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**Freedom and political form:  
On Philip Pettit's republican theory of democracy.**

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Roland Axtmann has been a professor of Politics and International Relations at Swansea University since 2005. He has previously held positions at Aberdeen University. He gained his PhD at the London School of Economics and his Magister Artium at Heidelberg University. He has published widely on democratic theory, macropolitical change, and individual thinkers such as Max Weber, Hannah Arendt, and Carl Schmitt.

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His books include: "Liberal democracy into the twenty-first century. Globalization, integration and the nation-state" (Manchester UP, 1996); "Democracy. Problems and Perspectives" (Edinburgh UP, 2007); "Balancing Democracy" (ed., Continuum, 2001); "Understanding Democratic Politics" (ed., Sage, 2003); (with H. Kuzmics) "Authority, State and National Character. The Civilizing Process in Austria and England, 1700–1900" (Routledge, 2007).

He has published in journals such as History of Political Thought, History of the Human Sciences, International Political Science Review, Review of International Studies, International Politics, German Politics and Society, Australian Journal of Political Science, and Leviathan.

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**Abstract:**

This article critically engages with Philip Pettit's republican political philosophy, and with his republican theory of democracy in particular. After a brief summary of Pettit's conceptualization of freedom as non-domination, the paper focuses on the question as to which institutional arrangement Pettit considers commensurate with this normative ideal. The paper prepares the ground for a critical reconstruction of Pettit's theory of democracy by highlighting the understanding of democracy in the republican tradition within which Pettit aims to develop his contemporary theory of democracy. The reconstruction leads to the argument that Pettit, in neo-Roman republican tradition, has written 'the people' as a transformative actor out of the script of democratic theory.

**Keywords:** Philip Pettit – republicanism – democracy – depoliticization – representation

**Neo-Roman republicanism and freedom as non-domination**

In his republican political philosophy, Philip Pettit advances two central arguments: first, freedom ought to be understood as non-domination and be embraced as the ultimate political value; and second, 'politics' ought to refer to rational and reason-bound decision-making. In a well-ordered polity, political institutions must entrench and sustain freedom as non-domination as well as procedures for rational and reason-bound policy-making. Pettit's republican theory of

democracy aims to specify the political institutional order that is commensurate with the normative ideal of freedom as non-domination.

Pettit develops his republicanism on the basis of two distinctions. First, he distinguishes between two republican ‘traditions’: the tradition of Italian-Mediterranean-Atlantic republicanism and that of Franco-Prussian (Rousseauvian-Kantian) continental republicanism. Second, he sets ‘republicanism’ apart from liberalism. Pettit traces the ‘classic republican’ tradition back to Roman republican thought and practice, stressing the central importance of Polybius, Cicero, and Livy. And it is within this tradition that Pettit proposes to develop a republican theory of democracy. In constructing a narrative trajectory, he places Machiavelli within a ‘neo-Roman’ framework of thought, arguing that this thought, and that of his Roman predecessors, provided terms of political self-understanding for Northern European countries in their struggle against absolute monarchs. He argues that, while the English republic in the 1640s and 1650s was short-lived, it nevertheless had a deep impact not least through the ideas and writings of John Milton, James Harrington, and Algernon Sidney. Their thoughts informed political debate in 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain and America and were incorporated into Montesquieu’s writings. Republican ideas provided the arguments in the debates on American independence in the 1760s and 1770s both in the colonies and in Britain (for example, in the writings of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley) as well as in the constitutional debates of the 1780s, and for politicians and thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.<sup>1</sup>

This neo-Roman republicanism from Machiavelli to James Madison was Ciceronian in inspiration and anti-Athenian in orientation:

These republicans pictured Athens ... in the critical terms suggested by Polybius: as a ship without a captain, buffeted by the storms of popular opinion. They traced the Athenian problem to excessive reliance on pure democracy and saw the Roman Republic, by contrast, as a constitution in which government was built on a democratic foundation but was better devised to guard against problems of factions and demagoguery and tyranny. The principal devices they celebrated in Rome were the dispersion of democratic power across different assemblies, adherence to a more or less strict rule of law, election to public office, limitation on the tenure of public office, rotation of offices among the citizenry.<sup>2</sup>

For Pettit, a hallmark of this form of republicanism is its wholehearted and enthusiastic embrace of “the enjoyment of a publicly protected freedom in the domain of private life – a freedom, in the republican view, that enables you to stand equal with others, not depending on anyone’s grace or favour”.<sup>3</sup> Pettit distils from this republican tradition a conceptualization of freedom as non-domination:

If you are to enjoy freedom as non-domination in certain choices ... then you must not be subject to the will of others in how you make those choices ... you must not be exposed to a power of interference on the part of any others, even if they happen to like you and do not exercise that power against you. The mere fact that I can interfere at little cost in your choices – the mere fact that I can track those choices and intervene when I like – means that you depend for your ability to choose as you wish on my will remaining a goodwill.<sup>4</sup>

In Pettit’s conceptualization, mere vulnerability to arbitrary power diminishes liberty. He sets this conceptualization of freedom as non-domination apart from a ‘liberal’ understanding of freedom as non-interference. He traces the main variants of this conceptualization back to

Thomas Hobbes and Jeremy Bentham respectively. “A free-man is he”, Hobbes argued in *Leviathan* (21.2), “that in those things which by his strength and wit he is able to do is not hindered to do what he has a will to”.<sup>5</sup> Pettit interprets this statement as the proposition that “a hindrance takes away from my freedom only if I prefer the option that is subject to hindrance”.<sup>6</sup> For Bentham, liberty was “the absence of restraint”: to the extent that other persons do not hinder a person, he or she is ‘free’. This conceptualization of freedom suggests, according to Pettit, that “[e]ven though you avoid interference only because of my being good-willed and indulgent, then – even though you can choose as you wish only because I permit – still ... that is enough to make you free”.<sup>7</sup> In his treatment of ‘liberty’, finally, Isaiah Berlin argued that “the deliberate interference of other human beings” offends against freedom.<sup>8</sup> It is in view of Berlin’s distinction between ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ liberty that Pettit maintains that the conception of freedom as non-domination is

negative to the extent that it requires the absence of domination by others, not necessarily the presence of self-mastery, whatever that is thought to involve. The conception is positive to the extent that, at least in one respect, it needs something more than the absence of interference; it requires security against interference, in particular against interference on an arbitrary basis.<sup>9</sup>

