard to change. The glorification of these figures is essentially an attempt to shield values against the change that comes with trends spanning over time.

Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky shed light on Franklin D. Roosevelt's and John F. Kennedy's numerous love affairs and effectively illustrated that what was a minor occurrence in the 1940's or even in the 1960's was definitely a big occurrence in the late 1990's. Similarly, Ronald Reagan often hailed both Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy politically, for example, praising Kennedy's tax-cuts. Reagan still failed to recognize that the contextual elements were different in the 1940's, 1960's, and the 1980's.

Sweden, just like many other European countries, does not celebrate historical individuals in the same way. There is an annual formal recognition of Gustavus II Adolphus who successfully (from a strict military perspective) led the Swedish troops in the 17th century war between the Protestants and the Catholics in Europe. However, most Swedes (with the exception of a few neo-Nazis) do not identify themselves with Gustavus II Adolphus or any other historical leader (such as Karl XII); they consider these historical figures to be part of another time with different values and norms. In other words, these historical figures do not represent absolute and eternal values independent of time but rather historical representations of past values and norms. Sweden, in contrast to the U.S., was not founded on any eternal principles and values – current principles and values are instead a product of contemporary social interaction.

Most holidays in Sweden therefore celebrate the Swedish culture in which traditional practices are connected with contemporary values and norms. A holiday from that perspective does not represent something eternal or absolute but rather the citizens' involvement in the transformation of the current culture. Traditional Swedish holidays, such as *Midsummer* and *Christmas,* have little meaning unless most citizens attempt to recognize the current meaning of these holidays. From that perspective, time is relative whereas individual honor is secondary to the manifestation of a communal culture. It is hard to change what George Washington did but it is certainly possible to change contemporary cultural practices because they are dependent on the practices of those living in

society today. The former puts the public sphere in the passive position of admiring the past – the latter puts the public sphere in a more active autonomous position of defining what a holiday represents right now. The former connects the past with status in an absolute way – the latter allows the past to grow into the present.[27]

The notion that the past is different from the present does not mean that history is irrelevant. A person's or a people's heritage obviously has helped form who he, she, or they is or are and should not be ignored. The past still needs to be distinguished from the present and should not automatically be treated as if they are the same. Some of the jokes that were told 20 years ago are considered inappropriate today (sexist, racist, homophobic, etc.); our perceptions and values have changed. The awareness of these changes, of the trends that occur in our culture, is absolutely crucial to the understanding of who we are. It is in the same way important to know about our historical figures, what they did and stood for, but we must recognize that what was considered appropriate at that time may not be appropriate today.

The connection between time and status could also appear in terms of temporal competition for status. One of the most discussed issues during the 2004 presidential election campaign was CBS News' report on President Bush's National Guard record. All commercial media are concerned about their status in

[27] It is important to recognize that the public sphere in Sweden does not have total autonomy in defining these holidays. Commercial interests clearly have a strong

relation to other news sources, and status is determined by viewer ratings. Time is crucial from this perspective: being the first news program to report on a story supposedly enhances the news station's status. CBS News, in its eagerness to "break" a story about President Bush's National Guard record, therefore set a higher priority to the timing of the story than to the accuracy of it (they did not adequately check their sources). CBS News therefore later had to admit that they had based the entire story on a fake document; the public was misinformed due to the station's obsession with obtaining a greater status. Status and time, as described in the above examples, are often interconnected – the pursuit of status often requires attempts to control time. Time is therefore highly political in nature, but controlling for time is not always easy and seldom democratic.

The connection between the past and the present is one dimension of time. Another temporal dimension with great political implications is quantity of time. Politics is often defined in terms of an *organized conflict over* or *redistribution of scarce societal resources*. We tend to identify political conflicts with material resources such as financial entitlements, with social values such as gay-marriage and abortion, or with international relations such as the "war on terror," but we seldom identify *time* as the direct source of conflict. However, Robert Levine (1997) claims that one of the most common sources of conflict on a micro level; the politics between spouses, often relates to time. These are "questions as how to

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voice in defining specific holiday practices.

spend their time, when to begin activities and when to go home, who is too fast, who is too slow, and must wait for whom" (p. 77).

Time-efficiency, our desire to squeeze more time out of time, was the main concept behind Fredric Taylor's investigations of how to create a more productive work force. Taylor's practices "effectively" reduced the individual worker's autonomy to nothing – they lost all the power over their own time. Workers are reduced to nothing but robots if they are forced to follow a schedule that dictates exactly how and when they should do specific things. Contemporary management still works under the assumption that there should be very little time for reflection and/or emotions; the work force has to be kept on track by a rigorous planning of time.

Jeremy Rifkin (1987) predicts that many future political conflicts will involve interests of time: a "new temporal spectrum". Just like spouses argue about their common use of time, we may, as a society, not only disagree about how to use our time but also on how we define it. Those aligned with power stress *time-efficiency* as a reason for preserving the current emphasis on material, industrial values; time is money and we have to be careful to not waste our time on "non-productive" activities. In opposition to this traditional time-frame stand those who argue that the traditional industrial perceptions of time are human artifacts; that we should be more conscious about how we relate to time and apply a more *emphatic focus*. "Politics, long viewed as a spatial science, is now also about to be considered as a temporal art" (Rifkin, 1987, p. 5).

Gebser (1985) claims that in the modern world humans have learned to control space but that we are struggling with the concept of time:

> As we approach the decline of the perspectival age, it is our anxiety about time that stands out as the dominant characteristic alongside ever more absurd obsession with space. It manifests itself in various ways, such as in our addiction to time. Everyone is out to "gain time," although the time gained is usually the wrong kind: time that is transformed into a visible multiplication of spatially fragmented "activity," or time that one has "to kill." (p. 22)

In other words, we treat time just like we treat space: we quantify it. The quantification is possible through the mechanical clock; the clock is telling us how "much" time we have available. However, we often treat the mechanical clock as if it (the clock) invented us and not the other way around; the mechanical clock has become our master.

