# *Democracy as Political Agency: Governance and Emancipation in Mega-cities*

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***Declaration***

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***Abstract***

This thesis challenges two commonly held views in political and urban theory. The first is that democracy is in crisis and that it is not able to respond to the growing complexities of the modern world. The second is that mega-cities are spaces of misery that are too chaotic to be governed democratically. Against these views, this thesis develops an alternative conception of democracy, according to which any polity can be democratic as long as it promotes the political agency of its members in conditions of complex equality. Following this conception, a democratic polity should promote a variety of direct and indirect ways to enable its members to realise their choices in relation to the rules of collective life. Furthermore, a democratic polity should create conditions that permit its members to reflect on these rules. This conception of democracy sheds new light on existing democratic institutions but also enables us to look beyond the state and to evaluate democratic prospects in unconventional settings. As an example of such an unconventional setting, the thesis focuses on mega-cities, defined as large and diverse forms of urban settlements. Mega-cities instantiate complexity, interdependence and fragmentation of collective decision-making. The current literature in political and urban theory often assumes that the key to solving these problems lies in stronger, centralised governance. By contrast, my analysis suggests that the way to effectively govern mega-cities lies in a mixture of social, structural, and political strategies. In existing mega-cities such strategies are often successfully implemented by civil society organisations, social movements, and institutions of participatory governance. The thesis concludes that the present democratic ideal is relevant for the guidance of decision-making even within challenging and complex settings. Finally, the thesis proposes a set of recommendations for democratic, emancipatory governance in mega-cities under which the cities' inhabitants are treated as key actors.

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# 1. Introduction

Published in the late 1990s, *Development as Freedom* by Amartya Sen had a significant impact on the social scientific world. Sen's (1999) core argument is that development, essentially, depends on expanding substantive freedoms rather than increasing GDP or accelerating economic growth. The novel character of Sen's argument lies not merely in its definition of the concept of development but also in a consequential shift in thinking about solutions to global poverty. Sen's argument translates into concrete measures that make people the key actors of change in their lives.

In this thesis, I argue it is time for a similar shift in conceptualising and operationalising democracy. Democracy has recently become an object of vast criticism and, for some, disappointment (see Crouch 2000; Foa and Mounk 2016). In the social-scientific literature there exists an especially influential narrative implying that democracy is in crisis and that it no longer offers a meaningful normative ideal (e.g. Brennan 2016). While I find this narrative mistaken, its popularity and impact demonstrate that democratic scholars simply cannot continue with 'business as usual'. New tools and new perspectives are necessary to respond to rising criticisms of democracy. This thesis offers such a re-definition of the democratic ideal. I argue that, fundamentally, any site of collective decision-making can be democratic as long as it promotes the political agency of its members. Following this conception, a democratic polity should promote a variety of direct and indirect ways for their members to realise their choices towards the rules of collective life and to create conditions that enable citizens to reflect on these rules. I call this conception *emancipatory democracy.*

Emancipatory democracy is not only a conceptual adjustment but a new framework for assessing established democratic institutions. For example, from the perspective of this framework, there is nothing intrinsically democratic in periodical elections which are often cited as a flagship democratic institution (e.g. Coppedge et

al. 2012). At the same time, under certain conditions, elections are still an important part of a democratic polity. Further, this framework enables us to look beyond the state and to evaluate democratic prospects in unconventional settings. Analysing such settings is an important task for democratic scholars since more and more collective decision-making happens in polities that are porous, interdependent and not sovereign (see Rhodes 1996; Sørensen and Torfing 2007).[1]

To illustrate the potential of democracy defined as political agency for the analysis of such amorphous polities, in this thesis I investigate mega-cities. Conventionally, the term mega-cities refers to large, diverse and porous forms of urban settlements (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017). Currently, one in eight people lives in a mega-city, and this share is expected to increase (UN DESA 2018). They are situated all over the world, but the mega-cities of Asia and Africa are growing at the fastest rate (ibidem). Mega-cities across all continents have significant levels of inequality and accommodate a lot of poverty, segregation and exclusion (L. Gordon 2013). At the same time, they are dynamic and diverse, which offers democratic and developmental potential.

[1] Another illustration of this can be seen in the rising academic interest in democratic assessments of the global arena, international or non-governmental organisations, political parties, and governance networks (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2010; Koenig-Archibugi 2012; Levi et al. 2014; Moravcsik 2004; Sørensen and Torfing 2007; Wolkenstein 2018).

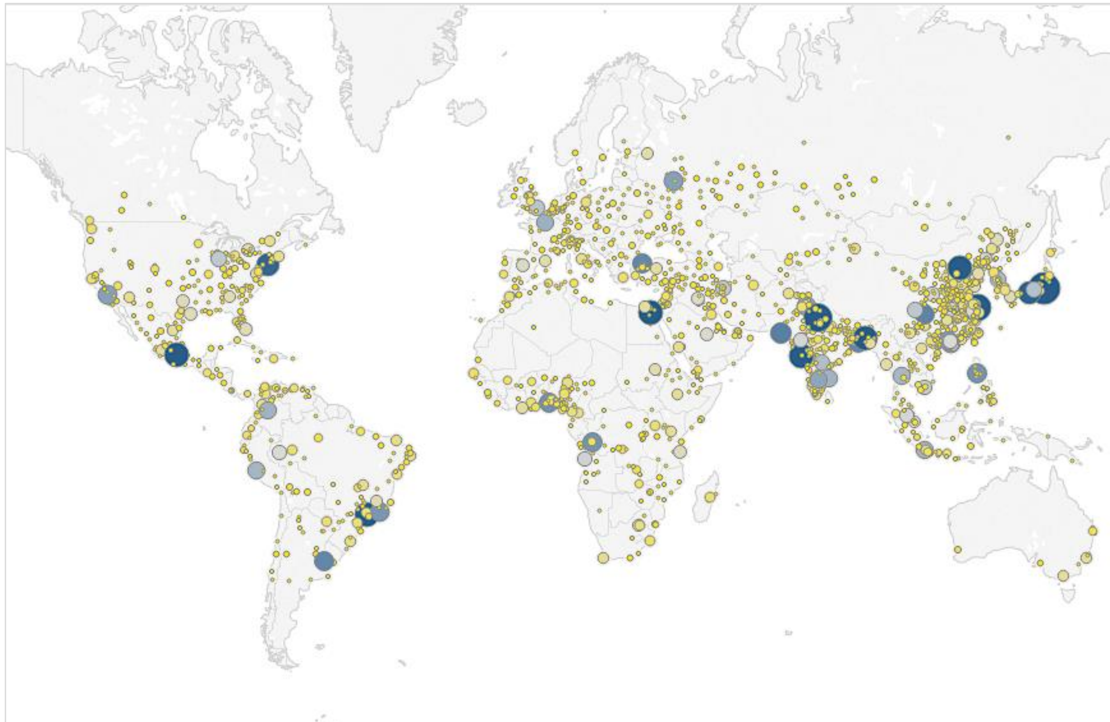

Figure 1. The biggest cities in 2019. Mega-cities in blue.[2]

Mega-cities are an intriguing case for the study of democracy. They are partially sovereign, and partially depend on the will of the nation-state in which they are situated, and on the will of local and international actors. Their decision-making does not happen in a system of coordinated fora but rather in a variety of formal and informal systems within which only some are accountable to mega-cities' inhabitants. As such, mega-cities instantiate complexity, interdependence and fragmentation of collective decision-making. The existing literature often refers to those characteristics and portrays mega-cities as a 'mega mess' (Marshall 2005), a site of 'inexorable growth' (Daniels 2004) that struggles to coordinate the collective action needed to deliver city services (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017). The literature interested in governing cities suggests that one way to resolve these problems lies in stronger mayors (Barber

[2] Visualisation based on 2019 UN Data on urban population. Cities in yellow have from 300,000 to 7.5 million inhabitants. Cities in blue have over 7.5 million inhabitants.

2013), regional associations of cities (Frug 2014), or state-led intervention (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017).

However, this thesis argues against such a negative portrayal of mega-cities. From the perspective of emancipatory democracy, many characteristics of mega-cities and their decision-making processes represent opportunities, not just problems. Hence, a multiplicity of political fora within mega-cities does not simply lead to fragmentation but often offers inhabitants more chances to influence their polity. Further, mega-city diversity provides them with a wider range of viewpoints and perspectives and, in this way, expands their personal knowledge. Similarly, lack of sovereignty enables inhabitants to engage in vertical forms of governance to better realise their aims (e.g. Appadurai 2001; Barber 2013: 146; Mitlin 2013). In addition, from the perspective of emancipatory democracy, the key to solving issues of mega-cities, and building upon their potential, relies on making inhabitants capable of reflecting on the rules of collective life and achieving them. In the current mega-cities, it is possible to promote inhabitants' political agency by increasing the role of civil society organisations and social movements, and by introducing various institutions of participatory governance. Hence, from the perspective of emancipatory democracy, it is these mid-level, bottom-up institutions rather than a strong leader, state, or intra-regional body that constitute the democratic mega-city.[3] As a result, this thesis argues that it is possible to govern mega-cities in a democratic, emancipatory way.