It is the *arbitrary* power of interference on the part of others that makes a person unfree: “Interference that is uncontrolled by the person on the receiving end” signifies a lack of freedom.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, significantly, he also contrasts his conceptualization of freedom as non-domination with freedom as civic involvement and participation, understood not as a means to secure an

individual's liberty but as a good in itself and a necessary aspect of the good life. This conceptualization he considers to be central to (what he calls) Franco-Prussian continental republicanism. According to Pettit, this republican tradition embraces "the romantic idea of a participatory, Rousseauvian engagement"<sup>11</sup> by emphasizing communal self-determination through self-legislation and the right of popular participation in political decision-making while "downplay[ing] private life in favour of public engagement".<sup>12</sup> Pettit claims that, in this Rousseauvian republicanism,

freedom consists in nothing more or less than the right to participate in ... communal self-determination: the right to live under a regime of law that you have a certain participatory or electoral role in creating ... This new ideology replaced freedom as non-domination with freedom as participation. It replaced the ideal of a mixed constitution with that of a popular, absolutely sovereign assembly. And it replaced the ideal of a contestatory people with that of a participatory legislature against which individuals had no rights in their own name".<sup>13</sup>

He sees Hannah Arendt as a major inspiration behind contemporary populist-communitarian republicanism and he interprets her as endorsing participatory democracy and thus as drawing a "rather romantic picture of the tirelessly engaged public figure".<sup>14</sup>

The neo-Roman writers, on the other hand, do not focus, Pettit suggests, on "achieving participation". Writers such as James Harrington, John Milton, and Algernon Sidney were critical of 'popular democracy'. They took "liberty to be defined by a status in which the evils associated with interference are avoided rather than by access to the instruments of democratic control, participatory or representative. Democratic control is certainly

important ... but its importance comes not from any definitional connection with liberty, but from the fact that it is a means of furthering freedom”.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, we should take note that these republicans did argue that ‘the people’ entrusted a ruler with authority: “... a king is a king simply on account of the people, not the people on account of the king”; the people is “both itself its own lawmaker and able either to tighten or relax the power of the king”.<sup>16</sup> Yet, who are ‘the people’? It includes, according to Milton, “all citizens of any rank whatsoever”, but it excludes “the rabble”, which is “blind and dull”, lacking in “the skill of ruling”.<sup>17</sup> It is above all the “middle sort” of whose number “are the men who are almost the most sensible and skilful in affairs. As for the rest, luxury and opulence on the one hand, poverty and need on the other, generally divert them from virtue and the study of statesmanship”.<sup>18</sup> They are the “better” and “healthier” and “sound” part of the people (“*pars potior, id est sanior*”; “*sanae et integrae ... partis*”).<sup>19</sup>

For the English republicans, a popular government would have, in James Harrington’s expression, “a mixture of aristocracy”.<sup>20</sup> He saw a natural, meritocratic aristocracy, characterized by “wisdom and honesty”, as being “the only spur and rein of the people”:<sup>21</sup> “[W]here there is not a nobility to bolt out the people, they are slothful, regardless of the world and the public interest of liberty”.<sup>22</sup> In popular government, “debate” is “managed by a good aristocracy”, for “debate in the people maketh anarchy”.<sup>23</sup> The people, having been shown truth by this aristocracy, have an obligation to accept them as their guides.<sup>24</sup>

Fear and distrust of the ‘common’ people are perennial features in Pettit’s republican ‘tradition’. Cicero feared the power of the ‘multitude’. Referring to Athenian democracy, Cicero, in *Pro Flacco*, spoke of “the immoderate liberty and licentiousness” of the masses: “When inexperienced men, ignorant and uninstructed in any description of business



whatever, took their seats in the theatre, then they undertook inexpedient wars; then they appointed seditious men to the government of the republic; then they banished from the city the citizens who had deserved best of the state".<sup>25</sup> When the will of the people rules, then there is licentiousness, not freedom. Cicero considered it to be in the best interest of the *vulgus*, the "dregs of the city populace" ("*sordem urbis et faecem*"), that 'the best men' govern.<sup>26</sup> In the 'mixed constitution' of the well-ordered polity, "there is enough power [*potestas*] in the magistrates, enough authority [*auctoritas*] in the deliberations [*consilio*] of the leading men [that is, the Senate, RA] and enough freedom [*libertas*] in the people".<sup>27</sup> Yet, in such a well-ordered community, "the senate [remains] master of public deliberation, and all persons defend whatever it determines, and ... the other orders want the republic to be governed by the deliberation of the leading order".<sup>28</sup>

In North America, the War of Independence in 1776 had resulted in the democratization of the state legislatures of the former colonies. The size of the legislatures increased and the franchise was extended: "In all states electioneering and the open competition for office had expanded democratically, along with demands for greater public access to governmental activities".<sup>29</sup> Debt- and tax-relief legislation that was enacted by popularly elected state legislatures "revealed to the Revolutionary leaders an unanticipated dark underside to democracy and equality".<sup>30</sup> It was the composition and the policies of the state legislatures as well as the political activism of 'the common people' that convinced the elite revolutionary leaders that a new political order had to be constituted. Most members of the Constitutional Convention that met in Philadelphia in 1787 were agitated by what they perceived to be "the extremes of democracy", the "prevailing rage of excessive democracy", "democratical tyranny", and "democratic licentiousness".<sup>31</sup> Elbridge Gerry and Alexander Hamilton spoke of "an excess of democracy"; Hamilton referred to "the amazing violence

and turbulence of the democratic spirit”; and Roger Sherman demanded that “the people [should] have [as] little to do ... about the government” as possible.<sup>32</sup>

The new federal Constitution became *the* manifestation of the successful counter-revolution. In the creation of a Supreme Court, the Senate, and the Electoral College, the Constitution showed itself to be “intrinsically an aristocratic document designed to check the democratic tendencies of the period”.<sup>33</sup> The justification of the ‘principle of representation’ in the *Federalist Papers* supports this assessment. ‘Representation’ was intended to achieve “the total exclusion of the people, in their collective capacity, from any share in [government]”. A Senate, whose members were elected not popularly but by the state legislatures, would ‘protect’ the people at moments - so James Madison argued in the same paper - when, “stimulated by some irregular passion, or some illicit advantage, or misled by the artful misrepresentation of interested men”, they “may call for measures which they themselves will afterwards be the most ready to lament and condemn”.<sup>34</sup>

Madison had also asserted that in any given society “the most enlightened and impartial people” would be outnumbered by “the unreflecting multitude”. In order to confront the “Danger of Demagogues”, election, he asserted, had to be “made by the Peop. in large Districts”:

