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Models of Democracy: An Introduction

There is a striking paradox to note about the contemporary era: from Africa to Eastern Europe, Asia to Latin America, more and more nations and groups are championing the idea of democracy; but they are doing so at just that moment when the very efficacy of democracy as a national form of political organization appears open to question. As substantial areas of human activity are progressively organized on a regional or global level, the fate of democracy, and of the independent democratic nation-state in particular, is fraught with difficulties. (Held 1998, 11)

Many recent contributions on democracy start – like David Held's above – by mentioning a paradox. On the one hand, the number of democratic countries in the world is growing – according to Freedom House, from thirty-nine democracies in 1974 to eighty-seven countries free and democratic, and sixty partially free, in 2011 (Freedom House 2012). On the other, there is a reduction in the satisfaction of citizens with the performances of 'really existing democracies' (Dahl 2000). Some scholars even suggested that the third wave of democratization risks developing into economic wars and armed conflicts (see, in particular, Tilly 2004). Certainly, research on quality of democracy by Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino (2005) pointed at the low quality of many democratic regimes. The question 'Can democracy be saved?' became central in the recent political debate faced with a most serious financial crisis, as well as apparent institutional incapacity to address it. Not only have these developments triggered harsh societal reactions and calls for politics to come back

in, but also the austerity measures to address them have accelerated the shift from a social model of democracy, with its development of the welfare state, to a neoliberal one, that trusts free-market solutions.

As we will see in this volume, to understand this paradox it is necessary to distinguish between different conceptions of democracy, both as they have been theorized and as they have been applied in real-world, existing democratic institutions. As Robert Dahl observes about the idea of democracy, 'Ironically, the very fact that democracy has such a lengthy history has actually contributed to confusion and disagreement, for "democracy" has meant different things to different people at different times and places' (2000, 3).

In this volume, I shall in fact contrast four models of democracy, assessing the challenges and opportunities that recent social, cultural and political changes represent for them. If we want to save democracy, we have in fact to acknowledge its contested meaning, as well as the different qualities that are stressed in different conceptions and practices of democracy. Saving democracy would mean going beyond its liberal model, broadening reflection on participation and deliberation inside and outside institutions. This would imply looking at the same time at normative theories as well as at empirical evidence on different models from the liberal one. Referring to research I carried out on social movements, but also to other scholars' work, I aim to discuss general challenges and opportunities for democracy. In this chapter, I will start this journey first of all by introducing different conceptualizations of democracy, which will then be discussed in depth in the rest of the volume.

Conceptions and practices of democracy: an introduction

The search for a shared conceptualization of democracy in political science was for a long time oriented towards procedural criteria which mainly considered free, competitive and periodic elections as a sufficient indicator for the presence of democracy. The choice of a minimalist definition of democracy was justified at the time with reference to the ease of its empirical operationalization. Normative definitions – which look at the ability of democracies to produce a government 'for the people', realizing its wishes and preferences – are instead considered difficult to apply in empirical research:

> How may we see to what extent certain real problems are close to, or far away from, the ideal 'correspondence' or responsiveness postulated as necessary?...How is it possible to pinpoint the 'wishes' or

'preferences' of citizens? Who is entitled to express them without betraying or modifying them? Is it only the 'preferences' of the majority that count? But should a democratic regime not also protect minorities? How, then, do we measure the 'correspondence' or responsiveness, that is the 'congruence'? (Morlino 1996, 84)

More recently, however, it has been observed that a minimalist, procedural definition is not, in reality, the only empirically verifiable one. As Leonardo Morlino (2011) has argued, all the different ideals of democracy can be operationalized in the sense that adequate empirical indicators can be found to determine whether, according to a specific definition, a country at a particular moment in time is democratic or not. It should be added that definitions of democracy are always changing, linked as they are to specific problems (theoretical and empirical, scientific and real) that emerge and change in different historical periods.

In addition, every definition of democracy necessarily has a normative dimension. As rightly observed by David Held, empirical theories of democracy, focusing on the meaning normally attributed to the term, have thus tended to normatively legitimate that specific conception:

Their 'realism' entailed conceiving of democracy in terms of the actual features of Western polities. In thinking of democracy in this way, they recast its meaning and, in so doing, surrendered the rich history of the idea of democracy to the existent. Questions about the nature and appropriate extent of citizen participation, the proper scope of political rule and the most suitable spheres of democratic regulation – questions that have been part of democratic theory from Athens to nineteenth-century England – are put aside, or, rather, answered merely by reference to current practice. The ideals and methods of democracy become, by default, the ideals and methods of the existing democratic systems. Since the critical criterion for adjudicating between theories of democracy is their degree of 'realism', models which depart from, or are in tension with, current democratic practice can be dismissed as empirically inaccurate, 'unreal' and undesirable. (2006, 166)

It could be added that, over time, the research focus on representative institutions has produced a partial vision of the real functioning of existing democracies.

If a large part of political scientists' attention has been concentrated on democracy, this does not mean that a unanimously accepted definition of the concept exists. There is no doubt that the concept of democracy is not only 'stretched' but also contested. In a recent *APSA-CP Newsletter* symposium dedicated to conceptualization, Thomas Koelbe (2009) rightly lamented the use and abuse of the concept of democracy to

describe a plethora of different political systems, and indeed a basic disagreement on its conceptualization.

Different types of definitions of democracy do in fact exist. The classical normative definitions underline the legitimizing role of citizens. Democracy is power *from* the people, *of* the people and *for* the people: it derives from the people, belongs to the people, and must be used for the people. Those general principles are, however, combined in very different ways. Charles Tilly (2007, 7) has distinguished four approaches to democracy in the social sciences:

- A *constitutional approach* concentrates on laws a regime enacts concerning political activity…
- *Substantive approaches* focus on the conditions of life and politics a given regime promotes…
- Advocates of a *procedural* approach single out a narrow range of government practices to determine whether a regime qualifies as democratic…
- *Process-oriented* approaches…identify some minimal sets of processes that must necessarily be continuously in motion for a situation to be considered as democratic.

If we look at actually existing democracies, we can generally observe that they in fact combine different conceptions. Representative institutions are flanked by others. As Pierre Rosanvallon has recently noted, 'the history of real democracies cannot be dissociated from a permanent tension and contestation' (2006, 11).[1] Indeed, the democratic state needs not only legal legitimacy through respect for procedures, but also the trust of its citizens. In the evolution of 'really existing democracies' this has meant that, alongside the institutions that guarantee electoral accountability (or responsibility), there is a circuit of surveillance (or vigilance) anchored outside state institutions (2006, 11). A public sphere developed from the encounter between the state's search for efficiency and the intervention of civil society seeking to express requests and rectify mistakes (Eder 2010). Placing emphasis on elections often ends up obscuring the need for critical citizens who make governors accountable. Thus, 'When the electoral institution is chosen as the institution characterising democratic regimes the much more important presence of a sphere that is both public and distinct from the regimes is obscured. Deprived of this, deprived that is of open public discourse, and despite being governed by persons regularly elected, such a regime could only misleadingly be called democratic' (Pizzorno 2010, xiii).

Rosanvallon suggested that democracy needs not only legal legitimation, but also what he calls 'counter-democracy', that is 'a specific,

political modality of action, a particular form of political intervention, different from decision making, but still a fundamental aspect of the democratic process' (2006, 40). In the historical evolution of democratic regimes, a circuit of surveillance, anchored outside state institutions, has developed side by side with the institutions of electoral accountability. Necessary to democratic legitimacy, confidence requires defiance, in the sense of instruments of external control and actors ready to perform this control; in fact, democracy develops with the permanent contestation of power. Actors such as independent authorities and judges, but also mass media, experts and social movements, have traditionally exercised this function of surveillance. The latter, in particular, are considered as most relevant for the development of an 'expressive democracy' that corresponds to 'the *prise de parole* of the society, the manifestation of a collective sentiment, the formulation of a judgment about the governors and their action, or again the production of claims' (2006, 26).

The definition of democracy also changes over time. Through self-reflexive practices, democracy is in a permanent process of definition and redefinition (Eder 2010, 246). Although extremely young as an institution (just a few decades old in the majority of states, if we take universal suffrage as a fundamental condition), democracy does have a long history as a subject for reflection (Costa 2010). If electoral responsibility was privileged in the historical evolution of the discourse on really existing democracy, today the challenges to procedural democracy bring our attention back to other democratic qualities (Rosanvallon 2006).

Democracies are also varied. Different democratic qualities have been intertwined in the construction of diverse typologies. Political scientists have often looked at different arrangements in terms of functional and geographical distribution of power, involving more or less centralization in public decision making. Other scholars have pointed at the varying capacity of democratic states to implement their decisions. Tilly has, for instance, classified political regimes on the basis of some of their capacities: 'How wide a range of citizens' expressed demands come into play; how equally different groups of citizens experience a translation of their demands into state behaviour; to what extent the expression of demands itself receives the state's political protection; and how much the process of translation commits both sides, citizens and the states' (2007, 13).

Not one, but four models

Noting the diversity between different conceptions and practices of democracy, my aim in this volume is not to reconstruct various ideas of democracy, but rather to analyse the way in which they have been

prefigured by different actors, as well as translated into requests and proposals, thus penetrating and transforming real democracies, and so the democratic state. From this point of view, in addressing the question 'Can democracy be saved?', the original contribution I wish to develop in this volume lies in the combination of normative theory with empirical analyses of how some conceptions have developed and have inspired concrete institutional changes.

Throughout the analysis, some general considerations will emerge on the status and content of the liberal model of democracy. If this is dominant today, it is, however, challenged by other conceptions, variously discussed as participatory democracy (Pateman 1970; Polletta 2002), strong democracy (Barber 2003), discursive democracy (Dryzek 2000a), communicative democracy (Young 1996), welfare democracy (Fitzpatrick 2002) or associative democracy (among others, Perczynski 2000).

In the intense debate in normative theory, we can single out two dimensions of democratic conceptions that are relevant for our reflections. The first dimension refers to the recognition of participation as an integral part of democracy; a second one looks at the construction of political identities as exogenous versus endogenous to the democratic process. In political theory from Dewey to Habermas, it is often observed that the principle of representation is balanced by the presence of participatory spaces, and the majoritarian principle, central to liberal definitions of democracy, is in various ways, balanced by the presence of deliberative spaces.

First of all, a general mantra of discussion on democracies in so-called 'empirical theories of democracy' is that democratic institutions are representative. While the ideal of democracy as government of, by and for the people stresses the source of all power in the citizenry at large, democratic institutions are called to restrict the number of decision makers and select them on the basis of some specific qualities. A distinction is in fact usually made between the (utopistic) conception of a *democracy of the ancients*, in which all citizens participate directly in the decisions about the public goods, and a (realistic) *democracy of the moderns*, where an elected few govern. The volume and complexity of decision making in the modern state is often quoted as imposing severe constraints on the participation in public decisions of the many and, especially, of the normal citizens, often considered as too inexperienced, if not too emotional, to have a say in the choices which will affect them. Electoral accountability should then give legitimacy to the process, by allocating to the citizens-electors the power to prize or punish those in government, every once in a while (see chapter 2).

If the liberal theories have underlined delegation, or electoral accountability, this has, however, been considered to be insufficient in other

theorizations (see chapter 3). In particular, so-called participatory theories have affirmed the importance of creating multiple occasions for participation (Arnstein 1969; Pateman 1970). Elections are in fact, at best, too rare to grant citizens sufficient power to control the elected. Additionally, elections offer only limited choices, leaving several themes out of the electoral debates and citizens' assessment. More and more, elections have been seen as manipulated, given the greater capacity of some candidates to attract financial support, licit or illicit, as well as to command privileged access to mass media. In parallel, the quality of decisions could be expected to decline with the decline in participation, as the habit of delegating tends to make citizens not only more apathetic, but also more cynical and selfish. Participation is instead praised as a school of democracy: capable of constructing good citizens through interaction and empowerment.

Not only delegation, but also majoritarian decision making has been criticized. A 'minimalist' view of democracy as the power of the majority has been considered not only as risky in terms of thwarting the rights of the minorities, but also as reducing the quality of decision making. As there is no logical assumption that grants more wisdom to the preferences which are (simply) more numerous, other decision-making principles should at least temper the majoritarian one (see chapter 4). In normative debates, deliberative theories have in fact promoted spaces of communication, the exchange of reasons, the construction of shared definitions of the public good, as fundamental for the legitimation of public decisions (among others, see Miller 1993, 75; Dryzek 2000a, 79; Cohen 1989, 18–19; Elster 1998; Habermas 1981, 1996). Not the number of pre-existing preferences, but the quality of the decision-making process would here grant legitimacy as well as efficacy to the decision. By relating with each other – recognizing the others and being recognized by them – citizens would have the chance to understand the reasons of the others, assessing them against emerging standards of fairness. Communication not only allows for the development of better solutions, by permitting holders of different knowledge and expertise to interact, but would also change the perception of one's own preferences, making participants less concerned with individual, material interests and more with collective goods.

Participation and deliberation are in fact democratic qualities in tension with those of representation and majority decisions, and are alongside these in a precarious equilibrium in the different conceptions and specific institutional practices of democracy.

Crossing the dimensions of delegation versus participation and majority vote versus deliberation, I single out four different models of democracy (see table 1.1) that I will refer to in the following chapters.

Table 1.1   Conceptions of democracy

	Majority vote	*Deliberation*
Delegation	Liberal democracy	Liberal deliberative democracy
Participation	Radical, participatory democracy	Participatory deliberative democracy

Liberal democracy privileges – as mentioned – delegation and the majority vote. The assumption is that deciding on public issues is too complex a task to be left to the mass of citizens. Their task is rather to legitimize the power of an elected elite. As power originates, indeed, from the people, they are expected to exercise it, as electors, at specific moments. Electoral campaigns should be able to inform the citizens about past performances and political programmes, as well as personal skills, of candidates; elections should allow the citizens to choose those who will then govern for an allocated time-span. The fear of losing power at the coming elections should make the elites in government sensitive to the people's judgement. The distinctive institutions of Dahl's polyarchal democracy are in fact based upon the presence of officials elected in free, fair and frequent elections, as well as freedom of expression and association and alternative sources of information (Dahl 1998).