## The Argument in the Context of Existing Research

Overall, this thesis offers two broader arguments. First, I argue that democracy can be defined as any polity promoting the political agency of its members in conditions of complex equality. Second, I argue that this conception of democracy offers a way of assessing and governing mega-cities. Therefore, this thesis contributes to two bodies of literature: the literature concerned with the possibility and desirability of

[3] At the same, the actual shape of such mid-level institutions can vary, depending on preferences and values of the mega-city inhabitants.

democracy, and the literature concerned with urban studies. I will now discuss each of these in more detail and clarify my intended contribution to the field.

By offering a conception of emancipatory democracy, this thesis contributes to the debates on the possibility and desirability of democracy on the basis of a theory that is not organised around so-called democratic models (Saward 2003; Warren 2017). Such a non-model-based conception of democracy, capable of accommodating various practices and norms, responds to calls for diversification of the field and the inclusion of non-Western experiences as a basis for theorising (Dallmayr 2010; Flikschuh 2014). This thesis aims to propose a conception of democracy that is flexible, both conceptually and geographically, but that does not lose the ordinary-language meaning of the term *democracy*.[4] At the same time, in this thesis, I am not interested in justifying the value of democracy. While I am aware that there is a considerable body of literature on these topics, I leave aside such debates.[5]

The conception of democracy developed in this thesis shares some normative commitments with participatory and deliberative models of democracy. Like participatory democracy, the conception of democracy developed here values direct participation and choice of members of a polity (Dacombe 2018; Pateman 1970). However, contrary to participatory accounts, it does not find it necessarily problematic if some members of a polity do not participate in collective decision-making.[6] Like deliberative democracy, the conception introduced in this thesis emphasises the importance of reasoned judgement and argues that democracy can be realised across multiple fora and at different points in time (Bӓchtiger and Parkinson 2019; Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008, 2010; Goodin 2005; Mansbridge et al. 2012; Owen and Smith 2015). However, following the conception of emancipatory democracy, it is the promotion of political agency that is the core aim of the democratic political

[4] Here, for example, I assume that a notion of democracy which is not egalitarian does not match the everyday use of this term and as such is counter-intuitive. Similarly, democracy needs to relate to an arrangement that relies on popular enfranchisement and the ability to govern one's own polity. For a description of the importance of this requirement and its potential critique, see List and Valentini (2016: 9) on the ordinary-language plausibility requirement.
[5] For a review of core arguments for and against democracy, see Christiano (2006).
[6] Following my conception, political absence is democratic if, and only if, the absence is what the polity's members value and have reasons to value.

system. This is contrary to the deliberative democrats who seek the realisation of deliberative aims (compare with Dryzek and Niemeyer 2010). Further, as opposed to early deliberative democrats, the conception introduced here follows Amartya Sen (1985, 1992) in his understanding of what constitutes reasoned judgement. In this thesis, reasoned judgement simply refers to a genuine reflection about what a person values and why. Hence, a reasoned judgement is neither an urge that a person may happen to have, nor an external, dispassionate evaluation.[7]

In addition, the practical solutions I recommend are, to some extent, similar to those proposed by participatory and deliberative democrats. My overall recommendation of grounding democracy in mega-cities on a plurality of mid-level, bottom-up institutions like social movements, co-governance mechanisms, and civil society organisations would most likely be welcomed by many deliberative and participatory democrats (for example Curato et al. 2017; Dacombe 2018; Della Porta 2018). However, my project has different points of emphasis than those of participatory and deliberative projects. From the perspective of emancipatory democracy, bottom-up communities are not necessarily better in promoting political agency than other fora. Moreover, they can polarise or refuse to contribute to the wider city resources (Blokland et al. 2015; Frug 1999). Hence, this project argues that diverse polities, like mega-cities, can be democratic if there exists a plurality of overlapping and diverse political fora which serve to balance diverse perspectives and empower inhabitants. For the mid-level institutions to fulfil these roles, they need to be big enough to accommodate a variety of perspectives. Furthermore, the mid-level institutions realising emancipatory democracy need not be exactly like the ones identified in this thesis, depending on the actual mega-city in question, its history and inhabitants. As such, my recommendation depends more on the preferences of mega-city inhabitants than on a particular institutional design.

One may wonder why I call the conception developed in this thesis *emancipatory democracy*. Political emancipation is a thread connecting several issues that this conception of democracy aims to address. First, inhabitants of mega-cities

[7] For a criticism of such an external, dispassionate view, see Young (2001: 49) and Sanders (1997).

experience various dimensions of structural oppression and the account of democracy I am proposing addresses these conditions. More precisely, I suggest strategies for emancipation from the conditions of urban poverty and from negative consequences of informality and socio-spatial segregation. Unlike so-called minimalist accounts (e.g. Schumpeter 1947), my conception identifies social conditions as strictly political. I argue that reliable transport, accessible education or the ability to access city services regardless of official status are essential for democracy in mega-cities. Second, the conception of emancipatory democracy provides a ground for challenging those mega-city inhabitants who use their status or income to gain disproportionate political opportunities and limit such opportunities for others. Therefore, a conception developed in this thesis challenges the inequality-induced domination that is overwhelmingly present in many modern cities (Tonkiss 2017). Third, the conception developed herein follows the tradition of critical theory. Critical theory is a philosophical tradition that, broadly speaking, aims to decrease domination in many forms and to facilitate human emancipation (Bohman 2005; Hammond 2018). The account of democracy I am proposing leaves it up to the members of the polity which procedures, institutions and norms they want to realise in their polity, *albeit* under certain conditions. As such, it also offers emancipation from dominant notions of what democracy should be. While mainstream conceptions of democracy rely on Western, mainly Anglo-Saxon logic and institutional design, mega-cities are spread all over the world. The conception I am proposing is pluralistic and capable of accommodating a variety of institutional designs.

The second wider contribution of this thesis targets literature on urban theory. I propose a normative ideal that is suitable for analysing many modern cities, with a special emphasis on mega-cities. By comparing and contrasting this ideal with the actual circumstances of living within mega-cities, I arrive at a set of recommendations based on three strategies of democratic interventions. This project identifies several directions of democratic reforms based on common political and social problems of mega-cities, but leaves it up to the societies in question to decide

on what actual policies and institutions to put in place. As such, this project contributes to the wider debates on the governance, challenges and opportunities of mega-cities (Blackburn and Marques 2013; Kraas and Mertins 2014; Sivaramakrishnan 2015; Sorensen and Okata 2011; Ye and Björner 2018; Yeh and Xu 2011). What is more, this thesis also proposes a normative urban project to influence those who work on changing real-life mega-cities, in particular their inhabitants, mayors, public officials and developmental agencies.

By focusing on modern cities as a vital site for theorising on democracy, I contribute to the work of a growing group of political theorists interested in cities, including Benjamin Barber (2013), Avner de-Shalit (2018), Archon Fung (2004), Margaret Kohn (2004), Bart van Leeuwen (2010, 2018), John Parkinson (2009, 2012), and Iris Marion Young (1990). However, I maintain that there are substantive differences between large, porous, complex mega-cities and other cities. Mega-cities are more complex, fragmented and interdependent than other types of urban polities. Due to the fact that these differences have explicit implications for urban governance, I focus specifically on mega-cities.

In this thesis, I also follow scholars who employ the city as a basis for theorising. In particular, I draw on the paradigm of urbanism which emphasises the qualitative uniqueness of city living as opposed to other ways of life (see Wirth 1938).[8] Here, I contribute to urban literature by employing vocabulary from the field of political theory, like *political agency* and *complex inequality*, to shed new light on the characteristics of urban living. By emphasising the informal sphere both as a challenge and as an essential element of democratising cities, I support the literature of subaltern urbanism (Roy 2011a). This literature considers the experiences of the cities of the Global South and, in particular, its informal sphere as a source of inspiration and knowledge (Robinson 2006; Roy 2005). My research adds to this literature by offering a set of reforms that can enable mega-cities to benefit from informality despite fragmentation. By doing so, this thesis sets a fruitful research

[8] At the same time, I do not assume that the city is or should be the core focus to facilitate wider social changes. For a critique of such an approach and for an account of the importance of thinking about wider changes for critical urban scholars, see Meagher (2012).

agenda on how, in real-life, informality contributes to the democratisation of modern mega-cities and helps in addressing the existing inequalities present in these cities.

