2 Participatory, liberal and electronic democracy

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Introduction

The reluctance of citizens in present-day democracies to participate in politics is a matter of considerable concern to many observers. Their concern is fed by two sources: first, this reluctance is understood to reflect an erosion of the legitimacy of these democracies; and second, it is set against the background of a normative understanding of democracy, according to which political participation is a constitutive characteristic. This understanding is implicit in the democracy concept, for government by the people, however it may operate in detail, and is quite simply inconceivable without the political participation of the citizens. However, there are widely differing ideas about the necessary extent and type of participation. They depend on the normative model that serves as our point of reference. The issue of political participation by the citizen can accordingly not be discussed in isolation; it can be meaningfully addressed only in the framework of normative models of democracy.

The first goal of the following analysis is to outline the most important democracy models and the status they confer on political participation. Our account is simplified: we restrict ourselves to a few fundamental models.[1] We proceed in three steps. First, antique democracy is described. There are several reasons for taking this as our point of departure. It was the first democracy in history and also a form of democracy in which the people literally governed themselves. It is therefore archetypal and exemplary for many modern models of participatory democracy. In addition, taking this point of reference can avoid the frequent overburdening of the democracy concept with almost arbitrary content and criteria (Eder 1998). Finally, the democracy of antiquity can provide insight into the conditions under which participatory democracy can be realized.

The second step is to describe modern democracy, generally referred to as liberal democracy, and which, from an institutional point of view, is representative democracy. We are interested not so much in providing yet another compilation of its characteristics but in comparing it with antique democracy. The intention is to demonstrate that, although both models can be understood as democracy, they imply quite different meanings of the term.

In the third step we turn to participatory and electronic democracy. The two

terms can subsume a multitude of approaches. With regard to participatory democracy, we concentrate on what is presumably the most important variant under discussion in contemporary democracy, namely deliberative democracy. As regards electronic democracy, we consider only ideas that are committed to the ideal of participatory democracy. Proponents argue that participatory democracy can be realized under the conditions of modern societies thanks to technological innovations in information and communication media: "The new challenge of direct democracy lies in the startling fact that it is now technically possible" (Budge 1996: 1). The subject of this third step of analysis is therefore participatory democracy as electronic democracy or electronic democracy as participatory democracy.

The second goal of our chapter is to discuss how realistic it is to uphold the ideal of participatory democracy under present-day circumstances, and the extent to which it can be realized even approximately. It is, of course, beyond the ambition of this paper to settle this controversial issue, but theoretical plausibilities and scholarly findings can contribute to the discussion. Without engaging in this discussion the postulate of "bringing citizens back in" can come to nothing.

Antique democracy

The antique democracy is perceived as a model in a double meaning of the word. First, in the sense that it is a descriptive model that gives a simplified account of the complex reality of Athenian democracy in antiquity and which is restricted to identifying essential characteristics. Second, in the sense of a normative model, since for many modern theoreticians and practitioners, this antique democracy has been a natural example to be emulated. In describing antique democracy we are guided by both components of the democracy concept. What are the essential characteristics of the *demos* and the *kratos* in the original form of democracy? We begin with a formal definition of the demos, going on to deal with the kratos. Certain normatively relevant characteristics of antique democracy are then discussed in greater detail, and in this context we return to a consideration of the demos.

In the democracy of antiquity, the demos included all citizens, i.e. all male inhabitants of Attica with political rights. When in antiquity it was said that the demos rules, two meanings have to be distinguished: first, it meant rule by the mass (*plethos*), the many (*polloí*) or the people (demos) and not by the few, let alone an individual. Second, the equality (*isótes*) of citizens was emphasized. Poor and rich citizens, less well and well-educated citizens had equal part in government regardless of class and education. In the antique understanding of democracy, political equality between citizens is of decisive importance, and historically the isonomy concept (*isonomía*) to denote the system of government based on the equality of citizens precedes the democracy concept (Meier 1993; Bleicken 1994; Eder 1998; Raaflaub 1998).

If the notions that the people should rule and that all are equal in the system

of rule are considered fundamental to democracy (Bleicken 1994), it begs the question of how they have been institutionalized. And the question of institutionalization concerns the "kratos components" of the democracy concept. The structure of the democratic system of government in antique Athens was based on four institutions: the assembly of the people (*ekklesía*), the council of the five hundred (*boulé*), the magistrates (*archaí*) and the people's courts (*dikasteria*).[2] The basis institution and center of government was the ekklesía. Every Athenian citizen had the right to attend and speak. And the vote of every citizen had equal weight. The ekklesía made all important decisions concerning the common affairs of the polis, and which were binding on the polis. The ekklesía met at least thirty times a year for this purpose. The number of participants presumably varied between a tenth and a fifth of the citizenry. Although only part of the citizenry was ever present in the ekklesía, it was also regarded as being the demos as a whole (Welwei 1999). This is expressed in the formula with which the decisions on the ekklesía were introduced: "demos and *boulé* have decided."

The council of the five hundred (boulé) had a double function (Hansen 1991; Bleicken 1994). In the first place, it was to ensure the efficient functioning of the ekklesía. It achieved this, for example, by preparing every matter to be put to the ekklesía, drawing up a "preliminary decree" (*proboúleuma*) which provided the basis for debate in the ekklesía. Second, the boulé directed and supervised the entire activities of the magistrates (archaí). In order to perform these functions, at least part of the boulé was in permanent session, thus ensuring government by the demos even when the ekklesía was not meeting. This naturally presupposed that the boulé was a direct expression of the demos and could not dissociate itself from the latter in its activities. This was ensured by a number of arrangements. All councilors (*bouleutés*) were replaced each year by lot, no citizen could belong to the boulé for two years in a row or more than twice in his life. The boulé was therefore a committee randomly selected from among the demos, and there was no possibility of it giving rise to a governing elite with corresponding ruling knowledge (Meier 1993; Welwei 1999).

We will not go into detail about the magistrates (archaí) and people's courts (dikasteria), but it should be noted that the archaí and the judges (*dikastai*) of the dikasteria were newly appointed each year and were also chosen by lot.[3] These institutional arrangements ensured that the demos itself did literally rule. In a famous passage from his *Politics* (1317a40–1317b7, see also 1261a31ff.), Aristotle described taking turns at ruling and being ruled as the essential feature of democracy.

The permanent rotation of rulers and ruled, the choice of office-holders by lot, the mass magistracy with relatively few powers (Bleicken 1994) and, especially, the concentration of the power to make binding decisions for the polis in the ekklesía realized what modern democracy theory calls the identity of rulers and ruled.

Finally, we look at certain aspects of the reality of antique democracy that are very important for current participatory democracy theories: (a) the extent of participation by citizens, (b) the nature of political opinion-building, (c) the nature of the decisions made, and, (d) the demos as a collective subject.

