PART I

Introduction

Rising Participation and Declining Democracy

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Introduction: A New Context for Participation

Deliberation in Michigan

In November 2009, three hundred Michigan residents from all walks of life converged on the state capital in Lansing to take part in a high-level public debate about what should be done to improve their state's beleaguered economy. In an atmosphere of brewing unrest about the nation's direction—most clearly marked by raucous congressional town hall meetings over proposed reforms to the health care system—the absence of party activists yelling at one another was notable. This was a sober, state-of-the-art affair paid for by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, in which technocratic expertise, philanthropic resources, and political capital were brought together. Consistent with a general turn to civil and deliberative practices in diverse institutional contexts, the goal was to facilitate rational deliberation among citizens from across the political spectrum.[1] Governor Jennifer Granholm and the president of the University of Michigan, Mary Sue Coleman, both gave keynote addresses thanking the participants for their service to the state. Business leaders and community groups presented information to the participants over the three-day process. Kwame Holman of *NewsHour* moderated the discussion, and coverage of the events was broadcast on public television stations throughout Michigan. Not pulling any punches, the event was called "Hard Times, Hard Choices."

The intrepid group of Michiganders had been randomly selected by Stanford professor James Fishkin's Center for Deliberative Democracy in order to gather a representative slice of the state's citizens for his "Deliberative Polling" method of assessing public opinion. Such processes are intended to ensure that the collective voice of the people is not drowned out by the most vocal, the most partisan, or those with the strongest preexisting ties to well-heeled interest groups.

Although a principle of deliberative practice is the presumed equality among participants in the dialogue,[2] the outcome of deliberation may not always reflect preferences for a broader social egalitarianism. Indeed, after participants were polled a final time on a number of policy options for facing the state's fiscal crisis, James Fishkin reported the event to be an unqualified success when they voted to increase taxes on themselves but to decrease taxes on business:

> Support for increasing the sales tax went up by fourteen points from 37% to 51%. Similarly, support for increasing the income tax went up by 18 points from 27% to 45%. . . . People were willing to shoulder new burdens they could feel. By contrast, support for cutting the business tax rose by a gigantic 27 points from 40% to 67%.[3]

In Michigan, a state widely recognized as the poster child for capital flight and a bellwether of the crumbling national economy, ordinary citizens engaged in far deeper discussions about their civic responsibilities than even the most faithful voters may do in their lifetimes. The result of such intensive participation was a demonstrated willingness to assume greater burdens in their day-to-day lives and more stress on their families' pocketbooks in order to entice fickle employers to remain in their state. Today, as business health is increasingly dependent on Wall Street investments, and states and localities struggle to balance their budgets and meet their pension obligations, similar deliberations reveal a populace willing to engage deeply in revitalized forms of public deliberation. But in a context of heightened inequality and social precariousness, the capacity of participation to transform that very context may be limited. Indeed, what such a case illustrates is that certain new forms of apparently "empowering" public participation may be doing more to reinforce authority than to challenge it.

Defending For-Profit Education

At the start of 2010, Dawn Connor was just a regular college student, taking night courses to become a veterinary technician at Globe University in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, while working during the day at a local shelter spaying and neutering dogs and cats.[4] She had been active in a variety of leadership roles around the university, including by serving as a student ambassador for the veterinary technology program, being the president of the veterinary technology club, and playing a role in meeting and welcoming new students on campus. She had graduated from high school early, then drifted from one traditional college to another, ultimately changing majors a few times and making progress without earning a degree. Globe University, a for-profit university with eight branches throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, and South Dakota, turned out to be a great fit for Connor. Despite the substantial tuition for a vocational degree—the two-year associate's degree in veterinary technology runs over $44,000 plus lab fees and book expenses—the school had the advantage of being located in Connor's hometown. She especially liked that she was able to maintain a conventional job during the day while working toward her degree by taking classes at night.

Connor's experience at Globe University was so good, in fact, that when she heard that the Career College Association (CCA)—a trade group for for-profit colleges that has since been renamed the Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities—was seeking students to represent the school at a Washington lobbying day that March, she jumped at the opportunity. But the lobbying day was just the beginning.

Only a few short months later, Connor would find herself the newly elected president of Students for Academic Choice (SAC), which describes itself as an association of "proud students and graduates of private, post-secondary career-oriented institu-

tions." The association focuses on ensuring "access to a quality education," recognizing both the value that "non-traditional learners" bring to the workplace and the value of career-oriented education for society as a whole. As of September that year, the organization had an estimated 150 members and was working with a lawyer to gain official nonprofit status. More significantly, SAC became active in organizing college students across the entire for-profit university system, ultimately assembling some thirty-two thousand signatures on a petition asking that the Department of Education avoid enacting a proposed new "gainful employment" rule, which would cut off federal aid to colleges whose graduates have high debt-to-income ratios and low loan-repayment rates.[5] The petition was framed to suggest that the rules change would harm disadvantaged groups, including the "single mothers, veterans, and adult students who work full time while attending school."[6]

But despite its efforts to be seen as an independent, grassroots uprising of concerned students at for-profit colleges, the industry's backing was not far behind. Indeed, as Connor herself acknowledged, the idea to form the organization originated not with the students, but with representatives of for-profit schools.[7] Further, the group was formed at the CCA's lobbying day in Washington, and the SAC website and its initial resources were provided by the CCA.[8] As Connor put it, the CCA served as SAC's "grandfather," which gave the group its start and guidance. She says, "They kind of got us going. But now they're taking the training wheels off and saying, 'Go for it and let's see what you guys can do.'"[9]

SAC, then, became a primary support in a full-throated response to what was seen as a life-or-death fight by the $30-billion industry of for-profit colleges against the gainful employment rule. Cass Sunstein, the Harvard Law School professor formerly in charge of rulemaking at the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, called the industry's lobbying effort nothing short of "extreme."[10] And the lobbying efforts seem to have made a difference, as the rules will only affect a small proportion of for-profit universities at the start, and those penalties won't even go into effect until years down the road.