Moreover, in liberal democracy, even if with some caveats, the majority wins. This means, decisions are made by measuring the degree of support for opposing views and allocating the victory to those who are more numerous. In principle, ideas, interests, preferences and/or identities are assumed to develop outside the democratic process, which channels them inside the political system. Decisions are then made on the basis of measurement of the support for each of them among the citizens. The legitimizing principle is 'one head, one vote'. In Anthony Downs' (1957) influential version, democracy works as a market where politicians aim at collecting votes, and citizens have (exogenously generated) preferences. While, of course, interests differ, a broad consensus is assumed among compatible interests, and conflicts tend to be considered as negative, as they risk overloading the system (Crozier, Huntington and Watakuni 1975). The actors carrying conflictual interests are seen as anti-systemic (Sartori 1976).

This liberal conception of democracy, however, does not sufficiently reflect the real functioning of democracy in any periods of its existence. As we are going to see, in the rest of this volume, really existing democracy incorporates institutions based upon different principles of legitimation. Referendums, considered as a residual vestige of direct democratic

procedures, are spreading, and so are institutions based on principles of restricted delegation or including representatives chosen by lot (see, e.g., chapter 9). Moreover, that conception is partial as it implicitly looks at the public institutions as the only democratic arena. Research on social movements, but also on political parties, called instead for attention to be paid to the many arenas in which democratic forms are based upon different principles from the liberal ones. Mechanisms of institutional accountability, through control by the people as the source of democratic legitimacy, require (many and varied) societal institutions that work as channels of political communication and socialization to the public good. Not only (negative) controls but also (positive) stimuli have to come from the citizens continuously if good decisions are to be made. Along the same lines, research on the long processes of first democratization stressed the importance of non-electoral circuits for the functioning of the democratic state. The influence of protest in regimes with restricted electoral participation did not operate through elections, even though the parliaments were targets of claims-making. In fact, in their concrete evolution, the existing democratic states and societies have amended the ideal-typical principles of liberal democracy, mixing them with others, linked to other conceptions of democracy.

The liberal conception of democracy has been, first of all, challenged by a *participatory* one. Recognizing the existence of deep conflicts in society, the theorists of participatory democracy have stressed the importance of involving citizens beyond elections (Arnstein 1969; Pateman 1970; Barber 2003). Participation in different forms and in different moments of the democratic process is in fact considered as positive both for individuals, who are socialized to visions of the public good, and for the very political institutions, as it might lead to increased trust and support for them. Challengers to the elites, in particular – from the labour movement to the most recent *indignados* – have nurtured a participatory vision, extending the forms of legitimate political involvement well beyond the vote. Conceptions of democracy as open participation tend, in fact, to limit the functions of delegates and instead expand (assembleary) arenas for decisions open to all. Moreover, the space for politics broadens in participatory visions, as democracy is considered as fundamental not only in parliaments, but also in civil society organizations: from parties to social movements, from working places to neighbourhoods. While collective identities are still, as in the liberal model, formed outside of the democratic process, and might lead to conflictual interests, agreement on the basic principles of decision making is a precondition for managing those conflicts peacefully.

Beyond the set of criticisms addressed to delegation, there is also one addressed to the principle of the majority vote. A second alternative to

liberal conceptions of democracy has, in fact, stressed the importance of the communicative dimension. Decisions are, in this sense, not made by counting votes, but rather through the more complex process in which opinions are formed. While liberal democracy assumes a political market in which candidates try to sell their products to electors, who already have their preferences, the *liberal-deliberative* conception of democracy is most attentive to the way in which those preferences are formed. The assumption is, in fact, that decisions are more legitimate and, additionally, better, the more interests and collective identities emerge – at least in part – throughout a high-quality deliberative process. In Habermas' (1981) theorization, deliberation should be based on communicative rationality, through an exchange of opinion based on reasons. While the extent to which deliberation implies the actual building of consensus is debatable (Dryzek 2010), good communication certainly implies a recognition of the others', and an open-minded assessment of one's own, reasons. With this in mind, the theorists of deliberation have looked at the ways in which preferences are formed within democratic institutions (Dryzek 2000a, 79). Even though the decision process often ends up with a vote, democracy should not, however, be identified with the principle that the majority wins over the minority. What counts as democratic is rather the possibility, during the democratic process, for holders of different points of view to interact and reciprocally transform each other's views. Empirical research on deliberative democracy has looked at deliberation within political parties (Teorell 1999), parliaments (Steiner et al. 2004), public journalism (Dzur 2002), cyberspace (Dahlberg 2001; Gimmler 2001), the European public sphere (Schutter 2002; Chalmers 2003), citizens' juries (Smith and Wales 2000), deliberative pollings (Fishkin 2003), referendums (Uhr 2000) and social movement organizations (della Porta 2009a and 2009b).

   Combining both criticisms of the liberal conceptions of democracy, a fourth model of democracy stresses *participative-deliberative* qualities. In political theory, the feminist critique of Habermas has, in fact, stressed the importance of looking not only outside public institutions, but also beyond a mass-mediatic public sphere, creating places in which the weakest groups in particular can be empowered. Free spaces, with high-quality communication, are here considered as fundamental for the formation of collective identities. Not the bourgeoisie, but rather the subaltern classes are seen as the carriers of this democratic vision. The most recent waves of social movements, in particular, from the global justice movement to Occupy Wall Street, tried to put these norms into practice, by creating public forums, open to the participation of all citizens, in which a plurality of opinions is represented. The public sphere is here considered as a conflictual space, but there is also a reflection

on the conditions for the formation of collective identities during the democratic process.

This volume

In what follows, I aim to bridge theory and empirical evidence, debates on democracy and debates on social movements, in order to look at the normative characteristics of these four different models, but also at their historical evolution. In this sense, I will seek to move beyond the gap that exists between normative theory and empirical studies, responsible for a lack of comparative studies, informed by theory, on democratic innovations (Smith 2009, 8; also Shapiro 2003). That gap is linked to the separation between the institutional analysis of democracy and the analysis of democratic principles, as if they belonged to two different worlds (Beetham 1999, 29). I will try, therefore, to contribute to the dialogue between normative theories and empirical explanations, whose absence, or at least weakness, has been seen as a considerable obstacle to progress in the analysis of democracy (Smith 2009, 9).

   As will be seen, not only the conceptions but also the institutions of democracy themselves have been transformed to include, with differing levels of tension and in different balances, diverse understandings of democracy. After presenting the challenges to the liberal model (chapter 2), I will introduce conceptions and practices of participatory and deliberative democracy (chapters 3 and 4, respectively), with particular attention to the role of social movements as promoters of another democracy. Later on, I will address the use of new media in the search for new forms of participation and deliberation (chapter 5), the challenge of building a global democracy (chapter 6), and the contribution of social movements to the democratization process (chapter 7). Chapters 8 and 9 look at two, very different, state responses to social movement challenges, in the forms of protest policing and institutional experiments aimed at innovating democracy.

2

Liberal Democracy: Evolution and Challenges

The idea of popular sovereignty found historical expression in two different ways. The first was the right to vote, the right of citizens to choose their own leaders. This was the most direct expression of the democratic principle. But the power to vote periodically and thus bestow legitimacy to an elected government is almost always accompanied by a wish to exercise a more permanent form of control over the government thus elected. (Rosanvallon 2006, 12)

This is how French sociologist Pierre Rosanvallon reminds us of the different legitimating pillars of democracy. In political discourse, as well as in the mainstream social sciences, the attention is focused in a more and more narrow (and myopic) way on a liberal conception of democracy. As we are going to see in this chapter, it is mainly this conception that has been challenged by recent transformations. Saving democracy implies therefore the recognition and implementation of different democratic models. In this chapter, I shall present some tenets of the liberal conception of democracy and its evolution. I shall then discuss the challenges that developments such as the weakening of the identifying capacity of the political parties, the shifting of power to international organizations, and the retrenchment of the welfare state bring about for liberal democracy. Finally, I'll mention, however, some opportunities for different models of democracy, to be discussed in the following chapters.

The conception of liberal democracy: an introduction

Robert Dahl, one of the most influential political scientists in the field, has defined the fundamental characteristic of democracy as 'the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals' (1971, 1). This definition underlines a normative element: it is affirmed, that is, that democracy should involve a necessary correspondence between politicians' decisions and the wishes of the population. Moving to empirical research, Dahl has also suggested, however, that a series of procedures guarantees the response capacity of democracy.

A government capable of responding to the preferences of its citizens should guarantee that each is able:

1. to formulate their own preferences;
2. to present them to their fellow citizens and to the government via recourse to individual and collective action;
3. to ensure that their preferences are 'weighed equally in the conduct of the government, that is, weighted with no discrimination because of the content or source of the preference' (Dahl 1971, 2).

For these three conditions to be achieved, according to Dahl (1971), eight constitutional guarantees must be in place:

1. the freedom to form and join organizations
2. the freedom of expression
3. the right to vote
4. the right to compete for support and votes
5. eligibility for political roles
6. alternative sources of information
7. free and fair elections
8. institutions that make the government dependent on the vote and other forms of expression of political preferences.

Elections play indeed a very central role in the definition of liberal democracy – in particular in the passage from normative to procedural definitions of democracy. In this conception, those regimes that guarantee the right to vote to all citizens are thus democratic. Elections and institutions constituted by elected members are considered as indispensable guarantees for democracy: 'a representative system cannot exist without periodic elections used to render those who govern responsible before those who are governed…a political system is qualified as representative

when honest electoral practices assure a reasonable level of responsiveness among governors before the governed' (Sartori 1990, 230).

In order for there to be democracy, elections must be competitive, fair and recurrent. It is not, in fact, sufficient for there to be elections – elections must involve real competition among the candidates, the competition must be fair, and the elections must be repeated regularly (in order that those elected know they must give account to electors for their actions within a certain amount of time). Elections must therefore function as elements of accountability, obligating the principal actors in the government – given that democracy involves an institutionalized system of representation, 'realised through the free electoral designation of certain fundamental organs (mostly parliaments)' (Cotta 1990, 933).

Liberal democracy is certainly representative, locating in representative institutions the possibility of limiting the risks linked to the power elections confer on the masses, considered as ignorant and potentially dangerous. Democracy here is conceived as the right of the citizenship to participate in the determination of the collective will through the mediation of elected representatives (Held, 1997, 168). It is not accident that John Stuart Mill underlined the difference between controlling the government and exercising the functions of government, leaving the latter to specialists. Although citizens participate in the selection of representatives, the principle of an unbinding mandate defends the capacity of the latter to make their decisions autonomously. Many theorists of a liberal model of democracy have explicitly defined direct democracy as unrealistic, especially when the territory to govern exceeds a certain size or when there is a high qualitative differentiation of administrative functions (Weber 1974, 256).

In this vision, electoral competition is central to the functioning of the cycle of electoral control. According to Sartori, democracy is an ethical-political system in which the influence of the majority is based on the power conferred on minorities, in competition among themselves, through elections (Sartori 1969, 105). Democracy, then, requires competition in the electoral market as the mechanism to attribute power to the people and to enact the responsiveness of the leader (Sartori 1987, 156). Political parties fulfil a fundamental function in implementing the principle of electoral responsibility, structuring the competition. Since they are present in the long term, they give the elector the possibility to judge, and eventually punish, those responsible for bad government.

Simplifying greatly, competition and electoral accountability are central to the realization of individual autonomy aspired to in the conception of liberal democracy. An effect of this should be the realization of a certain level of responsiveness to the preferences of citizens (Dahl

1970), normally operationalized as the preferences of the majority, but including the protection of the basic rights of minorities.

Liberal democracy does not, however, rely on electoral legitimation alone – so the observation that 'in democracy the majority wins' is inaccurate. A widespread *constitutional* conception underlines the necessity of limiting every type of power, including that of representative organs, by submitting it to the law. Liberal democracies in fact subordinate the power of the majority to judicial control regarding respect for the law and the constitution (Kelsen 1995, 123).

In democracy, obtaining the majority in parliament confers the right to decide on many things, but not on everything. Principally, liberal democracies exclude decisions that can contribute to corrupting the democratic rules of the game (Bobbio 1983, 316). Minorities are protected through the constitutionalization of some rights – that is, the protection of some fundamental elements of the social pact that democracies are based upon from the whims of majorities. As Morlino notes, even though allowing for a large indeterminancy in decisions to be taken, 'this uncertainty is always *relative* and cannot exceed certain boundaries' that are defined in the 'compromise agreement which recognizes the collectively accepted rules for the peaceful resolution of conflicts between social, politically represented and significant parties' (Morlino 2011, 30–1).

Similarly, in what has been called the genetic definition of democracy, democracy is considered as that bundle of norms and procedures that derive from a compromise oriented to the peaceful solution of the tensions that emerge among relevant actors in a specific political system (for example, Przeworski 1991, 26–34).

Even if we speak of competition (above all between parties) and of majority and opposition, the liberal conception of democracy is founded on the recognition of individual rights, while conflicts between collective actors tend to be considered as pathological. Citizens with a base of similar values, interested principally in their own material wellbeing, have the power to decide between political leaders in constant competition amongst each other. Indeed, the need for generally shared values is often affirmed, even if there are ever-increasing doubts as to the real extent to which these are shared in contemporary democracies (Held 1997). As David Held observes, in this competitive elitism, 'the sole role of the elector is to accept or reject one boss over another. The boss guarantees order and the capacity to manage the complexity of the political world; the vote of the electorate supplies legitimacy to subsequent political action' (1997, 265). Competition must however be limited on some themes. As summed up by David Held, 'the competition between rival leaders and parties must regard a relatively limited range of political

questions: these must be reciprocally bound by consensus on the overall orientation of national politics, on a reasonable parliamentary programme and on general constitutional business' (1997, 266).

In this vision, participation must be limited and channelled in order to avoid an overload in demands, particularly from infantile citizens. Indeed, J. A. Schumpeter underlined that 'the electors must respect the division of labour between themselves and the politicians they elect. They must not withdraw their trust too easily in the interval between one election and another and they must understand that from the moment they have elected someone, political action is his competence and not theirs' (1967, 280–1). Even letters and petitions would, in this view, reduce the necessary freedom of action of the representative (1967, 280–1).