If Athenian democracy was to function at all, an extraordinary level of political participation by citizens was needed, and was, in fact, given. Every year 500 councilors and about 700 magistrates were required, and a further 700 or so magistrates were active for the Maritime League. If we include the 6,000 citizens from among whom the officers of the courts of justice were chosen by lot, we have a total of about 8,000 citizens who held and exercised public office in the polis each year. Given an approximate total of 35,000 citizens this amounts to almost a quarter. This list does not include participation in the ekklesía and activities in the communities (*demoi*). The enormous extent of political engagement on the part of Athenian citizens is incontrovertible. According to Meier (1993: 491f) "the expenditure of effort by the Athenians is almost incomprehensible," and "it is a mystery how political life concretely related to work." Hansen (1991: 313) takes a similar view: "The level of political activity by the citizens of Athens is unparalleled in world history, in terms of number, frequency and level of participation."

One of the most characteristic features of the reality of Athenian democracy was the extensive discussion on polis affairs by citizens in public places. This includes conversations in the marketplace (*agora*), and especially oratory and deliberation in the institutionalized meetings like the ekklesía and the boulé. Bleicken (1994: 341) even describes the freedom of speech in assemblies, *isegoría*, as the "key element of democracy" (see also Hansen 1991; Raaflaub 1998). This practice of participation in oratory and deliberation also determines the type of opinion-building by the demos and the type of decisions made. The will of the demos was formed through joint deliberation by the physically present demos in the ekklesía. To this extent one can indeed speak of a collective will of the demos that is more than an aggregation of individual opinions. A decision adopted by the ekklesía was an outcome of the deliberations and accordingly constituted an authentic expression of the collective will.

The principle that guided deliberations was the common good of the polis. This is shown, for example, by a passage in Euripides (1970: 435 ff.), which cites the following introductory formula for discussion in the ekklesía: "Who wishes to bring a proposal before the assembly that is useful for the polis?" In surviving records of discussions in the ekklesía, the contribution of a speaker is repeatedly justified in terms of the utility (*symphéron*) for the polis, and this utility for the polis is valued more highly than utility for the individual. What is useful for the polis is also seen as equitable. If we express these notions in the language of contemporary democracy theory, contributions by speakers were legitimate only if they appealed to the common good and were therefore non-particular in nature.

The institution of the ekklesía and the opinion-building that takes place there had another far-reaching consequence. From the perspective of each and every participant, the communal and public nature of deliberation in the ekklesía involved a limited and observable number of actually present citizens. He could ascribe every spoken contribution to a specific citizen and attribute every decision to the present gathering of citizens including himself. The demos of

Athenian democracy was thus constituted not as an imagined collective subject as is the case in modern nation states but as a tangible collective subject. And this satisfies a demand associated with the democracy concept. The subject of government should not be merely an aggregate of single citizens but the demos as a whole.

The experience of commonality was not limited to the ekklesía. Political discussions were conducted in other public places, the marketplace, gymnasiums, etc. If one considers the relatively small number of citizens, it is highly probable that people came across acquaintances on public occasions and in the exercise of public offices. This commonality experienced in public places was underpinned by the marked ethnic-cultural homogeneity of the citizenry. This homogeneity was grounded in a long, organic and unquestioningly accepted tradition which was highly valued as such by Athenians.

Modern democracy

Institutional and procedural characteristics of modern democracy

Modern democracy – generally termed liberal democracy – differs fundamentally from the antique democracy. Before we address these differences, some of its characteristics shall be considered. This can be done rather succinctly. According to Dahl (1989) it is the result of the "second democratic transformation," initiated by the extraordinary change of scale (territorial space, number of citizens). As a result, the principle of democracy merged with the principle of representation. And this had profound institutional and procedural consequences. Whereas in antique democracy the *ekklesía* was the institutional focus, in modern democracy it is the parliament and the government. In both institutions representatives perform the business of governing. Since the representation principle is not a democratic one per se, it gains its democratic character only through the specific selection of the representatives of the people by the people. This is done through elections, and elections are democratic only if the voter has alternatives, if all citizens who wish to take part can indeed do so, and if every vote has equal weight. These criteria are met in liberal democracy by the institution of periodic and competitive elections, generally implemented by the constitution.

The institutionalization of modern democracy through elections and through parliaments and governments has a far-reaching impact on what democracy means, transforming it dramatically. Sartori (1987: 86) puts it tersely and almost cynically: "Since in order to have democracy we must have, to some degree, a government of the people, let us immediately ask: When do we find a 'governing people,' the demos in the act of the role of governing? The answer is: at elections."

The mere fact that the demos elects representatives who take on the business of governing is, however, insufficient to satisfy a reasonably demanding understanding of democracy. If, after election, these representatives were willing and

able to govern only according to their own wishes without any regard for the demos, the idea of government by the people would be completely devoid of sense. It must therefore be ensured with the institution of elections that representatives rule in accordance with the will of the demos. The concept of responsiveness (Dahl 1971; Fuchs 1998) has become established to describe this state of affairs. According to the theory of liberal democracy, responsiveness is to be structurally generated through the periodicity of elections and the possibility of a change in government. The prospect of the next elections obliges the rulers to take heed of the opinion of the demos in their own interest.

The responsiveness of rulers to those ruled introduces a completely new criterion to the semantics of democracy. It played no role in antique democracy. If there is identity of ruler and ruled, there can perforce be no difference between them. But where elected representatives are in government, such a difference is almost structurally inbuilt. The situation between rulers and ruled thus changes fundamentally in modern democracy. This change naturally affects the meaning of political participation by citizens. Politics is concerned with regulating the common affairs of a polis or a state through generally binding decisions. If in liberal democracy this decision-making activity is performed by representatives – even though elected by the people – this must drastically modify the concept of popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty can no longer consist in the participation of the demos in governing but only in the control of government action by the demos, or – which is the same seen from another angle – the responsiveness of the rulers to the will of the demos. The institution that is to generate this responsiveness structurally is, as we have seen, periodic and competitive elections. This considerably reduces the standing of political participation by the citizens, which assumes quite a new character. Whereas in antique democracy participation by the citizens in government was both means and end, in liberal democracy it is now only a means to an end. Under the second democratic transformation popular government is thus no longer direct participation in government by the people but the choice of rulers by the people and the responsiveness of the rulers to the people.

Comparison between antique and modern democracy

Some important differences between antique and modern democracy have been dealt with in the preceding section. They include the nature of participation by the demos in government. In antique democracy, the demos was directly involved, one could even say that through annual and mass rotation in ruling and being ruled and through the institution of the ekklesía, the demos not only participated in government, but governed itself. In modern democracy, in contrast, which is representative democracy, there is only indirect participation in government, in that the demos chooses representatives to govern, and – through the institution of periodic and competitive elections – imposes more or less strong constraints on the latter to act in accordance with the will of the demos.