From Contention to Consensus in Cleveland

Today, the city of Cleveland, Ohio, is a hotbed of civic participation. Yet expanded participation has not necessarily meant a democratic revival, although every day in the city dozens of community organizations, churches, ward clubs, and street clubs meet to discuss issues of concern.

In the city's predominantly African American neighborhood of Hough, residents meet frequently around a host of civic and political projects. Well-attended ward club meetings discuss policing, garbage pickup, and funding for schools. A meeting at a local community center takes up the need to secure the funding necessary to provide children's services. A meeting in a nightclub discusses regulatory approval for a Negro Baseball Hall of Fame. In the name of economic development, a group of men meet at a local community development corporation to develop strategies for locating "mentors" who can nurture aspiring entrepreneurs.

In another of Cleveland's neighborhoods—the increasingly African American but still heavily Eastern European Slavic Village—discussions have a similar flavor. A street club discusses policing and traffic mitigation. A local organization familiarizes residents with a program to paint window sashes on abandoned houses. Community organizers meet with neighborhood residents in order to take action against illegal scrap dealers. One group is discussing outreach to victims of predatory lending, and yet another is attempting to defuse racial tensions through a series of face-to-face relationship-building meetings reminiscent of the encounter groups of the civil rights era.[11] Members of a local church gather to discuss plans for a townhouse development to preserve the viability and cultural flavor of the neighborhood surrounding the church itself.

Comparing these settings, the ostensible topics present an interesting variety but are not radically different. The manner in which they are conducted is also surprisingly similar. They have agendas, they tend to loosely follow Roberts' Rules of Order, and diverse citizens come together to hash out issues of local concern. Within the meetings themselves there are subtle distinctions in the discourse and practice of deliberation: who gets to speak, when they get to speak, and the sorts of authority they invoke when doing so.

However, just as important are the various *purposes* that participation and deliberation are serving. This concern is evident in both cases. To a local blogger and former director of a community development corporation, Hough is not an example of a Tocquevillian associational democracy, but of a "Maoist" personality cult, led by the indomitable city councilor Fannie Lewis, until her recent death. Her allies, on the other hand, celebrated her familiarity with the people of the ward and her willingness to secure resources on their behalf by hook or by crook. Regardless of which characterization is more accurate, one of Lewis's main tools was the facilitation of broad-based participation. Indeed, each of the meetings in Hough referred to above were in some way related to Lewis. Participation was how Lewis maintained connections to constituents. For some, this produced deliberation that was less about democratic decision making than it was about performing loyalty to the councilor. If true, deliberation in Hough is unlikely to produce effective citizens, much less democracy.

In Slavic Village, citizen participation flows across a civic landscape that was largely formed in the neighborhood-based social movements of the 1970s. Perhaps the most visible figure in Slavic Village is Barbara Anderson. When Anderson first moved into the neighborhood, her garage was firebombed by racists. Shortly thereafter, she received a leaflet for a meeting to discuss neighborhood issues. When she arrived she realized "the meeting was about me." Today, the friendly and soft-spoken Anderson leads a street club, Bringing Back the Seventies, which has won awards for civic involvement from the city. She considers the mayor an ally and works with the local community development corporation on residential issues. She is not paid for this work and in street club meetings she keeps a low profile. Anderson has been the victim of predatory lending, an experience that has made her far more willing to be confrontational than she once was. It has also thrust her into the forefront of discussions on the foreclosure crisis. She has testified before committees of the U.S. Senate on

the issue, is regularly interviewed by journalists from around the world, and has been the subject of a French documentary. Anderson the political and civic actor has been both created by the civic life of her neighborhood and a creator of it. Participation in Slavic Village does not just accommodate people like Anderson; it celebrates them. Yet the meetings in Slavic Village are not radically different from those in Hough. So what makes some deliberative participation good and some bad?

Participation in an Unequal Context

What do these stories tell us about contemporary public participation? The goal of broadening and deepening public participation has served as a valued mechanism for societal revitalization among democratic theorists, social reformers, and popular commentators.[12] Participation is held up as a means of placing power in the hands of everyday citizens,[13] a device for creating new forms of self-governance intended to put citizens in the role of collaborators in making major institutional decisions,[14] and, importantly, for breaking down rigid hierarchies and entrenched inequalities within state, corporate, educational, health care, and other institutions in society.[15] Many have come to see participation as a remedy for a variety of the organizational and political problems that have emerged in complex, differentiated modern societies. Flexible organizational cultures, a decentralized media environment, and network-based collaboration all seem to augur a more promising environment for new forms of empowered democratic participation.

Modern societies appear to be undergoing a participatory revolution, a development that has been accompanied by an exuberant scholarly and popular celebration of the transformative potential of participation. Across the political spectrum, increasing citizen voice is viewed as a necessary counterweight to elite power and bureaucratic rationality.[16] Stakeholder dialogue sessions, crowdsourcing, town hall meetings, web-based open government initiatives, and deliberative democracy are championed as revolutionary antidotes to the decline of civic engagement and the thinning of the contemporary public sphere.

We call these elite-facilitated civic innovations the "new public participation," which we define as (a) the facilitation of lay participation by elite actors in order to manage or channel the former's voice in support of narrow interests, (b) the creation of collaborative relationships between lay actors and organizational decision makers to reground the authority of the organization, or (c) efforts to arrive at better-informed organizational decisions by relying on the collective wisdom of assembled publics rather than experts.

Much contemporary participation, even when carried out with the best of intentions, is shaped by socioeconomic inequality. In the Michigan case, we see that deliberative goals were working *against* the goal of economic redistribution and egalitarianism, as ideas about the risks of business taxation have permeated popular understandings. In the case of Students for Academic Choice, we see a participatory program that provides backing to a contested industry despite the concern that this industry is seen as exploiting socially disadvantaged groups. In the case of Cleveland community-based

organizations, we can see how in some settings participation can expand citizen voice while in others it works to underpin the authority of an elected official.