The Scarcity of Time

> *Contemporary anxiety about time is manifest in our flight from it: in our haste and rush, and by our constant reiteration, "I have no time." It is only too evident that we have space but no time; time has us because we are not yet aware of its entire reality. Contemporary man looks for time, albeit mostly in the wrong place despite, or indeed because of his lack of time: and this is precisely his tragedy, that he spatializes time and seeks to locate it "somewhere.*
>
> *Jean Gebser, 1985, p. 22*

Deliberation requires time; it is impossible to reach a well-deliberated decision if the decision has to happen right away. The absence of time for deliberation often leaves us stranded with a few unattractive options. We could always follow our emotions – our gut feelings. Related to this is the option of only considering our narrow self-interest; there is from that perspective no room for any

considerations regarding what is best from a communal perspective because the communal does not even exist. Another alternative is that people with authority are given monopoly over the time needed to decide upon an option – thus the public is only given one option because they do not have time to deliberate upon anything else. The perceived scarcities of time therefore tend to reduce the public to a powerless institution without the ability to scrutinize different options and thereby legitimize a specific decision.

Habermas is critical of what are often referred to as *public opinion polls*, which in reality are often nothing but aggregated measurements of private opinions. The public is something communal – something shared. This does not mean that everybody has to have exactly the same opinion – only that a wide range of information, perspectives, and opinions have been shared and deliberated. Public opinions should be representative of a public sphere in which democratic deliberation takes place. However, the commercial media, who generally order "public opinion" polls, do not have time to wait for deliberation – they want to have their percentages right away, which therefore tend to be aggregated private opinions rather than a truly *public* opinion.

David Ryfe (2002), when examining different deliberative organizations, found that this temporal anxiety is nothing unique for commercial media; participants in most organizations want to see "real" results soon. "Apparently, participants in deliberative groups believe that deliberation is useless unless it results in tangible change" and that the changes should have "observable effects on the community"

(p.366). Our culture promotes fast action, which often stands in opposition to time-consuming deliberation. We assume that there are quick “fixes” to all our problems. Deliberation, from that perspective, becomes goal oriented where the goal always is defined in terms of policies. Deliberation is also, according to the same perspective, generally not reflective. Deliberation about cultural changes, which takes time and is hard to observe, has to stand back to direct policy changes, which we can decide upon and officially “implement” right away. The long-term effects of a decision are, from that viewpoint, secondary to the results that we see the next month.

The ability to control time also transforms into political power. Many politicians like to control the outcome, and controlling the agenda is the key to controlling the outcome. For example, in 2004 (after being reelected) President Bush invited prominent political and business leaders to discuss his economic agenda. However, Bush was not interested in deliberating with anyone with a different opinion; he only invited those who shared his views in order to effectively advance his own agenda.

Early the next year, the Senate was asked to confirm President Bush’s choice for Secretary of State (Condoleezza Rice). The Republican majority in the Senate communicated strong opposition to any lengthy debate regarding the confirmation. Senate Democratic Minority Leader, Harry Reed, regarded the four hours that the Democrats had deliberated on the confirmation as very modest – considering that it involved the position of *Secretary of State* in a time of war and

with strained relations to our traditional international allies. Reed noted that four hours was less time spent on deliberation than most people spend deliberating on buying a car; Harry Reed also proclaimed that *Shut Up and Vote* is not democracy.

President Bush and his political allies in Washington are hardly the first ones to set a higher priority to time constraints than to deliberative democratic procedures. Political representatives of both parties have set the same priority many times throughout history. Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, was often accused of pushing his New Deal policies through Congress without allowing for any lengthy debates (Wolf, 2001). Controlling the quantity of time is crucial to political power but it is also often detrimental to democratic ideals involving broad political participation.

Non-western cultures may set different priorities to time and activities. They may, for example, care more about the actual social event than the actual material outcome of the event:

> In my travels in South America and Asia I have repeatedly been confused, and sometimes even harassed, by comments such as: "Unlike you Americans, time is not money for us." My usual response is something like: "But our time is all we have. It is our most valuable, our only really valuable, possession. How can you waste it like that?" Their typical retort – usually in a less frantic tone than my own – begins with unqualified agreement that time is, indeed, our most valuable commodity, but it is for exactly this reason, event timers argue, that time shouldn't be wasted by carving it into inorganic monetary units. (Levine, 1997, p. 90)

The low priority given to deliberation is clearly detrimental to democratic ideals, but an even larger problem is the low priority given to the social activities

that build social capital and a democratic culture. The higher priority assigned to separation (in contrast to integration) of human communities in the modern western culture negatively affects our ability to build and maintain social bonds and other forms of social capital. Graduate students, for example, are expected to spend more time working on academic activities then on social activities – they are expected to spend more time in front of their computers than with their families, friends, and neighbors. They are also expected to sacrifice their social bonds, their connection with the community, and move to a new place once they have finished their degree. The reason for this is the same as for most other well-educated individuals; the individual career that creates status and material wealth is supposed to be more important than communal cohesion, social bonds, and other forms of social capital. Graduate students are expected to be individualistic in the narrowest sense when making decisions regarding their future; as if communal and non-materialistic concerns are irrelevant. Geoffrey Goodbye claims that we have become *walking résumés*: "If you are not doing something you are not creating and defining who you are" (Schor, 1991, p. 23).

Directing time

> *A further expression of man's current helplessness in the face of time is his compulsion to "fill" time; he regards it as something empty and spatial like a bucket or container devoid of any qualitative character. But time is in itself fulfilled and not something that has be "filled up" or filled out.*
>
> *Jean Gebser, 1985, p. 22*

Another way to exercise political power is to control the use of time; how we schedule our activities. It is generally assumed that the most important issues

should be dealt with first; leaving less important issues further down on the agenda. The way we schedule not only our political activities but also our everyday activities therefore has a major impact on our lives. We live in a society in which it is commonly expected that we adjust our lives to a small human artifact (the mechanical clock) disregarding that each mechanical clock has to be set by ourselves or other human beings. For example, an Italian professor during the early Renaissance decided that he was going to eat lunch at 12:00 pm every day, so he simply adjusted his own clock to 12:00 when he felt like it was time to have lunch. This professor clearly realized what most of us never even would consider: that we are the master of the clock and not the other way around.

The *Nuers* live in a culture distinct from the western modern culture and they treat time in a different way: they decide upon when their different seasons arrive according to when they start a specific project. In other words, they do not allow an artificial calendar to dictate their seasons – they instead dictate when their seasons start and end. *Kur*, which is the season when they do a lot of construction work, starts when they start doing a lot of construction work. *Dwat*, which is the time when they break their camps, starts when they start breaking their camps (Lauer, 1981).