The type of participation in government partly determines the extent of par-

ticipation. Since elections do not take place very often and are concerned not so much with policy content than with the selection of representatives, political participation by citizens in modern democracies can be described as occasional and limited. But participation in elections does not exclude engagement on the part of citizens in political parties and collaboration in civil society voluntary associations. In fact, however, only tiny minorities are involved. Precisely this state of affairs together with the declining participation in elections to be observed in many countries is the source of concern for many observers mentioned in the introduction and which has led to the postulate of "bringing citizens back in."

Another important difference between antique and modern democracy lies in the nature of opinion-building. In modern democracies, on account of the scale involved, no joint deliberation by the demos in assemblies occurs. For the individual citizen, political opinion-building is largely monologistic, or takes place in very restricted communication in the primary life-world. The demos as a whole can at best be reached through the mass media. And something like a discussion occurs there. But it is not discussion among citizens but advocatory discussion among journalists and representatives that is conducted in public and, perhaps, for the public. Through this type of political opinion-building, anything resembling a deliberatively constituted will of the demos can scarcely come into being. The will of the demos in a liberal democracy is accordingly a factor calculated on the basis of procedural rules – primarily the majority rule. The basis for applying this procedure is the preferences and interests of individual citizens, factors largely exogenous to the democratic process. Anything in the way of a common good can therefore hardly be the outcome of these processes and is reduced to a non-binding, rhetorical formula.

In what sense can we speak of a demos at all in a modern democracy? The demos is a political community and, like every community, it constitutes itself through two mechanisms (Fuchs 2000b). First, by drawing a boundary that decides who belongs and who does not; and, second, through commonalities among those who belong, which provide a starting point for more or less strong identification of members with the community. In both antique and modern democracy, boundary drawing is very exclusive. Since Pericles' 451/450 BC citizenship law, only a male resident of Attica whose parents were born Athenians could be an Athenian citizen. In modern democracy the boundary is drawn by the law relating to nationality.

In antique democracy there was further exclusion within the population of Attica. Citizenship was denied to women, slaves and so-called metics (*metoikoi*). The latter were free foreigners living and working in Attica. This internal exclusion is one of the main points of criticism extended by contemporary analysts of antique democracy, and in this regard the modern understanding of democracy differs considerably from the view taken by antiquity. Dahl (1971, 1989) considers the inclusion of all members of the social community in the demos as one of the most important criteria of a fully developed democracy. This is likely to be one of the few aspects where modern democracy can be regarded as being "more democratic" than antique democracy.

A crucial difference between the demos in antique and modern democracy has already been mentioned in discussing political opinion-building. The demos of antique democracy was a real community formed through interaction between physically present citizens in public places. This interaction was based on an extraordinarily homogeneous culture with shared values and modes of behavior. These commonalities were permanently manifested in interaction, thus stabilizing the political community. This real community was one of the preconditions for the demos to be able to constitute itself in actuality as the collective subject of government. Because every single citizen had the experience of being a member of a demos he could comprehend what it means to be involved in discussing and determining the affairs of the polis together with the other members.

In modern societies these preconditions are not met or, at best, are met only in a very diluted form. The community of modern societies is characterized by pronounced ethnic-cultural plurality, and its members are spread over the extensive territory of a state. For the individual, other citizens are therefore necessarily strangers; he knows only that they exist. This knowledge is underpinned by extremely selective encounters in public situations and by reports about other citizens in the mass media. But if they are to be understood as citizens and thus classed as belonging to a political community, this community must exist. And it can exist only as an imagined community, not a real one as in antique Athens. But such an imagined community, too, must be moored to something substantial that, first, embraces ethnic-cultural plurality and, second, draws a boundary. In European nation states this is achieved by the idea of the nation, and the nation is characterized above all by factors like a shared language, history, tradition and territory (Smith 1991; Fuchs 2000b). Such a political community, whose collective identity is that of a nation, is a cognitively and affectively highly contingent construction. And it is questionable whether this construction can be maintained under the conditions of globalization (see final section).

The comparison between modern and antique democracy undertaken in the previous section makes one thing clear: if antique democracy is seen as the ideal, modern democracy is indeed a pale imitation of this model. Instead of actual self-government, there is only choice of the rulers by the ruled and more or less effective control of government action by the demos. Instead of joint and deliberative opinion-building by the demos, there are at best advocatory discussions in the mass media limited to a small selection of subjects that need to be decided. Instead of an authentic popular will that substantively constitutes a common good, the decisions made in liberal democracies are a procedural aggregation of particular group interests. In modern democracy the demos is not a collective subject but a collection of individual subjects, and, at best, an imagined, i.e. abstract community. Because of these considerable differences, Meier (1993: 478) asks the skeptical question: "In all, it [Athenian democracy] was so characterized by peculiarities that we must question whether our democracy deserves this name at all when compared with the antique model." We will take this skepticism a step further with the postulate that modern democracy is undemanding in comparison with the antique ideal.

This matter of fact can occasion different responses. One possibility is to problematize the antique democracy as a normative reference point and to claim normative independence or even superiority for liberal democracy. Another possibility is to uphold the normative ideal of a participatory democracy. This does not necessarily mean confronting the reality of liberal democracy with a fundamentally unrealizable ideal and thus adopting a resigned stance. Some proponents of participatory democracy seek to show what it means under modern conditions and how it can possibly be realized. This is the perspective that is interesting in the context of our analysis and one we will return to. First of all, however, we must recall certain restrictions that are imposed on greater political participation by citizens in a modern society.

The complexity of society and restrictions on political participation

The normative question of how a political system should be designed can never be answered with any finality by referring to realization problems. One can stand by normative ideas, even counterfactually, for very good reasons. However, such realization problems cannot fail to affect the justification of normative positions.

The second democratic transformation, which led to the formation of liberal and thus representative democracy, was not the chance outcome of a historical process. As we have already described, it was made necessary by a change in scale (states covering large territories, a public amounting to millions) (Dahl 1989). This change in scale does not limit the possibility of political participation per se. But if it is not a matter of some participation or other but of self-government, we have quite a different state of affairs. Self-government means that the demos itself actually rules, and, by definition, this means not via representatives. And such self-government by the demos presumably requires the presence of citizens in assemblies all the more if opinion-building is to proceed in the form of deliberations. However, the bigger the territory and the greater the number of citizens, the more implausible ruling without representatives and ruling in assemblies becomes.