## Concepts and Methods

In this thesis, there is no separate chapter on methods. Instead, I introduce relevant concepts as the narrative develops. Hence, I give a general definition of *democracy* in chapter 2, a more specific definition of *emancipatory democracy* in chapter 3, an explanation of the concepts of *political agency* and *complex equality* and their conditions in chapters 3 and 4. I introduce and define the *mega-city* as a type of polity in chapter 5.

As a matter of clarification, my definition of mega-cities differs from conceptualisations that rely purely on the number of inhabitants or their geographical location. Traditionally, the term mega-city refers to urban areas inhabited by more than 10 million people (Kübler 2012; Kübler and Lefèvre 2017; UN DESA 2018). Furthermore, the concept of *mega-cities* is sometimes employed to describe big but not powerful cities, usually located in the Global South as opposed to powerful cities of the Global North (D. B. Massey et al. 1999).[9] However, neither the size of the city nor its geographical location have, on their own, significance for democracy understood as a form of collective decision-making. From the perspective of collective decision-making, it does not matter whether the urban polity consists of 2 million or 11 million inhabitants. Both numbers are high for democratic decision-making.[10] Alternatively, mega-cities understood in opposition to the cities of the Global North have a pejorative association with 'uncontrollable population growth, extreme concentration of poverty, deteriorating environmental conditions' (Zeiderman 2008).

In contrast to these approaches, in this thesis, I focus on the common characteristic of mega-cities, namely governance and collective decision-making. As

[9] For a critique, see Robinson (2002, 2006) and Zeiderman (2008).

[10] Here, consider Dahl and his reflection on the challenges of size for non-representative forms of democracy. Dahl (1970: 67-8) claims that if 'an association were to make one decision a day, allow ten hours a day for discussion, and permit each member just ten minutes – then the association could not have more than 60 members'.

such, my definition remains silent on other features. More precisely, I emphasise that mega-cities are types of polities that consist of a variety of formal and informal decision-makers at various levels of governance with overlapping yet fragmented authority. Consequently, there can be substantive differences among polities that I classify as mega-cities. For example, my definition does not identify the character of the local administration or the character of its relation to the state authorities. Hence, following this definition, mega-cities will show a wide variety of organisational structures, from unified metropolitan governance systems to multi-level or federal management types (Sivaramakrishnan 2015). My definition does not specify the general political system in which the polity exists nor its geographical location. Hence, some of these polities are located in countries that are commonly identified as democratic, while some of the others are not. My definition of mega-cities relies therefore on a family resemblance, 'a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing' across all mega-cities, referring to overall similarities or similarities in their more detailed organisation (Wittgenstein 1958: 32). In my interpretation, then, mega-cities are both diverse *within* and *among* each other.

Methodologically, this thesis is committed both to the requirements of contemporary analytic political theory and to some core ideas from critical theory. Miller and Dagger (2003) point out some assumptions that unite many contemporary political theorists within a broadly analytical school of thought. These are a commitment to conceptual clarity and argumentative rigour aimed at clarifying the terms of political discourse, and the devotion to presenting explicit arguments used to justify certain rules, preferably by the application of deductive reasoning from premises to conclusions (Miller and Dagger 2003). My application of analytical political theory is most visible in the construction of the conception of emancipatory democracy and its conditions. However, perhaps unusually, I also remain committed to critical theory. Following critical theorists, I assume that the aim of political theory is to facilitate the emancipation of its subjects. This assumption is reflected in my focus on the emancipation of mega-city inhabitants as a core aspect of democratising these cities. Furthermore, following the practice of critical theory, I seek out real-life

subjects and tensions that require normative intervention. Following Young, for the critical theorist, 'normative reflection arises from hearing the cry of suffering or distress, or feeling distress oneself' (1990: 5). In this thesis, the critical angle is evident in the overall argument but also in my analysis of the conditions of the mega-city living.

**Overview of the Thesis**

The thesis proceeds as follows. I begin by pointing out that the current democratic literature, essentially, offers three ways of defining democracy, namely as a set of institutions, procedures or values. This chapter investigates if existing accounts of democracy are suitable for the assessment of amorphous types of polities. I argue that institution-based accounts of democracy are often designed for more traditional polities, like states. Conceptions within the procedure-based approach offer institutional flexibility. They also extend the applicability of democracy to sites other than the nation-state. However, as I explain, these conceptions are not easily applicable to non-traditional, amorphous types of polities. Finally, value-based conceptions of democracy, in turn, offer institutional and procedural flexibility, but their applicability to amorphous types of polities varies.

As a result, in chapter 3, I introduce a novel conception of democracy that follows pluralism in terms of institutions and procedures. I call this conception *emancipatory democracy* since it allows members of any polity to emancipate themselves, also with regard to how they want to rule themselves. In this chapter, I explain the normative foundations of my argument, namely commitment to critical theory and ethical individualism. Here ethical individualism does not promote atomisation over support for communities or groups; rather, it assumes that the individual is the main unit of moral concern (Robeyns 2005). I then continue to elaborate on what emancipation means. Here, I offer a novel way of conceptualising emancipation regarding *positive* vs. *negative*, *internal* vs. *external* aspects, and as a *process* vs. *state of affairs*. While conceptualisations of emancipation present in the political and normative literature often emphasise a negative aspect of this concept, I argue that

political emancipation, to guide political change, requires a multifaceted definition. I further argue for a specific understanding of emancipation as gaining or having *political agency*. This is a substantive opportunity conception of political influence that follows the work of Amartya Sen (1992, 1999, 2002). As a result, I offer a conception of democracy that defines democracy as promoting the political agency of each member of a given polity. However, democracy also needs to reflect egalitarian arrangements. Here, I follow Michael Walzer (1983) and argue for the condition of *complex equality* as a foundation of emancipatory democracy. This is because, I suggest, complex equality is a condition for realising political agency. As a result, my proposed conception of emancipatory democracy calls any polity a democracy if, and only if, its system of collective decision-making that regulates the rules of collective life is organised to promote political agency for each of its members in conditions of complex equality. It is a value-based conception, and it permits members of the polity to decide what arrangements they are going to implement. This is, therefore, a pluralistic conception of democracy that may be realised by different institutions and procedures depending on the preferences of the members of the polity. It is emancipatory because it promotes members' choice of rules of collective life instead of any predetermined conception of what democracy should look like (Hammond 2018). In addition, following this conception, in conditions where domination exists, democracy is not possible.

Emancipatory democracy is a normative ideal, and it has yet to be applied to the assessment of real-life arrangements. In chapter 4, I provide an analytical framework for assessing real-life arrangements from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. I consequently operationalise conditions for political agency and complex equality. I show that while emancipatory democracy is a demanding political ideal, it is not impossible to realise it. In Sen's understanding of political agency, a person is an agent towards a state of affairs if, and only if, this person reflects on what they value and want, chooses that state of affairs, and the chosen state of affairs indeed comes about (1985, 1987, 1992, 2002). More analytically, political agency requires reasoned judgement, choice or counterfactual choice, and achievement, as I explain

in detail. In turn, complex equality requires that people enjoying an advantage regarding some social goods are not able to use this advantage to gain other goods in other distributive spheres (Miller and Walzer 1995). In other words, complex equality requires the existence of various social goods with separate rules of distribution and the absence of dominance or pre-eminence of one particular good over the other goods. For instance, in conditions of complex equality, money should not buy political influence. I further propose a typology of the most common democratic polities and assess them from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. In particular, I analyse an example of a small group, a nation-state, an international organisation and a governance network. By doing so, I demonstrate that emancipatory democracy offers a helpful regulative ideal for the assessment of real-life polities.

In chapter 5, I reintroduce mega-cities. This chapter, along with chapter 6, provides a critical analysis of the existing literature on mega-cites. In this chapter, I look at mega-cities from the perspective of collective decision-making and analyse them as a type of polity. A mega-city is an urban polity constituted by multiple, loosely coordinated, overlapping but fragmented political fora that interact with each other in a complex manner. Some parts of mega-city decision-making happen in the informal sphere, created by rules, people and activities not sanctioned by the official urban authorities (AlSayyad 2004; Roy 2005). In this chapter, I argue that what appears to be a weakness of these polities enables mega-cities to become sites of emancipatory democracy. In principle, a plurality of loosely coordinated political fora in mega-cities can promote political agency of diverse mega-city inhabitants.