Some political movements, in their attempts to radically change society, have recognized the power of the perception of time. The revolutionaries in France at the end of the 18th century and the Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union both attempted to exchange the traditional Gregorian calendar for a new secular calendar

independent of Christian teachings. The revolutionaries in France introduced a ten-day week, including one day of rest. Stalin was easier on the labor force when he introduced a five-day week that also included one day of rest. The French revolutionaries even introduced a ten-hour day (instead of 24 hours) trying to "rationally" fit the measurement of time into the metric system. The motive behind all of these changes was to achieve control over the collective; the ways that people interact in a community (Levine, 1997). Needless to say, these attempts to change the traditional social constructions of time failed, effectively showing that what humans consider "natural" ultimately is a product of communal understanding and repetition rather than cognitive impositions. The intersubjective scale of time is much more important than any "natural" or "rational" quantification of time.

The introduction of cable TV networks providing us with "news" 24/7 is typical of modern media acting under the constraints of time-efficiency. They, for example, order "public opinion" polls in order to be able to present the polls when the regular news flow is expected to be low. News organizations have to fill their airtime or newspapers with a constant amount of news, and the easiest way to do so is to plan for pseudo news instead of waiting for the actual news to happen. That is, the importance of the actual news is less important than the ability to timely *plan* the news.

An example of this was the reporting on the Tsunami disaster in South East Asia in 2004. The Tsunami happened late in the evening (Eastern American time)

on Saturday December 25th and the word of the disaster had reached every major news organization early Sunday morning. However, the major news providers, such as CNN who are supposed to report on "news" 24 hours a day, gave the Tsunami disaster little attention that Sunday. CNN ran Sunday news magazines with minor news briefs headed by reports from professional football games – content that was planned ahead of time. It did not seem to matter that this was a major disaster that later qualified for enormous amounts of coverage: news was not supposed to happen without prior notification and especially not the Sunday after Christmas. The same problem could be related to what Waller et al. (2001) describe in terms of *temporal urgency*; a preoccupation with rigorous scheduling and deadlines. Many news organizations' obsession with efficiently controlling time through rigorous planning of every event makes the news organizations do exactly the opposite of what they claim they do. The reporting on actual news events (in contrast to planned pseudo events[28]) therefore often delays the public's ability to determine a reasonable response to problems in a timely manner.

Politicians also tend to focus a lot of attention on the timing of the political events that they "control." Politicians know when people are paying attention to news media, which usually is at the same time as when journalists expect things to happen. "From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August," said White House chief of staff Andrew Card in reference to the timing

[28] See Daniel Boorstin's discussion on pseudu-events in *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream* (1962).

of the White House's serious push for a war in Iraq. The White House knew that the "war on terrorism" (which the war in Iraq was framed as) was a favorable issue for President Bush and therefore should be introduced when it had the opportunity to generate the most attention. August, a month when many Americans were on vacations, was not a good time to push for a war in Iraq. The President instead wanted the message to reach the public before the November congressional election and September was therefore the natural time to seriously introduce the issue to the American public (Schneider, 2002).

Timing is, from this perspective, crucial; a politician wants to use his or her time so that he or she receives the maximum benefit from every policy incentive. This often requires the planning of pseudo-events in order to have maximum control over the outcome of the event. Actual events are problematic because they are hard to control. Planned pseudo-events, on the other hand, could be produced in a way that they generate the intended positive effects – they establish the "truth" in a favorable way. Yet what may be favorable to an individual trying to control time is unfavorable to a public trying to establish what constitutes a problem and truth in a democratic way.

Holding on to Time

Albert Einstein began a paradigm shift in physics with his exploration of time-relativity. Einstein's discovery that time physically runs at a different speed at different places was new to the hard sciences but still an extension of the relativism expressed by scholars like Aristotle, Kant, and Heidegger. Einstein

essentially claimed that time is not absolute – that it is dependent on the different contextual aspects as well as the perspective a person brings to the context:

> When you sit with a nice girl for two hours, it seems like two minutes; when you sit on a hot stove for two minutes, it seems like two hours. That's relativity. (Einstein as cited in Levine, 1997, p. 26)

The relativism of time may be one of our largest hurdles when trying to apply deliberative democracy based on reason. One of Habermas's elements of the *ideal speech situation* states that arguments based on tradition need to be exposed. The autonomy of the public sphere and its ability to democratically determine reason is reduced by references to traditions. Traditions are generally based on what was considered good reason in the past but reason, just like everything else, changes with time. People experience new things; they are exposed to new perspectives and therefore receive a new understanding of the world that surrounds them.

Time therefore tends to create complexity and dissonance instead of the uniformity and clarity that modern society proscribes. Our current perception of time essentially allows us to either retrospectively impose our current reason to a specific situation, or accept that the reason that we agree upon has to be relative, which creates complexity in the implementation of policies. In other words, we cannot claim that the reasoning we want to apply is absolute without violating the legal norm that states that we should not retrospectively judge past actions.

This problem was illustrated in the example from the Olympic Games in Athens as described earlier in this essay. Parts of the American public wanted the FCC to enforce an absolute standard limiting nudity. However, is it really possible

to apply this absolute standard to people and actions in the past (or in other cultures) that do not share the same reason and norms? A common attempt to "solve" this problem is to presuppose *value neutrality*. The idea of value neutrality is based on the assumption that an objective foundation exists to every issue – that there is something that is free from individual subjective interpretations. This is, of course, impossible; how can we make sense of something if we are not allowed to relate to prior experiences and perspectives?

Contract theories attempt to create a system that overcomes temporal complexity. A system is assumed to be fair and democratic as long as it holds onto some predetermined set of rules no matter how old or outdated these rules are. The U.S. constitution (decided upon in the late 18th century) is by many assumed to be the guarantee for democracy in America. It does not matter how undemocratic the contemporary society turns out to be; the fact that each person, supposedly, knows the rules and is able to play according to them is assumed to make the system democratic. In fact, changing the rules would, from that perspective, be undemocratic since it violates the rules that were set up to make society democratic in the first place.

Both Robert Nozick (1974) and John Rawls (1999), in their definitions of justice of a fair society, work with the same *prospective* perspective; they both assume that a fair society is identified by the rules we set up ahead of time. Nozick is straightforward in his approach; the only thing that matters is whether a person has the same theoretical ability to compete for scarce societal resources.