According to a much discussed study, in the 1970s it was the growth in participation that threatened the 'disintegration of the civil order, the breakdown of social discipline, the debility of leaders, and the alienation of citizens' (Crozier, Huntington and Watakuni 1975, 2). The governments of the United States and European democracies were described here as being subjected to excessive stress as a result of the growth in participation, seen as a challenge to institutions. According to Huntington (1975, 37–8), the problem of Western governments derived from an 'excess of democracy': 'The effective operation of a democratic political system normally requires some measure of apathy and disengagement in the population. The vulnerability of the democratic government in the United States derives from the internal dynamics of democracy in a highly educated, mobilized and participatory society.' The paradox was that it was precisely those most educated groups that seemed to present the greatest danger for democracy – as they were the ones that placed most demands on the system.

The emergence of democracy in the liberal state

The history of democratic regimes, defined by the right to vote for all citizens, is brief. As observed by Dahl (1998, 5–6), 'if we accept universal adult suffrages as a requirement of democracy, there would be some persons in practically every democratic country who would be older than their democratic system of government'. The concept of democracy has, however, a history thousands of years long.

Democracy, as developed in the last century, has some distant predecessors where the first rumblings of democracy developed. Some of the independent cities in Greece and the Roman republic in 500 BC are in fact often referred to as examples of forms of government that foresaw the participation of a consistent number of citizens. Specifically, in Athens

between 500 and 300 BC, an assembly open to all those who enjoyed the status of citizens assigned some administrative posts, while others were decided by drawing lots. Limited forms of popular government were also seen in ancient Rome up to 100 BC. After 1,200 years, forms of popular participation in government then re-emerged, in particular in the city-states of northern Italy, and survived for around two centuries (Dahl 1998).

These first experiences did not, however, include some of those accountable institutions which are fundamental to the definition of a regime as democratic (in particular a parliament elected by universal suffrage), which were, instead, (slowly) developing beginning in Great Britain, Scandinavia, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

The study of 'first democratization' has focused in fact on the extension of political rights and the institutions linked to them. In an important piece of comparative work on different countries, the Norwegian political scientist Stein Rokkan spoke of *institutional thresholds* that each political movement had to pass in order to be fully integrated into democratic institutions. Similar to locks on a canal, these institutional thresholds allow for the growth of new actors that will then flow into institutions, but also allow the tide to be stemmed and the waves to be contained. Each rising political movement must pass through a series of locks, moving along the road that leads to the heart of the political system and the central arena of the decision-making process (1982, 142). There are four 'locks' or institutional thresholds: the *legitimation* threshold, linked to the right to express one's own ideas and to organize; the *incorporation* threshold, linked to the capacity to influence the choices of representatives; the *representation* threshold, linked to entrance into parliament; the *executive power* threshold, linked to the capacity to control the government.

During this process, the very quality of liberal democracy changes: extremely important for the quality and stability of democracy is the *timing* – that is temporal evolution – of the passing of the various thresholds. Rokkan presents the objectives of his research as follows:

- Regarding the *legitimation* threshold: at what moment in the history of the formation of the state and the construction of the nation did the effective recognition of the rights of petition, criticism and demonstrations against the regime take place?
- Regarding the *incorporation* threshold: how much time passed before formal rights to participate in choosing representatives were granted to the supporters of the opposition movements?
- Regarding the *representation* threshold: what barriers prevented the representation in parliament of the new movements and when

and in what ways were they lowered, facilitating the conquest of seats in the legislative assembly?

- Regarding the *executive power* threshold: how much were the executive organs influenced by the legislature, and how much time was needed before the parliamentary force could be transformed into direct influence on the decision-making process of the executive, through proportional rule and cabinet responsibility towards parliamentary majorities? (1982, 142)

The temporal evolution of passing the first two thresholds is linked, according to Rokkan, to elements such as the level of territorial consolidation in the Middle Ages and the continuity of medieval organs of representation. Electoral systems and executive accountability also vary subsequently, influenced by the dimensions of the country as well as specific historical circumstances.

The affirmation of liberal democracy followed diverse paths. In Robert Dahl's analyses, these can be distinguished based on the two principal theoretical dimensions of his concept of democracy:

1. the *right to opposition*, which refers to the level at which a series of constitutional guarantees 'are openly available, publicly employed and fully guaranteed to at least some members of the political system who wish to contest the conduct of the government' (Dahl 1971, 4);
2. the *level of inclusion*, that is the proportion of citizens to whom rights of opposition are guaranteed – as 'regimes also vary in the proportion of the population entitled to participate on a more or less equal plane in controlling and contesting the conduct of the government' (1971, 4).

Crossing the two dimensions, Dahl constructs a typology of political regimes, distinguishing:

- *closed hegemonies*, where no citizen has any right to opposition;
- *competitive oligarchies*, where strictly defined groups have a right to opposition;
- *inclusive hegemonies*, where low level participation is granted to all citizens;
- *polyarchies*, with wide-ranging opposition rights granted to all.

Dahl has defined the concession of opposition rights as *liberalization*, and the extension of those rights to the majority of the population as *inclusion*, or participation. Historically, the evolution of the

two dimensions has not been in parallel. Paths of democratization – that is evolution towards polyarchies – have been varied.

In a first path, *liberalization precedes inclusion*: 'a) a closed hegemony increases opportunities for public contestation and thus is transformed into a competitive oligarchy; b) the competitive oligarchy is then transformed into a polyarchy by increasing the inclusiveness of the regime'. The English case is an example of liberalization, with the widening of opposition rights preceding the extension of participation: the opposition system was in fact well developed before the concession of universal suffrage. There was therefore an intermediate passage from a closed hegemony to a competitive oligarchy.

In the second path *inclusion precedes liberalization*: 'a) a closed hegemony becomes inclusive; b) the inclusive hegemony is then transformed into a polyarchy by increasing opportunities for public contestation'. The evolution towards polyarchy took place via a path that privileged inclusion in diverse countries, with an intermediate passage from closed hegemony to inclusive hegemony, principally through the extension of a single right of opposition: the vote.

In the third path there is a 'short cut', with a direct passage from closed hegemony to polyarchy. In these cases, 'a closed hegemony is abruptly transformed into a polyarchy by a sudden grant of universal suffrage and rights of public contestation' (1971, 34).

According to Dahl, the first type of path has been the healthiest for democracy, allowing the gradual socialization of new groups to the rules of the game. Indeed, this applies for the oldest and most stable polyarchies, where 'the rules, the practices, and the culture of competitive politics developed first among a small elite' (1971, 36). In these cases, the sometimes bitter conflict surrounding democratization was 'restrained by ties of friendship, family, interest, class and ideology that pervaded the restricted group of notables that dominated the political life of the country. Later, as additional social strata were admitted into politics they were more easily socialized into the norms and practices of competitive politics already developed among the elites' (1971, 36). The second path was generally more risky: 'When the suffrage is extended *before* the arts of competitive politics have been mastered and accepted as legitimate among the élites, the search for a system of mutual guarantees is likely to be complex and time consuming' (1971, 38). The short cuts have only rarely led to stable polyarchies. Unfortunately, while the liberalization path is the best for allowing the elaboration of a system of reciprocal guarantees that stabilize the regime, this is no longer a realistic option for contemporary non-democratic regimes (1971, 39).

Different paths towards democracies of different qualities are also described in other accounts of first democratization. Again in Dahl,

democratization is a long process, during which degrees of inclusion and participation vary, together with the very quality of liberal democracy. Historical sociologists have also noted that the different and more or less easy paths of democratization have been influenced by some socio-economic structures. In a wide-ranging historical study covering many countries, Barrington Moore demonstrates how some socio-economic configurations have been more favourable to the development of liberal democracy. In his work, three roads to modern society are identified: 'The earliest one combined capitalism and parliamentary democracy after a series of revolutions: the Puritan revolution, the French revolution, and the American civil war…The second path was also a capitalist one, but, in the absence of a strong revolutionary surge, it passed through reactionary political forms to culminate in fascism…The third route is of course the communist one' (1973, 413).

Only in the first path does modernization pass via the development of democracy, defined as

> a long and certainly incomplete struggle to do three closely related things: 1) to check arbitrary rulers; 2) to replace arbitrary rules with just and rational ones; 3) to obtain a share for the underlying population in the making of rules. The beheading of kings has been the most dramatic and by no means the least important aspect of the first feature. Efforts to establish the rule of law, the power of the legislature, and later to use the state as an engine for social welfare are familiar and famous aspects of the other two. (1969, 414)

The factors that favoured the affirmation of democracy in Western Europe were multiple. In the first place, absolute monarchy filled an important function in 'checking the turbulence of the nobility. Democracy could not grow and flourish under the shadow of prospective plunder and pillage by marauding barons' (1969, 417). On the other hand, however, the presence of a nobility strong enough to counterbalance the power of the monarchy was also an important element for the development of democracy. From the feudal relationship of vassalage, typical of the medieval Europe, both the idea of the right to resistance to unjust authority and the conception of a contract as a reciprocal commitment, freely entered into by free persons, were maintained. This permitted 'that delicate balance […] between too much and too little royal power which gave an important impetus to parliamentary democracy' (1969, 415–6) to exist in Western Europe. Indeed, 'In early modern times too, a decisive precondition for modern democracy has been the emergence of a rough *balance between the crown and the nobility*, in which the royal power predominated but

left a substantial degree of independence to the nobility' (1969, 417, emphasis added).

A final element that favoured democracy was the existence of a numerous and vigorous *urban bourgeoisie* – 'No bourgeoisie, no democracy' (1969). As various scholars agree, the bourgeoisie in fact had an interest in the development of a series of individual rights – first and foremost rights to private property and concluding contracts – that indirectly favoured the development of political rights.

And, again, democracy was facilitated by the *mercantile evolution of the landed aristocracy* – a typically English phenomenon. The need to find money to pay rising taxes and the development of trade with cities pushed the English aristocracy towards a form of mercantile agriculture that in fact liberated peasants from many of the constraints of subjugation to lords and created solidarity with the interests of the emerging bourgeoisie in the cities.

If the alliance between city and countryside helped democratic evolution, a necessary condition to the development of democracy was in any case *the absence of a coalition between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie against peasants and workers.*

In the historical experience of Great Britain, France and the United States, finally, *violent revolutions* formed part of the process of industrialization and democratization which took place via the weakening of the power of the agrarian elite and the destruction of peasant society. The revolutionary break with the past is thus seen as another necessary characteristic for the development of democracy.

Various studies have also emphasized how the development of democracy was closely linked to some paths of construction of the nation state. If 'the state makes war, but wars make states', some of the main stages of development of democracy and mass politics have also been reached through the recognition of ever greater rights for citizens. Indeed, 'it was in the interests of a State that confronted other States to have well fed soldiers and healthy workers with none of the problems of old age' (Pizzorno 2010, xxiii). This served not only to keep soldiers quiet and tamed through material advantages, but also to construct collective identities that legitimated the state's demand for loyalty.

The recognition of these rights, as we will see in the next chapter, contributed to a profound transformation of the democratic institutions that were initially founded upon elitist and individualist conceptions. The elitist conception of representation, present in the first French and American republics, is explicit in the often cited affirmation by James Madison, 'To the people of the state of New York' published in the *Federalist*, which defines elections as an instrument 'to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens,

whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations' (in Sintomer 2007, 37). In contrast, drawing lots, as was already done in some local contexts, was rapidly abandoned insofar as it risked giving power not to the best, but to common citizens. It was not by chance that, in the nineteenth century, it was the Left that defended the institution of the popular jury, including their use in judicial proceedings, which conservatives considered instead as technically incapable and prone to emotional influence (2007).

Democratic states were also born with an idea of democracy as linked to individual rights and/or negative freedom. As David Held observed (1997, 138), the theorists of liberal democracy (from Jeremy Bentham to J.S. Mill, to utilitarians in general) have justified the liberal state on the basis of its capacity to secure 'for individuals those conditions that are necessary to follow their own interests without the risk of arbitrary political interference, to participate freely in economic transactions, exchange labour and goods on the market and appropriate resources in a private manner'. In the nineteenth-century conception of liberalism, 'the state was to play the role of arbitrator and guarantor while individuals pursued their interests in civil society according to the rules of competition and free exchange' (1997, 238).

All concerted action in the pursuit of specific interests (wages, working conditions) remained illegal for a long time. Indeed, the conception of the state as guarantor was accompanied by intolerance towards those who contested some of its rules: 'Those that threatened the security of property, or the market society, threatened the realization of the public good' (Held 1997, 138–9).

The dominant Enlightenment discourse of the French revolution supported individual freedom and competition, opposing trade corporations and proclaiming individual liberty (Sewell 1980, 73). Private property was defended as deriving from men's work, in nature, preceding the intervention of the state; society was presented as a voluntary act of association between independent individuals. Suppressed by the Turgot edict of 1776, corporations were in that discourse considered as responsible, by blocking trade and industry, not only for causing prices to rise, but also for depriving many of the right to work. After the French revolution, there were in fact several attempts to destroy the traditional corporatist order in favour of a society based instead on individuals, contracts and private property (1980, 167). Consequently, the Le Chapelier law affirmed the right to meet as private citizens, but not as members of corporations, for the promotion of common interests. In the constituent assembly, in fact, the right to work outranked the right to association, the masters won over the workers (1980, 167).

In England too civil and religious freedoms were linked to free trade (Thompson 1991, 57), and individual freedoms did not at first include a full right of association. Tom Paine, while promoting social measures that could reduce disorder and thus legitimize the government, did not think any state intervention on private property wise (1991, 105). Here, as well, individual freedoms did not initially include a full right of association. The Combination Acts of 1799–1800 banned the trade unions, and the Seditious Societies Act of 1799 confirmed opposition to national associations, making, e.g., the Corresponding societies, that were pushing for a constitution, illegal.

This conception of liberalism accompanies a specific vision of society as composed of individuals possessing prevalently material interests. As David Held writes, 'democracy is a logical necessary requirement for the direction of a society now free from tradition and absolute power, in which individuals with enlightened desires constitute a mass of consumers whose aim is to obtain the maximum of private satisfaction' (1997, 140).

Transformations in democracy: the challenges

In the next chapters we are going to see how the liberal model of democracy was, de facto, bridged with other democratic conceptions – such as participatory and deliberative ones – in the institutional evolution of really existing democracies. As liberal democracy remained dominant, an understanding of contemporary challenges requires an assessment of the mechanisms which needed to function in order for liberal democracy to be legitimate. I suggest below that three such mechanisms were necessary. First, liberal democracies needed functioning political parties as actors that could implement the principles of electoral accountability. Second, the majoritarian assumption needed a nation state as defining the border of the demos in whose name (and interest) decisions were made. Third, and more subtly, even though liberal democracy did not call for social justice, it still relied upon the assumption that political equality was to reduce social inequality that otherwise risked undermining the very principle of free access to political rights. The liberal form of democracy developed, that is, in contexts characterized by well-established welfare states, party democracies and the full sovereignty of the nation state.