Cases like these make sense when understood in light of the structural problems of modern societies that limit the potential for true democratization. Vast inequalities of wealth, income, and organization exist both within and across nations, and in the United States these inequalities have expanded dramatically since the 1970s. Rising political partisanship has accompanied this transformation, with ideological divisions becoming sharper and more deeply entrenched.[17] Corporate power has been transformed through the decline of managerialism and the expansion of (often highly participatory) network forms of business organization.[18] Not least, companies have expanded their reach into civil society through new methods of mobilizing the public as a lobbying force.[19] In the public sector, bureaucratic expertise is regularly contested through participatory forums, community consultations, and other dialogues with local citizens. Political representatives are held accountable by constituents in town halls, at primary challenges, and by watchdog groups. Over the last forty years there has been a broad institutionalization of participatory practices, a flattening of hierarchies, and an expansion of the role of stakeholder voices in organizational decision making. We once associated an expansion in participation with an expansion in both broader socioeconomic equality and greater egalitarianism within organizations. Yet over the same period there has been a rapid expansion in socioeconomic inequality and political polarization.[20]

These developments suggest a need to revisit the question of participation. Is participation reinforcing the unequal, undemocratic context of society at large? Once a tool for protesters contesting the authority of hierarchical organizations, is participation now a tool for the creation of authority? Is participation a practice that helps realize broadly inclusive social and political aspirations, or is it a tool for realizing particularistic interests? If the latter, is it because some interests are irreconcilable? Or is it because the practice of participation is conducted poorly? Finally, is reasoned deliberation the best process for locating the welfare of the citizenry as a whole, or is deliberation most productive alongside other modes of participation such as protest and contestation?

Our interest in this volume is to explore implications of new participatory innovations for the exercise of authority and governance. Compared to those involved in promoting empowerment projects, our work in this project may seem simply cynical, but that would be the wrong conclusion. Our goal is to understand what has happened to participation over the last forty years in order to gain a deeper theoretical and empirical understanding of it as a political practice. The goal is not simple critique. It is to enrich our understanding of democracy and the practices that sustain and undermine it.

While in the 1960s participation was offered up as a solution to hierarchy and alienation, participation today is widespread and complicated enough that any equation of participation with democratization cannot be sustained without some ambiguity. This does not mean we should give up on participation. Instead, it presents a challenge to activists, citizens, and scholars to think through what kinds of participation yield the positive outcomes we seek and what prevents their realization. Before we can do

this, we need better analyses and an improved conceptual apparatus to understand the complexities of participation today. Celebratory accounts are uplifting, but they do not meet the needs of this moment when expanding participation has occurred alongside the greatest expansion in socioeconomic inequality since the Gilded Age.

For this reason, we set our goals in contrast to those who study participatory projects mainly by evaluating successful cases of stakeholder empowerment. In particular, our volume offers an alternative perspective to the explosion of recent work by proponents of "empowered participatory governance"—defined as efforts to redesign institutions in a participatory democratic fashion in order to facilitate deliberation and civic engagement, while transcending the "familiar configuration of political representation and bureaucratic administration."[21] The intention of this volume is to move beyond the selection of positive cases in order to examine instead (1) the institutional interests in public legitimation through participation and (2) the link between new participatory forms and the highly unequal context in which they have taken root. In addition, (3) we are also interested in exploring how participatory democratic practices (or those that invoke this tradition) have migrated from their origins in civil society organizations to a diverse set of institutional homes and (4) how this migration shapes participatory dynamics. But, first, it is worth considering the sources of this new participatory revival.

Participation in Historical Context

Today we generally accept the idea that participation produces healthier communities, better politics, and more innovative institutions. Government programs and bureaucracies mandate or encourage participation in the name of both democratic governance and more effective policies. Civic engagement and civic participation programs are now widely diffused as programmatic goals among philanthropies, nonprofits, government, and increasingly among for-profit firms as well. Indeed, an entire industry of specialist organizations sells participation services to meet this growing demand.[22] For these actors the question is not whether and how participation matters, but how to encourage it. Given the more or less unquestioned positive associations we have with the idea of participation, it is useful to recall that it was not always so. The idea of participation as a practice with promising democratizing potential has not had a linear trajectory in modern thinking. In historical context, positive associations with participation are relatively new; recalling this enables us to scrutinize theorists' and practitioners' contemporary celebration of it.

Enlightenment thought used the premise that all of us have the capacity to reason as a tool to undermine the authority of monarchical governments and state religions. The Age of Revolution saw the creation of numerous experiments that attempted to institutionalize this premise in democratic and representative constitutions. Political practices changed alongside ideas of legitimate authority. In Britain and the United States, rioting and machine breaking began to cede ground to mass demonstrations and unionization.[23] Debates emerged over the role of organization in politics. Are

organizations to be understood as expressions of power rather than reason? What is the relationship between organization and individual reason? Do they fragment people into parochial interests rather than bringing people together in reasoned dialogue? Other debates emerged over the conditions that support the use of reason in politics. Some thought material deprivation turned reason to the question of personal acquisition rather than the general good.[24] Renaissance-era ideas of civic virtue persisted because of the perceived need to ground reason in normative values.[25] Women began to be excluded from the promising universalism of Enlightenment thinking.[26] People of color, manual laborers, and Jews suffered the same fate on the grounds of material circumstance and assumed proximity to nature rather than civilization.[27]

Even as democratization proceeded apace in the 19th century, the belief in broad, reasoned participation in government did not advance with it. Popular conservatism invoked tradition at the expense of reason, nationalism invoked commitments to abstract ideas about cultural essences beyond the scope of reason, and communitarianism and religious revivalism invoked shared values that were not to be subjected to reason's skeptical eye.[28] Ideologies and political practices served to disconnect reason and participation despite the efforts of some to maintain the connection (Max Weber notable among them).[29] These trends reached their apogee in the First World War, understood by many to be a manifestation of collective insanity, a sentiment that was easily extended to related events like the Russian Revolution and the Nazi Revolution.[30] In this context, Freud wrote about the "death instinct," our human drive to destruction.[31] Emotion had exploded out of the private sphere and overwhelmed the reasoning public. Horkheimer and Adorno, looking at the rise of state capitalism, national socialism, and the "culture industry," argued that the Enlightenment's promise of emancipation through reason had merely circled back on itself to reestablish the authority of superstition and myth.[32] Mass participation in politics led, ultimately, to mass delusion.