There is, for example, nothing in the written constitution that theoretically stops a poor inner-city girl from becoming a billionaire. Rawls, on the other hand, argues that fairness ought to be determined through a "veil of ignorance"[29]; that we could agree upon what constitutes a fair society if all of us hypothetically entered society with no knowledge about how we might fare in the societal competition for scarce societal resources. Rawls assumes that people acting under the "veil of ignorance" would create a system that prevents people from gaining practical advantages – it should not matter whether your parents are billionaires or welfare recipients.

However, Rawls and Nozick's theories share the same modern western assumption that citizens compete for strategic advantages and that the outcome of the competition is justified through the rules that were set *prior* to the competition. Stanley Deetz disagrees and claims that democracy is an "ongoing accomplishment" that requires a balanced conflict where nobody has a predetermined upper hand. He refers to Gilligan's description of young girls playing games:

> She [Gilligan (1982)] describes their play as a balance of competition and facilitation. They played to win as part of the logic of the game itself. But they also played to learn and help the other learn, and importantly to keep the game going and interesting. If the rules disadvantaged one player, they changed the rules. The game even became more fun to play. (Deetz, 1992, p. 338)

[29] The *veil of ignorance* is a condition in which a citizen has no knowledge about his own conditions. That would, according to Rawls, make people chose societal arrangements that are fair to everyone since it is impossible to strategically favor your own interests when you do not your own particular interests.

In other words, the issue is whether the purpose of the game is supposed to be *legitimate status separation* or *democratic interaction?* The idea that democracy, fairness, or justice, is determined in the present and not in the past is foreign to the modern (male-dominated) western culture. The current prospective (rule of law) perspective is based on the assumption that competition and communication are a means for status separation. A perspective defining fairness and justice in the present is based on the assumption that competition and communication are a means for social interaction.

Both Rawls and Nozick seem to perceive competition as "natural" and therefore value neutral, but it could just as well be an issue of familiarity. I may, for example, find competition between individuals very familiar after being encouraged to compete against my fellow students during my entire time in the educational system. However, just because something has been encouraged and become familiar does not mean that it is value neutral; it simply means that I have been cultivated some specific values.

Therefore both the idea of value neutrality and predetermined rules work with the assumption that temporal concerns do not matter. There are no trends, developments, or contexts that can change the natural superiority of these procedures; anything "natural" is absolute in reference to time and culture. This effectively reduces the need for deliberation; people are effectively told that there is no need to deliberate about anything that is based on these "neutral" or

predetermined values. Everything is supposed to be democratic as long as the rules appear to be "neutral" and do not prospectively favor anyone. Democracy is from that perspective supposedly independent of attitudes and motives and it is especially independent of the societal trends that take place over time. The end result is a limited scope of democratic deliberation; traditions, as represented in the ideas of value neutrality and predetermined rules for competition, reduce the ability to identify common reason. Communication is unnecessary because past reason is extended to current reason. The autonomy of the public sphere is reduced by our attempts to hold onto time as though our perception of the world is constant.

Time Transformed into Status

> *In a hierarchical time culture, status is often delineated in terms of how valuable a person's time is. The time poor are made to wait, while the temporally privileged are waited upon. Material compensation is less determined by work accomplished than by the notion that some people's time is more valuable than others' and therefore worth of greater remuneration.*
> *Political tyranny in every culture begins by devaluing the time of others. Indeed, the exploitation of human beings is only possible in pyramidal time cultures, where rulership is always based on the proposition that some people's time is more valuable and other people's time more expendable.*
>
> *Jeremy Rifkin, 1997, pp. 196-197*

The disrespect of other people's time is a result of status differences. Status is based on past accomplishments, or could even be inherited from earlier generations, which gives a person an elevated position (higher authority) in a speech situation independent of the quality of her actual arguments. This could

potentially also “save” time, a reference to authority is generally less time-consuming then the presentation of a logical argument.

The status of the chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, is an American example of how status affects democratic activities. Greenspan’s word is not only often treated as absolute but is often treated as *praxis* when in reality it is nothing but *techne*. Very few people in the political arena dare to question what Greenspan says – his opinions about economic policy are regarded as the ultimate judgment. The public sphere often looses its ability to choose between different alternatives when Greenspan already has determined the “best” solution.

Status is also very important in political campaigns. The 2004 presidential election debate, for example, was regulated by 37 pages of rules dictating what the two candidates could say and not say, how the candidates should stand/sit, what the cameras could show, and so on. Representatives for both candidates carefully negotiated these regulations with one single purpose in mind: to win/not loose the debate. Each candidate participated in days of debate preparations aimed at making sure that they had a prepared standardized answer to every possible question and that they always stayed “on message.”

Representatives for media complained about how these rules and standardized messages were detrimental to the purpose of a debate. However, most media coverage ultimately shared the same focus: the competitive aspects of the debates. The pre and post debate coverage featured very few substantive discussions regarding important societal problems: the focus was almost entirely on how the

debate could influence a candidate's status in the polls and ultimately his ability to win the election. Spinners from both parties were given plenty of time to preview and review the debate in the most favorable way to their candidate independent of any substantive reality.

In other words, neither the media nor the candidates were interested in any deliberation with the purpose of dialectically determining what constitutes good policies and reason. The candidates probably had no intention of ever admitting that their policy was substantively inferior to the policy of their opponent or of debating the strengths and weaknesses of the original positions to create new policies. In fact, candidates generally purposely propose policies vague enough to make it almost impossible to engage in any dialectical deliberation. Media also lack any interest in time-consuming deliberation[30]; they prefer short statements with constant turn-taking reinforcing the competitive aspect of the debate.

Robert Bellah (1996) describes how talk radio represents an extreme version of *politics*; it "mobilizes private opinion, not public opinion, and trades on anxiety, anger, and distrust, all of which are deadly to a civic culture" (p. xvii). The end game for many talk radio hosts is to defeat and trash the political opponent in order to place themselves ahead of their colleague or any other person willing to voice an opinion. There are few, if any, efforts wasted on identifying good reason

[30] The average presidential election coverage sound-bite on the network evening news has decreased from more than 30 seconds in the 1960's to less than 10 seconds in 2000.

or even the truth. The competitive status of the talk radio hosts seems to be the top priority – they represent a modern version of sophistry.