In Dahl's (1989) concept of the second democratic transformation, one decisive characteristic of modern societies has not yet been taken into account: societal complexity. A modern society is a functionally differentiated society, in which the primary societal subsystems have to perform specific services for the others. The political system, as we know, is responsible for controlling functions, for providing infrastructure, for ensuring internal and social security, etc. This is associated with a decision-making activity that can no longer be compared at all with antique democracy as regards the complexity of problems. If these services are to be performed, the political system needs to be differentiated into professionalized roles. And if this is the case, self-government is no longer possible unless one is prepared to accept dedifferentiation and to renounce the gains in effectiveness and increases in options associated with the growth in complexity. It is questionable whether this would be in keeping with the will of

the demos. In accordance with Sartori (1987: 65), the argument can be summed up and formalized in the following proposition: the intensity of self-government attainable stands in inverse relation to (a) the extent of the territory, (b) the number of citizens, (c) the quantity of decisions, and, (d) the complexity of the problems.

We now shift our perspective from the systemic to the individual level and consider the rationality of political participation under the conditions of modern societies. As argumentative background we draw on rational choice theory. This theory assumes that, in an action situation, an actor chooses the alternative which he expects to bring the greatest benefit at the lowest cost. These choices are made under situational and structural constraints. At least three constraints can be distinguished. Identifying a benefit of one's own political participation involves information costs, and in complex societies the corresponding expenditure of time and energy is systematically insufficient (Downs 1957). If a benefit can nonetheless be identified, the problem arises as to the significance of personal participation. In elections, for example, the weight of an individual's vote in an electorate of millions is infinitesimal. The probability of actually bringing the preferred party to power through personal participation in the election and, by this means, to realize the perceived benefit, is accordingly almost zero.

But this raises the question of opportunity costs, i.e. of lost benefits owing to action alternatives not taken. In a modern society, the realization of personal life plans and action goals and the achievement of the highest possible social status depend much more strongly than in antique society on subsystems other than politics. Investing the scarce resources of time and energy in actions in other subsystems would therefore be more rational for the majority of citizens. There is empirical evidence to support this theoretical assumption. In the analysis by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995: 129), the three most important reasons stated by American respondents for their political inactivity were the following: "I don't have enough time" (39 percent), "I should take care of myself and my family before I worry about the community or nation" (34 percent), "The important things of my life have nothing to do with politics" (20 percent). The findings of the comparative World Values Survey point in a similar direction. In comparison with other spheres of life, the subjective importance of politics is lowest in all Western countries (the data are not provided here; see Fuchs 2000a; van Deth 2000). Most important were family, friends and work. From a normative point of view it is a matter of concern that leisure time is seen as much more important than politics. This alone indicates that it is likely to be difficult to mobilize time resources invested in leisure activities for political participation.

Participation in self-government by the demos would mean comprehensive and everyday engagement on the part of citizens. And, as we see it, reality imposes restrictions in modern societies that are difficult to overcome. But if participatory democracy theory wishes to do more than uphold an ideal without consequences, it cannot entirely eschew discussion on how such participation can be motivated and institutionalized under contemporary societal conditions.

Participatory and electronic democracy

Participatory democracy

Unlike the models of democracy discussed so far, participatory democracy is a purely normative model. Of the wide spectrum of approaches that can be classed under this heading, we concentrate on those that have played a prominent role in the democracy theory discussion over the past two decades, and which focus on the notion of deliberation. Specifically, we will be looking at the theory of strong democracy put forward by Barber (1984), at Habermas's (1992) theory of discoursive democracy, and at the directly-deliberative polyarchy theory of Cohen and Sabel (1997). The three theories overlap in important aspects.

Their starting point is criticism of existing liberal democracy. It proceeds from two perspectives, normative and practical. From a normative point of view, they object that liberal democracy is now hardly in keeping with a reasonably demanding interpretation of the democracy principle. From a practical point of view they presume that liberal democracy confronts problems no longer amenable to solution within its institutional framework and by its procedures alone. The most important problem they see is the unquestioned dominance of particular interests in politics, which in the long run erode the foundations of the democratic process itself:

> Liberal democracy is based on premises about human nature, knowledge, and politics that are genuinely liberal but that are not intrinsically democratic. Its conception of the individual and of individual interest undermines the democratic practices upon which both individuals and their interests depend.
>
> (Barber 1984: 4)

Habermas (1992) stresses that the social and political integration of modern societies can no longer be effected only by systemic mechanisms and the bargaining of particular interests, but needs also to be placed on a communicative basis. According to these approaches, participatory democracy is thus the normatively desirable and the practically necessary form of democracy; it is: "desirable both in itself and as a problem solver" (Cohen and Sabel 1997: 314). The extent to which it is also possible, that is to say, actually implementable, is a moot point. We will leave this question to one side for the moment and turn to the normative dimension.

It has been indicated that the two central characteristics of all three variants of participatory democracy are the directness of participation by citizens in governing and deliberation in political opinion formation. Another common feature is the attempt to adapt the model to the conditions of modern societies. This is shown in the following three definitions by Barber. The first describes unrestricted participatory democracy:

> Participatory democracy [. . .] denotes the form in which the people literally rule themselves, directly and participatorily, day in and day out, in all matters that affect them in their common lives [. . .] To its advocates [. . .] participatory democracy involves extensive and active engagement of citizens in the self-governing process; it means government not just for but by and of the people.
>
> (Barber 1995: 921).

The correspondence between this definition and antique democracy is obvious. The contrasting form of democracy is the liberal democracy of modern society: "A form of government in which some of the people, chosen by all, govern in all public matters all of the time" (Barber 1984: XIV). Barber concedes that liberal democracy can no longer be replaced by a participatory democracy in the unconditional form, and therefore weakens his normative requirements, using the term "strong democracy" to denote a realistic model of participatory democracy: "A form of government in which all of the people govern themselves in at least some public matters at least some of the time" (Barber 1984: XIV). We will be looking at the implications of this normative dilution of the ideal of pure participatory democracy as it existed in antiquity at a later point. It is not quite so clear how we are to understand direct participation by the citizens in Habermas' (1992) and Cohen and Sabel's (1997) variants. Their argumentation tends to remain on a fundamental and normative level.