In the United States the issues were similar, though they took a somewhat different form. American politics in the 19th century could not be considered "inclusive," despite the invocation of self-government in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Women, African Americans, and immigrants were all denied citizenship by various constitutional and legal mechanisms.[33] Even native-born workers and farmers were often excluded from full political citizenship. At the same time, urban politics traded on nativist prejudices and ethnic solidarity. This exclusion produced numerous efforts to reestablish the authority of the "people" in American politics, culminating in the late 19th century with the Farmer's Alliance and the Populist Party.[34]

Populism's high point was checked by an emerging Progressive movement that invoked expertise as the necessary tool of reform in the face of a representative politics that was hopelessly corrupted by parochial interests.[35] The tensions between these strains in politics were integrated in the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the Great Depression. Electoral politics in the era continued to be governed by sectional interests and the need to respond to emerging movements. At the same time, Roosevelt's administration created new bureaucratic agencies to be managed by experts disconnected from the pressures of popular participation in politics.[36] "Tech-

nocratic" movements emerged alongside popular ones. Walter Lippmann summarized the dilemma and proposed a solution in *Public Opinion*, where he questioned the "omnicompetence" of the public.[37] The world is complicated and the reach of reason is limited by a lack of expertise. Public officials should consider the views of experts as well as the voting masses, particularly in day-to-day decision making.

The 1930s were characterized by massive economic and social upheavals and, just as important, by a very ideological brand of politics. Of course, one outcome was another world war, but there was also the sense that mass movements were in a struggle to define the future. However, in the wake of the Second World War, the idea of mass participation as a tool of democratization and emancipation was somewhat battered. Government bureaucracies, staffed by experts, were capable of solving most problems and securing the general well-being. While there were voices that resisted this— Saul Alinsky argued that exclusion would produce more extremism, and the civil rights movement began questioning the justice of any government that could exclude its citizens from self-determination— the faith in experts and bureaucracy was at its height.[38]

In response to the emerging dominance of bureaucratic experts in American society, C. Wright Mills wrote *The Power Elite* in 1956.[39] Mills questioned whether bureaucrats and experts were oriented to the general good or, in fact, were attempting to expand their own power and authority. For Mills, military, corporate, and political leaders composed a distinct social interest that rendered ordinary citizens powerless in an ostensibly democratic society. Mass participation was not to be feared, and decisions by the Power Elite, relatively unchecked by citizen participation, were the real danger. At roughly the same time, concern began growing about general social alienation even amid the rising tide of postwar economic affluence. *The Lonely Crowd* was published in 1950 and in it Riesman, Glazer, and Denney argued that suburban affluence was producing a middle class that was primarily concerned with social validation rather than achievement, a tendency that was easy for bureaucracies to manipulate.[40] In *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse similarly argued that advanced industrial society produced "false needs" which ultimately manipulated desires and aspirations away from critique or a drive for excellence.[41]

The thinking that was encapsulated in this work amounted to a collective rejection of the idea that bureaucracies and their experts could be reconciled with broadly participatory democracy and, at the same time, could realize general social improvement and progress. This view was not just important in leftist intellectual circles. Theorists of cybernetics, for example, began imagining a world in which technical mastery would lie with individuals, rather than large organizations, empowering them to know more, do more, and make better decisions— a line of thinking that would take computing out of large organizations and place it on individual desktops.[42] The New Left and the student movement incorporated elements of this thinking. Students, faced with the prospect of working as middle managers in faceless and oppressive bureaucracies, resisted. In the South, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee took the view that self-generated movements of regular people were more promising tools of social transformation than experts and charismatic leaders.[43] In Berkeley, the thing to be feared was understood to be bureaucracies and the power elite, including university

presidents, not simply capitalists or conservatives. These were merely the opening salvos of a wave of movements that invoked participation and democracy in opposition to bureaucrats, expertise, and traditional authority. Women questioned the authority of men, union members struck in opposition to their own unions as well as their employers, the LGBT community developed a more militant politics and demanded social acceptance, and neighborhoods revolted against the highway building and slum-clearance projects of centralized municipal bureaucracies.[44] Among many in these movements, participation was not simply understood as a check on the authority and power of experts, it was also understood as a tool for creating community and overcoming social alienation and the meaninglessness of consumer society.[45]

These movements also informed the next generations of political theory and intellectual research. Theorists' understanding of mass participation and civic participation was no longer framed as an emotional and easily manipulated crowd, but as a body of empowered "stakeholders" who should be the authors of key decisions concerning their own lives.[46] This participation did not merely enact a democratic right to self-determination; it developed the political sophistication of the participants, ultimately producing a healthier and more sophisticated polity.[47] A general capacity for reason was not invoked with the same insistence that it had been, though it clearly made a revival, most notably in the thought of Jürgen Habermas.[48] A general capacity to solve problems through participation and collective decision making was increasingly invoked. Liberals and communitarians would debate the nature of the best polity, but both accepted the idea that participation was a good, not something to be feared.[49] Bureaucrats and experts, on the other hand, were understood to be distantly interested and somewhat blinded by the abstractions of their training and expertise.[50] These views pervade contemporary intellectual thinking on the polity and society.

Of course, there are intellectual positions that contest this rosy view. Foucauldians associate participation with the disciplining effects of civil society.[51] Participation, from this perspective, does not enable individuals constituted prior to participation to express their essential aspirations and values. It constitutes and disciplines the individual. Sheldon Wolin, at the time very much a supporter of the 1960s movements against the power of unconstrained bureaucracies, now argues that today's fragmented and diffuse modes of participation help enable an "inverted totalitarianism" in which elites can have democratic authority while pursuing antidemocratic goals.[52] But these views are in the minority and it may be that invoking these ideas today is considered mildly impolite or unreasonably contrarian.

