Marginalized Meanings of Democracy in the World

What are they? Why do they matter? How is it that they differ? Where are they found? When are they from? Who do (or do not) they include? Can they work together?

"Forgotten Land", Portraiture by Herbert Migdoll, Still, circa 1985-1995.

a call for papers for up to two special issues

by

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The symbol known to many as "democracy" or "démocratie / demokratie / democrazia / democracia / etc.," seems to have always been associated with ambiguity and pluralism in its meanings and practices since, at least, the earliest records of when that symbol was issued in its ancient Grecian format. This is not to say that the modes of government, governance, and society that the Greeks termed democracy were *all* invented by them—we reject this premise and understand the "births" of these concepts to have happened in diverse locations, to have manifested independently more than once across time, space, language; and for *some* of democracy's meanings and practices to have come from much older polities and to have existed under names different than "democracy / Δημοκρατία".

    Pace Plato's children, advocates for the one ideal meaning of democracy to rule them all: should you take umbrage with the paragraph above we encourage you to quarrel with Thorkild Jacobsen (1943), Arne Naess (1956), Jens A. Christophersen (1966), Martin Bernal (1987), Muhlberger and Paine (1993), John Markoff (1999), Glenn E. Perry (2000), Yves Schemeil (2000), John Keane (2009), Isakhan and Stockwell (2011 & 2012), Francis Fukuyama (2011), Eric W. Robinson (2011), Chou and Beausoleil (2015), Kurunmäki, Nevers and te Velde (2018), Borlenghi et. al., (2019), David Stasavage (2020), de Sousa Santos and Mendes (2020), Eduardo Posada-Carbó (2020), and the list goes on. It is, we think, enough to state that Aristotle is credited by Naess (1956) with giving seven different definitions of democracy in his *Politics* and that the options to choose from, as to what democracy means and how it may come to be practised, has only grown in number, variety, and location since then. The extant literature speaks for itself. The above stated, positions *against* the plurality of democracy's meanings are, however, welcome and invited.

An Imbalance in the Diversity of Democracy's Ideas:

Whilst the exact number of meanings for democracy is not known, Naess (1956) for example collected 338 definitions of democracy, Collier & Levitsky (1997) claim to have recorded 550 sub-types of democracy, and Gagnon (2020a) lists over 3,500 "complex designators" of democracy (i.e. linguistic artefacts like representative democracy, deliberative democracy, patrimonial democracy, etc.,), some meanings are better known, and therefore more widely practiced, or entertained as possible future practices, than the majority of others.

    The Google n-Gram can be used to show, at least among searchable books inside the Google Books storehouse, the use-frequency of democracy's concepts over the period of, for example, 1990-2019 (or any other time period of your choosing). Figure one, below, shows that direct and deliberative concepts of democracy are prominent whilst representative democracy (once du jour) is now in the doldrums, illiberal democracy has slowly been growing in use whilst despotic democracy—a concept we should be fiercely examining today (see, e.g., Keane's *The New Despotisms* [2020] or Applebaum's *Twilight of Democracy* [2020] for reasons why)—has as yet to

emerge from obscurity. Imagine, for example, inputting the several thousand complex designators into this measure: the gross majority, we hope you can trust us in accepting, do not share anywhere near the use-frequency of direct or deliberative democracy and, in fact, fall far below even representative democracy (see Figure 2 for a start).