Another example of the pursuit of status at the expense of deliberation within media was revealed in January 2005. Armstrong Williams and Maggie Gallagher, both conservative media commentators, admitted that they had been paid by the Bush administration to endorse specific issues on the President's agenda. Armstrong accepted $240,000 from the Department of Education to promote Bush's *No Child Left Behind* initiative (Keen & Drinkard, 2005). These kinds of transactions are illegal since they are considered to be governmentally sponsored propaganda. However, Williams's and Gallagher's acceptance of money in exchange for media "favors" also speaks to their priority of values: the money that they received was apparently more important to them than the quality and integrity of their voice in the democratic deliberative process.

Political figures in the nation's capital are not the only ones setting a higher priority to their own status than to the quality and integrity of the deliberative process. The politics taking place at a local level may be just as selfish and "dirty". George Skinner, a County Commissioner in Oklahoma, is probably not the only politician to change his party affiliation in order to become more attractive to his constituency, although all politicians may not be as blunt about it. Skinner claimed during his reelection campaign that he better-represented the majority of the voters in his district after switching his registration from Democrat to Republican (Turk, 2004). In other words, Skinner set a higher priority to his

ability to get reelected (his status as a politician) than to any substantive political ideals.

Mathews (1996) also describes the American society and especially the political culture as a competition where communication is used for manipulation rather than building understanding:

> We're organized into interest groups which compete with one another in a political arena that is like a marketplace with all kinds of competition and transactions. Some of the interest groups are able to amass a majority and get legislation passed and candidates elected because of their skill in manipulating the public and the media. The function of government is to adjudicate this competition and distribute resources as dictated by the outcomes. (Mathews, 1996, p. 283)

This competitive perspective of politics and democracy is generally taken for granted in the academic research in which scholars work with the assumption that politics and democracy is all about advancing individual interest. Many political communication scholars evaluate different strategies for advancing specific arguments and agendas without any consideration regarding what constitutes the common good.[31] The dominant perspective of communication, from this perspective, is one concerned with instrumental *effectiveness* rather than broad *participation* (Deetz, 1992). That is, we are more concerned with our ability to accomplish (control) specific ends rather than the formation of collective meaning and decisions.

[31] This competitive perspective of political communication is prevalent in Trent and Friedenberg's book *Political Campaign Communication. Principles and Practices* (2000), which is used in many undergraduate political communication classes.

Deetz relates this to the enlightenment process and especially the French and American Revolutions in which the transcendent switched from the "truth and nature of the world" to the "nature and rights of the individual to use reason to reach *a* rather than *the* truth" (p. 97). Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1991) is often credited as an early influence towards this emphasis on effectiveness in communication, but this is a notion that Deetz disagrees with:

> This recurring view often forgets to mention that the Greek conception of effectiveness presumed a model of participation to be already in place. We don't have to be too charitable to Aristotle or overly simplistic to suggest that, even at this late stage in Athenian democracy, training in rhetoric was not primarily to give one an advantage over others, as perhaps Plato's view of the Sophists suggests. The point was to enable all citizens (from which they excluded women and slaves) to contribute effectively within the public forum to enable truth itself to emerge. In this sense rhetoric was intended to be in support of the dialectic of truth, not in opposition of it. (Deetz, 1992, p. 95)

In fact, a private person who tried to separate himself or herself from the community was regarded as strange or even stupid in the ancient Greek culture. A *Private person* is the Greek term for a non-citizen; it is someone who lacks a home – which was the same as an *idiot* (Deetz, 1992). Or, as Aristotle described it in *Politics:* "The man who is isolated, who is unable to share in the benefits of political association, or has no need to share because he is already self-sufficient, is not part of the polis, and therefore must be either a beast or a god" (In Deetz, 1992, p. 154).

Successful modern political communication, on the other hand, is often defined in terms of the ability to influence a citizen to vote for a specific candidate or even

not to vote for the opposing candidate. A candidate's *ability* to influence simply makes the influence *legitimate*. Yet, neutrality and objectivity are still generally expected when academic scholars examine political messages, assuming that one neutral reality actually exists. Academic scholars attempting to be 'neutral' or 'objective' in their analysis therefore indirectly support the notion that *might makes right*; that political communication is independent of reason and communal needs. Paul Lazersfeld (1941) was an early pioneer in separating the effects of a message from broader social values; numbers were supposed to be objective and independent of philosophical considerations. Academic scholars who, in that way, treat *techne* as *praxis* or even *virtue* in their analysis are essentially legitimizing modern sophistry by avoiding the motives that guide the action.

This academic neo-Aristotelian perspective of truth and reason is sometimes extended to the most un-liberal political movements. That is, political movements that have little tolerance for alternative opinions utilize the liberal idea that all truth and reason are relative. One of the most frightening examples of this was Joseph Goebbles' mass communication machine in Nazi Germany. Goebbles (the Minister of Propaganda) demonstrated little respect for common reason; communication was, from his perspective, an effective tool in moving public opinion in a favorable direction without any concerns for generally accepted social constructions:

> It would not be impossible to prove with sufficient repetition and psychological understanding of the people concerned that a square is in fact a circle. What after all are a square and a circle? They are mere words and

> words can be moulded until they clothe ideas in disguise. (Goebbles as cited in Pratkanis & Aronson 1991, p. 49)

Still, Goebbles' Nazi regime did not allow any alternative interpretations of symbols once they had defined all symbols in a way that fit their interests. Meaning and truth were relative to Goebbles in the pre-Nazi era, but they became very absolute once the Nazis were in power.

However, the willingness to force absolute perspectives and truths on the people is not exclusive to what is referred to as *totalitarian*[32] regimes. Plenty of research (Button & Mattson, 1999, & Kimmelman & Hall, 1997) on deliberation confirms the negative impact that status has on deliberation and stake-hold. Politicians with a higher status and "regular" citizens generally do not deliberate effectively together:

> Politicians prefer to assume the role of experts in the political process and seek to educate participants into the logic of group politics. And participants feel that they do not know enough about the relevant issues to engage with representatives as equals. The result is a teacher-pupil form of exchange that rarely moves beyond a question-answer session. Moreover, when more sustained conversations are achieved, they may end in breeding more public cynicism. (Ryfe, 2002, p. 369)

Ryfe's description of status recognition in this kind of meetings is an environment in which all elements of Habermas's *Ideal Speech Situation* are violated: ideas are not freely expressed and examined (because the politicians do not get a chance to examine the ideas of the citizens); politicians are using their

[32] Anyone trying to receive absolute control over the society has to control communication. However, are attempts to control communicative entities like

own status to strengthen their arguments; politicians indirectly use traditions as the base for the arguments (when referring to the "logic of group politics"); and the truth is often *imposed* by the politicians rather than *achieved* through consensus building.