The movements of the 1960s sparked a culture war between traditionalists and social liberals. *What is less commented on is that it produced a general social consensus that participation was a good worth pursuing and institutionalizing.* The very bureaucracies that were understood in the 1960s to produce alienation and arrogant experts now routinely make use of participatory practices. Corporations, government, and the military, each part of Mills's power elite, all make use of New Participatory practices today. Of course, when the movements of the 1960s invoked participation, they were not simply saying any old participation will suffice. Indeed, it is clear from research on these movements that the nature and dynamics of participation were constantly debated.[53]

Nonetheless, the ideas developed in these movement settings have often been incorporated into the organizations that sell participatory services to large bureaucracies.[54]

The valorization of participation in the 1960s was not simply pushed by movements. By the late 1970s, it was also widely adopted by government and private-sector organizations. Citizens gained access to policymaking, the management of agencies, the direction of scientific research, and even the capital allocation decisions of corporations. Indeed, in many settings participation was actively pushed as a management tool, not as a method of democratization. American manufacturers adopted "total quality management" techniques wholesale from Japan, disrupting labor relations on the shop floor but potentially transforming work-management techniques to give workers a greater voice. Political theorists on both the left and the right turned to civil society as a realm of authentic social relations that could provide a necessary corrective to the power of bureaucracies, a sentiment that has helped justify the devolution of government and the incorporation of nonprofit organizations and for-profit corporations into governance functions.

Given this history, it is necessary to develop a better theoretical and conceptual language to understand participation in contemporary society. We turn now to a framework for carrying out that task.

The Response: A Participatory Renaissance?

Democratic deficits appear to be prevalent in modern societies,[55] and responses to such concerns have become a prominent aspect of contemporary states and organizations. Government agencies, businesses, and nonprofits are all making efforts to become more open, transparent, accountable, and welcoming of public input than their rigid, bureaucratic, and more hierarchical predecessors of generations past. Organizations are doing what they can not only to *respond* to public concerns, but also to *facilitate the expression* of public concerns by hosting deliberative democratic forums, making political and organizational leaders available to members of the public for dialogue, and even helping to build advocacy organizations so that members of the public can have their say in politics and organizational governance. These new efforts transcend the well-established and routinized mechanisms of agencies' "public comment" periods, the writing of environmental impact statements, and basic efforts to promote the "maximum feasible participation" of disadvantaged members of society in public programs.

What many see as today's participatory renaissance appears to be richer and deeper than the programmatic efforts of earlier generations. Yet it also coincides with a dramatic expansion in socioeconomic inequalities over the past forty years, which have entailed a growing polarization between institutional elites and everyone else. The new participatory revival also coincides with the neoliberal turn in policymaking.[56] The role of markets in determining life chances is being valorized at the same time that state interventions to mitigate inequality are being dismantled. In this context, when material well-being no longer underpins legitimacy, some, like the geographer Mark

Purcell and Michael McQuarrie in this volume, argue that participation is now a necessary component of authority.

Regardless of how we feel about these changes, it seems clear that "participation" is a practice that is increasingly valued not just in government but also in diverse institutional settings beyond the state. Moreover, it is valued not simply because it enables citizens to express their aspirations and priorities. It is valued as a management tool and a socialization tool as well. With the help of new technologies and new fields of expertise, participation has metastasized across the organizational and institutional landscape in dramatic fashion—and in ways that are likely to alter its significance and purpose. This breathtaking expansion raises questions about the relationship between the legal-institutional "home" of participation and its effects, and about how the meaning of the practice shifts when it operates in multiple settings other than the public sphere and formal politics.

Tensions in Participatory Projects

In this context, and given this history, we think any consideration of participation revolves around three primary tensions.

1. *Democratization versus tyranny.* Of course, participation has long been associated with democratization. However, the postwar period is an example of a time when it was widely associated with totalitarianism. This pessimistic view persists in Foucauldian conceptions of the disciplining effects of civil society and collective participation, and more recently, in arguments like Sheldon Wolin's suggestion that we now live in an "inverted totalitarianism," premised on fragmenting and diffuse participation (as opposed to the mass, unifying types of participation that were characteristic of the movements of the 1930s and 1940s). One volume abandons nuance and simply asks the question in its title: *Participation: The New Tyranny?*[57] Short of hyperbole, there are essential questions about participation as a component of rule today. We are accustomed to thinking of elite power and authority as being associated with social closure or as blocking the paths to more inclusion and participation. With participation so often celebrated, it is not surprising that participatory practices might be enrolled in support of governance and authority, underpinning the rule and legitimacy of elites rather than simply challenging them. Is our society more open and democratic? Or is elite rule reorganized to accommodate greater openness and participation without disrupting hierarchies and power relations?

2. *Solidarity versus conflict.* The key question here asks whether participation promotes social solidarity or instead exacerbates conflict. Formal politics is usually understood as a realm of "adversarial" politics, but civil society has often been characterized as a realm of social solidarity that potentially acts as a unifying base for healthier formal politics. Moreover, participation is often understood to promote solidarity by transforming identities and interests so that we are better able to recognize and act on the general good. From this perspective,

participation potentially socializes us to be better and more sophisticated citizens. Critics argue that this emphasis on social solidarity obscures questions of justice. Don't solidarity and consensus in an unequal society come at a cost? On the other hand, given an unequal society, if participation is not transformative and people merely act on their self-interest, is conflict inevitable? Are all questions usefully amenable to compromise and deliberation or are there issues that are better decided on the basis of agonistic contests between organized interest groups?[58] Some activists and organizers argue that conflict is an essential prerequisite to consensus because it forces recognition of groups, issues, and interests that might otherwise be marginalized. Is this true? Or is conflict taken up too readily without an appreciation of the potential for deliberative compromise and consensus?

3. *Better governance or worse?* In Philip Selznick's classic examination of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the relationship between management and participation was not particularly positive.[59] Rather, in that story organizational strategies and purposes were disrupted and defused by participation. However, today, participation is increasingly celebrated as a source of local knowledge, "stakeholder" investment, and as a corrective to the rationalizing effects of abstract, expert knowledge.[60] On the other hand, many lament the relativization of expert authority. What, for example, does it mean when lay voices direct scientific research and assess its value?