[A] majority when united by a common interest or passion can not be restrained from oppressing the minority, what remedy can be found in a republican Government, where the majority must ultimately decide, but that of giving such an extent to its sphere, that no common interest or passion will be likely to unite a majority of the whole number in an unjust pursuit. In a large Society, the people are broken into so

many interests and parties, that a common sentiment is less likely to be felt, and the requisite concert less likely to be formed, by a majority of the whole ... *Divide et impera*, the reprobated axiom of tyranny, is under certain qualifications, the only policy, by which a republic can be administered on just principles.<sup>35</sup>

Gouverneur Morris, who represented Pennsylvania, revealed the ‘class’ aspect that is typically hidden behind the rhetoric of (numerical) minorities being oppressed by (numerical) majorities: “The schemes of the Rich will be favoured by the extent of the Country ... [Ordinary] people in such distant parts can not communicate & act in concert”, placing them at a disadvantage compared with “those who have more knowledge & intercourse” with each other.<sup>36</sup>

In the republican tradition that Pettit privileges and within which he proposes to formulate his contemporary theory of democracy, ‘democracy’ was not a regime type that these republicans keenly wished to institute and defend as a manifestation of ‘freedom’ but which they eagerly desired to contain and tame since it was seen as a threat to ‘freedom’. ‘Pure’ democracy was rule of ‘the plebs’, of the poor, uneducated, incapable, irresponsible, and uncouth masses; a rule better described as an ‘ochlocracy’, mob rule, that would inevitably lead to anarchy. Democracy, so republicans argued, deprives ‘the best men’ – virtuous, noble, wealthy, educated, and experienced men – of the power to rule the political community, and to rule it for ‘the common good’. The oligarchs in Republican Rome aimed, just like English republicans and the ‘Founding Fathers’, at the exclusion of the people, “in their collective capacity”, as it says in the Federalist Paper number 63, from political power.

This republican tradition thus aims to contain and curtail the power of the people to act. Algernon Sidney had suggested that “[a]s to popular government in the strictest sense (that is pure democracy, where the people in themselves, and by themselves, perform all that belongs to government), I know of no such thing; and if it be in the world, have nothing to say for it”.<sup>37</sup> Pettit, too, argues that the populist ideal of participatory democracy is neither feasible in the modern world nor is “the prospect of each being subject to the will of all ... attractive”.<sup>38</sup> All that is required for non-arbitrary state power “is that the power be exercised in a way that tracks, not the power-holder’s personal welfare or world-view, but rather the welfare and world-view of the public”.<sup>39</sup> As long as “the law ... answers systematically to people’s general interests and ideas”, interference is non-arbitrary and compatible with a people’s liberty”.<sup>40</sup> Democratic instruments of control, desirable and indispensable though they are, are “not the be-all and end-all of good government”.<sup>41</sup> It is in view of this core contention that I now critically reconstruct Pettit’s theory of democracy.

### **Philip Pettit's republican theory of democracy**

“[I]f we start from the republican conception of freedom as non-domination, then we can derive the need for democracy, under a suitable characterization, from the requirements of freedom”.<sup>42</sup>

“No theory would count as a theory of democracy unless it kept faith at a general level with the sorts of institutions that we find in most democracies today ... the notes struck in the theory outlined here resonate in each case with more or less familiar democratic institutions”.<sup>43</sup>

“Let democracy be mistaken for maximally politicised self-government, as it often is, and democracy is in serious trouble”.<sup>44</sup>

“No democratization without depoliticization”.<sup>45</sup>

The first quotation above makes quite explicit that Pettit perceives his conceptualization of freedom as non-domination to ground (and to find institutional form in) a particular political regime ('democracy') and, indeed, to provide the normative justification of (a 'suitably characterized') democracy. The second quote admonishes the readers not to expect that freedom as non-domination will provide a set of criteria with which to criticize the institutional arrangement of actually existing democracies and, on that basis, for it to lead to an alternative institutional design. His theory, Pettit tells the reader, “resonates” with familiar democratic institutions. Indeed, the reader is asked to accept that it would be quite inappropriate to expect a theory of democracy to be critical of the institutions of

actually existing democracies: unless a theory affirms, or “keeps faith with” ‘what is’, it cannot count as theory.<sup>46</sup>

Yet, we would be ill advised simply to see Pettit’s republican theory of democracy as nothing but a scholarly endeavour to convince readers that we live, by and large (“at a general level”), in the best of all possible democratic worlds. What we find in Pettit’s theory is not so much simply a philosophical justification of democracies ‘as they are’ together with minor modifications of their institutional design, but an argument for constraining and curtailing democracy: Pettit’s theory of democracy is, indeed, (neo-Roman) ‘republican’ in so far as it presents itself as a theory of ‘depoliticized democracy’ and an admonition against ‘the excesses of democracy’.

Pettit does not associate democracy with the rule of the collective people - democracy, for him, does not mean ‘people power’ and does not entail ‘demopraxis’:<sup>47</sup> to argue that it does would mean, Pettit avers, mistaking democracy for ochlocracy.<sup>48</sup> Democracy is “a system under which individuals share – and in particular, share equally – in the *kratos* or control of the *demos* or people over government”.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, “[d]emocracy’s *entire* [emphasis added] reason for being ... is to guard against the domination of the state”.<sup>50</sup> And democratic theory exists “to identify the institutions whereby the goal [sc., control over government, RA] might be advanced”.<sup>51</sup> A republican theory of democracy is thus conceived as a theory of the well-ordered, or well-constituted, polity. It is an institutional theory.

Effective and equal popular control of government does not entail that it has to be exercised by the people themselves or that it has to be active control, whether exercised by the collective people or by any other body.<sup>52</sup> Democratic control may be exercised in either

an electoral or a contestatory mode: “Whereas the electoral mode ... gives the collective people [sc., via elected representatives, RA] an indirect power of authorship over the laws, the contestatory would give the people, considered individually, [sc., via contestatory institutions, RA] a limited and, of course, indirect power of editorship over those laws”.<sup>53</sup>