At the turn of the millennium, these conditions have, however, been challenged as neoliberal globalization, as well as other general evolutions in contemporary democracies, have produced:

- A shift of power from parties (and representative institutions) to the executive;
- A shift of power from the nation state to international governmental organizations (IGOs);
- A shift of power from the state to the market, which also implies a shift from welfare state to warfare state.

Even though these are neither complete nor natural or irreversible trends, they are, however, certainly challenges to the liberal model of democracy. In fact, they contributed to the shifts towards a neoliberal conception of democracy, based upon an elitist vision of electoral participation for the mass of the citizens and free lobbying for stronger interests, along with low levels of state intervention (Crouch 2003, 5).

From the parties to the executive?

Competition between well-structured parties is an essential mechanism for electoral accountability as a legitimating device for liberal democracy. The assumption that elections give citizens the power to punish bad governors and confirm good ones requires collective actors that are able to give transparency and, especially, continuity to the accountability process. Citizens need, that is, information from trusted sources, as well as a certain degree of continuity in the actors that are to be prized or punished. Additionally, as many aims cannot be achieved in the short term, citizens must trust some actors to interpret and promote their claims in a long-term perspective. Political parties have been pivotal in playing these functions, in what have been – not by chance – called party democracies.

Recent research has, however, repeatedly confirmed a rapid decline in the capacity of political parties to function as mediators between the civil society and the political institutions (della Porta 2008). In particular, parties seem to have lost much of their 'power of identification', that is, their capacity to function as powerful identifiers, helping to define long-term collective identities (Pizzorno 1981). Analyses of political parties describe (with particular intensity after the Second World War) a progressive rapprochement of parties to institutions, and their moving away from civil society. As Pizzorno has observed, parties maintain their function of selecting political personnel, but 'political participation as a contribution to proposals for the (re)organization of society no longer pass through parties, which see their associative and political socialization activities greatly reduced' (1996, 1028). In fact, in the last quarter of the twentieth century and the first decade of the new one, there has been a

substantial and growing disaffection with respect to numerous specific democratic institutions, and no institution is considered worse than parties (Diamond and Gunther 2001, ix; della Porta and Reiter 2012).

First of all, the *trust* of citizens in parties is dramatically falling. In seventeen of the nineteen democracies for which there were data, at the turn of the millennium the proportion of the population identifying with parties, along with attachment to parties, had declined (Diamond and Gunther 2001, ix). According to Eurobarometer data, the percentage of respondents declaring attachment to parties also dropped in almost all European countries between 1975 and 1992. The decline appeared particularly acute in countries such as Italy (where the percentage of interviewees who declared themselves close to a party fell from 46 per cent in 1978 to 31 per cent in 1992), France (from 28 per cent to 16) and the Netherlands (from 40 per cent to 28 per cent). On average the percentage of European citizens close to parties fell from 37 to 29 per cent in the same period. In advanced democracies, the percentage of those who strongly identify with parties is in decline in all twenty-one countries analysed (Dalton 2004; see also della Porta 2001; Dalton and Wattemberg 2000). It has been noted that, in particular, the trust of electors in the competences and ability of their own parties decreased (as did the conviction that politicians listen to citizens) (Dalton 2004, 28 and 149). The weakening of parties' capacity to root themselves in civil society was particularly marked in Italy, where the proportion of members of the main political parties to voters collapsed from about 12 in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, to around 9 in the 1970s and 1980s, then to 4 in the 1990s and 2000s (Raniolo 2007, 125). Apathy has also been singled out as an important characteristic of political culture in democratic countries such as the United States (Eliasoph 1998). In general, comparative research has indicated that, at the beginning of the new millennium, citizens have become more distant from political parties, more critical of elites and political institutions, and less positively oriented with respect to governments (Dalton 2004, 46).

Decline in trust had *electoral* effects. Research carried out on Austria, Germany, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom indicates that the percentage of electors that has changed parties between one election and another (among those that voted at both elections) has increased constantly, passing from 11 per cent in 1950–4 to 26 per cent in 1990–4 (Lane and Ersson 1999, 195). In addition, another effect of the changes is the growth of electoral abstention. If we look at the trend of participation in elections in European countries between the period immediately after the Second World War and the end of the 1990s, despite noteworthy differences among countries, we note a downward trend, particularly strong in countries as different as Norway

(−9.8 per cent), Italy (−9.9 per cent), Ireland (−11 per cent), Finland (−16.9 per cent) and the Netherlands (with −22.2 per cent).

With the parties reeling from declining trust and loyalty, party organization also changed. The centralization of decisions in the hands of a few visible leaders is intertwined with the merely formal involvement of members (considered mainly as card-payers). In particular, there is a much reduced number of and influence from the activists, normally considered more intransigent than both the leaders and the rank and file, and therefore as obstacles to moderate political choices (Crouch 2003). The personalization of leadership has led to talk of an Americanization of European parties, oriented more and more to an individualistic management of gains, and less and less to the creation of collective identities, progressively assimilated into the state (depending on the state for finances and profits) and less and less autonomous from public institutions (Calise 2010). Party activists as channels of communication to potential voters are thus replaced by the mass media, in particular television, which facilitate direct identification of electors with leaders able to transmit a self-assured, confident and warm image, as well as to appropriate some relevant themes (Barisione 2007), thus side-stepping the mediation of the party. In this frame, the use of an 'anti-political' language by leaders also becomes an instrument for reinforcing personalized leadership by politicians who underline, paradoxically, their estrangement from politics (Campus 2006). Similarly, populist appeals (to the people against the elites) by parties (prevalently, but not only from the Centre-Right) seek to utilize low party identification and mistrust in institutional politics to create an electoral following. In a vicious circle, the decrease in trust and identification in parties could lead to further personalization as a strategy to win back consent (Diamanti 2007), especially (but not only) from the most socially marginalized and least politically interested electors.

While parties appear less and less able to mediate between the state and the society in the most advanced democracies, cynicism towards them is very widespread in new democracies as well. As Philippe Schmitter observes, however – unfortunately for the prestige of their discipline – political scientists are not sure about what to do to 'fix the parties' (Schmitter 2001, 67), and, with them, the basis of the legitimacy and efficiency of liberal democracy.

From the national to the international

Liberal democracy developed within national borders that defined the community whose (majoritarian) will had to be represented. Political

rights were part and parcel of national citizenship, and often jealously protected: not by chance, they have often been the last type of citizens' rights to be granted to non-national residents. Liberal democracy applied only within national borders, and states were the only recognized actors of international politics. In the realist approach, long dominant in the discipline of international relations, states are considered to compete amongst themselves in different forms in the name of their national interests inside a wholly anarchic system. This vision has, however, been challenged from various points of view.

First of all, an increasing relevance of international politics is shown by the growth in the *number* of international organizations (from 37 in 1909 to 350 in 1995 – see Princen and Finger 1994, 1), international agreements (from 15,000 in 1960 to 55,000 in 1997), of international conferences (from a couple per year in the nineteenth century to about 4,000 per year at the end of the twentieth century). The number of international agreements at the United Nations increased from the 8,776 registered at the end of 1960 to the 63,419 registered in March 2010 (http://treaties.un.org/pages/Home.aspx?lang=en).[1]

What is more, there are indicators of an increasing *power* for some of these international organizations. In particular, international financial institutions have made economic help conditional upon national govern-ments accepting some specific policies. The World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – during the Cold War accused of distributing help according to political loyalty (Thacker 1998) – increased their power of injunction through the negotiation of structural adjust-ment programmes with debtor countries. At the end of the 1990s, half of the world's population and two-thirds of its countries were subject to the influence of those two institutions (Pieper and Taylor 1998). With its growing involvement in liberalization policies (in Eastern Europe but also, e.g., in Greece), the IMF linked provision of long-term loans to the approval of its plans for liberalization, deregulation, privatization and fiscal reform (O'Brian et al. 2000, 162). As for the WB, since the late 1970s the move from financing development projects to supporting structural adjustment has brought about an attempt at reorganizing domestic economies, with 'considerable influence on the daily lives of the world's population' (2000, 11). Also macro-regional organizations (e.g. the European Union) increased their sanction capacity, as is seen very clearly in the conditionalities imposed on member states who want access to some form of financial support.

Furthermore, there has been a change in the internal decision making of some of these international organizations. While the majority of them still function mainly as meeting places and discussion forums where deci-sions are taken unanimously and then ratified by national organs, there

is a growing number of supranational organizations within which deci-
sions binding for all member states are made on a majority basis. Vis-à-
vis its predecessor, the GATT, the World Trade Organization (WTO)
dispute settlement procedures moved from a system of negotiation to
one of adjudication (O'Brian et al. 2000, 71).

International organizations have thus contributed to the spread of
international regulations and norms that in some cases supersede
national sovereignty. As has often been pointed out, 'no official author-
ity controls states in the contemporary world system, but many are
subject to powerful unofficial forces, pressures and influences that pen-
etrate the supposed hard shell of the state' (Russett and Starr 1996,
62). Increasing acknowledgement of global interdependences has con-
tributed to the creation of supranational norms that, as in the case of
the human rights regime, help to defend some citizens' rights, especially
against authoritarian regimes. At the same time, some international
organizations became norm entrepreneurs for neoliberal visions, privi-
leging deregulation and reducing social services. A neoliberal model in
fact implies an elitarian conception of citizens' participation, and yet a
large sphere of influence for the lobbies which represent strong interests
(Crouch 2003, 5). Market deregulation and the privatization of public
services are not 'natural' effects of technological development, but a
strategy adopted and defended by international financial institutions
and by the governments of the most powerful nations (in particular
through the G7 and the G8) to the advantage of multinational corpora-
tions. As Colin Crouch (2003, 95) has observed, the establishment
of the ideology of a free market has clearly been facilitated by the
WTO, whose 'postdemocratic' aim is the liberalization of international
exchanges of goods and services. Neoliberal globalization, therefore, is
a matter not only of new technologies and modes of production, but
also of the *political* tools set in place to regulate and reproduce this
social structure through, among other things, the proliferation of inter-
national organizations (Beck 1999; Boli and Thomas 1999). Labels such
as 'judicial globalization' reflect the expansion of international courts
(Zolo 2004, 96).

Finally, while the types of recognized actors in international arenas go
well beyond states (see below), there is a growing *politicization* of inter-
national relations, in the sense of its increased contestation, but also the
emergence of a world order based on the diffusion of shared norms. As
observed by Zürn, Binder and Ecker-Ehrhardt, politicization means
entrance into the political sub-system, which is characterized by the pres-
ence of 'public communication and by contestation about the common
good and collectively binding decisions necessary to advance it.... In
brief then, politicization means making a matter an object of public

discussion about collectively binding decision making' (2010, 7). In fact, a shift from hegemony to contestation has been observed in the configuration of discourses that address international issues – among them, nowadays, international political economy, in particular (Dryzek 2010, 183). The scope of the debates, in terms of issues addressed, increased in fact together with the number of actors participating in them (2010, 185).

This does not mean, of course, that states (especially some of them) have no power left. First of all, the growing political globalization is not particularly related to technological challenges and opportunities or market dynamics. It is rather the product of political decisions that the states (especially some of them) participated in. The liberalization of trade and particularly of financial markets is driven by political actors within single states (and in particular within the most powerful one, the United States) – as well as by the mentioned international actors. Moreover, as in the past, sovereignty is formally equal, but substantively unequally distributed, as some states have more power over their own territory, others much less. Also, as research on the European Union clearly indicates, states retain a (differential) capacity to influence the international organizations (suffice to compare Germany with Greece in the EU) they belong to, and especially play an important role in the implementation of international treaties.

It is uncontestable, however, that the growing number, power and visibility of international organizations challenge the very principles of legitimation of liberal democracies as representing the will of their citizens.

From the state to the market?

While not directly claiming that they aimed at reducing social inequalities, liberal democracies tended to legitimize themselves as efficient in granting wellness to their citizens: freedom was assumed to produce healthy competition and, therefore, economic growth and political equality to grant power to the (more numerous) less privileged citizens and, therefore, policies were oriented to reducing inequalities. This assumption seemed to be confirmed when democracy became synonymous with welfare states that, even if following different models, were all oriented to granting a modicum of social protection to the citizen, so reducing the inequalities produced by the market. Many agreed (and some still agree) that a high-quality democracy should not only respect individual freedom, but also pursue the second aim of democracy: equality. As Leonardo Morlino (2011, 43) observed:

If these aspects, which are essential for the achievement of freedom and equality, are to be effectively pursued, contemporary democracies will also have to attend to issues such as environmental conservation, the right to health care, assistance for the elderly and invalid, the right to a job, provisions for the unemployed, the need to ensure everyone has a reasonable standard of living, the right to greater educational opportunities, and also the promotion of equity in private disputes or between public and private interests. Not to include in an analysis of the ideal democracy the safeguarding of the substantive elements outlined above would paradoxically mean ignoring the steps already taken by many real democracies to promote equality.

What is more, failing to recognize the protection and promotion of social rights as indispensable for democracy and the implementation of its main principles, such as participation and political equality, 'In short…would result in a definition of the ideal democracy that in some ways falls short of what real ones have already achieved' (2011).

The so-called mid-century compromise between capital and labour, which had allowed for the development of the welfare state, was, however, not going to last. Since the 1990s, and more and more in the new millennium, research on the welfare state has pointed at its retrenchment, and the consequent rapid increase in social inequalities. Deregulation of financial markets, reduction of taxes, and privatization of public services have indeed been common trends in advanced democracies, although with some differences between European countries and the United States (Crouch 2003). Administrative reforms, often presented as applications of the theory of 'public management', were, until a few years ago, almost unanimously appreciated as capable of limiting parasitic behaviour among public actors, of simplifying baroque administrative procedures and of re-launching economic initiative. Deregulation and the privatization of public services were seen as functional for the rejuvenation of local economies thanks to the space liberated for private initiatives. Especially since the beginning of the new millennium, the weaknesses and criticality of the new model – in terms of both the reduction in quality of a series of public utilities (Crouch 2003) and the delegitimation of local government organs – have become increasingly clear.

