

A way to fuzzy democracy

"The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter."
(Winston Churchill)

or

How modern communication might change the way we think about and practice politics

What's ahead

- Democracy
- The citizens
- Political participation and frustration
- New media and politics

- Systems theory
- Information theory
- Fuzzy theory
- Interesting projects

Democracy – where it comes from

- Δημοκρατία --> δῆμος (démos – the people) + κρατία (kratía – power, leadership, strength)
- Definition:
 - 1) **Government system**, where the people have the control of the government ruling over them
 - 2) **Decision-making process** where all participants have the same influence on the voting outcome

Democracy = democracy ?

- --> Not „democracy“, but „democracies“

Representative democracy

Consensus democracy

Plebiscitary democracy

Direct democracy

Parlamentaric democracy

Deliberative democracy

Social democracy

...

(Very) brief history of democracy

- First democracy: Athenian democracy
 - First instituted in Athen, later in other poleis (city states)
 - Governance as collective decisions
 - All (male, free) citizens could vote, not only the rich
 - Often criticized (ostracism, etc.)
- Medieval times: nearly no democratic governments in Europe
- 1787: american constitution, USA as first modern democratic state, revival of democracy

Democracy today

- „Holy“? Untouchable? The „right“ form of governance?
- Democracy as last remaining, ethically justifiable, „modern“ form of governance
- No more contrasting government forms since the end of the cold war / the end of the socialistic states
- Today: decline of modern democracies

The idea behind democracy

- „Citizen participation is at the heart of democracy“ (Verba Scholzman, Brady)
- Center of the democratic process: the concrete individual with all its desires, fears, preferences, interests
- Means: less governance of the majority, but more participation of the individual
- Two central concepts:
 - Participation (individuals participate in decision making processes which concern them)
 - Opposition / veto (last „cry for help“)
- --> realizable through direct democratic concepts

Criteria of quality

What a democracy has to guarantee

- Opportunity for participation
- Basic principle of civil liberty
 - Protection from government authority --> assure basic rights, separation of powers
 - Guarantee for autonomous decision-making
- Political equality, fair chance to represent values and interests
- Effective and responsible government
 - Provides welfare (social security)
 - Provides safety

Criticism at modern democracies

- Low level of transparency
- Representatives don't actually represent their voters
- --> Low trust in politicians (decision making, competence)
- Corruption affairs
- Lobbyism
- Shifting of political public into the mass media, politics as banal media events
- ...

So is democracy wrong?

- No, but modern democracies need to be improved!
- 3 approaches for reforms:
 - Reform of bottom-up communication (voting, citizen participation)
 - Reform of lateral communication (between representative actors)
 - Reform of top-down communication (government orders)
- Democracy has to be democratized!
 - We need to get closer to the original idea!
 - --> More direct-democratic elements!

Do modern democracies serve the individual?

- ... or do all governmental decisions just serve the majority?
- Can the individual influence political decisions?

The citizens – how do they look like?

- **Cognitive mobilization** since the 50's
 - More information resources:
 - Higher level of education
 - Television as primary information source
- Increased political skills
- More interest in political issues
- --> **Political sophistication** of the citizens!

The citizens – how do they look like?

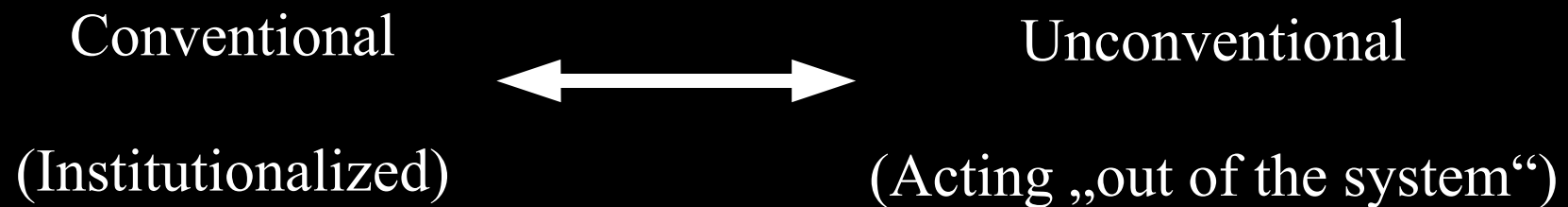
- Citizens have to inform themselves actively, but cannot be informed about every political issue
- Split into informed and uninformed citizens?
- --> Today, the politically informed citizen is said to be a **critical citizen**