After directness, the second focus of the three theoretical approaches under consideration is deliberation. Two basic justifications are offered. The first is purely normative. With explicit or implicit reference to the ideal of participatory democracy in antiquity, it is postulated that a collective decision by representatives and, above all, a collective will of the demos should be brought about by deliberation. The aggregative procedure of liberal democracy is thus to be confronted by the deliberative procedure. The other justification is a combination of normative and practical arguments. On the one hand it is stated that democratic politics are controlled by a collective will of the demos and that its purpose ought to be the pursuit of common goods. On the other hand, it is realistically stated that modern society is characterized by a plurality of particular interests and that there is no going back on this "fact of pluralism" (Rawls 1993). The conclusion is that the multiplicity of particular interests is only the starting point for the democratic process and that they are to be transformed by joint deliberation. Barber (1984: 119, 173) states accordingly: "The stress on transformation is at the heart of the strong democratic conception of politics [. . .] at the heart of strong democracy is talk." Through this strong democratic talk,[4] the isolated citizens of liberal democracy are once again to form a community and thus restore the demos as a collective subject of self-government. Habermas (1992) goes a step further, defining democracy as the legal institutionalization of discursive opinion and will-formation by the citizens. Cohen (1989) offers a similar definition. He sees a democracy as an association whose affairs are governed by the public deliberation of its members.

The status of deliberation is thus extraordinarily high, and we must ask what exactly it means and how it can effect the claimed transformation. Barber (1984: 173) starts with a negative definition: “talk is not mere speech.” Although he is referring to modern liberal democracy, the reduction of talk to speech can in a certain fashion be said to be a problem of antique democracy, too. The assembly of the people included up to 6,000 citizens, and no real discussion was therefore possible. In actual fact, it consisted of a series of speeches that did not interrelate in any great measure. It was more a matter of convincing those citizens present to adopt a certain view than of reaching agreement among the citizens. And deliberative procedures are concerned with the latter. The basic postulate is that deliberations proceed in argumentative form, which means the systematic exchange of information and reasons between the parties (Cohen 1989). A further postulate is that deliberations are inclusive and have to be public: no-one must be excluded and everyone who may possibly be affected by the decisions to be taken must have the same opportunity of access to the deliberations.[5] Habermas (1992) concurs with this characterization of deliberative procedures, adding another aspect: in deliberative procedures reasons are legitimate only if they are impartial and can therefore, in principle, be accepted by everyone. According to Habermas, it is this criterion of impartiality that distinguishes the discourse from bargaining. He sees bargaining as a procedure of compromise formation between particular interests, which as such are not at all transformed through the procedure.

This understanding of deliberation shows an interesting situation. In the present-day variant of participatory democracy as compared with the antique variant, directness is normatively weakened whereas deliberation is strengthened. This makes it all the more necessary to enquire into the realization and implementation of participatory democracy as deliberative democracy. We will deal with this issue and then go on to look at electronic democracy.

Cohen and Sabel (1997: 334–337) devote a separate section to the question. In their model of a directly-deliberative polyarchy, collective decisions are made through public deliberation in public arenas open to all citizens. However, they do not explain exactly what these public arenas are and how they can be set up. The institutional proposal made by the authors is primarily a change in the role of existing institutions like legislatures, courts, executives and administrative agencies. This change in role consists of the enablement of directly-deliberative arenas and provision of an infrastructure for the exchange of information between these arenas and political units at various levels. We see this not so much as a proposal for the implementation of deliberative democracy but as a further postulate.

Although Habermas (1992) takes the institutionalization of discursive opinion and will-formation as the central criterion of his democracy concept, his definition of this institutionalization remains curiously vague. He works with the figure of a complex communication cycle between institutionalized deliberations, elections and informally formed public opinions. This communication cycle is ultimately to lead to decisions made in the politico-administrative

system being linked back to the "communicatively generated power" (Habermas 1992: 362). This communicative power is generated in an autonomous public sphere through deliberation. The autonomous public has its basis in a civil society equally distant from state and market. Its structure is composed of a network of voluntary associations. The important point for our context is that the autonomous public and its civil-society basis can be institutionalized through legal norms only to a very limited degree. Habermas (1992: 366) therefore logically has recourse to an accommodating political culture and socialization: "Precisely deliberatively filtered political communications have to rely on a liberal political culture and on an enlightened political socialization, and especially on the initiatives of opinion-building associations, which to a large extent constitute and regenerate themselves spontaneously." But at least a political culture cannot be deliberately institutionalized.

The relatively most concrete proposals for the institutionalization of deliberative democracy are made by Barber (1984). He suggests an institutional framework for strong democracy, and one of the criteria for the institutions is that they should be "realistic and workable" (Barber 1984: 202). At this point we will not deal in great detail with the entire institutional setting but consider only the most important elements. With reference to Arendt and Tocqueville, Barber regards it as absolutely essential for strong democratic talk to be institutionalized at the level of small local units. This is where citizens can deliberate in direct interaction about matters that directly concern them, thus acquiring and practicing civic competence. For this purpose he proposes so-called neighborhood assemblies. In these assemblies not only local problems could be discussed; they could also provide forums for the discussions of regional and national referendums and initiatives. Such neighborhood assemblies can be established purposefully and to this extent they are a realistic proposal. But Barber (1984: 273) himself points to a serious problem: "Neighborhood assemblies offer vital forums for ongoing political talk, but they reach only local constituencies and can divide and parochialize both regions and nation as a whole." For this reason, strong democratic institutions are also needed at the regional and, especially, at the national levels. Only they can ensure that the demos participates in discussions and decisions that affect all equally. Barber (1984: 273ff., 281ff.) proposes electronic town meetings and national referenda and initiatives as such institutions. The latter two institutions play an important role in the discussion on electronic democracy, and we will be dealing with them in that context. The problem of motivation, extremely important for the institutionalization of a deliberative democracy, has already been discussed.

The concept of electronic democracy

Expectations for electronic democracy

The concept of electronic or digital democracy subsumes a multiplicity of different approaches and analyses concerned with how the new information and

communication media affect modern democracies and what opportunities they offer for it.[6] For our purposes, we can reduce the complexity of this discussion to two criteria. We first limit ourselves to the aspects that are relevant for the model of participatory democracy, and second, we follow Kaase (2002: 268) in assuming that the technical, political and economic problems involved in implementing an electronic democracy have largely been resolved. This assumption is prerequisite to any consideration of the participatory potential of electronic democracy.

Owing to the technological focus of electronic democracy, it cannot be an independent model. The technological innovations are of value only in the framework of traditional models of democracy (Bellamy 2000; van Dijk 2000). Our point of reference is the model of participatory democracy. This model repeatedly confronts the objection that it cannot be realized under the conditions of modern society. And despite the claim by some proponents of this normative model that it can indeed be put into practical effect, this has, in my opinion, yet to be convincingly demonstrated. This is the case with regard to institutionalization at least.