However, 'in principle' does not necessarily mean 'in practice'. As a result, in chapter 6, I zoom in on the actual living conditions within mega-cities. I draw attention to a variety of conditions that undermine the political agency of mega-city inhabitants, namely a lack of official recognition of those living in the informal sphere, poverty, segregation and urban conflict. Interconnected informality, urban poverty and socio-spatial segregation constitute conditions of structural oppression in which vast segments of mega-cities' populations do not have political agency.

Furthermore, mega-city informality, poverty and segregation create conditions of complex inequality in which formal status and good income enable one to secure favourable housing, reliable infrastructure, solid employment, social respect and political influence. However, I also note that mega-cities' informal sphere and multiplicity offer unique emancipatory and democratic potential.

As a result, in chapter 7, I propose a set of emancipatory reforms that can promote emancipatory democracy and target conditions of structural oppression and complex inequality in mega-cities. Here I discuss real-life examples of institutions and policies that can make mega-cities more democratic and which have proved to be successful in unequal urban settings.[11] In the current circumstances, inhabitants organised within mid-range fora – namely social movements, participatory governance and civil society associations – emerge as key actors of the emancipation of mega-cities. On the basis of real-life examples, I explain that these fora are able to promote political agency of members of unequal mega-cities and successfully target conditions of structural oppression within them. However, both the less diverse and the larger, representative fora also play an important role in democratising mega-cities. The smaller fora, like neighbourhood groups or religious communities, are often the very first source of information and support for many inhabitants. More distant, representative institutions in democratic mega-cities, in turn, should have the supportive and executive role of the rules of collective life created by the mid-range political fora. As a result, this chapter describes a normative political project for democratising mega-cities in an emancipatory manner. However, I also note that the exact shape of emancipatory reforms will differ depending on the mega-city in question and the preferences of its inhabitants. The final chapter concludes.

Finally, while I have written the thesis to be read as a whole, it is also possible to read it partially, depending on the interests of the readers. More precisely, chapters 2 to 4 introduce and operationalise the conception of democracy that is an alternative to existing conceptions. These chapters also show how to assess existing polities

[11] However, while looking at the urban examples, I acknowledge that innovations introduced elsewhere could also guide democratising mega-cities.

from the perspective of this conception. Chapters 5-7 offer guidance for democratising mega-cities and introduce a set of emancipatory reforms.

# *2. Three Modern Ways of Defining Democracy*

In this thesis, I am interested in both the application and the desirability of democracy. In this chapter, I introduce the core concept of this thesis, namely democracy. I show that political science and philosophy, essentially, define democracy as a set of institutions, procedures or core values. In this chapter I critically assess existing approaches to defining democracy and investigate if they are suitable for the assessment of amorphous types of polities.

**Definitions**

Definitions of *democracy* differ subtantively (see Held 2006; Sartori 1987; Saward 2007). Democracy, literally, means the rule of the people. Its etymological meaning is connected to Ancient Greece and the system of citizens' self-rule in the Greek polis. However, since the times of Ancient Greece, the meaning and the scope of the concept have changed. Currently, the meaning of the two core components of the concept, *the people* and *rule*, has become blurred and subject to various debates. As such, democracy is an essentially contested concept, and disagreement about its nature is an integral part of it (Dryzek 2016).[12] In this chapter, I understand *the people* (demos) as individuals who are subject to the results of decision-making (see Fraser 2008). However, as I argue in subsequent chapters, democracy in amorphous types of polities may require extending the demos even further. While there exists a substantive academic discussion regarding who should constitute *the people* (Goodin 2016; List and Koenig-Archibugi 2010), in this thesis, when I refer to *the people*, I simply refer to the members of the polity. Here, I want to emphasise that I do not refer to an *undifferentiated people*. In this usage, which is often associated with populists' claims (Müller 2015; Weale 2018), the preferences of an *undifferentiated people* provide a justification for exclusion of those who are disempowered, members of minorities,

[12] On essentially contested concepts, see Gallie (1956).

and those who do not fit the populist agenda. Regarding the second core component of the concept of democracy, in this thesis I understand democratic *rule* as influencing political life of the polity. This understanding of *democratic rule* is deliberately wide in order to accommodate different yet more precise definitions and conceptions of democracy.

In this thesis, I assume that democracy is a feature of a polity where a polity is:

> ***Polity*** - a site of collective decision-making which regulates itself by the use of collective rules (formal and informal).

This site of decision-making can refer to formal or informal sites making collective decisions, like informal groups or nation-states. Both 'sites' and 'polities' can refer to single fora and more complex systems. My definition of a polity complements other existing understandings of this concept that are relevant for the analysis of non-conventional democratic sites. For example, John Dryzek, in his analysis of the democratic capacities of political systems, argues that polities can be distinguished from fora by a normative integration, meaning that 'they have norms that regulate the interactions of their members' (2016: 15). Olaf Corry, in his analysis of global governance, calls for defining a polity as a group of subjects oriented towards a common, distinct, politically silent yet adaptable goal (2013: 85-90). In this thesis, I assume a similar definition of a polity, in which a *polity* is different from a forum or a system due to its capacity of self-regulation via the use of formal or informal rules of collective life. However, a polity, in my understanding, need not be integrated by *coherent* norms or follow coherent and coordinated aims.

In order to organise various definitions of what democracy is, I draw a distinction between *institution-*, *procedure-* and *value-based* approaches to defining democracy. The aim of this distinction is to present rich material for defining democracy in a clear and organised way. A relevant trade-off of such an organisation is that it risks some oversimplifications by emphasising only some aspects of the

analysed approaches to defining democracy. Consequently, the normative theories I analyse are richer and more nuanced than the simplified types below may suggest.

On each approach, I will assume that a polity is a democracy if some condition X holds. However, the three approaches define X differently. For the institution-based approach (Type1):

*X = it has a particular set of collective decision-making institutions.*

On this approach, the formal institutional design needs to reflect the democratic organisation of the given polity. If certain formal democratic institutions do not exist in a given polity, this polity is not a democratic one. On this approach, the democratic definition is often a benchmark for the assessment of already existing institutions.

For the procedure-based approach (Type 2), X is:

*X = its decision-making institutions satisfy particular procedural requirements.*

Procedural accounts of democracy seek to find the essence of democracy within the relevant procedure of collective decision-making. This approach is often interested in democracy as potentially occurring within various political spheres, not only those which are formalised.

Finally, the value-based approach defines X in the following way (Type3):

*X = it is organised so as to promote certain core democratic values.*

Approaches to defining democracy labelled as Type 3 seek to find the essence of democracy not in a procedure or particular institutions, but in its core values. These values can be reflected in how particular institutions and procedures of collective decision-making are organised. For example, one of the definitions here could assume that democracy is essentially fair. On such an understanding, a given polity

needs to be organised so as to reflect the ideal of fairness in order to be called democratic. In the rest of the chapter, I critically analyse different contemporary definitions of democracy.

As a matter of clarification, my intention here is to show that it is possible to distinguish groups of democratic definitions based on their similar features. My aim is not to offer a typology of democratic models. Theories analysed in this chapter are simply an illustration of these wider groups. Please also note that I have assigned authors and projects to particular approaches, based on my interpretation. Despite the engagement with work of both political scientists and political theorists, in this chaper I am mainly interested in definitions of democracy that are prescriptive. By 'prescriptive', I mean accounts which give some sort of prescription as to what democratic societies should look like. I deliberately do not include so-called 'realist' accounts of democracy, as these are not interested in providing a prescription for the democratic organisation of a polity (e.g. Schumpeter 1947).[13] Since this project seeks to contribute to contemporary political theory, I focus on theories that have emerged after World War II.

## *2.1. An Institution-based Approach*

The first approach to defining democracy described in this chapter focuses on formalised rules regulating core institutions of the polity and effective decision-making. It considers a polity as a democracy if this polity has a particular set of collective decision-making institutions. It is the most descriptive approach among all of the approaches analysed herein. However, even this approach can be interpreted as providing some sort of prescription about how democratic societies should be organised. I illustrate this approach by referring to two examples of definitions of democracy, applied by Freedom House (2015) and Varieties of Democracy Project

[13] The aim of the realist model is to offer a narrow definition of democracy. For example, the notion of democracy offered by Schumpeter (1947) sets the meaning of democracy as a political process that enables acceptance or rejection of political leaders. Here, the basis and the aim of democratic decision-making is an appropriate aggregation of individuals' political preferences. In this account, democracy is characterised by regular voting and competition between political parties over power.

(Coppedge et al. 2012). I conclude that both of them provide a limited definition of democracy that emphasises the role of elections and have a limited applicability to amorphous types of polities.