Political frustration and alternative ways of participation

- Why is the voting rate decreasing?
- Why are so many citizens demonstrating?
- Voters have to think that they can influence policy!
- No influence --> political frustration
- Citizens feel powerless, not integrated into the political process

Political participation

- Citizens concentrate on forms of political participation, which are up to their motivations and goals
- Two categories of participation:



Conventional participation

- Voting
- (Campaign activity)
- (Communal activity)

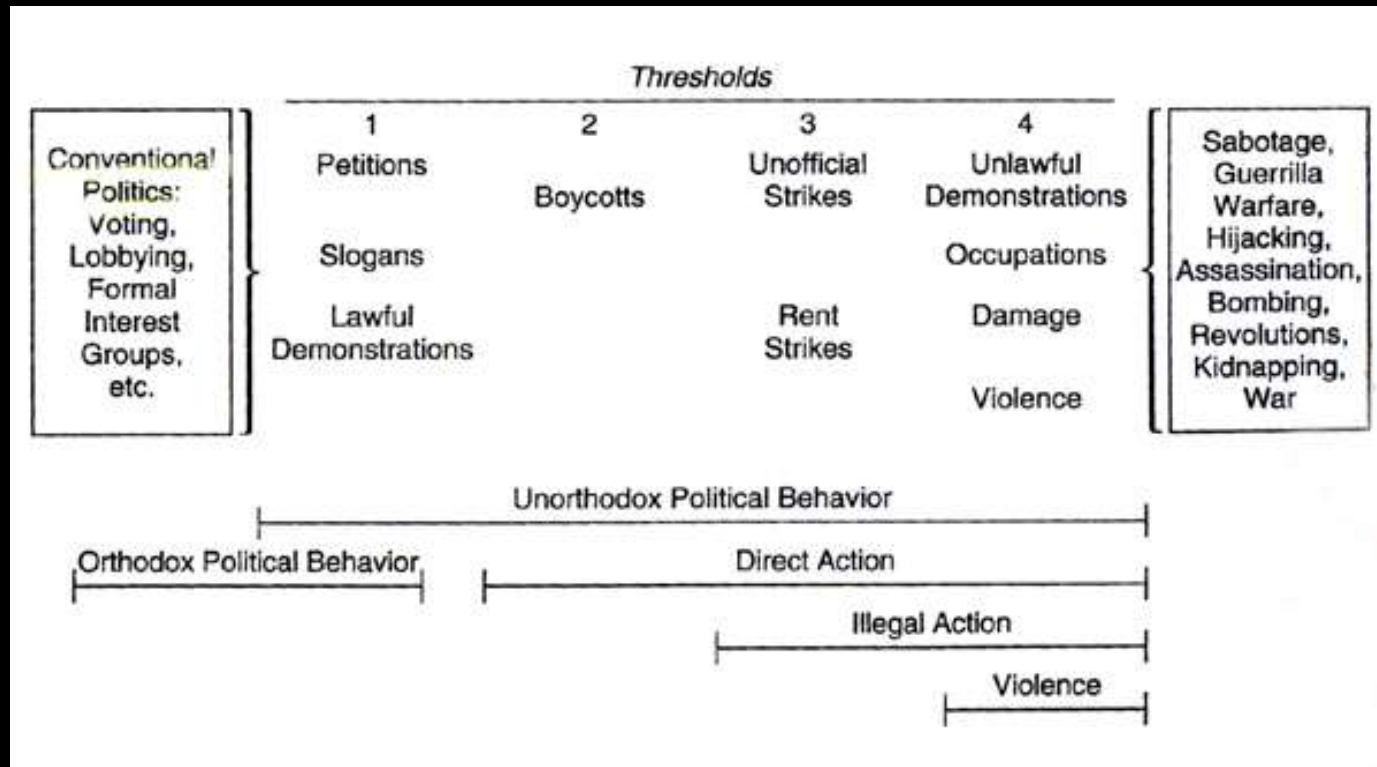
- Voting rate decreasing
- Voting out of conscientiousness, not to influence policy
- --> Voting seems to have no direct influence on policy

Unconventional participation

- Demonstrations
- Protests
- Civil disobedience
- ...