References to status in a speech situation are sometimes officially established before the speech situation even takes place. A campus newspaper advertisement regarding a university-sponsored political event featured the following:

Your Are Invited
Panel Discussion
"Republican Leadership of the U.S. House and Senate"
Featuring
The Honorable Tom Cole
The Honorable Don Nickles
The Honorable Guy Vander Jagt

Luncheon Address
"Leading the House Republicans"
Featuring the Honorable Dick Armey

The label *honorable* indicates that these guests should be recognized with a high social status. Labels, like *honorable,* are different from positional titles like *President*; a title informs about a position that may be relevant in a speech situation. A *President* should be held to the same standards of reason in his or her arguments as all other citizens, but the title still informs about that specific person's background and perspective. The label *honorable* does not necessarily indicate any perspective that may be relevant to the speech situation; it only

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meaning and the truth totalitarian in nature? A confirmative answer to that question would effectively put a totalitarian label on many politicians.

indicates that someone ought to have an elevated status in the specific speech situation. That is, this person may receive more time to present his or her argument and the arguments may not receive the usual scrutiny. The use of status labels would therefore be an obstruction to the process of democratically identifying reason in a speech situation. People attending this specific event on congressional politics benefit from knowing that both Don Nickles and Dick Armey have played major roles in the U.S. Congress and that Tom Cole is a current member of the House of Representatives (which the ad does not say), but do people who attend this event really benefit from being told that these men are honorable? The use of labels may primarily be based because of tradition or it may be an attempt to create a glamorous atmosphere. However, glamour and traditions do not extend into rational and logical reason; they are instead a distraction from reason because they generally generate an emotional rather than cognitive reaction.

The categorization of people sometimes has more democratic intentions as exemplified by the discussion over differences between male and female brain activity. Scientists have found that men's and women's brains function differently, and that boys and girls therefore face different educational challenges. Therefore, some scholars claim that boys and girls should be separated and receive different educations since it would be more "productive" to society if we customize the education according to their different needs. Another argument for this kind of gender separation is that society needs to cognitively educate boys and girls

differently so that the educational process does not favor one gender over the other.

Both those arguments are based on competitive concerns. The first argument assumes that a more productive society is a better society – that we become happier simply because we know more. The other argument assumes that education should primarily prepare the individual citizen for future competition. The latter is therefore an egalitarian argument in the sense that it aims at creating a leveled playing field between men and women in the competition for material resources. However, is it really better for democracy if we educate our children towards the purpose of competition rather than cooperation? Also, do we really do democracy a favor when we separate boys from girls and therefore add to the difficulties of creating common understanding, reason, and social capital? These types of questions reflect the differences between a democracy based on *equal competition* and a democracy based on *equal cooperation*.

The modern western culture is generally geared towards competition for social status as exemplified by Bill Clinton commenting on his impending surgery in March 2005. “I’ve had an unusual life. If something happens – If I get struck by lightning on the golf course today – I’d wind up ahead of where 99.99 percent of the people that ever lived” (The Norman Transcript, 2005, p. A12). In other words, the former president does not determine the quality of his life based on any references to health or social relationships but rather in reference to the relative status of his career accomplishments.

Societal status is often communicated through material objects that are an extension of the past as described by Martin Buber:

> In so far as man rests satisfied with the things that he experiences and uses, he lives in the past, and his moment has no present content. He has nothing but objects. But objects subsist in time that has been.
> The present is not fugitive and transient, but continually present and enduring. The object is not duration, but cessation, suspension, a breaking off and cutting clear and hardening, absence of relation and of present being.
> True being is lived in the present, the life of objects is in the past. (Buber, 1958, p. 12-13.)

Buber claims that it is impossible to disconnect oneself from the community – what he describes as the *thou*. We do not achieve self-actualization by trying to separate ourselves from the public sphere and the community. Self-actualization has to be based on social relationships; on how we relate to the *thou* of our lives rather than material quantifications and social separation. However, the modern western culture, with its constant emphasis on consumption and comparisons of material entities, creates an environment in which status, defined in terms of separation, becomes highly prevalent.

The notion that *time is money* is representative of a society in which everything is measured and ultimately transformed into a unit that allows us to exchange values according to the same scale (money). Max Weber (1957) relates to this notion when describing the differences between the Catholics and the Protestants in 19th century Europe. Weber cites Benjamin Franklin when describing the work ethic of the Protestants:

> Remember, that *time* is money. He that can earn the shillings a day by his labour, and goes abroad, or sits idle, one half of that day, though he spends but six pence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon *that* the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides. (Franklin in Weber, 1957, p. 48)

President Clinton, in his 1994 State of the Union Address, raised his concern with the relative competitiveness of the American workforce. Clinton claimed that "we measure every school by one high standard: Are our children learning what they need to know to compete and win in the global economy." Astin (2002) defines this in the terms of a "pegboard view" in which "the role of higher education is to produce the right-shaped people – the "pegs" – who will fill these [industrial job-] slots" (p. 93). Astin claims that there is nothing wrong with educating citizens that do well in an industrial competitive market, the problem is that the competitiveness in the international market place only has a marginal impact on many contemporary social problems.

Some scholars and politicians therefore question the usefulness of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and other competitive rankings. The New Economics Foundation (based in London) claims that economic values, as measured in GDP, do not equal life satisfaction (Time Magazine, 2005). For example, are people necessarily happy when they have to work 50 hours a week in order to pay for what are considered necessities within their society? The combination of many work hours and high price levels in a country create a "high" GDP ranking, but what is that ranking worth if the citizens do not have the time to enjoy their material "necessities" or even the company of their family members or friends?

Jigme Singye Wangchuck raised the same issue when he was crowned king of Bhutan in 1972. Wangchuck argued that his country had a low GDP but a high GNH, *Gross National Happiness*. He further argued that the people of Bhutan would remain happy if the country focused on economic self-reliance, a pristine environment, preserving and promoting the domestic culture, and democratic governance (Time Magazine, 2005). However, King Wangchuck's ideas obviously did not take root in the modern western culture in which *better* generally is defined as *more*.