Freedom House is a non-governmental organisation that aims to promote democracy all over the world. The organisation publishes annual reports on the state of freedom in the world, based on institutions and institutional constraints present in the countries studied (Freedom House 2015). Freedom House traces indicators of political rights, civil liberties and electoral democracy. Regarding political rights, Freedom House investigates the electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and finally, the functioning of the government. The civil liberties reflect freedom of expression and belief, associational and organisational rights, the rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House (2015) investigates the presence as well as the effectiveness of these institutions. It summarises particular scores and maps them onto a scale of how free a particular political system is. The level of freedom in given countries is widely interpreted as an indicator of the quality of democracy.

I have classified the definition of democracy provided by Freedom House as an example of the institution-based approach because, according to this definition, a country is democratic if it realises political freedom to a sufficient degree. This degree is, in turn, operationalised by a particular set of institutions. For example, political rights, civil liberties and electoral rights need to be institutionalised and effective in order for a given polity to be labelled 'democratic'. The definition offered by Freedom House is limited in applicability to nation-states and to the official apparatus of any such state. Furthermore, it is very much focused on elections and the institutions that make them possible. For this reason, this definition is not well applicable to amorphous types of polities.

The *Varieties of Democracy Project* (V-Dem) offers a different definition of democracy (Coppedge et al. 2012). V-Dem is a research project that aims to grasp the diversity of current democratic arrangements. The authors of the project assume that it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a single, comprehensive definition of

democracy. Therefore, the project concentrates on seven core principles of democratic decision-making: electoral, liberal, majoritarian, consensual, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian principles.[14] Each of these principles reflects a different understanding of democracy (Coppedge et al. 2012: 11). At the same time, none of these principles is fully comprehensive in respect of what democracy currently means. Some principles are even contradictory or conflicting, which reflects the diversity of the concept's meanings. Each identified principle is operationalised by a presence of rules that regulate political institutions and collective decision-making (ibidem). A given polity is called a democracy as long as it has institutions realising one of the seven principles. However, institutions realising the electoral principle are necessary for each type of democracy identified by the project. The project analyses which institutions are present and then assigns particular countries to different models of democracy (Coppedge et al. 2012).

Contrary to the Freedom House definition, the V-Dem project suggests various institutions and principles that are important for democratic governance. By choosing several dimensions of democracy, this definition follows, at least in principle, some devotion to pluralism. However, at the time of writing, the project focuses on the state as a primary actor of a democratic polity and emphasises the necessity of elections. For this reason, it is not suitable for the democratic assessment of amorphous types of polities.

To summarise, definitions within this approach limit democracy to a selection of specific institutions. These definitions focus on the nation-state as the main site of democratic decision-making. As such, institution-based definitions are not very suitable for amorphous types of polities.

[14] For more, see Coppedge et al. (2012).

## 2.2. A Procedure-based Approach

The next approach to defining democracy focuses on democratic procedures and processes. On this approach, a polity is a democracy if its decision-making institutions satisfy particular procedural requirements. In this section, I include an exemplary selection of two institution-based approaches to defining democracy, namely the pluralist account offered by Robert Dahl (1989, 1998) and the participatory account proposed by Carole Pateman (1970). Here I conclude that while these definitions provide flexibility towards democratic institutions and can accommodate other sites besides the nation-state, their applicability to amorphous types of polities is limited.[15]

I begin with the highly influential definition of democracy offered by Robert Dahl (1989, 1998). Dahl argues that democracy is a polity in which the people are able to rule themselves. In order to be able to rule, he argues, the people must employ a process of decision-making (Dahl 1989: 106). In order to qualify as democratic, this process needs to satisfy certain democratic criteria. More precisely, (1) the decision-making process needs to rely on the effective participation of all members of the polity. In such a process, members should have adequate and equal opportunity to express their preferences, to question and alter the agenda, and to voice their preferences. (2) The democratic process ought to treat all inputs as equal at the decisive stage of making the decision. (3) The democratic process needs to be based on an enlightened understanding. (4) The democratic process should assume members' control over the decision-making agenda. Members should have the exclusive and final right to decide if particular topics are going to be included in the agenda of issues subjected to the democratic process. Potential limits to this right can be imposed only by the members themselves by means of a democratic process. (5) Such a process ought to be based on an inclusive demos. This means that, within the given polity, all adults subjected to the results of collective decision-making should have an equal opportunity to participate in this process based on criteria 1-4 (Dahl 1989: 106-14, 19-20). However, temporary members can be excluded from this

[15] More precisely, other types of sites include a city in Dahl's approach and a workplace for Pateman.

process (Dahl 1989: 129). Dahl claims that a process realising all the criteria above is an ideal that is unattainable in real-life, large societies. Instead of impossible democracy, he suggests using the term *polyarchy*. The essence of polyarchy is that the substantive influence on the decision-making process is distributed among many groups. This distribution results in the division of power and prevents the domination of one group or individual. Further, polyarchy ensures that various groups have an opportunity to realise their interests.[16]

Dahl's definition of democracy is an example of a procedure-based one since, for him, a polity is democratic if, its binding decision-making process satisfies specific procedural criteria. For Dahl, all adult members of the given state who are subjected to the decisions of a binding decision-making process should have a chance to be part of this process. Dahl further assumes that democracy can take, in principle, any institutional form as long as the binding decision-making procedure follows given criteria. As such, it allows for some scope of influence of the members of the polity in question to decide how to organise their collective life. However, Dahl's definition reflects the historical development of democracy in Anglo-Saxon countries (see Dahl 1989: 218-24). This, in turn, may limit the possibility of applying this approach to those types of polities that do not share such historical lineage. Moreover, while Dahl's understanding of democracy can be applied beyond the nation-state, it still relies on a closed, bounded type of polity. Therefore, such a definition is not suited to the democratic assessment of amorphous polities.

The participatory approach to democracy locates the essence of democracy, and of political life in general, in active participation. Core aspects of democracy, on this account, are direct participation of citizens in the polity's collective decision-making, popular control over the work of public officials, and treating participation

[16] Dahl identifies several elements constituting *polyarchy*: (a) constitutionally guaranteed elected officials; (b) frequent, fair and free elections which result in the peaceful changeover of elected officials; (c) the voting rights include practically all adult members of the polity; (d) most of these adult members have the right to run for office on their own; (e) freedom of expression is effectively enforced. This especially means the right to political expression and criticising the government, its choices or dominant ideology; (f) members of the polity have access to alternative sources of information; (g) the ability to form and join associations is effectively enforced. This includes political associations whose aim is to compete with the current government in fair and free elections (Dahl 1989: 218-23).

as a source of civic education (Dacombe 2018). According to the participatory approach, previously private spheres became political and should be subjected to democratic decision-making and engagement (Barber 1984; Pateman 1970). As a result, a workplace, a neighbourhood and a household can all become spheres for democratic decision-making. The emphasis on the educational aspects of civic participation is especially strong in the work of Carole Pateman (1970). In my analysis of participatory democracy, I will focus on her work.

Pateman assumes that 'the existence of representative institutions at the national level is not sufficient for democracy; for maximum participation by all the people at that level socialisation, or "social training", for democracy must take place in other spheres in order that the necessary individual attitudes and psychological qualities can be developed' (Pateman 1970: 42). Drawing on the work of G. D. H. Cole, Pateman argues that political participation facilitates political education and socialisation which in turn lead to the increased political efficiency of the members of society (Cole 1920; Pateman 1970). Following this account, political participation is a tool of civic education that enables citizens to gain knowledge, acquire democratic skills and practice, and, as a result, participation facilitates their empowerment (Pateman 1970) Even further, participation can help to create a 'democratic character' among the members of a given society (Pateman 1970: 103). As such, a necessary condition for an ideal democratic polity is a democratic society, and the way to achieve such a society is the active participation of its members in various political spheres.

This approach is procedure-based since, in principle, it calls any polity a democracy if its decision-making procedures are based on the participation of all members of the community. For Pateman, the scope of applicability of democracy is much broader than the nation-state. Her core argument concerns the applicability and desirability of democracy to other sites which she finds strictly political, like a workplace, institutions of higher education or housing organisations (Pateman 1970: 106-9). Here, the scope of democracy is not limited to any institutional design; however, participation is a central component. Pateman (1970) follows the assumption that participation has an educational aspect and changes members of

society. However, such assumptions may be problematic. If the ideal of democracy relies on members who possess a 'democratic character', then this ideal is exclusionary. It may exclude people who did not go through socialisation via democratic participation or who do not wish to do so. Finally, while Pateman focuses on types of polities other than a nation-state, it may be difficult to apply the concept of participatory democracy to those amorphous polities that rely purely on representation (e.g. international organisations). Consequently, from the perspective of participatory democratic approach, it may be difficult to assess polities that do not provide any scope for personal participation of 'all subjected'.[17]

To summarise, the definitions analysed in this section do not prescribe specific institutions that a democratic polity must accommodate. They are applicable to other sites besides the nation-state but their application to amorphous types is somewhat limited.