In the last few decades, politics and governments have lost ground, being conquered by privileged elites and their anti-egalitarian conception (Crouch 2003, 9), which tends to substitute social right with charity (Dore 2010, 177). In his *Post-Democracy*, Colin Crouch (2003, 9) points at the reduced capacity for intervention by elected politicians, as well as citizens' growing dissatisfaction with their performance. Neoliberal conceptions are said to have undermined the moral basis of capitalism and

with it the capacity to define a general interest (Dore 1998, 244), or at least to allow the development of those social rights that have been posited as the bases for some conceptions of democracy (Marshall 1992; Tilly 2004). In some sectors more than in others, economic globalization has produced not competition but high barriers to entry, favouring a small number of huge multinationals (Crouch 2010, 182). The effects of deregulation and privatization are not seen in a competitive market, but in the growth of multinationals and oligopolies. At the same time, there is an involution of the state – that is, the regression to a penal state, which concentrates on repression, and progressively abandons its social functions of education, health and welfare (Bourdieu 1998, 34). Indeed, public funds for social services have been cut, but not the public spending related to the pre-democratic roles of the state, such as the extension of official honours and symbolic privileges for the rich and powerful, the development of a complex apparatus of laws, prisons and police forces to protect private property, and the distribution of lucrative public contracts (Crouch 2010, 185).

These changes have been linked to those mentioned at international level as 'national governments, terrified of the implicit threat of capital flight, have let themselves be dragged into a cost-cutting deregulatory frenzy, generating obscene profits and drastic income disparities, rising unemployment, and the social marginalization of a growing population of the poor' (Habermas 2001, 79). Additionally, thanks to the opening of borders to goods, services and finance, multinational corporations have grown in size and influence upon (weaker) states while labour has not been given such freedom. In a vicious circle, removing borders for goods, services and finance has reinforced multinational corporations. Not only are they growing in number (there were 60,000 at the beginning of the 2000s), they have also grown in terms of size and the capacity to influence states, progressively increased in their ability to intervene. Suffice to remember that in 2000, the large multinationals accounted for 42 per cent of world exports and 10 per cent of production, employing 40 million people (Pianta 2001).

The effects of this dominance are seen in the 2010s, with the recent dramatic crisis in the Eurozone. Neoliberal economic policies have renounced policy intervention oriented to promoting economic growth, so leaving territorial inequalities unchallenged while the financialization of the economy grew exponentially. The financial crisis that started in the United States in 2007 and spread at global level the following year thus hit those economies that had always been weaker: Ireland and Southern Europe. As Italian economist Mario Pianta noticed, 'The causes of the financial crisis are in the lack of sustainability of a system that let speculation prevail over rules, finance over real economy,

the market over politics' (2012, 9). When banks became insolvent, governments rushed to save them, with transfers of money. But without any structural intervention that could increase control over financial speculation (through, e.g., a tax on financial transactions or limits on bank and stock-market transactions), this brought about a growth in public deficits and increasing dependence from financial markets, with consequent economic recession. Austerity policies (with cuts of salary and pension, as well as flexibilization of the labour market through reduced protection for workers) have been unable to improve the economies, instead reducing productivity and increasing unemployment and poverty, with an improvement in the conditions of the richest 10 per cent of the population and a decline in those of the remaining 90 per cent (2012, 72). In all this, public authority has been accused of being not powerless, but, rather, 'actively committed to increasing the power of actors in the global markets and finance and reducing that of everyone else' (2012, 61).

Economic globalization, in this neoliberal version, therefore challenges a conception of democracy as development of social rights that is deep-rooted in public understanding, as well as in sociological theory (Marshall 1992; Tilly 2004). The effects on the legitimacy of democracy are immediate:

> With the chance (or even the possibility) of a welfare policy being revoked, the image of a democracy looking to the future, given to the progressive actuation of equality is weakened...As soon as the ground that forms the complementary (or at least credible) relationship between the various rights and their connection with democracy dries out, another of the characteristic elements of constitutional democracy disappears. (Costa 2010, 39)

While the satisfaction of users of public services is decreasing, the state appears no longer to be able to fulfil the functions of regulation, service provision and balancing of social inequalities once considered its fundamental duties.

In sum, although to differing degrees in different states, and certainly not in any irreversible way, we can note the diffusion of a neoliberal doctrine that has reduced the capacity of the state to intervene in the economy. If the recent financial crises have shaken these convictions, they have not yet led to any paradigm change.

Challenges and/or opportunities?

In sum, the weakening of the parties' states, nation states and welfare states present serious threats to a notion of democracy based upon a

liberal conception. We have pointed out several indicators of a general malaise in democratic countries that challenges democracy both inside and outside national borders.

At the national level, procedural legitimation of democracy as a regime based upon electoral accountability is limited by widespread phenomena such as the decline of electoral participation (visible on all territorial levels), but also the profound transformation in the political parties as the main actors that, giving continuity in time from pre-electoral promises to judgement on post-electoral performances, allowed electoral accountability to function. As the recent mobilizations for democracy show, the retrenchment of public expenditures has, moreover, reduced the potential for states to get a sort of 'legitimacy by the output' – linked, that is, to their capacity to meet citizens' claims.

At the transnational level, challenges to democratic legitimacy on the input side arise from the necessity to adapt conceptions and practices developed at the national level to a reality in which transnational actors and global events have an increasingly larger influence. As John Markoff (1999, 283) observed, globalization changes the ways in which democratization is addressed in a world of transnational connections: democratization of the states is no longer the central issue. The normative conceptions and empirical implementations of democracy developed in and about the nation state are not easily applied at the supranational level where political institutions and civil society are concerned. Indeed, 'democracy as we know it within countries does not exist in a Globalized Space. More accurately, to the extent that Globalized Space is marked by conventional democratic procedures, these are ad-hoc, non systematic, irregular and fragile' (Rosenau 1998, 39). Not only do international organizations usually have no electoral accountability, but also a transnational conception of citizenship and citizenship rights is hard to develop. The fundamental principles of nation-state democracy – such as territoriality, majority principles, and use of coercive power – 'have to be reformulated, if they are to be applied globally' (Archibugi 2003, 7). At the same time, however, democratic accountability, transparency and participation are more and more needed faced with processes of politicization of international relations (Zürn and Ecker-Ehrhardt 2011).

From the output side, an additional challenge comes (at both national and transnational levels) from the transformations in economic politics, and their effects on the capacity of democracies to produce public goods. Economic globalization as 'return to the market' has certainly reduced the potential for state intervention on economic inequalities, challenging the assumption (previously dominant in Europe, but also in Keynesian political economy) about its role in ensuring economic development, and also social justice. In turn, the reduced effectiveness of public administration

affects the legitimacy of state institutions as well. In fact, 'As markets drive out politics, the nation-state increasingly loses its capacities to raise taxes and stimulate growth, and with them the ability to secure the essential foundations of its own legitimacy' (Habermas 2001, 79).

If a narrative in terms of a crisis of democracy, or at least of a reduction of democratic qualities even in advanced democracies, has been long widespread, a sort of counter-narrative, however, started to develop, stressing the opportunities that some recent transformations bring about for democracy. Some empirical research has in fact also singled out potential chances for improvement in (some) democratic qualities triggered by recent changes (see table 2.1).

There has been an increase not only in the number of democratic countries after the third wave of democratization, but also in citizens' participation. While some more conventional forms of participation (such as voting or party-linked activities) are declining, protest forms are instead increasingly used (Dalton 2004). Citizens vote less, but are no less interested or knowledgable about politics. And if some traditional types of associations are less and less popular, others (social movement organizations and/or civil society organizations) are instead growing in resources, legitimacy and members. Media studies have discussed the increasing participatory opportunities linked to the new technologies, which also to a certain extent allow the shortcoming of increasing commercialization of traditional media to be bypassed. Both trends increase the capacity to watch over elected representatives, even if their electoral accountability is declining. In the analysis of public policies, the term 'governance' assumed a vaguely positive meaning to identify flexible and participatory forms of decision making. Experiments with deliberative democracy developed as means to increase citizens' participation, creating high-quality discursive arenas and empowering the people. Even though this process continues to be an exception, it is becoming more

Table 2.1   *Challenges and Opportunities for Democracy*

Challenges	Opportunities
– democracy in democratic countries	+ countries with at least a minimal level of democracy
– conventional forms of participation	+ innovative forms of participation
– media commercialization	+ partial public spheres
– electoral accountability	+ capacity for scrutiny of institutions
– state intervention against social inequalities	+ recognition of other-than-social rights (gender, environmental, human rights…)

and more tried and tested (della Porta and Gbikpi 2008). Moreover, if the capacity of state intervention on market inequalities is reduced, civil right issues have entered the political debate more and more. In international politics, research on transnational relations singled out the – admittedly difficult – development of norms in defence of environmental protection, gender rights and human rights. In different ways in different international organizations, civil society organizations carved out channels of access to international decision making.

More generally, the very reflection on democratic qualities testified to the perceived need to balance the acknowledged crisis of the representative (electoral) conception of democracy with a sort of revival of other ones that – even though far from hegemonic – belong to deep-rooted traditions in democratic thinking, and with development of democratic institutions that go beyond electoral accountability.

Conclusion

In summary, while the weakening of political parties, nation states and welfare states challenges the liberal conception of democracy, it might have produced some opportunities (at least discursive ones) for other conceptions of democracy. As Pierre Rosanvallon has suggested, the understanding of democratic experiences requires the consideration, at the same time, of the 'functions and dysfunctions' of electoral representative institutions, but also of the organization of distrust (Rosanvallon 2006, 8).

Thinking in terms of other conceptions of democracy paves the way to addressing contemporary changes as not only challenges to, but also opportunities for, democracy. The weakening of liberal democracy (variously defined as crisis or decline) has led the state to pay more attention to the variety of arenas in which different models of democracy developed – something I will deal with in what follows. These diverse models are often combined and balanced in the practices and discourses of different actors.

3

Participatory Democracy

We seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation, governed by two central aims; that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that society be organized to encourage independence of man and provide the media for their common participation. (Port Huron Statement, 1964)

Although the meetings were frequently long and tedious, many occupiers point to these open, participatory assemblies as embodying an alternative to the current representative democratic order disproportionately influenced by the 1%. (Juris 2012, 263, on #Occupying Boston)

The often-quoted Port Huron Statement by the US student movement in 1964 is considered to be a manifesto for democracy as participatory, claiming free speech and the right to participate in collective decisions. About fifty years later, as Juris observed on the Occupying movement, participatory democracy is still central for the movements that have mobilized against financial crises and austerity measures. Some of the transformations-as-opportunities identified at the end of the last chapter tend to favor the development of some specific democratic qualities, which are central for conceptions of democracy other than the liberal one discussed in the last chapter. In particular, the growth of diverse and multiple forms of unconventional political participation reflects the development of participatory conceptions of democracy. To this conception and related practices, and the long path of their development, this chapter is devoted. After defining participatory democracy and reviewing

normative theories devoted to it, I'll turn to history to show how social movements (in particular, the labour movement) have put forward different conceptions of democracy from the liberal one, emphasizing collective and social rights over individual (negative) freedom as well as participation by citizens over delegation to politicians. In their complex evolution, the labour movement, and other left-wing movements, have not only succeeded, often in alliances with other actors, in changing political institutions, but also experimented with different democratic qualities within their structures and struggles.

Participatory democracy: an introduction

The theme of participation is central to politics and to democracy. The very concept of politics, with reference to its etymological root in the Greek *polis*, recalls an image of participation: in the agora one intervenes in the making of decisions. If so-called 'ancient democracy' included this element of direct intervention, however, it is often said that 'modern democracy' has little in common with the Greek *polis*, being prevalently representative.

Yet another conception of democracy has survived in contemporary democracies, alongside the liberal one – one which underlines the necessity for citizens, naturally interested in politics, directly to assume the task of intervening in decisions that regard public issues. Where liberal democracy foresees the constitution of bodies of specialized representatives, participatory democracy instead posits strong constraints on the principle of delegation, seen as an instrument of oligarchic power. If liberal democracy is based on formal equality – one head, one vote – participatory democracy underlines the need to create the conditions for real equality. While liberal democracy is often bureaucratized, with decision making concentrated at the apex, direct democracy insists on the necessity of bringing decisions as close to the people as possible.

If the tension between representation and participation is always present in debates on democracy, with the first clearly prevalent in the actual evolution of democratic institutions, a certain level of participation is nevertheless necessary to legitimate representatives. The very idea of popular sovereignty presupposes the participation that developed in Europe halfway through the eighteenth century together with the public sphere, and which allowed interaction between citizens and institutional representatives (Mayer and Perrineau 1992, 10). This was then extended through the different stages of the widening of electoral suffrage, removing – albeit very slowly – census and gender barriers. As Pietro Costa (2010, 9) has observed:

The driving force of democratization (its principal rhetorical device) is equality, employed as an instrument capable of shedding light on differences and denouncing the illegitimacy of the barriers that fragment the national society creating mutually estranged classes of citizens. And it is the participation–equality–rights nexus that continues to hold up democratic claims throughout the nineteenth century…It is in this perspective that attacks on the census constraints of suffrage are conducted, in which the political and social elite who form a considerable share of public opinion oppose tenacious resistance.

Theories of participatory democracy have also criticized liberal conceptions of democracy, which spoke of free and equal citizens, as unrealistic, underlining instead the power asymmetries that a purely political equality failed to neutralize. Influenced by the most powerful interests, the state is in fact seen as not fully able to guarantee real freedom and equality. To fight inequalities (and their delegitimizing effects), greater transparency in the functioning of public – both representative and otherwise – institutions is thus called for, along with the democratization of societal institutions. The involvement of citizens must be continuous and direct, widening towards a capacity to intervene in all the different areas of a person's everyday existence. The democratization of parties and associations is considered particularly important, as these mediate between society and state. According to Held:

> if we want democracy today to bloom it is necessary to rethink it as a double-faced phenomenon, with one side regarding the reform of state power and the other the restructuring of civil society. The principle of autonomy can only be realized if we recognize that a process of 'double democratization' is indispensible, that is the independent transformation of both the state and civil society. (1997, 435)

In this conception, participation at all levels, institutional or not, is oriented to rebalancing power inequalities that the liberal conception does not question. In fact, in this vision, while democracy is challenged by powerful organizations, in order for democracy to survive the challenge, 'economic groups and associations must undergo rearticulation by political institutions, in order to become part of the democratic process itself. This is possible with the adoption, within the modus operandi of such actors, of principles, rules and democratic practices' (1997, 451).