Figure 1: Google n-Gram search results for "direct democracy", "deliberative democracy", "illiberal democracy", "representative democracy", and "despotic democracy", 1990-2019.
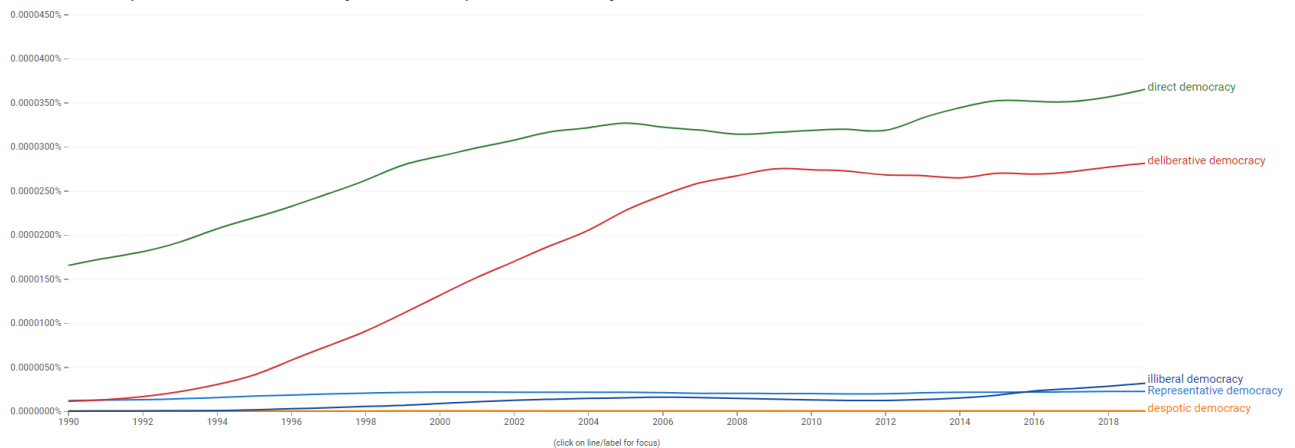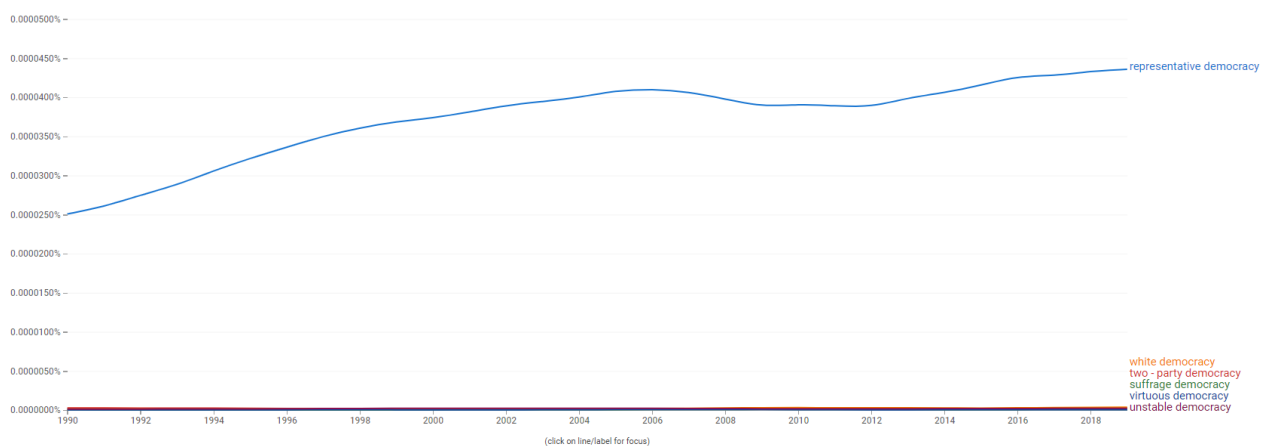

Figure 2: Google n-Gram search results for "representative democracy", "white democracy", "two-party democracy", "suffrage democracy", virtuous democracy" and "unstable democracy", 1990-2019.

This imbalance concerns us as there is a great deal on offer, conceptually and pragmatically, from democracy's forgotten, neglected, *marginalized,* others. Consider, for example, Joel Olson's book *The Abolition of White Democracy* (2004). In it, Olson details how the concept of "white democracy" can be used to examine racial politics and racism in the United States of America. "American democracy is a white democracy", Olson states, "a polity ruled in the interests of a white citizenry and characterized by simultaneous relations of equality and privilege" (p. xv) between whites to the exclusion of all others who are not accepted as "white" or "being white

(enough)". Abolishing "white democracy" is, of course, a normative ideal and a valuable, ethical, undertaking that should concern more students of democracy and lay persons than it presently does. Examples such as this could keep being given, likely extending into the hundreds of pages.

You may, however, take issue with the reliability of the Google n-Gram as a measure so we tack into a different epistemic paradigm: that of the storehouse of lived knowledge held in, for example, your mind. One test is to attempt the task in Figure 3, below.

To the professional student of democracy, such a task is likely going to be easier than a Sunday crossword. But consider the difficulty of completing this task by the lay community: how many could even answer half correctly but *also* hold the acuity to know that there are multiple, contested, definitions and uses for each of the types of democracy listed in Figure 3? Few, if any.

But here is the rub: those types of democracy listed in Figure 3 may be considered "well-known". Try completing the same task in Figure 4, below. Uncertain as to how to handle most? Stumped by half? Are you miserably clasping to "export democracy" or "more-democratized democracy" with the thought that at least here are more certain grounds?

To some this game is an unnecessary distraction. The critic's thinking goes as follows: those types of democracy in Figure 4 do not matter as much as those listed in Figure 3 as history and circumstance (present need) dictate which concepts sink and which concepts swim.

But where is the evidence to prove as much? There is not any (to our knowledge). And so the grounds for such a statement, that *b-list* in Figure 4 is not as valuable as *a-list* in Figure 3 are baseless: such a claim falls through our fingers when we try to grasp it, concretize it, as we have not yet done the work of even understanding democracy's marginalized meanings let alone comparing them and valuating them.

Figure 3: Provide a definition for each of the twenty types of democracy listed below and explain their usage.

Type of Democracy	Its Definition	Its Usage (Real or Theoretical)
1. Liberal democracy 2. Deliberative democracy 3. Electoral democracy 4. Participatory democracy 5. Consociational democracy 6. Direct democracy 7. Representative democracy 8. Green democracy 9. Consensus democracy 10. Illiberal democracy 11. Electronic democracy 12. Monitory democracy 13. Local democracy 14. Global democracy 15. Constitutional democracy 16. Counter democracy 17. Cosmopolitan democracy 18. Agonistic democracy 19. Workplace democracy 20. Economic democracy		

Figure 4: Provide a definition for each of the twenty types of democracy listed below and explain their usage.