## *2.3. A Value-based Approach*

The third approach to defining democracy emphasises democratic values. It defines a polity as a democracy if *it is organised so as to promote certain core democratic values.* On this approach, any polity can be a democracy, albeit on condition that it promotes core democratic values. This approach differs from the previous ones in terms of its open-ended institutional and procedural design. This section gives four examples of value-based approaches to defining democracy. Specifically, I consider, first, the systemic approach to deliberative democracy (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Dryzek and Niemeyer 2010; Mansbridge et al. 2012), second, the partnership conception of democracy proposed by Ronald Dworkin (1990, 1995, 1998, 2011), third, the

[17] However, please notice that this may differ among different participatory authors. For example, Rod Dacombe (2018: 26-33) argues that the contemporary theory of participatory democracy relies on three pillars: direct participation of citizens in collective decision-making; popular control over the work of public officials and representatives; and the educational effects of civic participation on ordinary citizens.

conception of democracy as political equality developed by Tom Christiano (2003, 2008), and finally, a value-theory of democracy offered by Corey Brettschneider (2007, 2011). I conclude that the analysed value-based conceptions do not prescribe precise institutions or procedures for a democratic polity. These conceptions vary in terms of their applicability to amorphous types of polities. Last but not least, I have chosen these four accounts since they offer three different stances on the applicability of democracy. The systemic approach to deliberative democracy considers democracy as applicable to various spheres of social life. Dworkin argues that democracy should be applied within state boundaries. Christiano argues that democracy should be extended to the common-world in which members have equal stakes. Finally, Brettschneider argues that the requirement of treating addressees of the law as sovereign rulers can be extended beyond state borders.

**Deliberative Systems**

I start the analysis of the value-based approach by investigating deliberative democracy. Currently, deliberative democracy is a vibrant and significant field of political theory, and its initial assumptions differ from most recent developments (Bächtiger et al. 2018; Owen and Smith 2015).[18] The theory's initial manifestations could be classified as procedure-based due to their emphasis on the process of reason-giving and public deliberation (Cohen 1989, 1996; Gutmann and Thompson 1996). Deliberation is a form of communication that 'involves weighing and reflecting on preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concern' (Bächtiger et al. 2018). For democracy to be deliberative, this process needs to be free from manipulation, deception and coercion (Dryzek and List 2003). However, the most recent developments conceptualise deliberative democracy, rather, as a property of the system that realises certain normative values (Dryzek and

[18] For example, Owen and Smith (2015) distinguish several phases of the theory's development. In the first wave, the theory was concerned with the ideal of deliberation and its role in political life (Cohen 1989, 1996; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Habermas 1996). During the second phase, the main focus of the scholarship has been the real-life application of the deliberative ideal and verification of theoretical problems (Bächtiger et al. 2007; Fishkin 1995; Fishkin and Luskin 2005; Steiner 2004). The current wave, in Owen and Smith's view, concerns consideration of deliberation among systems.

Niemeyer 2010; Mansbridge et al. 2012). As such, deliberative democracy in its systemic interpretation is an example of a value-based approach to defining democracy. This is the shape of the deliberative definition of democracy I focus on in this section, in the understanding of the deliberative system by John Dryzek (2010), Jane Mansbridge et al. (2012) and André Bächtiger (2018).[19]

Following the systemic approach to deliberative democracy, a system is democratic if it realises deliberative aims and uses reasoned communication as a tool for solving political disagreement (Mansbridge et al. 2012). This approach to deliberative democracy differs from the previous conceptions insofar as its focus is on the interaction between deliberative moments and institutions. Hence, it is possible to assess the performance of these moments and institutions with respect to how well they promote deliberative values. Mansbridge et al. (2012) argue that the aim of the political institutions of a well-functioning deliberative system should be to produce coherent and logical preferences based on facts. Furthermore, a deliberative system should encourage respect among citizens and promote inclusive decision-making based on equality. What is important is that, as a consequence of the division and coordination of the labour among parts, the system as a whole accomplishes these three aims.[20] While the deliberative qualities should be reflected by both the

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[19] However, there are many other authors who also contribute to this approach, for instance: Mansbridge (1999), Thompson (2008), Goodin (2005), Parkinson (2006), Bohman (2007), Hendriks (2006), and Krause (2008).

[20] Dryzek (2010) puts a similar emphasis on the division of labour among the particular elements of the system: public space, empowered space, transmission, accountability, meta-deliberation and distinctiveness. The character of a public space should allow for free and wide communication, ideally for unconstrained access to the communication forum. Contributions to the public space may come from such diverse sources as professional politicians and activists, media, social movement leaders and ordinary citizens. Public space can be physical, such as places where citizens meet each other (e.g. bars, cafes, squares or parks), as well as non-physical, like the internet. The second element of the deliberative system concerns an empowered space which reflects institutions, producing collective decisions by the deliberation procedure. Such institutions may be a legislature (Dryzek 2000), constitutional courts (Habermas 1996), labour unions, non-governmental organisations or international bodies. However, such institutions do not have to be formally constituted. Hence, informal networks which are producing binding collective outcomes could also constitute an empowered space. Transmission reflects the ability of a public space to influence the empowered space. This may include advocacy, criticism, questioning or supporting. The next factor constituting deliberative systems concerns the accountability of the empowered space. Accountability may be provided by such mechanisms as elections or public consultations. Another factor concerns the question of how the rules of the deliberation will be set (meta-deliberation). All deliberative systems should, to some extent, possess the ability of self-examination and self-transformation. The last factor

system and its parts, not all the elements of the system need to be deliberative (Bächtiger et al. 2018).[21]

The systemic definition of deliberative democracy interprets democracy as a network of fora that, overall, promote deliberative aims and solve political conflicts via reason-giving. Democracy can be realised by various institutions and procedures. For example, deliberative democracy is applicable to legislatures, judiciaries, political parties, democratic innovations, but also social movements, old and new media (Bächtiger et al. 2018; G. Smith 2009; Wolkenstein 2018). Moreover, non-deliberative procedures, like everyday discussion, negotiation or story-telling, can be democratic or contribute to deliberative aims (Young 1996, 2001). The systemic approach moves from a consideration of a single, bounded forum towards an analysis of other sites and systems beyond the nation-state (Dryzek 2016). The systemic approach to deliberative democracy facilitates a democratic assessment of informal decision-making happening beyond the official institutions of the state (Dryzek 2016). However, at least as argued by Dryzek (ibidem), a deliberative polity needs to rely on normative integration. Hence, this approach does not enable us to treat amorphous types of polity, that do *not* rely on such integration, as democratic polities.[22] Further, a democratic polity defined as a deliberative system focuses on the promotion of deliberative aims. Hence, a polity that promotes different aims may not be considered democratic (see Owen and Smith 2015; Warren 2017). Consequently, the deliberative system, by focusing on a deliberative way of solving political disagreement, may exclude other ways of solving it, for example by empathy or antagonism (Mouffe 2000a, 2000b).

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concerns distinctiveness, the degree to which these five elements truly influence outcomes of collective decisions. According to Dryzek (2010), a well-functioning deliberative system will be authentic in all five elements, inclusive in meta-deliberation, public and empowered space, and will be decisive in the subject of collective outcomes.

[21] For the examples of non-deliberative acts, see Curato (2019).

[22] Systemic deliberative democracy does enable treating such polities as 'systems'.

**Democracy as Partnership**

Ronald Dworkin (1990, 1995, 1998, 2011) offers a different and less empirically-oriented conception of democracy as a partnership. Dworkin grounds his conception by analysing the nature of self-government in democratic theory. He investigates what it means that democracy is a rule by the people and notes that there can be two different understandings of this rule (Dworkin 2011). The first is the statistical meaning, in which the statistical majority rules and elects officials in periodical elections. In this understanding, members of the community act mainly in their own interest (or in the interests of those who they consider as peers). The reason why Dworkin rejects the statistical understanding of democracy is that such form of governance does not provide any form of self-governance for the minority. In the statistical understanding of democracy, majorities de facto dominate the minorities. As an alternative, Dworkin offers a communitarian, or a partnership, understanding of democracy. Here, democracy is a vision of a political community, in which members can differ but still treat each other as partners (1990, 1998). According to democracy as partnership, members of the community acknowledge that they have a common responsibility for the results of the political actions of the community of which they are members.