We can add that a delegated conception of democracy does not take into account the problem – acknowledged by Dahl (2000), among others – of the different intensity of preferences. At elections, each vote counts equally, but in reality the strength of citizens' opinions and emotional attachments, as well as competences, on different issues varies

enormously. While this unequal distribution of preference makes representative democracy inefficient in its very claim to reflect preference distribution (Pizzorno 2012), participatory democracy takes this into account, by granting more decisional capacity to those who are more committed, and therefore participate more.

To a certain extent, participation has indeed survived even in representative regimes. Even if they are representative, participation (not only electoral) is considered essential for contemporary democracies, which gain legitimacy not only through votes but also through their capacity to submit decisions to the 'test of the discussion' (Manin 1995). As Pierre Rosanvallon noted, in the historical evolution of democracy, along with the growth of institutions of electoral accountability, a circuit of oversight anchored outside of state institutions took shape. In fact, the understanding of democratic experiences requires the consideration, at the same time, of the 'functions and dysfunctions' of electoral representative institutions, but also of the organization of distrust. The different elements of what Rosanvallon defined as counter-democracy do not represent, in fact, 'the opposite of democracy, but rather a form of democracy that reinforces the usual electoral democracy, a democracy of indirect powers disseminated through society – in other words, a durable democracy of distrust which complements the episodic democracy of the usual electoral representative system' (2006, 8). If mistrust is the disease, it might be part of the cure as 'a complex assortment of practical measures, checks and balances, and informal as well as institutional social counter-powers has evolved in order to *compensate for the erosion of confidence, and to do so by organizing distrust*' (2006, 4).

In the same vein as Rosanvallon, other scholars have stressed at the same time the crisis of the traditional, liberal (representative) conceptions of democracy and the revival of democratic qualities often considered under the label of a 'democracy of the ancients' that stresses the importance of a (free and committed) public. In particular, Bernard Manin described the evolution from a 'democracy of the parties', in which the public sphere was mainly occupied by the political parties, to a 'democracy of the public', in which the channels of formation of public opinion are freed from their ideological control (1995, 295). This also means that the cleavages within public opinion no longer reflect electoral preferences, developing instead from individual preferences formed outside of the political parties:

> Individuals may have different opinions on a certain theme (for example, some are in favour, others against). A fracture then forms in public opinion on the theme in question...but this fracture does not necessarily reproduce partisan divisions between those that habitually

vote for one party and those that vote for another. The fracture forms on the basis of the preferences of individuals on a specific subject, not on the basis of the partisan political preferences. The fracture of public opinion on different themes may not coincide with the line of division established at the vote. (1995, 295)

Normative theorists of participatory democracy have, as mentioned, stressed the importance of involving citizens beyond elections (Arnstein 1969; Pateman 1970; Barber 2003). In sum, participatory theory – which David Held defines as the conception of the 'New Left' – promotes a 'direct participation of citizens in the regulation of the key institutions of society, including the spheres of work and the local community' (Held 1997, 379), or 'the participation of citizens in the determination of the conditions of their associational lives, which presumes the authentic and rational nature of the judgements of each individual' (1997, 416).

In Carole Pateman's theorization, citizens should be provided with as many opportunities to truly participate as there are spheres of decision. While in *partial* participation, 'the final power of decision rests with the management, the workers if they are able to participate, being able only to influence that decision' (Pateman 1970, 70), *full* participation is a 'process where each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions' (1970, 70–1). In a similar vein, 'strong democracy' has been defined as a government under which citizens participate, at least some of the time, in the decisions that affect their lives (Barber 2003).

Participatory theorists have in fact criticized ritualistic forms of participation, calling instead for real empowerment. As Arnstein (1969, 216) noted, 'citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power'. This means that 'there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process' (1969). Any process which does not transfer power is a manipulation of public opinion; no meaningful participation is achieved until direct democracy comes into play. This is why, for instance, Arnstein's ladder counts eight rungs corresponding to eight degrees of power. From the bottom to the top, these eight rungs are: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power and citizen control. The first two bottom rungs are equivalent to non-participation; the three successive ones are degrees of tokenism; but the three upper rungs are degrees of citizen power.[1]

Participation is called for as not only just, but also useful. Among the instrumentally positive contributions of participation, we find defence from arbitrary power, the production of more informed decisions and the growth of the legitimacy of those decisions (Smith 2009, 5). Yet the

advantages of participation are praised in terms not only of immediate legitimation, but also of a growing socialization to interest and action for the collective good. Participation is seen to have a positive effect on citizens. Spaces of participation become 'schools of democracy': the more citizens participate in the decision-making process, the more they are informed and enlightened, and the more they will vote in national elections (Pateman 1970). Active, knowledgeable and informed citizenship will increase the systemic efficiency and individual and collective wellbeing.

Participation creates, then, a virtuous circle: opportunities to participate stimulate trust and activism, thus reproducing the stimulus to participate and improving the effects of participation itself. Indeed, participation in civic activity educates individuals with respect to how to think in public, given that citizenship permeates civic activity with the necessary sense of public-spiritedness and justice; in this sense, to paraphrase Barber, politics becomes its own university, citizenship its gym, participation its teacher (2003, 152).

Free spaces (horizontal and participatory) offer a school of citizenship, socializing in those competences and values that are essential to support effective participation (Evans and Boyte 1986, 17). Participation in social movements and other associations often broaden the personal identities of participants and offers satisfaction and self-realization (Gamson 1992, 56; Blee 2011). Indeed, identities and motivations are transformed, during collective action: while participation often starts for limited, immediate, even selfish reasons, many activists develop in time a political and social conscience and a more public and trusting sense of the self (Szas 1995, 154).

Similar effects were detected in the case of decentralized institutions. As Tocqueville (1986, vol. I, 112–13) wrote long ago, 'Town-meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people's reach, they teach men how to use and how to enjoy it.' It is from encounters that solidarity is born: 'Feelings and opinions are recruited, the heart is enlarged, and the human mind is developed by no other means than the reciprocal influence of men upon each other' (Tocqueville 1986, vol. II, 158). Similarly, according to J.S. Mill, it is local institutions that carry out

> the practical part of the political education of a free people, taking them out of the narrow circle of personal and family selfishness, and accustoming them to the comprehension of joint interests, the management of joint concerns – habituating them to act from public or semi-public motives, and guide their conduct by aims which unite instead of isolating them from one another (Mill 1947, 112)

In this sense, it is by participating that people learn to participate. As Carole Pateman writes (1970, 42–3), 'the principal function of participation is…the educational, educational in the widest sense of the term, that includes both psychological aspects and the acquisition of the practice of capabilities and democratic procedures…Participation develops and forges those same qualities that are necessary to it: the more an individual participates, the more he is able to participate.' Personal involvement in the participatory process may significantly change one's attitude, perspective and value priorities (Bachrach 1975, 50).

The need to create multiple and varied channels of participation is justified by the recognition of the presence of conflicts between actors possessing different resources and powers. Bachrach and Baratz (1986), in particular, have theorized a dichotomy between those who have power and those who do not. The former can realize the mobilization of prejudice, excluding some ideas and requests from the public debate through the activation of a bundle of norms, values and rules that prevent some matters from becoming subject to public decision. Part of the activity of exercising power is thus oriented towards imposing and reinforcing this selectivity, preventing controversies from emerging on questions of fundamental importance to the group in power. Decisions are thus often taken on issues of little relevance, while non-decisions are taken with regard to the most important conflicts.

Increasing participation by the excluded therefore becomes necessary in order to introduce new, important issues into the political debate. Participatory democracy thus has elements in common with *associational* democracy (Hirst 1994), which focuses upon the need for citizens to self-organize. Associational experiences in civil society are here considered not only to be capable of replacing the state in some of its functions, but also to produce social solidarity, contributing to the democratic socialization of the citizens as well as to the production of social goods.

Participation should thus be an instrument for redistributing resources to the advantage of the weakest. While interest groups favour the most resourceful through less visible lobbying, these arenas of participation should give more power to the powerless. For Peter Bachrach, democratic participation is 'a process in which persons formulate, discuss, and decide public issues that are important to them and directly affect their lives. It is a process that is more or less continuous, conducted on a face-to-face basis in which participants have roughly an equal say in all stages, from formulation of issues to the determination of policies' (1975, 41). The participation of those who are excluded is an instrument for reducing inequalities as a democratic public sphere should provide the mechanisms for recognition and representation of the voices and perspectives

of those who are oppressed (Young 1990, 184). From this point of view, the participatory approach tends to stress also the substantive, social dimension of democracy (Schmidt 2010, 225–35).

Conflicts are central in the conceptions of radical democracy (Laclau and Mouffe 2001), which presents agonist democratic *politics* as a peaceful way to manage conflictual interests that emerge in the (antagonist) *political*. So, for Chantal Mouffe, the political is 'the dimension of antagonisms that I take to be constitutive of human society', while politics is the 'set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political' (Mouffe 2005, 360). In this sense, agonism recognizes the conflicting relations with, but also the legitimacy of, the Others:

> while antagonism is a we/they relation in which the two sides are enemies who do not share any common ground, agonism is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents…This means that, while in conflict, they see themselves as belonging to the same political association, as sharing a common symbolic space within which the conflict takes place. (Mouffe 2005, 20)

What is shared in this vision is 'adhesion to the ethical–political principles of liberal democracy: liberty and equality. But we disagree concerning the meaning and implementation of those principles, and such a disagreement is not one that could be solved through deliberation and rational discussion' (Mouffe 2000, 245).

Visions of participatory democracy thus tend to consider the formation of collective identities as exogenous to the democratic process: that is, they emerge in the society, and then participate in politics. This is the case also for the radical democratic approach which leaves the formation of interests and identities outside of the (conflictual) political sphere. The interest in 'articulation' – as practices that establish a relation among elements, so that identities are modified (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 105) – does not bring about a definition of the (democratic) conditions under which this 'articulation' might happen. Additionally, there is a separation between political institutions and society. Identities are not constructed through democratic processes; rather, the function of democracy is 'to provide institutions that will allow them to take an agonistic form, in which opponents will treat each other not as an enemy to be destroyed, but as adversaries who will fight for the victory of their position while recognizing the right of their opponents to fight for theirs' (Mouffe 2009, 53).

The historical development of participatory democracy

In European history, a participatory vision of democracy developed with the mobilization of the labour movement, also bringing about relevant institutional changes. The initial phases of the democratic state have been defined as characterized by widespread activism in the public sphere (cf. Eder 2010), which remained autonomous from political parties. During the first phase of representative democracy, which Bernard Manin (1995, 260) defined as *parliamentarism*, candidates were elected on the basis of personal trust, linked to their networks of local relations and reputation. In society, opinion movements were organized around varied themes, and applied pressure, often through public demonstrations in parliaments, conceived as the place where representatives formed their opinions through open discussions. It is in this phase – which in the history of England and France stretches from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth – that the public sphere asserted itself, and not only for the bourgeoisie. Studies on the formation of the labour movement describe this period as characterized by identities still oriented to trades, fragmented organizational structures and local, sporadic protests, but also by a certain participatory ferment.

   In this phase, electoral accountability was limited, as electoral suffrage was still very restricted. Notwithstanding the low levels of electoral participation, participation in the public sphere was intense, with the multiplication of autonomous and influential opinion movements. Summarizing numerous historical studies, Alessandro Pizzorno observes that, halfway through the eighteenth century, in England public opinion 'manifested itself in ever more numerous petitions, in discussions in public places, or in semi-private places (taverns, cafés, clubs), where the new middle class of tradesmen and professionals, readers of periodicals gathered...Numerous societies and associations were formed...the political press spread in a manner previously unimaginable' (Pizzorno 1996, 972).[2] In the period, which, according to E.P. Thompson (1991), saw 'the making of the English working class', street marches for reform mobilized hundreds of thousands of citizens, while some of the radical magazines achieved circulations of tens of thousands of copies. In France, as in England, extra-parliamentary political associations gathered hundreds of thousands of signatures for petitions on themes such as the freedom of the press, the emancipation of slaves, freedom of religion, electoral reform, and public education (Pizzorno 1996, 488–9). Here too, processions and barricades mobilized hundreds of thousands of people (Sewell 1980).

In Habermas' analysis of the formation of public opinion, social conflicts that emerged outside of parties were expressed in the bourgeois *public sphere*, a sphere that 'develops in the field of tension between State and society, in such a way as to itself remain a part of the private arena' (Habermas 1988, 171).[3] The birth of the public sphere coincides with the rise of demands by social movement organizations for an active role in decisions that regarded their constituencies. In this sense, the notion of public opinion, connected to that of publicity, was affirmed during the eighteenth century. Peculiar to the public sphere is, according to Habermas, the instrument used for political confrontation: public and rational argumentation. Cafés, drawing rooms, linguistic societies and Masonic lodges were the social spaces where this public sphere took form and the taste for debate was satisfied. It is in these spaces, then, that the institutions that led to the physical enlargement of the public space developed – first the press, but also public meetings, reading societies and various associations. After the French and American revolutions, journalism, freed from the censorship of absolutist regimes, became an instrument of wide discussion, albeit limited to an elite.

In Habermas' historical reconstruction, the commercial bourgeoisie progressively assumed a hegemonic position in civil society. Financial and commercial capitalism required the international circulation of both goods and news, thereby creating a social class interested in influencing government action (1988, 37). According to research on social movements, however, the public sphere was not (only) bourgeois, in the sense of being limited to the elites of literary cafés. Even though it is debated whether emerging conflicts should be read as motivated by the beginnings of class consciousness, or the survival of community or trade identities (Calhoun 1982), social movement organizations, with their scarce links with political parties, occupied an important space in the public sphere

At the origins of democracy lies, in fact, what Bendix called 'the entrance of the masses into history': indeed, 'the 18th century represents a rupture on a grand scale in the history of western Europe. Before that moment, the masses were barred from exercising their public rights. From that moment, they became citizens and in this sense members of the political community' (Bendix 1964, 72). In contrast to the Marxist school, Bendix underlines the primarily political character of those social movements:

> the growing awareness of the working class expresses above all an experience of political alienation, that is, the sense of not having a recognized position in the political community or of not having a civic community in which to participate.…the recently politicized masses protest against their second class citizenship, demanding the right to

participate on equal terms in the political community of the nation
state. (1964, 73)

The struggle for universal suffrage was thus also and principally a strug-
gle for recognition: 'it is to oppose a conception of foreignness and social
invisibility that impacted the majority of society. Overcoming existing
discrimination in the name of equality meant being recognized as full
members of society' (Costa 2010, 13).