Type of Democracy	Its Definition	Its Usage (Real or Theoretical)
1. Indian democracy 2. Voluntary democracy 3. Unplanned democracy 4. Two-thirds democracy 5. Caribbean democracy 6. Romanesque democracy 7. Islamic democracy 8. Punk democracy 9. Ossetian democracy 10. Oak-tree democracy 11. Non-Euclidian democracy 12. More-democratized democracy 13. Lunar democracy 14. Chinese democracy 15. Involuntary democracy 16. African democracy 17. Latin American democracy 18. Feral democracy 19. Export democracy 20. Indigenous democracy		

Comparative Democratic Theory (CPT):

Weiss' (2020) comparative democratic theory research program, which he developed with Sophia Schubert, invites us to consider the value of the marginalized meanings of democracy in the world, especially those from "non-" or sometimes "anti - Western" orientations. Take, for example, de Sousa Santos and Mendes' (2020) concept of "demodiversity" which is focused on explaining both the value of democracy's conceptual ecology and the unfairness, if not danger, of a system which ignores or, perhaps wilfully, suppresses the variety of democracy's other meanings and practices.

Some questions to consider for this special issue are:

(1) Why should we study marginalized meanings of democracy?
(2) How did it come to be that some meanings of democracy are more popular than others?
(3) What makes a meaning of democracy? Should we, for example, have some technical terminology and valuational system to organize and classify the meanings?
(4) Is it required of us to entertain translations of democracy (such as *manapori* in Maori) and synonyms of democracy like "collective governance" or close semantic cousins such as "demoicracy" if our aim is to understand democracy?
(5) Which non-Western meanings of democracy can play a role beyond its original context and which role could that be?
(6) How are we to problematize or possibly solve the question of normatively evaluating non-Western meanings of democracy without falling back into presumptuous and unjustified conceptual universalism?
(7) Why do some scholars refer to certain meanings of democracy as "Western" when, in the West, those very meanings are contested?
(8) How, systematically, should the meanings of democracy be collected, preserved, and shared for the benefit of all its students?
(9) What does it mean for us if any polity of your choice expresses, under empirical scrutiny, always three or more meanings of democracy and never just one? Can a polity ever express just one meaning of democracy? Is such an outcome even desirable? (See Gagnon, 2020b, for more).
(10) Is having *more* meanings of democracy inside a polity better than having *less*?
(11) Which meanings of democracy can work together in theory or in practice?
(12) Which meanings of democracy oppose each other, or are conflictual, especially when practised?

Statement- or problem-driven invitations to this special issue might also appeal. You may, for example, be interested to:

(1) Pick a marginalized meaning of democracy and describe it to the point of exhaustion in the literature. From this "state of the field" position you may then wish to:
   a. Critique the meaning against your choice of criterion/ia.
   b. Explore its useability in the condition of your choice.
   c. Compare/contrast it with one or more other meanings of democracy.
   d. Theorise how it could be added to aspect *a* of institution or system *b* for the purposes of solving problem *c*. (Here we are after the possibility of "blending democracies" as a model of innovative government).
(2) Select a group of marginalized meanings that overlap in their synonymity to explain their descriptive or normative core. (Here we think of building Wittgensteinian families).
(3) For the more historically-inclined (read Stasavage 2020 in particular): find, in our past, a little known meaning of democracy and explain why it should matter today. (Here we are after essays in retrieval and a contribution to the historiography of democracy).
(4) In the perspective of CPT: what does it mean that meanings of democracy are marginalized "here", but more relevant or even hegemonic "there"? Does the status of being marginalized change one's interpretation and normative estimation?
(5) Explain how democracy's many meanings can, or cannot, be of use in the fightback against non- or anti-democracy.
(6) Explain how democracy's diverse meanings can or cannot enable government by democracy alone (to the exclusion of all other forms of government) in a polity.

We recognize that our questions and problem-statements are not exhaustive and are likely to miss or skirt other questions and problems. We, therefore, invite other submissions on the theme of "marginalized meanings of democracy in the world" as suit your interests.

Schedule:

Democratic Theory hopes to publish two special issues on the marginalized meanings of democracy in the world in its 8th volume, 2nd issue, of Winter (Northern) 2021 and its 9th volume, 1st issue, of Summer (Northern) 2022. The latter issue will be advanced in the calendar so that it will be published slightly after the former. Considering the requirements of first editorial review, with the possibility of revisions, then external peer-review, with the possibility of further revisions, we ask that:

(1) 150-word abstracts be sent to the editors (below) by <u>December 15, 2020</u>. The editors will read, discuss, and may thereafter invite authors to submit full articles.

(2) The <u>full articles invited are to be submitted</u> by April 1st, 2021, for initial reading by the editors. Articles may be returned to author(s) for revision prior to formal, external, peer-review.

(3) <u>External peer-review</u> and the required revision of articles is to be completed by July 15, 2021, or as possible thereafter in the case of major revisions with a resubmission requirement. Any paper that passes peer-review, but misses the deadline for the special issues, will be slated for publication in a later volume.

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