With regard to the contestatory mode, Pettit identifies procedural, consultative, and appellate measures that give individual citizens passive rather than active control of what happens. These measures and institutions range from the rule of law and the separation of powers to bicameralism and independent auditing bodies; from the establishment of advisory, community-based bodies and public hearings and inquiries to the publication of ‘green’ and ‘white’ papers and the conduct of focus-group research into public opinion; and from judicial review and tribunals to the institution of ombudsman.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to being a ‘system of rule’, Pettit understands democracy also as a mode of decision-making in a ‘republic of reasons’ in which the state relates to its citizens as a co-reasoner.<sup>55</sup> For decision-making to be rational, democracy, Pettit claims, must be ‘deliberative’. Government by reasoned argument promises, as a result of institutionalized reflexivity through deliberation, rational decision-making in the sense of non-contradictory and consistent policies.<sup>56</sup> The understanding of democracy as a mechanism of rational decision-making on the basis of reasoned deliberation has consequences for the institutional design of the democratic system of rule. To start with, Pettit argues that, even if one were to concede that the people are rational, informed and public-spirited to a very high degree, “it still remains that if they decide on policy issues as they come up over time – or even if they decide on a set of issues at the same time – there is every possibility that they will collectively support irrational policy-packages”, policies as ‘irrational’ as those – to use Pettit’s own example – that require reducing taxes and increasing spending at the

same time.<sup>57</sup> Pettit avers that the populace, “an unarticulated aggregate of individuals”, is not small enough and organized enough to reconsider and resolve such ‘irrationality’. For such irrationality to be avoided, individuals are needed who represent the people and who, without being mandated, take part in deliberations with other representatives with the aim of achieving rational and consistent decision-making: “Representative government ... is the first requirement of deliberative democracy”.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, effective contestability in the form of popular editorial control over governmental policies requires that governmental decisions are authorially controlled in a more or less rational way, which, for Pettit, means they are controlled “on the basis of considerations that get to be generally admitted as relevant to the determination of public affairs”: policy decisions as a result of ‘popular referendums’ are, however, liable “to display little or no rationality”.<sup>59</sup> “Reasoned deliberation” is deliberation conducted by representatives of the citizens, with the public views having been passed through – in Madison’s words – “the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country”.<sup>60</sup> “The people as a whole”, Pettit suggests, “can represent the most arbitrary and dominating form of government”, for which a regime of representative government is the obvious remedy: “... the role of the people is [to be] restricted to the choice of personnel, and only rarely runs to the determination of policy”.<sup>61</sup> With ‘plebiscitary government’ being both ‘unfeasible’ and ‘wholly inimical’ to the cause of deliberation, “democratic government is inevitably representative government”.<sup>62</sup>

Yet, in order to ensure that deliberation is given a central place in democratic rule, Pettit considers it also necessary to reduce “the hands-on power of the people’s elected representatives”.<sup>63</sup> Rational decision-making via deliberation is challenged and



undermined, Pettit maintains, whenever passions enter politics (as, to adduce one of Pettit's example, is the case in the sentencing policy for criminals); whenever 'aspirational morality' or 'aspirational ideals' lead to a 'politics of moralism' (as, in Pettit's example, is the case in debates on the legislation of prostitution); whenever sectional electoral interests lead to a situation in which politicians actively canvass and obtain the reactions of people to various government proposals and then defend the position they take on the basis of which lobby represents itself most effectively; and, finally, whenever the self-interests of politicians are affected (such as decisions on electoral laws or electoral boundaries and the number of representatives to be assigned to each area).<sup>64</sup> In the light of these perennial challenges, so Pettit suggests, "an assembly that operates blindly under majority rule won't be able to live up to the demands of reason and agency".<sup>65</sup> "Where electoral interests are likely to militate against the deliberative quality of democratic decision-making", it is imperative that decisions are taken by 'depoliticized bodies' of experts: decision-making must be "*routinely* [emphasis added] subject to depoliticized checks and controls. The democratic society which leaves the exercise of power to popular majorities and political elites may easily become the *worst* [emphasis added] of despotisms".<sup>66</sup>

Democracy is "too important to be left in the hands of the politicians", but neither should it be left in the hands of the people.<sup>67</sup> Democracy "requires a regime under which people and politicians are willing and able to trust in various depoliticized bodies to make decisions on certain matters of common interest".<sup>68</sup> Of necessity, in a democracy political power must be ceded to experts and professionals – legal-rational administrators.<sup>69</sup> As long as these unelected authorities are selected on the basis of expertise, experience and impartiality and operate under conditions of publicity, we may assume, according to Pettit, that "the

decisions [*nota bene*: ‘decisions’, not ‘proposals’, RA] they make are likely to be ones that the people, individually or collectively, would make or approve if they had all the relevant information or expertise”.<sup>70</sup> Lovett and Pettit clarify the role of ‘expertise’ in a ‘neo-republican’ democracy:<sup>71</sup>

Philosophy and theory alone cannot dictate the best way of doing things ... Should there be a means-tested social security arrangement, or something on the lines of the basic income proposal ... Should the power of wealth be regulated by high marginal rates of taxation ... or by restrictions on what might be done with money, or by incentives to provide money for public purposes ... Should special rights be extended to minority cultures? Questions such as these must be resolved [sc., by expert bodies, RA], not as a matter of abstract principle, but on the basis of empirical study.

Pettit defines the members of such expert bodies as ‘indicative representers’: where the representer is led in her or his judgements and decisions, I, ‘the represented’, would likely to be led, too, if I (instead of her or him) were a member of that body – her or his “decisions are indicative of what I would decide” and “the attitudes displayed by the [indicative] representer are an evidential sign of the attitudes held by the representee”.<sup>72</sup> Instead of expecting the representative to be led in her or his actions by considerations of what the representee might reasonably be assumed to prefer as the course of action, the representee is assumed to be reasonable enough to make the reasoning and the actions of the representer her or his own. Why should that be the case? After all, so Pettit asserts, unlike elected deputies, these authorities – “ombudsmen, statisticians, and auditors to public office, the members of central banks and electoral commissions, and the judges who determine the interpretation and application of the law” –, “will not be particularly

responsive to specific popular demands; that is how we set things up”.<sup>73</sup> However, “when we appoint, we can appoint them under such tight constraints and with such precise briefs that they count as our indicative representatives”.<sup>74</sup>

There is yet another aspect to Pettit’s endorsement of ‘depoliticized democracy’.