Popular participation through unconventional forms went along with
its politicization. Between the late eighteenth century and the early nine-
teenth, the importance of demonstrations and strikes grew, with workers
forming associations focusing on the defence of wages and working
conditions, but also allied to political movements calling for democratic
reforms. In France, newspapers written by workers for workers appeared,
denouncing the partiality of the bourgeois press (and journalists) (Sewell
1980, 197). In England too, political reading societies (including work-
ing-class ones) met in public cafés where up to ninety-six newspapers
were bought and read, including those printed illegally (Thompson 1991,
789). Not only, recalls E. P. Thompson, were there around a million liter-
ate people among English workers, but in addition 'Illiteracy...by no
means excluded men from political discourse' (1991, 782). We can
speak, then, of numerous and diverse *reading publics* (ibid., 790), not
only bourgeois ones, that addressed political (public) issues.

A central element in the conception of democracy that developed in
this way is the *collective* dimension of rights as opposed to a liberal
conception of freedom (of contracts, property, etc.) as merely individual.
If the public sphere emerged in these years, the actors who participated
in it were only partly new. In both France and England the continuity
between the trade corporations and the labour movement is underlined.
In France, the societies of *compagnonnages* and mutual aid societies
remained active, reproducing post-revolutionary versions of the old con-
fraternities that later transformed into free associations. The leaders of
the *compagnonnerie* maintained their influence in negotiations with
masters, and in deciding eventual strikes (Sewell 1980, 180). The English
workers' movement combined the traditions of the secret societies with
that of trade unionism (Thompson 1991, 570). Here as well, the repre-
sentatives of the old trades had a say in the emerging public sphere
(Calhoun 1982).

The social and political demands of the budding workers' movement
intertwined with claims that may be defined as meta-democratic, address-
ing the very conceptions and practices of democracy. The battle for the
freedom of the press was a founding experience of the English working
class (Thompson 1991, 805). There, the Luddites formed a transitional

movement with their mix of defending the past yet anticipating the future through, among other things, the elaboration of specific proposals against the exploitation of women and children, for a minimum wage, and indeed for the right to form unions (1991, 603). The Chartists' claims for political reforms (such as universal suffrage and the secret ballot, the abolition of limits on eligibility to stand for election, and paid parliamentarians) were in fact supported by workers' organizations (Tilly 2004, 46). In France, in 1848, trade corporations and political clubs marched together to demand civil and political rights.

The emerging social movements in the public sphere not only discussed specific political reforms, but also constituted arenas for the meeting of different conceptions of democracy, with an explicit challenge to the minimalist, individualistic and liberal vision of the developing democratic state. From this point of view, liberal democracy unintentionally offered the relational and cognitive resources for its own transformation. Even if the discourse of individual rights that dominated the collective order hindered the organization of the workers at first, it nevertheless triggered the development of alternative conceptions of democracy.

In England, it was precisely the resistance to repression and limits to the freedom of association that led to an alliance between radical clubs and trade unionism (Thompson 1991, 675), with the accompanying emergence of popular radicalism and militant trade unions. If the Combination Acts reflected the alliance of aristocrats and manufacturers, they also produced, as a reaction, the alliance between radicals and workers' organizations (1991, 217). Similarly, the repression of 1817–19 contributed to the bridging of calls for political reform and calls for social reform, in a reaction that E.P. Thompson sees as principally determined, in terms of initiative and character, by worker associationism. The Peterloo Massacre (eleven demonstrators killed) in 1819, by bringing hundreds of thousands onto the streets to protest, caused a polarization of public opinion ('nobody could remain neutral': 1991, 757) and the consequent alliances between moderates and radicals in the struggle for civil and political rights. Indeed, if the liberal language of rights defined these as the natural rights of the free man, 'it was primarily through the prism of their rights as citizens that workers came to discover and articulate their interests in the first place' (Somers 2008, 13, and 152).

In France, too, although a series of laws benefiting property-owners on a basis of competitive individualism emerged from the revolution (see also chapter 2), some of its ideological elements were nevertheless taken up by workers and their associations to justify demands for not only the widening, but also the transformation of the meaning, of those rights (Tilly 1995, 142). In the 1830s, the tension between the Enlightenment

conception of freedom (according to authorities, if workers had requests they had to present them individually to the competent authorities) and the workers' demands for the recognition of trade unions was obvious. Presenting the middle class as a new aristocracy, some of the labour organizations claimed their right to free themselves from oppression.

A central claim for the worker movement was in fact the right 'to combine', which began with the right to associate, but differentiated itself from this (Bendix 1964). While the freedom to associate with others formed a part of the freedom of conscience, of speech, of industry, of religious belief and of the press, it had not, like these others, been promoted by the revolution, which had rather, as mentioned, aimed to abolish the bodies between the state and the society. It emerged instead as an invention of the workers' organizations that, exploiting the ambiguities of the revolutionary discourse, defined the demands for collective negotiations in terms of brotherhood. In the burgeoning workers' movement, associations were thought of as workers' corporations, cooperatives, but also as confraternities of proletarians, initially with a mutual aid function, but then elaborated as instruments for opposing a vision of freedom as isolation, promoting instead reciprocal links and common intelligence (Sewell 1980, 216). Work was presented as the foundation of sovereignty, and the organization of workers in associations as a principle of social order, of a unique and indivisible republic. The language of association in fact allowed a redefinition of the workers' corporations as free and voluntary societies, combining cooperative language with a revolutionary one.

In the protest campaigns for the expansion of citizens' rights, other models of democracy were also conceptualized and practised: direct, horizontal and self-managed conceptions developed. In the public sphere, old and new intertwined: traditional forms of associationism (corporations, etc.) combined with emerging ones. In France, the conception of democracy emerging in working-class mobilizations included the federation of self-governing trade unions. With a mix of continuity and discontinuity, horizontal terminology began to spread in the trade associations – such as 'associate' rather than 'member', 'president' or 'secretary' rather than 'head' or 'captain'. The *sans-culottes* had already imagined the direct exercise of popular sovereignty in the name of a single popular will, calling for the public spiritedness of action, unanimity and equality (Sewell 1980, 103). Notwithstanding the defeat of the workers' motions in June 1848, the Luxembourg Commission (which functioned as an arena for interest mediation) remained an example of an attempt at self-management against the disorder of the market.

In a similar manner, the associations of the radical movement in England tended to organize in 'divisions', which were to divide as soon

as they reached forty-five members (Thompson 1991, 167). A delegate from each division participated (along with a vice-delegate with no voting rights) in weekly meetings of the general committee. The principle of payment for services was affirmed with the aim of preventing 'the taking over of its affairs by men of means or leisure' (1991, 169). In many Corresponding Societies, which met at private houses or taverns, the presidency of the session rotated, changing each time. Influenced by the events in France, the English Jacobins took up the 'zealous egalitarian underpinning' of the *sans-culottes* (1991, 171). Predominantly artisans (but also journeymen), the participants at the meetings brought the spirit of mutuality of that culture along with them (1991).

Returning to the model of liberal democracy presented in the previous chapter, we may observe that this was contested and, at least in part, disregarded in the construction of the democratic state – not only in the continuation of the visions and institutions of the 'old order', but also in the emergence of different visions and practices of democracy.

If requests that had formed in the public (not only bourgeois) sphere were granted and identities recognized, this does not seem to have occurred (only or principally) through mechanisms of electoral account-ability. In his research on France and England, Tilly describes a transfor-mation in the form of collective action between the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth, in which a local and parochial reper-toire became a national and autonomous one, based on public assemblies and ad hoc free associations among its interest groups. According to Tilly, in the eighteenth century the assumption was that citizens, grouped into known bodies (guilds, communities, religious sects), exercised col-lective rights, protected by the law, through the actions of their repre-sentatives who had the ear of the authorities (1995, 142). The modern repertoire that developed in the following century was made up of forms of action independent of the authorities, carried out in public places with the participation of associations that deployed their symbols of belonging (1995, 362). In England, the concentration of capital and proletarianiza-tion transformed the structure of interests, while urbanization changed the fabric of relations and the growth of the state (linked to military efforts) politicized the conflict, in what Tilly defines a 'para-parliamen-tarization' (1995, 49). Alongside parliamentarization, in fact, a public sphere grew, including even those citizens who, despite not having the right to vote, followed elections and participated in electoral campaigns (1995, 143). The parliamentarization of politics thus made elections important not only for the candidates, but also for their clientele (1995, 147). The French evolutionary path is similar, with growing demands by the state corresponding with a process of centralization of decisions and nationalization of political power (Tilly 1986).

Tilly linked the influence of social movements to the electoral moment, insofar as elections marked the presence of mass support for a few proposals (and thus a potential electoral pool of support). Nevertheless, the parties of the time were initially rather indifferent to these movements. Despite the odd exception (for example, candidates who supported the ideas of the English radicals), the parties were parties of notables, based on *individual representation* (Neumann 1956). *Patron* parties in the Weberian definition, they sought to:

> install their leader in a position of control in order that he would assign state offices to his followers, that is to the apparatus of functionaries and party propagandists. Lacking any principled content, the latter would from time to time include in their programs, in competition among themselves, those requests to which they attributed the greatest propagandist strength among the electors. (Weber 1974, vol. II, 709)

According to Neumann, this party 'is typical of a society with a limited political field and a low level of participation. This is manifested, in party terms, only by voting, and the party organization (if it even exists) remains inactive in the period between one election and another. Its principal function is to choose representatives who, once chosen, are invested with a complete mandate' (1956, 153).

Nevertheless, under pressure from social movements of various types, the system of representation that had been constituted with continuity and discontinuity with respect to the old order soon began to build institutions and practices for recognizing collective identities. Notwithstanding the individualizing rhetoric, the democratic state-in-formation developed traits of organized or associative democracy, constructing channels of access for interests organized in parties or associations. Both pluralist and, even more, neo-corporative models (Schmitter 1981) then recognized those bodies intermediate between the individual and the state that had previously been stigmatized. In addition, diverse conceptions and practices of democracy were present within these intermediate bodies, in some cases involving claims for direct participation, in some versions invoking self-management.

The labour movement has been a most important actor in the transformation of the individualistic liberal conception of right through a recognition of organized forms of participation. If, according to common wisdom, the Left privileged equality and the Right freedom, in reality the history of the workers' movement is one of claims for civil and political rights as inextricable from social rights. The relation between workers' struggles and demands for freedoms emerges continually in the historiographical reconstructions of the evolution of the workers' movement over the course of the nineteenth century.

In Great Britain, the tangling of claims for justice and for freedom appears evident in historical reconstructions. Chartism is presented as a development of radicalism in the eighteenth century, but also as the last spark of working-class revolutionary politics (Biagini and Reid 1991, 3). Halfway through the nineteenth century, the Reform League (65,000 members and 600 sections, 100 of which were in London) had an 'overwhelmingly working class' membership (Hinton 1974, 11). In tacit alliance with the more moderate Reform Union, the League organized huge demonstrations against the limits on the right to political assembly (in 1866, 150,000 protestors converged on Hyde Park, challenging a government ban), pushing the Disraeli government to concede an enlargement of suffrage. The 1850s also witnessed hard-fought battles for the recognition of trade union rights, among which the right to register was recognized only in 1855 with the Friendly Societies Act. In addition, it was only in the 1870s that the question of trade unions' legal status was finally settled, despite the earlier explosion in the numbers of those signing up. And even then, disputes over work on the law on conspiracy, the abolition of incarceration for breaking a contract (used until then against strikers) and the introduction of the right to peaceful picketing were excluded (Hinton 1974, 22). In the 1880s, the Democratic Federation continued its mobilization against repression in Ireland, for the nationalization of land, for democratic reform (along Chartist lines) and for a further extension of suffrage. Demands for social, civil and political rights thus became more and more intertwined, in complex ways:

> Unfortunately, it is all too often assumed that the world of the working-class politics can be understood simply by deploying categories such as 'socialist', 'Lib.-Lab.' or 'Labourist' to divide the labour movement into its ideological parts. In reality, working-class politics was far more complex. Individuals frequently shifted between these supposedly discrete ideological positions, or, more revealingly, behaved as though they were completely ignorant of their existence. (Lawrence 1991, 83)

Historians have in fact noted reciprocal influence between the organizations active on political rights and those active on social rights. Distinct from socialism, Chartism nevertheless had an impact on the workers' movement: while the Liberal party is normally seen as the heir to the traditions of radicalism, its effects are also strong in the Labour party (and in the organized working classes) (1991, 18). In fact, the Liberal party was viewed sympathetically by many trade unionists in the late Victorian period (for example, on the labour-law reform of 1875, Spain 1991, 110). The Tichborn movement of the 1870s has been described as the link in the chain between the end of Chartism and the development

of socialism (and thus of the Labour party in the 1890s) (McWilliam 1991, 44). Over the course of the century, popular constitutionalism was indeed invoked in support of working-class mobilizations:

> It was the repertoire of constitutionalist action – the mass petition, the remonstrance to the Crown, the mass demonstration and platform agitation, the convening of conventions – that could be relied on to rally the force of popular radicalism. It was not merely what could be said but what could be done that gave the constitutional force, allowing certain things to happen, certain political dramas to unfold. (Epstein 1994, 11)

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, this mostly came about in a defensive manner, in particular against the restrictions placed on trade union rights by the government Whigs, repression in Ireland and the new Poor Law, as well the Rural Police Act. Protests developed against restrictions of the right to meet in public and the suspension of *habeas corpus* in 1817.