Now technological developments in the information and communication media seem able to eliminate or at least considerably reduce structural obstacles to the realization of a participatory democracy in modern societies. There are at least high expectations in this direction. In the introduction we quoted Budge (1996), who claims that, with the new media, we face the startling fact that direct democracy is now technically possible. Barber argues in the same vein, albeit more cautiously:

> new telecommunications technologies have offered the possibility of interaction among widely dispersed citizens across space and time in a fashion that encourages new experiments with participation. Aristotle had argued that the ideal republic was small enough that a man could walk across it in a single day, thus ensuring regular participation in the assembly by all citizens. Interactive telecommunications technologies, which in effect permit the hundreds of millions of citizens of a mass society to be in touch without leaving their television screen, raise the possibility of "teledemocracy" and "virtual communities."
>
> Barber (1995: 922)

Grossman (1995: 33) has the most ambitious expectations: "Today's telecommunications technology made it possible for our political system to return to the roots of Western democracy as it was first practiced in the city-states of ancient Greece. Tomorrow's telecommunications technology almost certainly will." Can participatory democracy be restored in modern times in the form of electronic democracy? Before discussing this question, we need to systematize the most important expectations for electronic democracy that technology has fostered.

Dahl (1989) has described the change in spatial dimensions as one of the causal factors in the development of representative democracy. And this factor

space becomes relative because of rapid and direct communication via computer networks (Zittel 2001). A virtual space comes into being that overcomes the restrictions of real space (Abramson, Arterton and Orren 1988; Negroponte 1995). Space loses its physical quality and becomes merely a metaphor for a "place" of electronic communication among dispersed individuals. This relativization or perhaps even the death of space can, in conjunction with other technological properties, fundamentally change modern democracy. These properties include the multiplication and decentralization of information stocks which citizens can access rapidly and almost at will. But perhaps the most important is the possibility of interactive communication between citizens in virtual space.

The two following expectations for electronic democracy as participatory democracy can be formulated on the basis of these technological possibilities. The first is concerned with the criterion of directness and the second with the criterion of deliberation in the model of participatory democracy we have been discussing:

1. Through technologically facilitated referendums, citizens can again be comprehensively and permanently involved in government (kratos component).
2. Through interactive communication between citizens in virtual space, a common will of the demos can be formed deliberatively (demos component).

The following two sections discuss how plausible and realistic these two expectations for electronic democracy are.

Direct participation by citizens in government

Barber (1984) describes referendums at the national level as one of the most important forms of institutionalization for participatory democracy in modern society. There were, of course, referendums before the innovations in the electronic media. In the discussion on electronic democracy, these media have certainly quite rightly been considered a particularly effective means for conducting such referendums (Slaton 1992; Budge 1996). At the press of a button or the click of a mouse, citizens scattered over a wide area can take part in referendums and thus in political decision-making. For the citizens themselves, this participation is low-cost, and the organization of such referendums requires comparatively little effort. In principle, this permits comprehensive and lasting participation by citizens in government. But the technological facilitation of referendums changes nothing in the nature and implications of this instrument. This is already the subject of ongoing discussion. We will look at a number of aspects important for the normative benchmarks of participatory democracy.

One aspect is a problem caused by societal complexity and the associated fact that the political system has to perform a broad range of services for society. This means that the quantity of generally binding decisions that have to be made

has reached enormous proportions. Previously, we formulated the postulate that the intensity of achievable self-government by the demos is inversely proportional to the quantity of decisions. Barber (1984: XIV) ultimately accepts this, defining his strong democracy "as a form of government in which all of the people govern themselves in at least some public matters at least some of the time." He has thus adapted his model of participatory democracy to reality. On the other hand, this normative weakening means that the idea of self-government is largely abandoned and reduced to a greater or lesser degree of citizen participation in decision-making processes, which are largely carried out by elected representatives. The possibility of increasing the quantity of referendums through the use of electronic media does perhaps reduce the problem somewhat, but not fundamentally. Budge (1996) suggests therefore that referendums be restricted to fifty important laws adopted by parliament. But from the point of view of information and discussion on the relevant issues, this number is still very high. Above all: since citizens have widely varying preferences, it is not possible to establish which problems and which laws are particularly important (Kaase 2002).

A second aspect has to do with societal complexity: the difficulty and interrelatedness of the problems with which politics has to deal. This calls for expert knowledge, the building of compromises between differing positions, and the development of policy packages. And it is for this reason that the political system has differentiated itself as a functional system. Referendums, however, are concerned with single issues and, in voting, citizens almost always have to rely on inadequate information, all the more so as the number of referendums increases. Budge (1996) answers this objection by pointing out that professional politicians have no "monopoly of expertise," and, as far as Switzerland is concerned, Kirchgässner *et al.* (1999) note that members of parliament and average citizens do not differ substantially in the level of their political information. We have some doubt whether this claim is empirically tenable, and its applicability in general terms would in any case have to be empirically demonstrated. But the point at issue is not a monopoly of expertise and the general political knowledge of representatives but the specific knowledge of political and administrative entities about certain issues and about the possibility of aggregating different policies through appropriate procedures to create meaningful packages.

A third aspect is motivation for participation in referendums. The normative postulate of self-government can be approached only if the institutional possibilities are available and if they are also used by citizens. As we have seen, there are systematic restrictions on the political participation of citizens in modern societies owing to factors such as information and opportunity costs and the relatively low status of politics. If this thesis is valid, it would also hold true for referendums. The astonishingly low average participation by Swiss citizens in referendums (Kirchgässner *et al.* 1999) certainly does not contradict this thesis. This state of affairs raises questions about the essential democratic postulate of equal weight for every vote, a postulate that is much more strongly redeemed when it comes to electing representatives. Sometimes very small minorities

make binding decisions for correspondingly large majorities. This intensifies the nature of the decision as a zero-sum game (Sartori 1987), for compromise building between differing or opposing interests is not possible in referendums. The argument that every citizen can participate is, in my view, not sound. It forces the citizen to obtain costly information, for without it he has no way of identifying his own interest in the given issue, and his vote would then be senseless.[7] This is relevant above all against the background of the alternative of leaving the identification and enforcement of one's interests to elected representatives. The basis for this election is another matter that is not at issue here.

A fourth aspect is the blurring of the democratic logic of a representative system. Such systems are based on the clear accountability of elected representatives in the political decision-making system for their actions and the outcomes of these actions. The democratic mechanism of re-election or voting functions only through undiluted accountability. And it is primarily in this mechanism that the exercise of popular sovereignty in representative democracies is grounded. The more referendums are conducted, the more of a problem accountability becomes.

A fifth and last aspect leads us over to the demos component, which is to be discussed in the next section. According to Sartori (1987), referendum democracy is a direct democracy of isolated individuals and not of interacting citizens. But this interaction is the precondition for constituting a demos with a collective will, and it is a basic postulate of participatory democracy.