Deliberation and policy-making are normatively contained and confined. In a democracy, Pettit claims, “there are going to be norms of public policy-making that get to be accepted on all sides”.<sup>75</sup> These norms – such as consistency, rationality, relevance, acceptability, community-commitment – “filter out offending policies and processes, making room only for modes of decision-making, and actual decisions, that fit with accepted standards”.<sup>76</sup>

These norms “will be in place to outlaw any norm-incompatible routines, and to rule out any arguments – and any proposals based on arguments – that do not satisfy the norms”.<sup>77</sup>

In a democracy, political actors are required “to propose the policy that they favour ... and to present considerations to one another that should count as relevant by the lights of all”.<sup>78</sup> Political actors must play the “acceptability game”: “... the partisans of different viewpoints have to recognise that they must find non-partisan considerations – considerations that all can see as relevant – to support their proposals”.<sup>79</sup> By playing the ‘acceptability game’, citizens demonstrate, so Pettit avers<sup>80</sup>, their patriotism, which “requires people not to allow their more personal or partial attachments – say, those centred on religious affiliation, ethnic identity or geographical location – to undermine their commitment to the larger community”. And the ‘norm of norms’ requires of public decision-makers that they make their decisions “on the basis of *neutral* [emphasis added] considerations”.<sup>81</sup> Pettit does not clarify what such ‘neutrality’ might possibly mean for any policy area – nor does he discuss the process of norm-generation in a modern, democratic polity.

Pettit's understanding of 'deliberative democracy' is quite idiosyncratic: whereas 'deliberative democracy' has been frequently proposed and defended as a means of overcoming the participatory deficit in 'representative democracies' and of addressing (fundamental) disagreements on the basis of inclusive deliberation with a view of achieving legitimacy for policy decisions, Pettit's 'deliberative democracy' is decidedly 'elitist' in view of his endorsement of meritocratic representation in the form of the 'indicative representer' who speaks 'for' the people – as we saw, in a broad range of public issues (the delineation of which is not decided upon by the people themselves). While Pettit links the legitimacy of the exercise of political authority in the form of legislation to the (democratic) state's tracking 'common avowable interests', he does not pursue the question of the (deliberative) interpretation of interest(s) or the (deliberative) formation of opinions and the institutional settings in which citizens could engage in meaningful and consequential public deliberation.<sup>82</sup> Nor, indeed, does Pettit bestow upon public deliberation in the 'contestatory' dimension of democracy any significance. Contestatory democracy entails, after all, that "complaints" by citizens "should be heard away from the tumult of popular discussion and away, even, from the theatre of parliamentary debate".<sup>83</sup> Such a concern with contestation through the medium of public deliberation among citizens might have led Pettit to confront the unresolved fundamental problem that haunts 'deliberative democracy': meaningful and consequential 'deliberation' presupposes the empowerment of the citizens and does not precede it.<sup>84</sup>

## **Conclusion**

We may recall that Pettit defines democracy "by the fact that the people exercise control over government, enjoying equally accessible influence in the imposition of an equally

acceptable direction”.<sup>85</sup> He accepts that “the self-ruling demos ... may ... often run on automatic pilot, allowing public decision-making to materialize under more or less unexamined routines”.<sup>86</sup> Yet, what makes the people self-ruling is their capacity “to contest decisions at will and, if the contestation establishes a mismatch with their relevant interests or opinion, to force an amendment”.<sup>87</sup> Yet, we know from empirical political science that in ‘actually existing democracies’ there is a pervasive, powerful, and durable connection between socio-economic status, educational attainment and political participation: “[T]hose who are not affluent and well educated are less likely to take part politically and are even less likely to be represented by the activity of organized interests”.<sup>88</sup> In Pettit’s terminology, the capacity for the exercise of authorial and editorial power is unequally distributed across the citizenry. For the notion of ‘equal accessibility’ to carry any significance, Pettit would have to engage with ‘empirical’ political science – after all, he intends his theory to “resonate” with the reality of existing ‘democracies’.

‘Non-participation’ can arguably be perceived as an aspect of the political economy of capitalism. In recent decades, we could observe “ever greater inequality of income and property in the countries of democratic capitalism” as a result of an “unparalleled upward redistribution” – and, as a consequence, an ever more pronounced tension between the egalitarian ideal and demands of democracy and the material inequalities generated by capitalism.<sup>89</sup> States act as debt-collecting agencies on behalf of a global oligarchy of investors and, in the course of performing this task, tie themselves to market principles entrenched in international and constitutional law.<sup>90</sup> This ‘political’ economy closes down the space of democratic politics. It instates the “logic of a pervasive preponderance of accumulation, profit, efficiency, competitiveness, austerity and the market over the sphere of social rights, political redistribution and sustainability, as well as the defencelessness of

the latter sphere against the former, that governs the contemporary version of capitalist democracy".<sup>91</sup>

In view of this constellation, it is worth taking account of Pettit's view that republican policy is "hostile to material egalitarianism"<sup>92</sup>: "Suppose we imagine a social world in which institutions of private property are not established or are capable of being politically eliminated. The ideal of nondomination might make it easier to support the introduction or reinforcement of private property in such a situation".<sup>93</sup> Nowhere does Pettit provide an analysis of the role of the institution of private property in establishing relationships of domination with regard to both *dominium* as private power and *imperium* as public power. While he refers to the "blight" that American politics has suffered as a result of "the wealthy and powerful [exercising] an extraordinary degree of influence and control over those whom the people elect", he does not draw out the significance for democratic politics of this fact.<sup>94</sup> Pettit does not analyse the interpenetration of *dominium* and *imperium* and is thus unable critically to engage with theories of democracy and accounts of contemporary democratic politics in the 'capitalist state' from the perspective of political economy. From such a perspective as well as empirical studies on political participation, Pettit's idea of a 'tough luck test' is seriously flawed: "What democracy would ideally ensure for the subjects (*n.b.*) of a government is that when things go against them, this is not a sign of subjection to a malign will. It is a product of tough luck. The disadvantages imposed ... may be as blindly and blamelessly imposed as a misfortune wrought by the natural world".<sup>95</sup> Rather than referring to 'malign will', 'tough luck' or (natural) 'misfortune', should we not more appropriately refer to power differentials (arising out and reinforcing inequalities) as the reason for a specific distribution (or allocation) of 'disadvantages'?