The most extreme version of exchange theory works with the assumption that all the products or services people pursue have practical utility. That is, people pursue more materials in order to make their lives easier. Juliet Schor (1991) describes how Americans work more and more in order to increase their consumption. However, the desire to buy more products is primarily a function of trying to keep up with your neighbor – material competition forms the modern identity: *the reality is that you are poor.* "Consumerism is not an ahistorical trait of human nature, but a specific product of capitalism . . . the organized creation of dissatisfaction" (Schor, 1991, pp. 117-122).

In other words, our constant pursuit of more material does not necessarily make us happier; we simply act out of a fear of having less than our neighbor, of constantly being reminded about our *relative* material shortcomings.[33]

> The more of our happiness we derive from comparisons with others, the less additional welfare we get from general increases in income – which is probably why happiness has failed to keep up with economic growth. (Schor, 1991, p. 123)

We are in a sense in a *prisoners' dilemma*: we do not dare take the chance of working and consuming less because of the consequences it would have on our socially constructed identity. Only communication can take us out of that dilemma. We can only approach the problems related to status competition if we communicate in order to reduce the uncertainties and fears that drive our competitive actions. But once again, communication and social interaction take time and are often considered inefficient in the modern western culture.

However, what is an *efficient* society? Do we have an efficient society when the average citizen works so much that he or she cannot spend quality time with friends and family? Is society efficient when parents work so much that their children do not get the attention they need to feel loved and secure? Is society efficient when people are both mentally and physically worn out before they retire? Is society efficient when competition for status destroys the social bonds

[33] Erich Fromm describes this in *Escape from Freedom* (1982). He claims that the primary motivator in our society is fear – that we, for example, don't dare to break the negative spiral of material comparison.

that hold communities together?[34] These are questions that determine what is considered *rational* in society and are therefore important to the deliberative process but also to the creation of social capital. Cultivating citizens to gain advantages rather than to cooperate, to separate rather than connect, and to persuade without seeking understanding is, from that perspective, questionable.

Concluding Discussion

Who are we? Where are we going? These are fundamental questions that cannot be answered individually or through simple public opinion polls. Our communal identity and our communal destination can only be defined communally. That is, democracy, which is a communal and not an individual process, requires that we deal with these kinds of issues together – that we reach common understanding and reason through communication. This essay has examined how the modern western perspective of time often stands in conflict with democratic practices based on inclusive and egalitarian social interaction.

The most obvious temporal aspects relate to a perceived scarcity of time. The 2000 presidential election, when we barely had time to vote and count all votes, exemplified this problem. However, counting (and re-counting) close to 100

[34] Many American politicians, especially to the right, took notice of a Swedish survey showing that more than 50 percent of all Swedes thought that it was okay to stay home from work for a day when they were feeling *a little burned out and tired*. That kind of attitude does not appear rational in a society where work is more important than everything else including the long term health of each individual.

million votes may take weeks, but that is a relatively short timeframe compared to the aggregated amount time it would take to have the American public finding ways to interact more in order to find the common understanding necessary to reach communal answers to the questions of *who we are* and *where we are going*.

A common objection to the vision of a democracy based on rational deliberation and inclusive social interaction is that it is impossible to implement and that most people simply do not function (or have time to function) in that way. The high turnout in the 2004 presidential election was, for example, driven by strong feelings – pro and con – about the incumbent candidate George W. Bush and his policies[35]. Bush supporters liked his presidential leadership as well as his likeability and sense of humor while specific policy references were secondary in their decision to vote for him (CNN exit polls, 2004). This is typical of a society obsessed with time and honor. That is, it is a society where there is no time to deliberate, privately or publicly, where the focus of all debates is winning and honor, where the average sound-bite in TV news programs is less then 10 seconds; and where many Americans receive a large amount of their political information from short TV-ads. It is representative of a society in which the temporal anxiety is affecting all attitudes and behavior. The one and only thing that the voter is left with in this "time-efficient" environment is his or her emotions. The time it takes to figure out how you feel about a candidate is much shorter than the time it takes to figure out how social security needs to be adjusted to avoid bankruptcy. The

time it takes to figure out whether a candidate is the winner or looser in a Presidential debate is much shorter than the time it takes to figure out whether America need to "twist the arm" of Israel's Prime Minister in order to increase the chances of a peace in the Middle-East. Emotions, including perceptions of honor, are time-efficient; they allow us to move on with our lives without having to get involved in the time-consuming business of deliberation.

There are still instances where the scarcity of time is legitimate. The *Battle of Marathon (490 BC),* in which the Athenians "saved" the Western civilization, is an example of legitimate temporal concerns. The Athenians asked the Spartans for help fighting the Persians who were only a marathon (26 miles) away from the city of Athens. The Spartans claimed that they had to wait until after the full moon before going to battle (a few days later), which potentially could have been after Athens already were in the in the hands of the Persians. Time, in that context, really mattered: there was no time to wait.

However, it is harder to accept the Supreme Court's decision in 2000 to not count all the votes in the election due to the lack of time. What would have happened if all the inauguration ceremonies had to wait a week or two? My guess is nothing. I doubt that any other country would try to invade the U.S. because the inauguration did not take place on a specific date. I doubt that the economic activity in the U.S. suddenly would stop because the vote-counting process took a little bit longer than first planned. The Supreme Court made a reference to specific

[35] According to exit-polling presented at www.fairvote.org

dates that they treated as natural and therefore absolute. The inauguration had to take place on a certain date – anything else would be a violation of absolute standards. The specific context of this election did not matter – it was more important to honor old artificial standards dictating a specific time-schedule than to honor a commitment to democracy and count all the votes.

Yet the question we have to ask ourselves is whether we simply should surrender to the "human short-coming" of constantly chasing time. Should we settle with a political system and culture that effectively violates an egalitarian vision of democracy? Also, should it not matter that our communal decisions could be of low quality simply because we do not have time to deliberate about the issues but instead allow the decisions to be based on emotional considerations, traditions, and exclusive private interests? It may be true that things cannot be perfect, but perfect is not the same as better. Could we not at least aim for a society where everybody participates in the fundamental process of constructing meaning and reason?

Temporal aspects are important to the above questions and especially to the notion that our modern western relationship to time (and status) is "natural" – that we simply have to accept the notion that things have to happen fast or it is "inefficient. However, what is efficient from one perspective may not be efficient from another. This is an issue not only limited to the political process, but also to all aspects of social interaction.