I have classified Dworkin's account as a value-based approach because it calls any polity a democracy if, and only if, the life of a polity is organised if it members treat each other as partners.[23] The partnership conception of democracy is based on three requirements, namely the participation, equality and independence of all members (Dworkin 1990). Dworkin argues that without participation, members of the community cannot be responsible for common decisions. He proposes a specific understanding of the equality of all members. He argues that equality of political influence is artificial and unnecessary. It is because, Dworkin argues, real equality of influence can only be realised in a totalitarian society in which members of the society have no influence at all. In democratic societies, some people are more

[23] This is my interpretation.

influential and have more persuasive power. Therefore, political power should be rather distributed to confirm that the community has an equal concern and respect for each member (Dworkin 2011). Furthermore, collective decisions need to reflect this equal concern. Equality is also reflected in the very essence of democracy as a partnership. Partners have not only an equal position but also an equal voice and stake in the result. Finally, the independence requirement ensures that members are performing their own judgement during the collective decision-making process. This, in Dworkin's opinion, differentiates the partnership conception from tyranny and also enables all members to maintain personal dignity and self-respect. However, members do not owe the same respect to non-members of their community (Alexander Brown 2009). The political community in Dworkin's sense is the one created by historical, national boundaries. This is because political ties are created by people who are born and grow up in certain communities.

Dworkin's definition does not indicate which particular institutions or procedures best realise democracy. This definition, in principle, leaves a wide scope for members of the community to influence collective life and rules according to which the community is organised. As long as the rules of collective life are organised with equal respect and concern for all members, and the decision-making is inclusive and independent, members of the community are free to influence the collective life and its rules. However, this conception is not pluralistic in terms of values. For example, it excludes other than partnership ideals as desirable for guiding democratic decision-making. Further, this conception is concerned with the bounded and historically developed nation-states. It excludes new migrants, those with multiple citizenships and those who do not agree with the historical and national belonging. As such, this conception does not allow for an assessment of amorphous polities.

### Democracy as Political Equality

The third value-based conception of democracy is offered by Christiano (2003, 2008) who proposes a theory based on justice and the value of equality. Christiano argues

that the well-being of each person is a fundamental value. Well-being here means an ability for appreciation and engagement with values and deriving pleasure or happiness from this. The aim of any social arrangement should be to provide an environment for advancing people's well-being. But how should a social order be arranged such that each member can advance one's well-being without undermining the well-being of others? Here, Christiano argues, justice comes into play. Because all people are equal, social institutions should distribute well-being equally and ensure that members have available equal basic conditions for advancing their own well-being. Christiano sees democracy as a system where the realisation of equality of human beings is possible. He claims that in a political realm people have different interests. Furthermore, they are also cognitively biased towards their own interests and perspectives. As a result, they can undermine the interests and well-being of other people. Such under-appreciation of the well-being of others' interests could be unjust. Therefore, Christiano argues, different interests should be treated equally, or, more precisely, with equal consideration. According to Christiano, only democracy has this ability to treat each member's interest equally because members have an equal right to participate in the process of the creation of rules and laws. Additionally, in democracy, members can determine with which opinion they agree or disagree. Democracy is, in this account, a just method of coping with a diversity of opinions and interests.

Christiano defines a polity as a democracy if the polity realises values of equality and justice in ensuring that members have available equal basic conditions for advancing their own well-being, have equal rights to participate in the creation of laws regulating the organisation of the policy and, finally, that their interests are treated with equal consideration.[24] As such, I have classified his account as a value-based approach to defining democracy. An important aspect of this account takes the publicity requirement.[25] It is not enough that equality is realised; for Christiano

[24] This is, again, my interpretation how Christiano would define a policy a democracy.

[25] The publicity requirement enables members to see that they are treated as equals and, therefore, feel that their interests are given equal consideration by public institutions. Democracy realises the publicity requirement as all the rules are public and the process can be publicly accessed.

(2008), it needs to be seen to be realised. Christiano further acknowledges that, in democracy, all adults should have equal possibilities of having a say, but only if these people share a *common world*. Having a world in common requires that people have roughly equal stakes in it. It means that democracy is a just and desirable form of decision-making in a situation in which people share this common world. In Christiano's opinion, a common world can be shared within the borders of modern states.

This conception of democracy does not prescribe what kind of institutions or procedures members of the community in question should engage. Christiano's account prescribes some constraints for representatives of the people, the policymakers and the executive. He argues that, for the polity to be democratic, those who hold power need to treat members equally in their equal abilities to advance their well-being, assume their equal rights and to treat their interests with equal consideration. However, the assumption of applicability of democracy to sites and people that share a common world excludes those polities whose members, frankly, do not share it and have different stakes in the polity. It is therefore focused on bounded and relatively stable polities.

**Brettschneider's Value-Theory**

The final value-based theory of democracy I discuss is Brettschneider's value-theory of democracy which aims to explain the connection between citizens' rights and democratic procedures (2007, 2011). Brettschneider claims that the theory of democracy is based in the political realm and, therefore, it should be grounded in concepts and values from this realm. More precisely, he claims that the theory of democracy should answer the question of what it means to be a democratic citizen. Brettschneider suggests that it is possible to find such answers in existing democratic practices.[26] More precisely, he refers to Lincoln's formula of democracy understood as 'government of the people, by the people, for the people' (Lincoln 1863). In

[26] For example, rule of law, free speech (see Brettschneider 2007).

Brettschneider's interpretation, the phrase *government of the people* connects to the citizens' authority in the political realm. The fact that government should be *by the people* means that state actions, especially coercion, should respect the role of the people in the process of decision-making. Finally, *government for the people* means that the state needs to respect the citizens as the source of authority and to respect their interests. Based on the interpretation of Lincoln's formula, Brettschneider (2007) contends that the core ideal of democratic governance is to protect the status of citizens as free, equal and sovereign rulers. Brettschneider (2007) argues that three democratic values – equality of interests, political autonomy, and reciprocity – need to be promoted to treat citizens as sovereign rulers. The first value, equality of interests, asserts that all reasonable interests of citizens should be treated as equal by the state. It is especially important in the process of creation of the law that the process treats citizens as having equal interests. The second value, political autonomy, demands to treat citizens as eligible for ruling a society. More precisely, citizens as a group constitute a collective ruler. The third value, reciprocity, asserts that any policies influencing citizens need to be justified by reasons that citizens can potentially accept. The value of reciprocity states that the basis of any legitimate action is that it can be potentially accepted by its subjects.

I have classified Brettschneider's account as an example of a value-based approach to defining democracy as in this account a democratic polity needs to be organised in order to promote three core democratic values. These three values are the basis for protecting citizens from the coercion of the state. Therefore, the only justifiable coercion is that which treats citizen as equal and autonomous and is supported by the reasons that citizens can potentially accept. In my understanding, Brettschneider defines democracy as of any institutional or procedural form so long as it is organised to promote three democratic values. Furthermore, he argues that his value-theory of democracy applies to citizens as addressees of the law. Brettschneider's (2007, 2011) conception of democracy leaves a considerably wide scope for the influence of members of the community on the collective life and its

rules.[27] This definition is therefore pluralistic in terms of institutions and procedures that realise democratic governance. This definition is not limited to bounded nation-states, since Brettschneider (2009) argues for the extension of core democratic values beyond state borders, possibly even globally. However, the essence of Brettschneider's conception concerns the relationship between the citizen and the legal apparatus of the polity. He demands this protection even if members of the polity do not make the laws, but also when they are subjects of the law. However, such an account is not suitable for the assessment of polities that do not develop coherent legal frameworks.

## *2.4. Summary*

In this chapter, I have argued that it is possible to define democracy either by reference to certain concrete institutions, or by reference to certain procedural requirements, or by reference to certain values. As examples of the institutional approach, I have analysed definitions used by Freedom House (2015) and V-Dem projects (Coppedge et al. 2012). As examples of procedural approaches, I have analysed accounts of democracy offered by Robert Dahl (1989, 1998) and of participatory democracy (Pateman 1970). Finally, I have discussed deliberative systems (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2010; Mansbridge et al. 2012), a value-based conception of democracy based on political equality (Christiano 2003, 2008), a value-theory of democracy (Brettschneider 2007), and a conception of democracy as a partnership (Dworkin 1998, 2008, 2011).

I have argued that the applicability of these approaches to amorphous types of polities is limited. More precisely, conceptions within the institution-based approach focus on relatively precise institutions and settings (typically the state). Conceptions within the procedure-based approach assume that democratic polities can accommodate different institutions. They also extend the applicability of democracy to sites other than the nation-state. However, these conceptions are not

[27] Here, understood as citizens.

easily applicable to non-traditional, amorphous types of polities. Finally, conceptions within the value-based approach are flexible in terms of democratic institutions and procedures. However, they are often not well applicable to amorphous types of polities.