We argue that these questions are not best addressed through the use of theoretical reason alone and, indeed, all of the chapters collected here base their analyses on rich and detailed empirical research. The picture that emerges is certainly complicated. Participation is put to a variety of uses, but it also evolves in different ways given the needs of different institutional settings, the outcome of historical conflicts, and the application of new technologies. At the same time, the overall expansion in the use of participation and its spread into a variety of new settings are indicators of its changing practice and purpose. With these three tensions in mind—democratization versus discipline, solidarity versus conflict, and empowered governance versus the loss of expert authority—we can consider a number of types of modern participation that bring these tensions into even starker relief.

First, consider *economic development programs*. The World Bank has taken a strong interest in practical application of the concept of "social capital" and has considerable and wide-ranging programs in empowerment. By this, they mean "the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions that both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional contexts which govern the use of these assets." A wide variety of other aid programs have adopted the "empowerment" mantra in a fashion that is surprisingly apolitical in approach. Critics such as Arundhati Roy have pointed to empowerment in development aid as part of a broader turn toward "the NGOization of resistance," in which nongovernmental organizations (NGOs),

in her words, "defuse political anger and dole out as aid or benevolence what people ought to have by right. They alter the public psyche, they turn people into dependent victims and they blunt the edges of political resistance. . . . [NGOs] form a sort of buffer between the [state] and the public."[61] Empowerment rhetoric, critics like Roy argue, is being used as a cover to advance neoliberalism and blunt the impact of harsh structural adjustments, especially in that many of these empowerment programs distribute aid directly to NGOs *instead* of channeling funds through states. Even more interestingly, aid agencies do appear at times to truly empower citizens to confront institutions, namely *local* institutions known for human rights violations, unsustainable practices, or cultural avenues seen as hostile to development.

Second, consider *state-mandated participation*. Participation is often mandated as a condition of funding by foundations and grant-making agencies of the U.S. federal government. Of course, in the U.S., the notion of mandated participation is rooted in the requirement of "maximum feasible participation" as outlined in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The act, as part of the War on Poverty, established the Community Action Programs, which were to be "developed, conducted, and administered with the *maximum feasible participation* of residents of the areas and members of the groups served." These practices survive today especially in the resurgence of programs in community-based participatory research (CBPR). Consistent with the turn toward an inclusion-and-difference-based approach to health sciences research, both the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have adopted CBPR frameworks into their funding solicitations; these stipulate that research is not only collaborative with affected communities but also *mandates their participation* through making available "structures for participation by communities affected by the issue being studied."[62] Biomedical research grants involving formal community action components, for example, have skyrocketed since 1996. A consistent thread throughout these cases, as Nina Eliasoph argues,[63] is that organizations— whether in welfare, health, community development, or other policy areas—often mandate that their grantees encourage participation, and much of that participation may contradict other mandates and may challenge other institutions for change, especially local institutions like city councils, mayors' offices, and existing social service agencies.

A third set of phenomena includes *elite-driven efforts to mobilize the public*. Strategies like the use of empowerment language, grassroots organizing, and mobilizing links with existing community organizations for political advantage are not limited to the world of traditional advocacy organizations and social movements. There has been a resurgence of research on elite-driven public advocacy and elite social movements. Although this was a largely dormant body of investigation over the past thirty years,[64] a vibrant new body of studies has investigated how elites have appropriated social movement strategies, frames, and organizing processes, often to counter the advocacy of citizens' movements. Steven Teles's account of the rise of the conservative legal movement makes clear that elite conservatives, responding to the vast legal victories of liberal causes in the 1960s and '70s, mobilized foundations and legal networks to transform the law schools and, in turn, the very legal profession.[65] Recent

research that one of us (Walker) has done shows that as the civic and business environments changed in the 1970s, a new field of consulting firms came about to help businesses mobilize public participation in their favor;[66] similar to what Teles finds, Walker argues that corporate America adopted an "if you can't beat them, join them" approach to the challenges they were facing from protest groups and civic organizers. Campaigns like the ones Walker describes are designed to mobilize only those who are predisposed to agree with the request of the recruiter, and not to encourage independent public dialogue. These cases provide evidence of elite mobilization of public participation without true empowerment of the broader public, in that participation is a mechanism for the reproduction of institutionalized authority; it is a counterpressure to citizen power that seeks to root elite institutions more deeply in public life. Cases like these remind us that participation and inequality can often be quite compatible, despite the expectation of many—indeed, this includes the very architects of the notion of maximum feasible participation—that participation inherently combats inequality and reshapes authority.

A fourth and final phenomenon is the *professional facilitation of public deliberation*. One of us (Lee) has studied the rapid expansion of an industry of participation experts who manage "deep" engagement initiatives for government, nonprofit, and private clients.[67] These professional deliberation consultants take great pains to produce authentically deliberative, customized processes, and this much is not in doubt. But Lee argues that their institutional and political contexts—and the forms of empowerment they enable—deserve greater scrutiny. Complementing increasingly sophisticated stakeholder management technologies, this type of "designer democracy" has a number of potentially regressive outcomes. Deliberation consultants build public legitimacy for the retrenchment of programs, they enhance the reputational capital of the consultants' clients, and they encourage citizen mobilization focused on short-term, individualized action. As Isaac Martin's chapter in this volume describes, the explosion of government-sponsored deliberative forums is in part a response to increasing social conflicts over scarce public resources, and this explosion raises a number of ongoing challenges for social movement actors facing "anticipatory consultation" designed to forestall future movement activity. As deliberative processes themselves become routine, the relationships among deliberation, contention, and routine politics are far from settled. This is particularly clear in Francesca Polletta's contribution to this volume.

In all four of these cases—economic development programs, state-mandated participation, corporate grassroots lobbying, and professionalized deliberation—we see the tensions inherent in modern participation and the ways in which participation may at times be *consistent* with expanded inequalities, rather than a challenge to them. It would seem, then, that the concept of participation is overdue for a serious rethinking.

Overall, we believe that addressing these questions requires social scientists to examine these institutional changes with a more critical and objectifying take on the basic categories we use to understand democracy, though that does not necessarily mean that we take a critical stance on the practices themselves. We believe that the relationship between participation, political subjectivity, authority, and justice has

been reconfigured. It is not entirely clear *how* that has happened, nor are we clear on the exact shape of that reconfiguration. Nonetheless, it is time for scholarship to reground its consideration of the meaning of participation in empirical research on its practice, its settings, and its institutional frameworks. The chapters in this volume all seek to address this issue by challenging settled theoretical assumptions without throwing them out altogether, and by basing their challenges not on theoretical reasoning alone, but on empirical research.