In France, too, social movements intervened in the public sphere, raising demands for justice and liberty, but also presenting diverse conceptions of democracy. Sewell (1986, 63) writes that 'the fall of 1833 saw not only the creation of a new and powerful sense of class-consciousness among artisans working in different trades, but also the first steps towards a political alliance between radical republicanism and socialism'. In particular, the role played in the 1833 strikes by the Société des Droits de l'Homme has been underlined: initially a republican and bourgeois society, it soon became dominated by the working class. Together with the diffusion of socialist ideology, the demand for freedom was considered to be the central characteristic of the French working-class conscience. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the working-class identity, linked to a widespread popular culture, was characterized by:

> the sense of being manual workers; of being exploited by employers who, in the popular imagination, had replaced feudalism; a lively attachment to freedom, which formed the basis of the *sans-culotte* spirit as well as direct-action trade unionism; extreme suspicion towards all forms of authority, towards those referred to as 'them', ranging from the state to the workshop and even including other unions, whenever the 'little leaders' took advantage of their functions to act as big shots. (Perrot 1986, 105)

Although they were a minority, critics of the vote (and of 'votards') as an individual instrument in contrast with the collective will expressed in

assemblies, testified to the survival of conceptions of direct democracy (1986, 109).

Similarly in Germany, where end-of-century repression had favoured the centralization of struggles and working-class representation in the party (Nolan 1986), the workers' movement was born and grew from the bottom up: 'even apart from the strikes, to many workers self-organization and collective self-help appeared to be a quasi-natural way to protect against the insecurities of the market economy and the superiority of employers' (Kocka 1986, 338). The Verband Deutscher Arbeitervereine grew as the umbrella organization of workers' associations that had developed close links with left-wing and democratic liberals (Kocka 1986, 345). It was the defeat of the mobilizations of 1848–9 that rendered these alliances more difficult, contributing towards the creation of a strong yet isolated social democratic party.

From an organizational point of view, the interweaving and tensions between working-class struggles and conceptions of democracy were reflected in frequent waves of criticism of parties and trade unions 'from below'. As early as the end of the nineteenth century, in Germany, the political police had registered in the workers' *Kneipen* (bars) complaints about the coldness of the party and the loss of working-class spirit (Evans 1989, 246). In France, in 1936, the occupation of factories demonstrated how these had substituted trades as the focus of identity. As Perrot recalled:

> The occupations of factories in 1936 implied an entirely different relationship not merely to the instrument of work, but also to space. Dispersed with respect to residence, the workers were reunited daily in the factory, which became the locus of their collective existence; dislocated with respect to their crafts, they were reunited in the firm, which became the locus of their convergence, and thereby all at once the epicentre of the labour movement. (1986, 91)

In Great Britain, if the explosion in the numbers of those joining trade unions in the 1890s, and the mobilizations linked to this, led to the Labour party's running in the general elections of 1892, dissatisfaction over the lack of direct representation for the poor nevertheless accompanied the development of ideas of direct revolutionary action. [4]

Conceptions and practices of different models of democracy (and different democratic qualities) with respect to those foreseen in the definition of the liberal state were indeed developed and prefigured during waves of protest. In Great Britain, from 1910 to 1914, a new surge in membership of trade unions accompanied 'bottom-up' actions organized during the depression of 1908–9. Spontaneous transport strikes led to

alliances negotiated from below among up to eighteen trade unions at a time, all pledging not to leave the negotiating table until the requests of each had been satisfied. Community mobilizations included the strikers' wives, who marched under the banner 'Our poverty is your danger. Stand by us'. Currents of trade unionism in defence of working-class autonomy developed, criticizing existing trade unions as too sectarian in structure, oriented to compromise in their politics and internally oligarchic in their conception of representation (Hinton 1974, 91). These examples of working-class autonomy are described as 'loosely-coordinated, frag-mented and lacking a coherent body of theory'; in this sense, 'trade unionism failed to organize the grassroots leaders of industrial militancy into a disciplined force capable of leading a fight for revolutionary poli-tics within labour politics' (1974, 94). Nevertheless, 'in a period when the Labour Party achieved little and was wracked by internal dissension, the trade union explosion provided a base for a renewal of socialist poli-tics' (1974, 89). Even during the Great War of 1914–18, spontaneous protests saw alliances between skilled and unskilled workers, who pushed the Labour party to adopt some socialist goals. After the war, resistance to the moderate turn of the Labour government was expressed in the 1920–1 protests by the unemployed people's movement (organized in the National Unemployed Workers Movement), taking the form of hunger marches, which saw the participation of, among others, the party's local councillors, often at odds with the national government (1974, 134–5). The trade unions also expressed their disappointment about the second (minority) Labour government in 1929. In the 1930s, Labour re-emerged under the control of the trade unionists, with calls for promises to enact socialist legislation when in government, and a bottom-up opposition to the alliance with Churchill emerged in 1944.

Moments of tension and innovation also developed in the course of waves of strikes, accompanied by processions, assemblies and occupa-tions. According to E. P. Thompson's formula, 'class formation occurs at the intersection of determination and self-activity: the working class made itself as much as it was made' (1978, 299). It was especially during strikes that a working-class consciousness was formed. In Michelle Perrot's reconstruction (1974), the strikes that spread through France at the end of the nineteenth century [5] were in fact organized not just by trade unions, but also by various local committees, with strong involvement from grassroots activists, who were often very young. In this sense, action produced and reproduced the workers' community – as Perrot noted:

> Revolt is not instinctive. It is born of action, and community in action. The strike, in this view, offers a remarkable occasion for basic training, an antidote to isolation, to the mortal cold that the division of labour

reduces workers to. With its leaders, its assemblies, its demonstrations, its language, sometimes even its financial organization, it forms a community with Rousseauian aspirations, anxious for direct democracy, avid for transparency and communion. (1974, 725)

In its everyday dimension, the long strike of this period (ten times longer than the average contemporary strike), 'even if rational in its reasoning and objectives, is not purely functional, but experience, history, event. Experienced as a liberating force, able to break the monotony of the days and force the retreat of the bosses' power, it crystallized an ephemeral and often-regretted counter-society. Strike nostalgia carries the seed of its recommencing' (1974, 725).

Pushed by the workers' movement, the debate on democracy also spread to include not only an emphasis on participation, but also themes of social equality. In the first period of the development of capitalism, equality in civil and political rights sanctioned by the concept of citizenship was not normally considered to be in conflict with the social inequalities produced by the market, notwithstanding the fact that these weakened the enjoyment of civil and political rights (Marshall 1992, 27). In the twentieth century, the growth of economic wellbeing, the diffusion of education, and the use of those same civil and political rights affected this balance:

> Social integration spread from the sphere of sentiments and patriotism to that of material satisfaction. The components of a civilized and cultivated life, at first the monopoly of the few, were progressively placed within reach of the many, who were encouraged to reach out their hand to those who still eluded their claims. The diminution of inequality reinforced the pressures for its abolition, at least with regard to the essential elements of social wellbeing. These aspirations were in part heeded for incorporating social rights in the *status* of citizenship and thus creating a universal right to a real income that is not proportional to the market value of the claimer. (1992, 28)

Social rights began then to be discussed as essential conditions for a true enjoyment of political rights.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it was therefore Bendix's 'masses' that conquered the rights of citizenship, organizing in political parties which then contributed to their integration. In particular, the socialist parties included the working class in the system, allowing the nationalization of society: 'above all integrating the working class into the procedures of the representative regime, "giving it a voice" and thus leading it to enter into dialogue with the other components of the political system, then contributing with success to enlarge the attributes of the

State' (Pizzorno 1996, 1023). With respect to the democratic state, the 'masses' exercised constant pressure for the enlargement of rights to dissent, as well as 'civility control'.[6] Further, they kept alive a focus on participatory democracy – open, direct and horizontal.

A participatory revolution?

Going back to the definition of liberal democracy, we can observe that it does not reflect some of the main elements which are present in the conceptions and practices of democracy which have developed in the last two centuries. While the electoral moment certainly played an important role, it was, however, neither the only nor the most important one in a democratic participation which instead flourished in associational forms, often independent of the representative circuit. Like the labour movement in the past, more recent movements also became arenas for debating and experimenting with different conceptions of democracy.

The protest movements of the late 1960s were already interpreted as an indication of the widening gap between parties and citizens – and indeed of the parties' inability to represent new lines of conflict (Offe 1985). This could be seen in the growing separation between movements and parties, that had together contributed to the development of some main conflict lines. Despite the obvious tensions between movements and parties, especially on the European continent, relations with parties long continued to play a central role for movements (Tarrow 1998; della Porta 1995). In fact, social movements have tended to form alliances more or less tightly with parties – and parties have sought to co-opt social movements, to absorb their identities, and to represent them in institutions. Social movements have indeed been extremely sensitive to the characteristics of their political parties of reference: they have privileged action in society, leaving parties the job of bringing their claims to institutions. They have placed themselves on the political Left–Right axis, and have constructed discourses compatible with the ideologies of their allies. For their part, parties have not been impermeable to the pressures of movements: from the Labour party in Great Britain to the Social Democrats in Germany, from the French socialists to the Italian communists, the programmes and members of the institutional left have changed following interactions with social movements and increasing awareness on themes such as gender discrimination or environmental protection. Comparative research has indicated that, in general, the old Left has been more disposed to supporting movements in locations where exclusive regimes had for a long time hindered the moderation of conflicts on the Left–Right axis (Kriesi et al. 1995, 68; della Porta and Rucht 1995).[7]

Between parties and movements, tensions continued to develop, however, over the appropriate organizational format. Faced with more and more bureaucratized parties (see chapter 2), the democratic quality of participation has remained central in the visions and practices of left-wing social movements. The 1968 movements (or the 'sixty-eight years', as they have recently been defined) called for an extension of civil rights and forms of political participation. The Berkeley Free Speech Movement influenced European student movements, which also organized debates on freedom of opinion as well as the 'state of emergence of democracy' (in Germany, for example) (for recent analyses, see Tolomelli 2008; Klimke and Scharlot 2008). The anti-authoritarian frame, central to these movements, was in fact articulated in claims for 'democracy from below'. Democracies in the form of councils and self-management were also discussed in the workers' movements of those years. Beyond the expansion of forms of political participation, the student movement and those that followed it (the first being the women's movement) experimented internally with new democratic practices, considered to be early signs of the realization of non-authoritarian relations (a libertarian dimension).

The so-called new social movements of the 1970s and the 1980s also insisted on the legitimacy – if not the prevalence – of alternative forms of democracy, criticizing liberal visions. In fact, 'the struggle of the left libertarian movements thus recalls an ancient element of democratic theory, which promotes the organization of the collective decision-making process variously defined as classical, populist, communitarian, strong, grassroots or direct democracy, against a democratic practice defined in contemporary democracies as realist, liberal, elitist, republican or representative democracy' (Kitschelt 1993, 15). According to this interpretation, against a liberal democracy based on delegation to representatives who may be controlled only at elections, movements affirm that citizens, naturally interested in politics, must directly assume the task of intervening in political decisions. As carriers of a participatory conception of democracy, the new social movements of the 1970s also criticized the monopoly of mediation through mass parties and by a 'strong' structuration of interests, aiming to shift policy making towards more visible and controllable places. Democracy as self-management was much discussed among social movements in this period.

In part, these conceptions did penetrate the democratic state through reforms that widened participation in schools, in factories and in local areas but also through the political recognition of movement organizations and the 'right to dissent'. Beginning from the 1960s, there has also been an increase in institutional and other forms of participation. In an important piece of comparative research carried out in the 1970s in

different western democracies, Samuel Barnes and Max Kaase noted that, with respect to laws and decisions considered unjust or illegitimate, ever larger groups of citizens were ready to resort to forms of action characterized by their unconventionality, as in advanced industrial societies techniques of direct political action were no longer carrying the stigma of deviance, nor were seen as anti-systemic in their orientation (Barnes and Kaase 1979, 157). For example, between 1960 and 1974, the percentage of those who responded 'Non-conventional political actions, such as demonstrations' to the question 'What can a citizen do with respect to a local regulation judged unjust or damaging?' increased in Great Britain, the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany from less than 1 per cent to over 7 per cent.

The conclusion here is that increasing participation, including unconventional forms, is not an indicator of political alienation but, on the contrary, of the growth in political competences, in particular among the young. It was an expression of an enduring increase in potential citizen interventions, a broadening of the repertoire of political action that they rightly predicted was going to be reproduced over and over again (1979, 534).

In line with those predictions, a large-scale comparative research project – which used data from different surveys carried out at various points in numerous western democracies – underlined that, at least until 1990, political participation in western Europe grew considerably, with a reduction in the percentage of entirely inactive people (from 85 per cent in 1959 to 44 per cent in 1990) and a parallel growth in people partaking in some political activity (from 15 per cent in 1959 to 66 per cent in 1990) (Topf 1995, 68). While traditional political participation has remained stable, non-institutional participation has increased enormously in the years that followed. This growth has affected not only all the countries analysed, but, within the individual countries, it has reduced the differences in participation levels linked to gender, age and educational attainment – so as to lead scholars to speak of a 'participatory revolution' (1995, 78).

The most recent research also confirms that unconventional forms of participation are complementary, not alternatives, to conventional forms. In the 2000s, survey-based research has repeatedly underlined the decline of conventional forms of political participation (Putnam 2000; see also chapter 2), but the corresponding rise in unconventional forms (Torcal and Montero 2006). In Italy, for instance, unconventional forms of participation, such as signing petitions or participating in boycotts and marches, have spread – in 2005 the percentage of citizens that participated in unconventional forms stood at 37 per cent, equal to that of citizens participating in conventional ways (Lello 2007, 433; also Diamanti,

2007). In addition, while parties are losing members and trust, voluntary associations have gained. The number of people declaring that they never discuss politics has also tended to decrease: in Italy from 47 per cent in 1981 to 32 per cent in 2000 (Lello 2007, 416).

Conclusion

In conclusion, at the normative level, the concept of participatory democracy has suggested, with growing success, the need to increase the number and power of arenas open to citizens' participation. Concretely, real existing democracies developed by multiplying channels of participation, and extending the civil, political and social rights that made that participation possible. In fact, at least partially, participatory conceptions have penetrated the democratic state, through reforms that increased participation in public institutions, but also through the political recognition of the 'right to dissent'. This evolution has been neither linear nor peaceful: rights to participation were affirmed through various waves of protest, with strong resistance and frequent U-turns. Different democratic qualities – based on participatory principles – were nurtured in social movement organizations, re-emerging with more strength in times of struggle. The broadening of participation rights was reflected in a growth in unconventional forms of participation. Most importantly, the criticism of liberal democracy was expressed in the theorization of and experimentation with other models of democracy in a growing number of social movements.