In the light of the constellation of forces that restrict the space of democratic politics, ‘democracy’ may perhaps be better conceived, not as an institutional order but as a mode of action through which citizens combat inequality and exclusion, as a fight for “equality of power and equality of sharing in the benefits and values made possible by social cooperation”.<sup>96</sup> In this conceptualization, in a genuinely democratic system citizens would be agents actively and directly involved in the exercise of power; ‘demotic politics’ would thrive on a transformation of the individual from being an object of power to becoming an agent.<sup>97</sup>

Since 2011, we have witnessed a number of ‘unruly’ political mobilizations, many of them taking the form of the occupation of public spaces: Tahrir Square in Cairo and Puerta del Sol in Madrid; Syntagma Square in Athens and Zuccotti Park in New York are symbols of ‘discordant’ democratic actions. They stand for struggles against social and economic inequality and social injustice; against unresponsive and corrupt governments and politicians; against policies of deregulation, privatization, and commodification; against a politics of ‘austerity’; against the capture of politics by giant corporations and the collusion between business and politicians. They manifest a lack of trust in the institutions of ‘liberal’ democracy: they problematize the notions of ‘representation’ and ‘delegation’ as well as the notion of ‘majoritarianism’. The activists are convinced that “representation is being used as a cover for the domestication and emasculation of politics for the benefit of the few, or the 1%”; and the activities “evince a *democratic sensibility*: the demand of ordinary people to count, to be heard, to participate”.<sup>98</sup> Instead of ‘representation’, the activists demand ‘direct’, ‘participatory’ democracy: “Real Democracy Now” – self-government and self-management. For them, ‘democracy’ is a mode of living, not a system of rule or a mechanism of ‘rational’ decision-making. Not for them, then, a vision of democracy that

argues the case for further 'depoliticization' and for handing decision-making power over to ever more 'experts' who, as 'indicative representers', speak (and decide) neither at their behest nor on their behalf but in their stead.<sup>99</sup>

The '*indignados*' movements make visible the wider crisis of representation as the crisis of legitimacy of 'liberal' democracy. But so does the re-emergence of populist movements in Western democracies in recent years. Do they not provide convincing reason for embracing the idea of "depoliticized democracy"?<sup>100</sup> The answer depends upon the explanation for their emergence. If we were to follow the late Peter Mair's analysis, we would identify an ever "widening gap between rulers and ruled" and "the growing enfeeblement of party democracy, and the indifference towards party democracy" as well as the diminishing practical effect of elections.<sup>101</sup> These developments together with the transfer of policy-making authority away from established, representative organs that are either directly elected or are managed directly by elected politicians, to non-majoritarian institutions and the establishment of the EU as a political system designed by national politicians "as a protected sphere in which policy-making can evade the constraints imposed by representative democracy", have led to an opening for a "strident populist challenge" to representative democracy.<sup>102</sup> Add to this that the "crucial promise" of democracy, namely, that the people can rule and collectively master their fate, has not been fulfilled – and one is confronted with a political order that will always be vulnerable to populism.<sup>103</sup> Both Mair and Mueller emphasize the importance of strengthening the representativeness of the political system – with Mueller<sup>104</sup> also being adamant that the citizenry needs to understand that the promise that the people can rule "in a certain sense simply can't be fulfilled in our societies". In a way, the critics of liberal democracy – 'right-wing' populist



movements and '*indignados*' movements – as well as, in turn, their critics, such as Mair and Mueller, aim to 'repoliticize' democracy and find new forms of collective self-government.

Here also opens up an opportunity for reconsidering Hannah Arendt's contribution to 'republican' thinking. According to Arendt, the main characteristic of the crisis of modernity, of which totalitarianism is its main manifestation, is the dwindling space for action. Politics, for her, means "that men in their freedom can interact with one another without compulsion, force, and rule over one another, as equals among equals, commanding and obeying one another only in emergencies ... but otherwise managing all their affairs by speaking with and persuading one another".<sup>105</sup> What is required is establishing and maintaining the conditions for perpetuating the enactment of freedom "as the freedom to depart and begin something new and unheard-of or as the freedom to interact in speech with many others and experience diversity that the world always is in its totality".<sup>106</sup> In view of the emasculation of the political realm and the capacity for action, Arendt conceptualizes freedom as empowerment rather than 'participation', "the freedom to act and to be politically active" which she perceives is in contradistinction to an idea of freedom that focuses on limiting the sphere of government "in order to realize freedom beyond the reach of government".<sup>107</sup> Not for her a notion of freedom as "control over government". Arendt aims not for the citizens' participation in decision-making; she aims to retrieve the promise of politics.

Pettit, on the other hand, argues the case for depoliticizing democracy. In a situation when liberal democracy as a normative model and as an "actually existing regime" is confronted by a crisis of representation and of legitimacy, Pettit is adamant that one should not mistake democracy "for maximally politicised self-government".<sup>108</sup> Pettit could thus be

interpreted, in the context of current concerns with 'populism', as pitting a 'meritocratic representationalism' against 'populist representationalism'. 'Populism' does not just thrive on a widespread distrust of politicians, elites, and experts that is frequently coupled with a frustration of bureaucracy and a diffuse anti-intellectualism. In pitting the 'pure' people against the 'corrupt' elite, it aims to define who 'the people' are. The populist leaders speak to a particular audience and speak for particular constituencies. In order to be successful, the populist definition of the 'identity' of 'the people' and the representational claim of the populist leader(s) must resonate with 'the people', and is thus dependent upon discursive mobilisation as well as public enactment.<sup>109</sup> Pettit's 'meritocratic representationalism' does not only reinforce 'populist' concerns (and anger) with rule by 'experts', but also lacks the means of challenging the populist discourse and populist political mobilization. It can be seen as an expression of a liberal-republican fear of the unruly and irrational *demos*. Arguably, remaining true to (the neo-Roman) republican tradition of disempowering the *demos*, Pettit endeavours to contain and tame the ('common') people and writes the people as a transformative political actor out of the script of democratic theory.

## NOTES

1. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 19-20, 282-86; Pettit, *People's Terms*, 6-7; Lovett and Pettit, "Neorepublicanism", 12; see, critical, Ghosh, "From Republican to Liberal Liberty".
2. Pettit, "Sandel's Republicanism", 83.
3. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 18.
4. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 7. Individuals "may not actually suffer interference at the hands of those who dominate them. What ensures that they are dominated is the fact that those others have the power of interfering with them in an arbitrary way -- that is, in a way that they themselves do not control" (Pettit, *Political Philosophy in Public Life*, 33).
5. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. 21, section 2.
6. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 29.
7. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 9.
8. Berlin, *Four Essays*, 122.
9. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 51.
10. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 58.
11. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 227.
12. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 18.
13. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 16-17. "Citizens are no longer invigilators of government, alert to any possible misdoing and ready to challenge and contest the legislative, executive and judicial authorities. Rousseau's citizens are law-makers, not law-checkers, generators of law, not testers of law. They serve in the production of public decisions, not in controlling for the quality of those decisions" (Pettit, "Two Republican Traditions", 193-4).
14. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 18.

15. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 30. These writers were weaving an institutionally “complex web of checks and balances ... in which democratic participation was just one element” (Pettit, “Republican Freedom”, 167).
16. Milton, *Political Writings*, 193, 201.
17. Milton, *Political Writings*, 194.
18. Milton, *Political Writings*, 194; Harrington, *Political Works*, 665 speaks of men who “have wherewithal to live of themselves”.
19. Milton, *Political Writings*, 61, 181, 193.
20. Harrington, *Political Works*, 544.
21. Harrington, *Political Works*, 495; 262.
22. Harrington, *Political Works*, 183.
23. Harrington, *Political Works*, 479.
24. Harrington, *Political Works*, 284, 173.
25. Cicero, *Pro Flacco*.
26. As quoted in Wood, *Cicero’s Thought*, 96.
27. Cicero, *On the Republic*, 2.57.
28. Cicero, *On the Laws*, 3.28.
29. Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 16.
30. Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 20.
31. See the quotations in Holton, *Unruly Americans*, 5.
32. All cited in Cotlar, *Languages of Democracy*, 18.
33. Wood, *Creation*, 513.
34. *The Federalist*, no. 63. The Senate is “a defence to the people against their own temporary errors and delusion”; it will ensure that “the cool and deliberate sense of community” will ultimately prevail; its interference will be “salutary” to check

“misguided” legislation “until reason, justice, and truth can regain their authority over the public mind” [*The Federalist*, no. 63]. Demotic irrationality is a running theme in the Federalist Papers: “Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob” (*The Federalist*, no. 55). For Stephen Macedo, “Meritocratic Democracy”, 245, 246, Madison’s statement is an “excellent description of responsible representation”: “The responsible representative represents our better judgment: what we might be led to think after sober reflection, or at our best”. The institution of ‘responsible representative’ is, for Macedo, a key component in a ‘meritocratic democracy’; see Macedo, “Meritocratic Democracy”, *passim*. Pettit’s notion of “indicative representer” expresses the same thought, as we will see (Pettit, “Meritocratic Representation”).

35. Madison, *Letter*.

36. As quoted in Holton, *Unruly Americans*, 207.

37. Sidney, *Discourses*, 189.

38. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 81.

39. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 56.

40. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 35.

41. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 8.

42. Pettit, *People’s Terms*, 22.

43. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 149.

44. Pettit, “Deliberative Democracy”, 725.

45. Pettit, “Depoliticizing Democracy”, 64.

**46.** “Any plausible model of the form that democracy ought to take is bound to support many of the institutions that are actually in place in existing democracies” (Pettit, *People’s Terms*, 23).

47. Pettit, “Democratic Public”, 87.
48. Pettit, “Democracy, Electoral and Contestatory”, 139.
49. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 113; Pettit, “Democracy, Electoral and Contestatory”, 106. Pettit consistently renders *kratos* as ‘control’ rather than as ‘rule’, ‘authority’, ‘power’, ‘might’, or ‘strength’. Indeed, for Pettit’s understanding of democracy, this rendition is central: for him, the citizen performs the role of the law-checker, the tester of laws not the role of the law-maker; the citizen is given the role of the controller for the quality of decisions proposed or made but not of participant in the production of public decisions (Pettit, *People’s Terms*, 15).
50. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 113.
51. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 113.
52. Pettit, *Political Philosophy in Public Life*, 60; Pettit, “Democracy, Electoral and Contestatory”, 139.
53. Pettit, “Republican Freedom”, 180.
54. Pettit, “Democracy, Electoral and Contestatory”, 127-33. These are, indeed, “familiar democratic institutions”. “Monitory democracy”, the ‘new type’ of democracy identified by John Keane – “a variety of ‘post-electoral’ politics defined by the rapid growth of many different kinds of extra-parliamentary, power-scrutinizing mechanisms” (Keane, “Monitory Democracy? The Secret History”, 205; cf. also Keane, “Monitory Democracy?”, and Keane, *Life and Death*, part III) – has a conceptual proximity to Pettit’s ‘contestatory democracy’ as does Rosanvallon’s *Counter-Democracy* (see, for example, the short summary on pp. 12-18). Rosanvallon distinguishes ‘electoral democracy’, in which the people act as ‘voters’, from the three manifestations of counter-democracy: democracy as oversight (the people as ‘watchdog’), democracy of rejection and prevention (the people as ‘veto-

wielders'), and democracy of accusation (the people as 'judges'). 'Counter-democracy' is "a form of democracy that reinforces the usual electoral democracy as a kind of buttress ... a durable democracy of distrust [of elected officials and the government, RA], which complements the episodic democracy of the usual electoral-representative system," (8).

55. Pettit, 'Deliberative Democracy', 725, 730.

56. Pettit (*People's Terms*, 224) demands that "for every candidate, law or policy generated there should be a test to determine if it is likely to induce inconsistency". Pettit does not specify what would constitute 'inconsistency' in politics or what it could possibly mean that a 'candidate' might "induce" inconsistency; nor does he say who would conduct these "tests" and by whom any alleged inconsistency would be resolved and with what substantive outcome.

57. Pettit, "Deliberative Democracy", 731. It is surely a 'political' judgement whether these two demands are articulated, for example, via the institution of 'national debt' – a decision with its own political 'rationality', genuinely located in the domain of democratic contestation and played out in a particular power configuration.

58. Pettit, "Deliberative Democracy", 731. This is, of course, an argument with a long pedigree within Pettit's favoured republican tradition. For example, Henry Parker, the defender of (English) parliament's rights against Charles I argued in 1642 that "By virtue of election and representation, a few shall act for many, the wise shall consent for the simple, the virtue of all shall redound to some, and the prudence of some shall redound to all" (see the quotation in: Edge, "Two Ideas of Democracy", 566). Montesquieu, too, declared: "The great advantage of representatives is, their capacity of discussing public affairs. For this the people collectively are extremely unfit, which is one of the chief inconveniences of a democracy" (*The Spirit of Laws*,

Book XI). And in liberalism, too, we find these sentiments: John Stuart Mill requests that electors defer to the superior intellect of their representatives, a superior wisdom that they acquired “through long meditation and practical discipline to that special task” of exercising political power (Mill, *Considerations*, 375-79).

59. Pettit, “Democracy, National and International”, 305.

60. *The Federalist*, no. 10.

61. Pettit, “Deliberative Democracy”, 731.

62. Pettit, “Depoliticizing Democracy”, 52.

63. Pettit, “Depoliticizing Democracy”, 58.

64. Pettit, “Depoliticizing Democracy”, 53, 57. If one discounts ‘passion’, ‘aspirational ideals’, and (sectional) ‘interests’, then there is little of substance left for popular deliberation or contestatory politics.