Participation and Inequality

Very little of the discussion of participation is interested in how it might produce and sustain inequality by silencing dissent or relativizing political critique. To the extent that equity has been a concern of studies of contemporary participation, most research has focused on the structuring of power within particular processes, not across the wide array of settings for participation or between participation's institutional sponsors and its subjects. Since the 1960s, very little attention has been paid to the relationship between participation and equity because the assumption has been that the two are conjoined and that participation is an incontrovertible democratic good.[68] As the preceding sections show, the meanings and uses of participation vary strikingly across contexts and time periods, such that the assumed association between participation and equity, or even participation and democratization, must be related to historically specific dimensions of contemporary capitalist societies.

The relationship between participation and equity has always been tenuous and contingent, involving contradictions, trade-offs, and unintended consequences. But the rise of participatory solutions in the current era of increasing inequalities demands even greater scrutiny. To understand the challenges of democratic life today, we need a broader picture of how participation works now, the settings in which it operates, and what it is used for. In so doing, the contributions in this volume seek to avoid both the valorization of participation and an (equally problematic) argument that participatory practices are merely ideological cover for inequality. Strong normative arguments of either kind do not allow for an accurate understanding of how participation may reinforce or transform authority while also promising new opportunities for its contestation. At the same time, because we tend to associate participation with democratization, the contributors to this volume tend to emphasize the role of participation in underpinning contemporary forms of rule and authority. This is not because participation no longer offers democratizing promise. Rather, it is a necessary intellectual maneuver to force a reassessment of the way we understand and analyze participation and, hopefully, move beyond simplistic associations and assumptions. Most generally, a more nuanced analysis of how different kinds of equality are related to different kinds of participation in diverse settings will help us to evaluate what is really at stake in today's participation revolution.

The assembled contributions that follow frame a wholly new research agenda for the study of participation and inequality. We hope to excite those who find that dem-

ocratic reforms and existing power structures are interrelated in complex ways and may lead to unintended consequences. More important, we hope to demonstrate that there is a larger picture emerging from these empirical studies. From the Tea Party to Obama's online engagement strategies, from health policy to budgeting and taxation, from international development to human rights activism, and from workplace engagement and corporate culture to the civic realms of volunteers and low-income communities, we believe such questions could not be more timely or relevant for understanding extraordinary and everyday forms of political action in a contemporary context that continually demands that its citizens, shoppers, and workers "have their say" and "join the discussion."

What Is to Follow

As scholars who discovered common themes across our own studies of elite-driven mass participation, public deliberation, and community organizing, we set about to assemble this volume in a manner that focuses tightly on participation and inequality while at the same time demonstrating the range of questions such investigations can raise. We found junior and senior scholars doing fascinating research on common themes despite their very different subjects. Thus, we grouped chapters according to the questions they share in common.

Beyond this introductory section, the second section addresses the following question: How do new participatory forms help to produce and reinforce inequality? The question is addressed in three chapters that provide unique insights into how inequality is reproduced through participatory practices and that also present the outlines of the contemporary political economy of participation. Lee and colleagues investigate the field of professional public deliberation consultants and how their practices working on behalf of public- and private-sector clients help to provide a democratic veneer for the interests of consultants' clients. As one of Lee's subjects suggests, participation allows organizations to "pluck more feathers with less squawking." Vallas, Judge, and Cummins's chapter examines how discourse in the public debate surrounding sweatshops has come to emphasize a "human rights" frame at the cost of one focused on how to distribute wealth. They contend that one of the consequences of this frame is to divert attention away from issues of inequality and power in global workplaces. Walker's contribution analyzes a new set of "participation consultants"; actors in this field work mainly for corporations seeking to mobilize short-term public support around issues of company- or industrywide concern. He shows that companies are most likely to hire such consultants when they are facing concerns about the legitimacy of their community relations or environmental practices. These corporate campaigns reinforce inequality by mobilizing participation almost exclusively in line with company interests.

Part III asks this question: How does the new public participation produce new forms of authority and legitimacy for elites? McQuarrie's chapter takes as its subject changing "technologies of participation" and finds that while such technologies were

once used to challenge the authority of urban elites, they are now a central component of that authority. In the process the role and practices of community-based organizations have been transformed to secure civic consensus rather than express neighborhood interests. Martin's contribution tells a complementary story. He studies what he calls "new deliberative assemblies" carried out by state-level government agencies, and he links their proliferation to the fiscal troubles they face. The major implication is that democratization is conditional: increased participation is granted in return for increased taxation. In electoral politics, Daniel Kreiss asks how new technologies (facilitated by the growth of a new industry of political professionals) are reshaping public participation in a new era of "digital" campaigns promising individual empowerment. Building on interviews with the consultants who harnessed participatory technologies in the 2008 campaign to elect Barack Obama, Kreiss's chapter shows that although these new modes of engagement promise truly open and democratic forms of participation, in reality they increase voter surveillance capabilities and restrict engagement to fundraising, promotion, and political data gathering on behalf of the candidate. Rounding out the third section, David Schleifer and Aaron Panofsky's chapter explores the emerging world of entrepreneurial patient advocates who lobby and raise public awareness about diseases and their treatment. A key part of their account describes how such groups manage apparent conflicts of interest when lobbying for government support for specific drugs in which they also have a financial investment. Often, patient advocacy groups do little to contribute to the broader democratization of society and instead promote greater inequality in medical treatment and drug availability.