- In the past, protest was often the last desperate act of the public, today it's quite common
- Remains a political instrument of minorities and repressed groups
- --> More direct, visible influence on policy

What to do if voting seems to be ineffective and unconventional participation is partly illegal?



(Dalton)

- New and more efficient ways of participation have to be institutionalized!

Satisfaction with democracy

- The people are frustrated, but are they really frustrated of democracy as a concept or government form?
- No, they're more likely dissatisfied with current democratic practices

What to do with a nation full of frustrated and critical citizen?

- The political alienation must be stopped!
- Uninformed citizens have to be „picked up“
 - They have to be informed (easily accessible information)
 - Critical thinking has to be stimulated and supported
- New technologies have to be exhausted to create new stimulations for participation
 - Fascination for new media is a powerful motivation
- New media as a last resort?

The internet and politics

- Interactive process! (television only one-way)
- Everybody is a sender
- No need for physical presence
- No temporal limits (24/7)
- No censorship (in the ideal case)
- Great potential to realize direct-democratic concepts

System theory primer

- “The whole is more than the sum of its parts”
(Aristotle)

A definition of “system”

- A *system* is a set of *elements* and their *inter-relations* comprising a whole, such that the whole is more than the sum of its *constituents*.
 - Each element of a system is a system.
- *Emergence* := (system – constituents)
 - stems from inter-relations between constituents

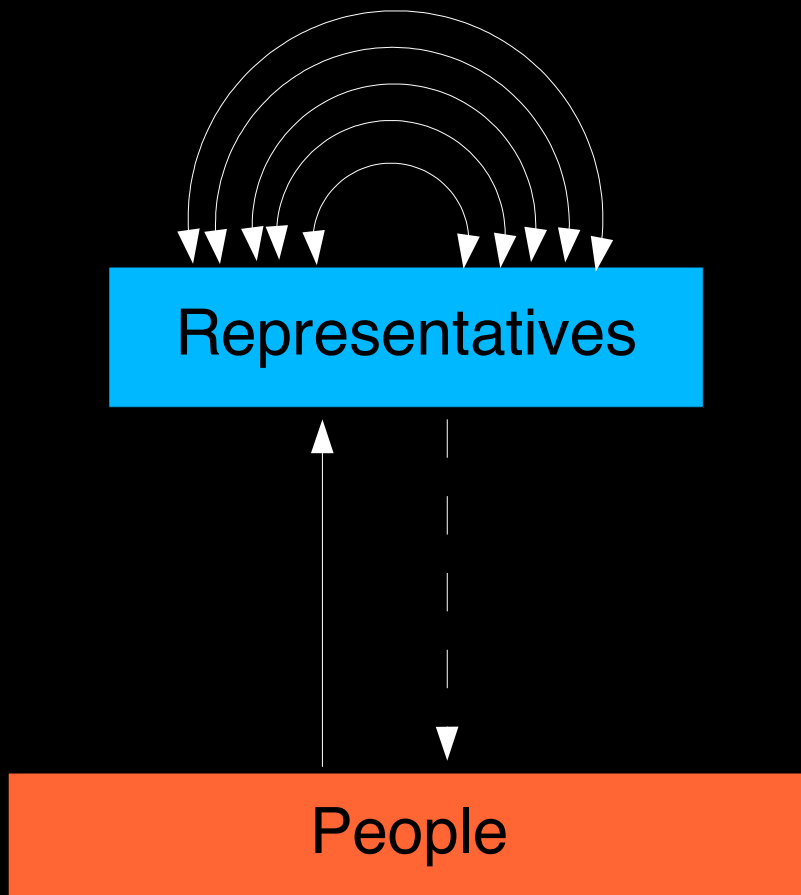
Systemical evolution

- The force to differentiate against the environment induces interaction with other systems
 - holds true for the constituents as well
- Any interaction of systems leads to differentiation
- Thus, differentiation and systemical interaction are like hen and egg

Systemical interaction

- “Sender” creates potential information
- “Receiver” interprets potential information
 - according to own level of differentiation
 - will “learn” by improved ability to differentiate
- Transmitted information is just a subset of potential information

Information flow in a political system



- Most political discussion takes place between representatives
- People elect representatives
- Petition for referendum by the people
- Media reports