The interactive constitution of a common will of the demos

If a referendum democracy is a direct democracy of isolated individuals and not of interacting citizens, this does not satisfy the normative requirements of a participatory democracy. Emphatic advocates of the referendum instrument are aware of this problem and suggest linking votes on political issues in referendums to prior discussion (Kirchgässner *et al.* 1999). Switzerland can be cited as a practical example of this procedure, and the authors mentioned claim that, by a number of criteria, Switzerland performs better than purely representative democracies. We will not go into the validity of this assertion. But for the purposes of our analysis, this linkage involves a further inverse relationship: the more strongly referendums are tied to prior discussion, the fewer referendums can be held, and the less self-government by the demos can be realized by means of referendum. From a normative point of view, technologically facilitated referendums are thus almost without importance.

But regardless of how direct participation by the demos in making generally binding decisions is conceived and implemented, two questions first need to be answered: To what extent can electronic democracy contribute to the interactive constitution of a common will of the demos? And to what extent can it contribute to constituting the demos as a community? We will consider each in turn.

In antique democracy, the collective will of the demos was formed in joint discussion among its members in a real place. If one considers that only a

minority of Athenians ever took part in discussion in the ekklesía, its structure can be characterized in brief as some-to-all communication in which all participants were physically present. The will of the demos constituted thus can be regarded as authentic and not as merely procedurally calculated. And it can be expected that those who took part also felt bound by it. The more strongly this collective will controls the decisions actually made, the more closely in keeping this is with the concept of self-government.

Owing to the problem of scale alone, will-formation in the democracy of modern societies is completely different. A discussion is conducted primarily in the conventional mass media – before the citizens and not by them. This type of discussion reaches very many, optimally almost all, citizens. In simple terms, it is very-few-to-almost-all communication in which the few are visually present and the many play no role. Nonetheless, conventional mass communication has two advantages: first, its reach, which means at least that the attention of a large part of the demos is occupied by the same issues at the same time, leading to a measure of communication in the private sphere and in public places in the primary life-world. Second, according to Gerhards and Neidhardt (1991), there is a code of communication in the general public sphere which requires arguments which can be generalized, rather than particular benefits to justify the views of a party. A certain degree of control or filtering of public discussion by the regulative idea of the common good can therefore by assumed, even if many actors appeal to it for primarily strategic motives.

In comparison with conventional mass communication, the Internet public sphere offers a different but highly ambivalent picture. In principle, "the Internet permits interactive communication by any number of participants at any spatial distance" (Zittel 2001: 433). Citizens can thus communicate with each other almost without restriction and no longer have to accept a largely passive role in hierarchically structured mass communication. Does electronic democracy then mean the restoration of the antique a-gora in the form of a virtual e-gora? There are at least two fundamental arguments against this hope.

In Internet communication, who communicates with whom is not determined a priori, but it is neither technically possible nor practicable for everyone to communicate with everyone on the same subject. On the Internet, a multiplicity of thematically focused communication communities forms. We can therefore argue that the Internet public sphere is fragmented (Wilhelm 2000) and as such, lacking one of the advantages of conventional mass communication. And a fragmented public can hardly contribute to interactively constituting a common will of the demos.

A second fundamental argument against the restoration of the antique agora in the form of a virtual e-gora lies in the character of "actors" communicating on the Internet. Partners in communication are neither physically nor visually present; they are mutually anonymous others. Basically, they remain concealed behind the communicated information. Each knows only that the source must be someone. But this someone can literally not take shape, except by fabrication in a completely unreal projection. This problem can perhaps be somewhat reduced

but not solved by associating a picture with the message. The authenticity of pictures on the Internet is always subject to doubt, and a picture without action, gestures and facial expressions offers practically no additional information. In Internet communication, the anonymous other is thus not identifiable as a citizen belonging to the same demos as ego himself. Besides anonymity, the blurredness or even absence of boundary-drawing associated with Internet communication makes attributability to the demos more difficult. For these reasons, interactive will-formation by members of the demos through Internet communication generating a collective will is unlikely.

So far, we have been talking about the interactive constitution of a common will without clearly stating what is to be understood by this interactivity. The normative model of participatory democracy postulates not any sort of interaction or communication between citizens but deliberative interaction. It is only through deliberation that the transformation mentioned can be effected. The question is therefore how the specific properties of Internet communication relate to the deliberation requirement. Deliberation means the systematic exchange of arguments by persons present. This presence is doubly important. First, it alone permits the mutual ascription of arguments to specific persons, which is a precondition for the progressive process of building a common will. Second, it is only the fact that arguments are put forward by other people that generates the credibility that may induce a participant to change his opinion. Internet communication fulfills neither the criterion that communication takes place between identifiable persons nor that these persons be present in a physical or at least visual form. It is thus not very surprising that a number of studies conclude that Internet communication is primarily a superficial expression of views by anonymous sources and has little to do with deliberation (Rosenfield 1998; Galston 1999; Wilhelm 2000).

The virtual nature of Internet communication must necessarily affect the nature of the community it enables. And this can be interpreted positively. According to Poster (1995), it is precisely the anonymity and boundlessness of Internet communication that offer completely new freedoms. Everyone can present himself as he wishes, and everyone can communicate with whom he wishes. Biological, social and spatial constraints are abolished. A virtual community is thus the result of free decisions by individuals with multiple and decentralized identities that come together because they have common interests (Poster 1995). This interpretation is indeed possible. But from a democracy theory perspective another interpretation is more plausible. We share the view of other authors (Turkle 1995; Ravetz 1998; Galston 1999) that virtuality cuts the ground from under the feet of credible, serious and thus far-reaching cooperation between citizens in dealing with common affairs. If this is the case, then the finding of Galston (1999) that participation in virtual communities leads to withdrawal from traditional communities is normatively alarming.

In concluding our analysis, we return to the criterion of deliberation. It is of strategic importance for the variant of participatory democracy we have been considering (see also Cooke 2000). To effect the asserted transformation, delib-

erative procedures must be carried out in practice. This raises two problems: institutionalization and motivation. We have looked at both when discussing direct participation by citizens, but they are even more serious in relation to deliberative participation. One of the few concrete proposals for institutionalizing deliberative procedures has been put forward by Fishkin (1991, 1995). According to him, parliaments should be flanked by representative citizens' forums whose task it would be to supply the parliament with deliberatively grounded citizens' opinions. Once again, however, they would be representative bodies and would not provide for any notable direct participation by citizens. And if the problem of representativeness can be solved (Kaase 2002), we still have to ask why the vast majority of citizens, who have not taken part in deliberations, ought to accept the outcome as binding. Both – representativeness and the binding nature of decisions – are unsolved problems for all advocatory deliberations.