Most medical patients, for example, are treated with drugs – the interaction between caregivers and patients is generally limited to the communication necessary to prescribe certain drugs. Even people suffering from mental diseases are prescribed drugs as the general treatment. Drugs may be expensive to purchase but they are more "efficient" then paying someone to sit down and talk to a patient for hours since salaries generally cost more than drugs. But are we really treating the mental problems with the drugs? Isn't it possible that the drugs cause other problems that cannot be measured in financial terms? That is, is it really possible to measure communicative needs financially?

A lot of people pay enormous amounts of money to be connected with someone else. Initial dating is something that traditionally took place in the social interaction of everyday life. People used to pay their bills directly to a teller – now they often pay their bills on a computer in their own private setting. People used to work with other people whether it was inside a factory or in an office – now they work with a robot, a computer or even at home. People used to watch football games in the middle of the stadium crowd – nowadays they often watch the game at home, from a skybox, or from an exclusive seat in the stadium. People used to eat inside the fast-food place – nowadays they use the drive-thru and eat at home. There are many examples of situations now disappearing in the name of "efficiency" that used to be opportunities to meet other people that potentially could develop into a serious relationship.

The other side of this issue is that the “natural” settings for social interaction are disappearing and people are paying large amounts of money just to find someone to socially interact with. A potential result of this is that the communication is getting more formalized. We don’t interact “naturally” anymore but rather plan exactly how we are supposed to interact and what we should say in those instances when we are set up with other people in an organized way. That is, formalized and organized forms of communication focus on who we are trying to *be* (strategically) rather than naturally exposing who we really *are*. This is hardly increasing our ability to understand each other and find common meaning. Our ability to interact and work with other people (especially those we don’t directly chose to interact with) decreases due to less opportunities to practice social interaction, and decreasing social interaction skills could develop into decreasing willingness to interact. It is not hard to see how we eventually could end up in a negative spiral.

The foundation of society: relationships, neighborhood cooperation, and educational processes, are all important aspects of the modern society that depend on our ability to reach common understanding and common meaning through social interaction. All the separate individual aspects of an “efficient” society connect somewhere: *the trees create a forest if one looks wide enough*. An efficient society has to be more than the sum of separate individual cases.

A change in our perception of time and especially how time and financial aspects connect in our perception of efficiency is therefore important not only for

democratic purposes but also for the well-being of our entire society. Both societies and democracies are communal entities that must be upheld through communal action – they can never be reduced to independent individual actions. That means that not everything has to be more rational merely to produce the most amount of money or privacy in the shortest possible time.

A good starting point for that kind of temporal paradigm shift is what Jeremy Rifkin refers to as a *democratization of time*: a society where time is a communal rather than an individual possession.

> In an empathetic political order, the most inalienable of all rights is the right to share equally in time. Everyone has a right of equal access to both past and future. In an empathetic time world, planning the future is a communal venture and memorizing the past a shared undertaking. There is no thought of possessing time, much less of manipulating the time of others to secure an advantage over the future. Robbing people of their past and future is an unthinkable crime in a social order where empathy is the ruling paradigm. The democratization of time becomes the overriding priority in a society where empathy substitutes for power. Temporal pyramids are eschewed and hierarchical schedules and programs are replaced with shared-time tasks as people come to view time as a collective experience rather than a tool to exercise power over others. (Rifkin, 1997, p. 196)

Limitations and Implications

One of the most obvious temporal limitations to a theoretical study is finding a "natural" ending to the study. There are always more perspectives in the next line of literature that could put the general argument in a different light or even change the conclusion. The problems related to selecting the literature as discussed early on obviously relates to this issue: there may be plenty of literature that are not mentioned in the general academic dialogue that would allow for slightly different

conclusions. The issues of social bonds and time are broad and have been discussed in a vast amount of literature at least since the days of Plato and Aristotle, which speaks to the possibility of adding an enormous amount of literature to this kind of study.

The general theoretical discussed in this dissertation is hard to test in a traditional empirical way. Claibourne and Martin (2000) tried to test how increasing organizational activity affects individual attitudes and received no support for any positive effects. However, the common reason that develops in social interaction does not appear on an individual basis - it exists in the relations between citizens. Each individual citizen does not necessary know more or think differently just because they decide to take part in a social activity – it is the connection between the citizens that changes. The general social scientific paradigm focuses on the individual and adds them up to a mass through quantifiable methods. This generally means that the bonds between the citizens are ignored; we receive data on an aggregated mass of individuals rather than on the actual group. Gebser (1985) claims that this does not mean that our society is inherently individualistic (rather than collectivistic). There is a collective mass but that mass is made up of unconnected individuals who make the aperspectival modern world both individualistic and collectivistic. The collective mass is a function of individualism.

The changes in the bonds between the citizens also do not happen in a week, a month, or a year. Our ability to connect, reach intersubjective understanding, and

eventually find common reason develops over a long period of time. Robert Putnam (1993), for example, traces the differences in social capital between Northern and Southern Italy in many hundreds of year back in time. It is therefore hard to study these changes in regular experiments where we measure effects among individuals in a relatively short period of time. The temporal anxiety makes us look for instant gratification – we want to be able to instantly report quantifiable evidence supporting our theories. However, social bonds does not change in an experiment that lasts a week or even one year, which effectively means that the results we are looking for do not give us gratification next month but rather in twenty years or even more.

There are still plenty of opportunities to further study different aspects of democratic social interaction, communication, and deliberation. Philosophers like Cohen and Estlund, sociologists like Coleman, and political scientists like Putnam have all put communication and social interaction between citizens in center of democracy. Communication scholars like Deetz and Ryfe have also studied the democratic aspects of communication but I believe that the field of communication could offer much more to this topic. Plenty of communication scholars, headed by Robert Denton, Lynda Kaid and Kathleen Jamieson, have studied the strategic aspects of political communication: what politicians do to make citizens vote for them (or in some cases not vote for the opponent). However, I believe that there are plenty of communication scholars with great experience from studying the communication taking place in for example

organizations, between medical doctors and patients, between family members, in educational settings and even between members with different cultural backgrounds that could bring interesting knowledge and perspectives to the democratic aspects of the daily interaction in society. That would in many cases require switching the focus from the traditional strategic aspects of communication (how I persuade others to do what I want) to the more communicative aspects of communicating (to communally discover good reason). It would also require that we study the connections between the citizens rather than the attitudes of each individual citizen. Ultimately, we have to recognize that democracy does not only take place in the formal settings that political scientists traditionally study. Democracy in the modern western mass society also takes place in the connections that appear in the communication of everyday life.

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