Reduction in information flow

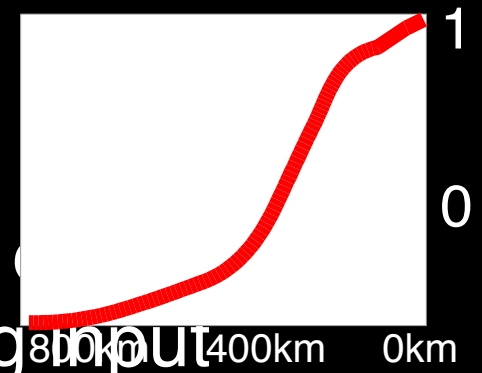
- Voters in the system communicate by casting votes
 - petitions et al. rather uncommon
- Media communicates back preferably content pre-selected for broad interest
 - special-interest content must be actively obtained by individuals
- 49% NO + 51% YES = YES
 - fuzzy logic helps
- Effect: reduced systemical inter-relation

Systemical view

- Everything is a system
 - true for material systems (physics)
 - States and international companies are inter-related systems
 - governmental organizations, NGOs, companies, communities and people are constituents of states
 - people constitute political parties
 - ...

Fuzzy logic

- Expands boolean logic from $\{0,1\}$ to $[0-1]$
- Norms for relations
 - “is an old human” or “is far away from Berlin”
- Simple sets of $[if A and (B or C) then D]$ of expert systems from fuzzy and changing input variables
- Norms and expert systems may be subject to debate and vote



Lessons learned

- Any sufficiently inter-related constituent has direct influence on the system as a whole
 - butterfly principle
 - direct democracy serves the individual
- If in states the inter-relation of people as constituents is reduced, their needs will decreasingly influence system differentiation and evolution

Lessons learned.1

- Keep voting results and vote distributions unreduced
 - reduce to “YES or NO” only where needed
 - make votes changeable and reusable
- ...
- Information flow and communication is the key to system evolution
 - Good news: we're already pretty good at communication!

DeVoteE

- Debian Vote Engine (debian.org/vote)
- Open communication over mailing lists
- Anybody can make a proposal
 - supporters needed for opening a discussion
- Open discussion
 - two weeks minimum
- Call for vote by proposer
 - only debian developers are elective
- Condorcet for candidate voting

DemExp

- Democratic Experience (demexp.org)
- “Ask everybody on everything”
- Anybody can open a vote/question
- Anybody can add candidate answers
- Cast and change votes at any time
- Condorcet
- External discussion

RSS/Atom feeds

- Subscribe for proposals, discussion-threads and votes according to your ...
 - expertise
 - concern
 - personal importance/interest
- Needs proper tagging (and localization) to work
- Perfect in combination with ./-principle to minimize amount of text to digest
- Make “politics” in the evenings/free time from home

Slashdot

- advanced discussion rating
- only postings above personal threshold are displayed directly
 - “click-through” to lower rated postings
- easily expandable rating system
 - tagging
 - per-category rating
 - informative, funny, “spindoctoriness”, expert-level
 - personal preferences for scoring

PGP/GnuPG

- Digital encryption and signatures
 - secure cast of votes
 - partisan involvement through centralized signature system
- Web of trust
 - partisan involvement through trust chains
- Misuse can be traced back

Problems

- Level of discussion and decision
 - expert discussions with non-experts
 - expert systems partially solve that
- “Built-in” transparency
 - help manipulation
 - network analysis
 - disadvantage in secretive environments
 - DRM might help with that (probably not)
 - will cease with prevalency

Problems.1

- Technical dependability
 - problematical inheritance
 - eg. denial-of-service
 - fallbacks and redundancy needed
 - requires internet access and (still) some decent technical skills
- Lots of work to implement a usable system
- ...

To go

- Start small scale
 - use for your
 - local club
 - small company
 - interest group
- Grow bigger by creating new inter-related systems out of the smaller existing ones
 - make good use of emergence

Thanks!

- Literature
 - Demokaritisierung der Demokratie, Claus Offe (hrsg.)
 - Citizen Politics, Russel J. Dalton
 - Relationale Informationstheorie, Dominikus Forcht
 - ask your favourite search engine or university on “fuzzy set theory” and “expert systems”

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