65. Pettit, *People’s Terms*, 224.

66. Pettit, “Deliberative Democracy”, 736. Accepting the role of the people as the source of political power must “not mean opening up the gates of tyranny of the majority, an elective despotism” (Lovett/Pettit, “Neorepublicanism”, 24).

67. Pettit, “Depoliticizing Democracy”, 64.

68. Pettit, “Deliberative Democracy”, 736.

69. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 129. Allowing for such ceding supposedly counters the ‘fallacious assumption’ that “democracy lives only in the oxygen of public debate and participation” (Pettit, “Democracy, Electoral and Contestatory”, 140). It also means that when the power of the representatives is “passed on in various areas to appointed boards and officials ... the democratic empowerment of the collective will is inevitably compromised” (Pettit, “Depoliticizing Democracy”, 59-60).

70. Pettit, *People’s Terms*, 237; see also: 233 fn. 45 and 236.



71. Lovett and Pettit, "Neorepublicanism", 21.
72. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 129 and 141.
73. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 130.
74. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 129-30. Who, one must ask, is this "we" that makes these appointments or that defines the "briefs"? Joseph Stiglitz (*Price of Inequality*, 473 fn. 35) reports that in the United States campaign fundraising for judicial elections rose from \$83.3 million in the period 1990-99 to \$206.9 million in the period 2000-09 and he observes: "Monied interests use campaign contributions to get judges who are sympathetic to their causes" (251). In which respects can the US Supreme Court that rules, in a 5:4 judgment in 2010, in favour of Citizens United (and unlimited political campaign spending by corporations and unions) and strikes, in its 5:4 judgment in 2013, at the heart of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; or the US Federal Reserve Bank that pursues a policy of deregulating financial services – certainly not particularly responsive to *popular* demands but thoroughly political and partisan – be said to be 'indicative representatives' and "helping maintain a system of influence in which people equally share" (Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 130)?
75. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 264.
76. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 266. The 'public' is said to be in power to the extent that these norms "constrain and channel what happens in government" (Pettit, "Democratic Public", 85).
77. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 269.
78. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 253.
79. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 135.
80. Pettit, *People's Terms*, 261-62.
81. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 203.

82. See also Rostbøll, *Deliberative Freedom*, 45-77.
83. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 196.
84. See also McCormick (*Machiavellian Democracy*, 164): “[I]n any democracy worthy of the name, the people should be institutionally empowered, wherever it is remotely efficacious logistically, to deliberate and decide public policies themselves”. McCormick, in chapter 6, provides, on the basis of a reinterpretation of Machiavelli’s writings, a critique of Pettit, not dissimilar to the one advanced in this article). McCormick’s opening sentence (141) sets the tone of the argument: “Democrats should worry when philosophers employ the language of ‘republicanism’”.
85. Pettit, *People’s Terms*, 207.
86. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 186.
87. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 186.
88. Schlozman et al., *Unheavenly Chorus*, 5.
89. Streeck, *Buying Time*, 52, 53.
90. Streeck, *Buying Time*, *passim*.
91. Offe, “Participatory Inequality”, 213.
92. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 161.
93. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 135.
94. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 141. Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson’s study *Winner-Take-All Politics* as well as Larry Bartels’ book *Unequal Democracy* or Martin Gilens’s on *Affluence & Influence* are indispensable in this respect.
95. Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 144.
96. Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated*, 61.
97. Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated*, 249. See, from different theoretical perspectives, for example, E. Balibar (*Citizenship*, chap. 3) on “the temporality of ‘insurrectional

moments’”; and Rancière (*Hatred of Democracy*, 71) who speaks of democracy as “the public activity that counteracts the tendency of every State to monopolize and depoliticize the public sphere” as well as his understanding of democracy as a “practice of dissensus” (Rancière, *Dissensus*, 45-61) and “disruption” (Rancière, *Disagreement*, 95-121).

98. Tormey, “Democracy”, 123, 125. “What we are seeing is ... what we might call a *resonant* form of politics where the object is ... the recuperation of political agency and political space” (Tormey, “Democracy”, 124; Tormey, *End of Representative Politics*). Peter Mair (*Ruling the Void*) analysed the “hollowing out” of Western ‘electoral’ (party-) democracy as a consequence of popular withdrawal and disengagement with (party-mediated) conventional politics. He considered Pettit’s conceptualization of democracy as symptomatic for endeavours “to redefine democracy in such a way that it can more easily cope with, and adapt to, the decline of popular interest and engagement” (Mair, *Ruling the Void*, 9). It bears emphasizing, however, that the withdrawal from ‘conventional’ democratic politics does not equate with a withdrawal from political activity. Bennett and Segerberg (*Logic of Connective Action*), for example, analyse the personalization of large-scale political action in individualized publics by distinguishing the logic of *connective* action in which group ties are being replaced by large-scale, fluid social networks and digital media operate as organizing agents from ‘classical’, organization- and hierarchy-based *collective* action. Pettit considers neither form of action.

99. See Biekart and Fowler, “Transforming Activisms”; della Porta, *Social Movements*; Glasius and Pleyers, “Global Moment”; Khanna, “Seeing Citizen Action”; Sitrin and Azzellini, *They Can’t Represent Us*; Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos, “Direct Democracy Now”; Tejerina et al., “From Indignation to Occupation”.

100. Recent ('right-wing') populist protest movements and their electoral and political successes might be construed as also giving sustenance to the revival of the idea of an epistocracy as the substitute for democracy: "Democracy ... is unjust. We expose innocent people to high degree of risk because we put their fate in the hands of ignorant, misinformed, irrational, biased, and sometimes immoral decision-makers. Epistocracy might be able to fix this problem" (Brennan, *After Democracy*, 230). Epistocracy is the rule of the knowledgeable; and we should not bemoan a decline in political engagement but rejoice in it as a good thing: "We should hope for even less participation, not more" (Brennan, *After Democracy*, 3). Pettit's republicanism, despite his embrace of expert bodies as a necessary institutional aspect of democracy, cannot be construed as supporting Brennan's platonistic political philosophy; he is much closer to Daniel Bell's support of political meritocracy along the lines of the "Chinese Model" (Bell, *China Model*; see also: Nicols, *Death*).
101. Mair, *Ruling the Void*, 18, 19, 20.
102. Mair, *Ruling the Void*, 99.
103. Mueller, *Populism*, 76-77.
104. Mueller, *Populism*, 76.
105. Arendt, *Promise*, 117.
106. Arendt, *Promise*, 129.
107. Arendt, *Promise*, 143.
108. Pettit, "Deliberative Democracy", 725.
109. Moffit, *Populism*, passim.

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