The emphasis of part IV is on this question: What unintended consequences and new opportunities emerge from new participatory projects in unequal contexts? Although their manifest purposes are often to facilitate thick public engagement and grassroots empowerment of those at the margins, many new participatory projects hold unintended consequences with respect to both participatory cultures and broader institutional practices. Nina Eliasoph's chapter explores previously hidden consequences of the transformation of volunteering and civic life in the empowerment projects of the last two decades. In opposition to hierarchical social relations, many civic associations, nonprofits, and foundations aim "to empower grassroots, local, multicultural, optional, voluntary communities, to help people break out of their boxes and express their gut feelings." This organizationally sponsored "empowerment talk" is rife with tensions between helping the needy, documenting accountability and transparency, and being "soul-changing" for those involved. Building on findings in her recent book, Eliasoph shows that those who are supposed to become "empowered" are forced to manage unintended contradictions between rhetoric and reality. Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Ernesto Ganuza's chapter also investigates the global reach of the new participation in a genealogy of the concept of "participatory budgeting." Although designed to be a tool of grassroots democracy in Brazil, the practice migrated from local communities into a routinized practice for intergovernmental organizations like the World Bank and USAID. Baiocchi and Ganuza resist the notion that political and economic elites colonized "pure" participation in order to legitimate the expansion of capitalist markets. Instead, the chapter makes the case that regulation and governance

questions are always a part of public participation and that participatory practices are never exactly utopian.

The fourth section closes with two contributions that explore how unintended consequences and unequal contexts may actually enable new opportunities for participation and empowerment. David Meyer and Amanda Pullum's contribution examines the Tea Party mobilization since 2009, considering how populist mobilization builds from public sentiments of inequality and democratic deficits in the political system. In so doing, they "explore the tension between grassroots mobilizations animated by democratic rhetoric and their potentially less democratic claims on policy." In the Tea Party case, inequality allowed for new mobilization opportunities, even if these were largely undemocratic in nature. Francesca Polletta's chapter concludes on a hopeful note by investigating participatory opportunities in the boundary between "deliberation" and "public contention." Theorists hold out deliberation as a space in which reasoned dialogue could change minds, reveal shared concerns, and lead to new processes of collective decision making. Protest groups, by contrast, are thought to be committed to winning their case through disruptive action and are unwilling to set aside ideological commitments; activists are thought to be worried that engaging in deliberation will entail co-optation or capitulation. This piece makes clear that these and related assumptions are undercut by empirical evidence on both types of action. Thus, the explicit linking of deliberation and contention may open up new avenues for participation.

We conclude with a capstone chapter that reexamines the pitfalls and unrealized promises of participation in a context of severe structural inequalities. Building on remedies suggested in the prior chapters, we argue that critical perspectives on participation are necessary in order to leverage the opportunities for challenging inequalities created by unfolding fiscal and political crises. In order to meet this challenge, it is necessary to constantly place our categories in dialogue with actual institutional practices.

In the case of participation, this dialogue is long overdue.

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

1. See, for example, Gutmann and Thompson (2004); Lee (2011).
2. For example, Habermas (1984); Knight and Johnson (1997).
3. Center for Deliberative Democracy (2010: 6).
4. The following builds largely from Gorski (2010).
5. Field (2010).
6. SAC (2011).
7. Gorski (2010).
8. Field (2010).
9. Gorski (2010).
10. Lichtblau (2011).
11. Davidson (2007).
12. See, for example, Pateman (1970); Dryzek (2000); Putnam (2001); Barber (1998); Fung and Wright (2003b).

13. Boyte and Boyte (1980).
14. Ostrom (1990); Bingham, Nabatchi, and O'Leary (2005).
15. Fung and Wright (2003a); Ansell and Gash (2006); Fung (2006); Gaventa (2006).
16. For a conservative take on participation and civil society, see Berger and Neuhaus (2000).
17. Abramowitz and Saunders (2008).
18. Davis and Thompson (1994); Podolny and Page (1998); Fligstein and Shin (2007).
19. Walker (2009, 2014).
20. For example, Hacker and Pierson (2011).
21. Fung and Wright (2003a: 15).
22. Walker (2009, 2014); Lee (2011).
23. Thompson (1963); Tilly (1995).
24. Epstein (1994); Calhoun and McQuarrie (2007).
25. Pocock (1975); Vernon (1993).
26. Fraser (1992); Ryan (1992); Clark (1995).
27. Eley (1992); Todorov (1993); Horkheimer and Adorno (2002).
28. Johnson (1978); Eley (1980); Coetzee (1990); Calhoun (1997); Roberts (2007).
29. Radkau (2009).
30. Eksteins (2000).
31. Freud (2010).
32. Horkheimer and Adorno (2002).
33. Keyssar (2000).
34. Foner (1970); Goodwyn (1976).
35. Rodgers (1998).
36. Block (1977); Amenta (1998).
37. Lippmann (1997).
38. Alinsky (1989a).
39. Mills (2000).
40. Riesman, Glazer, and Denney (1963); Kornhauser (2008).
41. Marcuse (1964).
42. Turner (2006).
43. Payne (1995).
44. Evans (1979); Clavel (1986); Aronowitz (1992); Armstrong (2002).
45. Evans and Boyte (1992); Jasper (1999); Polletta (2002).
46. McAdam (1982).
47. Alinsky (1989b); Arendt (1998).
48. Habermas (1989).
49. Rawls (1971); MacIntyre (1981).
50. Handler (1996).
51. Barry, Osborne, and Rose (1996); Cruikshank (1999).
52. Wolin (2010).
53. Polletta (2002).
54. Lee (2011).
55. Pharr and Putnam (2000); Dalton (2008). For a contrasting perspective, see Norris (2002).
56. See Mudge (2008).
57. Cruikshank (1999); Cooke and Kothari (2001); Wolin (2010).
58. The most visible debates around this question have centered on Habermas's

communicative ethics and, prior to that, his historical analysis of the bourgeois public sphere. For example, see Habermas (1989) and the essays in Calhoun (1992). These issues were also central to later debates on multiculturalism. See the essays in Gutmann (1994).

59. Selznick (1949).
60. Lippmann (1997); Callon, Lascoumes, and Barthe (2009).
61. Roy (2004).
62. Wolfson and Parries (2010: 120).
63. Eliasoph (2011).
64. See Useem and Zald (1982).
65. Teles (2010).
66. Walker (2009).
67. Lee (2007).
68. Some notable exceptions include Mansbridge (1980), Sanders (1997), Young (2000), and Verba (2003).