The structural restrictions on the political participation of citizens in modern societies have been discussed previously. But deliberative participation raises further problems. Every procedure has to be implemented by means of rules, and this is true in a special sense for deliberative procedures. A rule holds only if it is accepted and obeyed in fact. It will be accepted and obeyed only if there is a motive or an interest to do so (Alexy 1995). According to Habermas (1992: 141) this is, in the case of deliberations, an "interest in correctness." The question is the extent to which citizens in modern democracies can be assumed to have this interest. Habermas (1992: 142) is undecided: "It is certainly too optimistic to assume that every human being has an interest in correctness [. . .] But it is also too pessimistic to assume that no human being has an interest in correctness." Regardless of how one assesses the distribution of this interest, it is clear that a deliberative procedure as such cannot generate it. We must therefore count on the citizens possessing the appropriate virtues and on an accommodating political culture. To a certain degree, however, this presupposes what is supposed to be generated by deliberation, like the transformation of particular interests into general interests.

Summary and discussion

The system of government that has since been known as democracy came into being in antique Athens. For the first and only time in history, literal self-government by the people was realized. The notion of a democratic system of government was taken up again in the modern age. Under changed societal conditions, it was implemented not as direct democracy but as liberal, i.e. representative democracy. However, political thinking developed that upheld the ideal of self-government by the people, and confronted existing liberal democracy with this ideal. But the onus of proving how this ideal could be realized has always been on the theory of so-called participatory democracy. The alternative would be for it to remain an interesting but merely cerebral pursuit.

The versions of participatory democracy we have discussed stress delibera-

tive forms of procedure and participation, and are accordingly referred to as theory of deliberative democracy. They assume that deliberative democracy is not only normatively desirable in modern society but also necessary to solve the practical problems of liberal democracy. If it is to do so, however, it must be possible in real terms. And to establish this, answers are needed to the questions of institutionalization and motivation. In our view, they have yet to be given, and can perhaps not be given at all. The structural restrictions of modern societies are presumably so strong that the ideal of participatory democracy cannot be realized even approximately.

The only really concrete proposal for institutionalizing direct participation by citizens in the making of generally binding decisions has been advanced by Barber (1984), who advocates the instrument of the referendum at the national level. But there is a fundamental mismatch between the quantity of decisions that have to be made in the politico-administrative system and the quantity of referendums that can be held. This state of affairs is exacerbated by coupling referendums to prior discussions or deliberations, indispensable for the theory of participatory democracy. In this regard, Barber (1984: XIV) adjusts to reality in describing his strong democracy as a form of government "in which all of the people govern themselves in at least some public matters at least some of the time." The number of decisions in which all citizens can participate directly, is, however, likely to be so small in relation to the total number of decisions to be made that this has almost nothing more to do with the normative postulate of self-government.

The more participatory a democracy is from an institutional point of view, the more strongly it has to rely on political participation by the citizens. It cannot be a question of only sporadic participation in demonstrations and the like. What is needed is optimally enduring and comprehensive engagement by citizens and commitment to the demands of deliberative procedures. This is highly contingent, and Barber (1984: 265) accordingly asks: "How then can we expect either the self-interested or apathetic to identify with a program of participation and civic renewal in which their most immediate interests would be ignored, at least in the short run?" His answer is as follows: "Through persuasion, through the self-education yielded by democratic participation itself [. . .] The taste for participation is whetted by participation: Democracy breeds democracy" (Barber 1984: 265). In view of the grounds we have given for the rational citizen to abstain from political participation, we must regard this argument as rather unconvincing wishful thinking.

What possibilities does electronic democracy offer for technologically overcoming structural obstacles in modern society and bringing us closer to participatory democracy? We have argued that coupling referendums with prior deliberations – indispensable for participatory democracy – deprives technologically facilitated referendums of any practical importance. But the production of a virtual public sphere and a virtual community abolishing the restrictions of space and scale is praised by the proponents of electronic democracy as one of its most important advantages. In this way, autonomous will-formation by the

demos as a collective subject is to be restored under the conditions of modern societies. However, a number of studies conducted in the context of the discussion on electronic democracy have found the situation to be contradictory. Trends towards fragmentation of the public and the erosion of traditional communities are just as plausible. And these trends would be more likely to weaken than strengthen both the constitution of a common will of the demos in a general public sphere and responsible cooperation between citizens in a community of which they consider themselves members and with which they identify.

In the discussion on electronic democracy, we have abstracted from real problems posed by the new media. The intention has been, where possible, to probe the potential of electronic democracy for approximating to participatory democracy only on the basis of the technical properties of the media and the associated communication logic. Real problems like the complete commercialization of the Internet, the possibilities for monitoring Internet communication, the manipulation of voting via electronic media, etc., have naturally been left aside. Taking such real problems into account, Barber (1999) developed "three scenarios for the future of technology and strong democracy." Only one of them – which he calls the Jefferson scenario – was positive by the normative benchmarks for strong democracy. But this is precisely the one he describes as least realistic. It therefore seems that the possibilities for realizing a participatory democracy under the conditions of modern society by means of electronic democracy are to be regarded with skepticism for both "logical" and "realistic" reasons. From a normative point of view, it cannot be excluded that electronic democracy even falls short of the status quo of liberal democracy.

The dissemination and utilization of the new media is an irreversible development. The most optimistic proponents of an electronic democracy anticipate that the new media will trigger a "third democratic transformation" (Dahl 1989; Grossman 1995). This is expected to bring us back towards a participatory democracy under the conditions of a modern society. According to our analysis, however, it is more probable that it will tend rather to depart from this ideal. The most important reason has been stated to be the greater difficulty in forming a collective will and constituting a political community. And both are preconditions for the demos to govern itself as a collective subject.

If the predictions advanced in the globalization debate prove correct, the trend towards the dissolution of a collective subject through immigration and multiculturalism will strengthen. And nation states are tending to lose their capacity to control their own societies. They compensate this loss of control partly by implementing international and supranational regimes. In an attempt to address and positively interpret this development caused by virtualization and globalization, a further model of democracy is advanced: cosmopolitan democracy. In this model, the importance of democracy is more or less reduced to some sort of participation by some citizens of the world in decision-making by a multitude of national, international and supranational regimes. In other words, this means that the unambiguity of the demos, the kratos and of the relation

between them begins to dissolve. This has hardly anything more to do with the idea of democracy that came into being in antique Athens about 2500 years ago and to which the models of participatory democracy are fundamentally committed.

Notes

1 See Held (1996) for a differentiated discussion of a wide range of democracy models.
2 At this point we disregard the legislative commission (*nomothétai*), which was set up only in 403/402.
3 One of the few exceptions was the office of military strategist.
4 Strong democratic talk, deliberation and discourse are different terms for largely identical concepts.
5 Other postulates on and conditions for deliberative procedures are to be found in the study by Cohen (1989).
6 For an overview on this discussion see Kamps 1999; Hacker and van Dijk 2000; Hoff, Horrocks and Tops 2000; Zittel 2001.
7 See Dahl's (1989) democratic criterion of "enlightened understanding."

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