So far, I have analysed different approaches to defining democracy to investigate their applicability. In the final part of the chapter I would like to quickly discuss a different condition. In particular, it may be interesting to investigate if existing accounts provide scope for including preferences of the affected groups when defining what democracy is. Including preferences of the affected groups can be valuable because different communities can prioritise different norms, procedures, and institutions depending on their cultural or historical background. Instead, the practice of defining democracy, based on the experiences of only some groups and selected institutional traditions, limits the scope of what democracy could be. However, there is a risk in including the preferences of all subjected groups. For example, norms, procedures, and institutions chosen by some groups may be exclusive or employ physical violence towards political opponents. Consequently, political theorist wanting to expand the scope of democratic norms, procedures, and institutions may want to include preferences of the communities in question, but with some constraints. For example, a democratic theorist could argue that democracy can, effectively, take any institutional form as long as it includes all the members of the polity and does not employ physical violence towards political opponents. From the approaches discussed above, it is only some deliberative systemic scholars who argue for the possibility for communities in question to decide what democracy is.[28] However, the scope of this possibility varies substantively among other democratic scholars.

Taking this into account, in the next chapter, I propose an alternative approach to defining democracy. Specifically, I introduce a novel conception of democracy that follows pluralism in terms of both institutions and procedures, and is

[28] For example, James Fishkin (2018) sees the operationalisation of deliberative ideals in a precisely defined set of institutions. On the other side, Marit Hammond (2018) argues that deliberative democracy exists when there is a wider deliberative culture instead of precise deliberative institutions.

applicable to amorphous types of polities. Further, this conception allows the people in question to decide how they want to govern themselves, albeit with certain constraints.

# *3. Emancipatory Democracy*

In this chapter, I establish a value-based conception of democracy, which I call *emancipatory democracy*. The chapter proceeds as follows. I start by elaborating on the normative foundations of my argument, namely a commitment to critical theory and ethical individualism. In particular, critical theory aims at a philosophical inquiry that facilitates emancipation and ends domination, broadly understood (see Bohman 2005; Hammond 2018). My aim in this thesis is to establish the emancipatory conception of democracy that would not limit the rule of the people in terms of how the people want to rule themselves. Because critical theory defines emancipation broadly, I proceed to offer a conceptual analysis and introduce several dimensions according to which it is possible to define emancipation: as a *process* vs. a *state of affairs*, *internal* vs. *external* and *positive* vs. *negative*. After elaborating on several aspects of this concept, I investigate which of them is suitable for the development of an emancipatory political project. Here, I argue for the understanding of the concept of political emancipation conceived of as having, or acquiring, substantive opportunities to affect the rules of collective life and the ability to control the influence of these rules on one's preferences. This notion is analogous to the conception of agency offered by Amartya Sen (1985, 1992, 1999, 2001) which I adopt and further adapt. As a result, I argue that for democracy to be emancipatory, it should be concerned with the promotion of political agency.

However, a focus on agency is not enough for a polity to be democratic. Democracy is an egalitarian concept, and any democratic conceptualisations should reflect this. Here, I argue that complex equality is a necessary condition of emancipatory democracy since it is necessary for the realisation of political agency. I conclude the chapter by defining a polity as an emancipatory democracy if its system of collective decision-making is organised so as to promote political agency for each

of its members in conditions of complex equality. Overall, this chapter provides the theoretical foundations for the conception of emancipatory democracy.

## *3.1. Normative Assumptions*

In this section, I describe the normative foundations of this thesis and propose a preliminary definition of emancipatory democracy.

### Critical theory

Critical theory is a wide field of theoretical inquiry. Broadly speaking, critical theory 'provides the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms' (Bohman 2005).[29] What unites this tradition is its aim to facilitate human emancipation. For these theorists, the theory strives for 'emancipation from slavery, (…) [to] act as liberating (…) influence' (Horkheimer 1972: 246). However, this aim can be understood widely or narrowly. Widely, the aim of critical theory refers to emancipation in all spheres of social life (see Laclau 1996: 1). In this chapter, I am interested in a narrow understanding of this aim, which refers to emancipation in one of the spheres of social life. Here, I focus on the value of *political emancipation* as an aim of the critical endeavour.

Critical theory offers a thick and rich understanding of 'the political'. For example, Young argues that politics 'concerns all aspects of the institutional organisation, public action, social practices and habits, and cultural meanings insofar as they are potentially subject to collective evaluation and decisionmaking [sic]' (Young 1990: 9). In turn, a richer and thicker understanding of 'the political' is relevant for assessing democracy in unconventional political settings. For example, if one defined 'the political' as related exclusively to institutions and procedures of the

[29] For more information regarding critical theory and its method, see Bohman (2005), Hammond (2018), Young (1990: 5-7).

state, then only nation-states would be political sites and could be assessed in terms of democracy.[30] Defining 'the political' in a thicker way means that democracy can potentially be examined beyond traditional sites of collective decision-making which centre on the nation-state.

Following the critical theory tradition, I assume that 'the political', broadly speaking, refers to a wide sphere regulated by the rules of collective life. Here, I assume that this sphere is regulated both by legally binding rules and by non-formalised rules. Binding rules refer to laws and regulations, while non-formalised rules refer to social norms or conventions in a given polity.[31] Binding rules differ in character from non-formalised rules, as they are coherent with each other. In polities with the rule of law, binding rules are usually ordered hierarchically. Hence, in a situation of conflicting rules, there is, in principle, a superior rule managing the conflict or an institution responsible for the interpretation of the superiority of the rules. Binding rules are created by official institutions and are supported by the state's ability to use coercion (Posner 1997). In turn, non-formalised rules are not enforced by the use of state sanctions (Bicchieri 2006: 8). Furthermore, they can be incoherent, contradictory or not organised hierarchically.

In this thesis, 'the political' is a sphere regulated by formal rules of law and other social rules and norms. However, this sphere is also influenced by other factors, such as the laws of nature, coincidence, and individuals' preferences and conceptions of the good. 'The political' does not normally influence laws of nature or coincidence, but it influences individuals' preferences and their conceptions of the good. Both formal and informal rules influence individuals' preferences and conceptions of the good. Factors that influence 'the political' are illustrated by Figure

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[30] As an example of such definitions, recall the institution-based definitions noted in chapter 1.

[31] Such a definition of *the political* is deliberately wide and cuts across the *public vs. private* divide. This distinction, roughly, refers to the sphere regulated by the government which is separate from the public sphere regulated by self-control (Mill 2011 [1859]). Following this division, democracy would be applicable to the public sphere but not to the private sphere. This division, I argue, is too narrow and too formalised. It is too narrow since it excludes in principle all political dynamics concerning, for example, the way social norms shape our identity and behaviour. However, this division is too formalised insofar as it assumes that a *public* sphere is under control of the state or other formalised institutions. Hence, the self-organisation of neighbours would not be included as public and as a domain relevant to democracy. Hence, this is too constraining.

2. The differentiation of these factors is important for the scope of political emancipation.

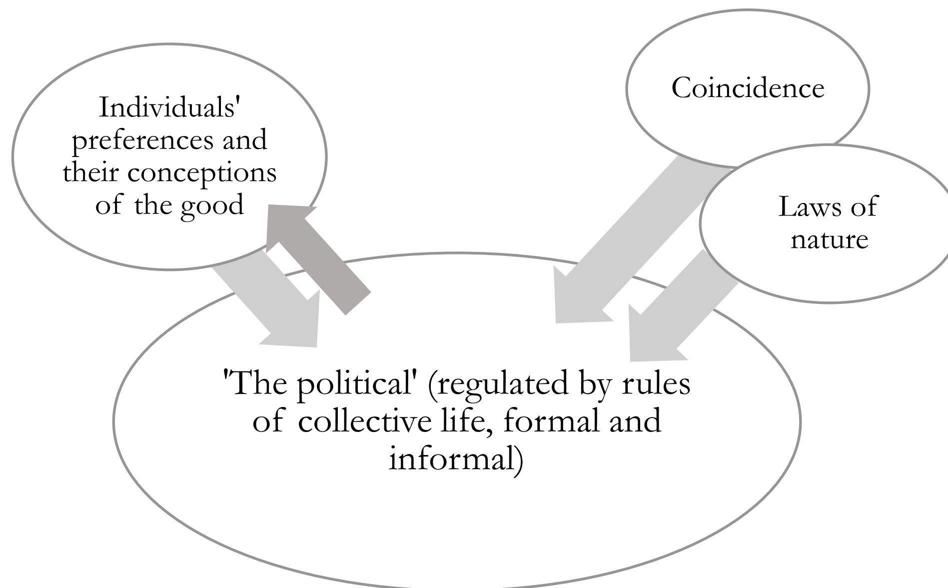


Figure 2. Factors influencing 'the political'

A rich understanding of the political sphere within critical theory also delineates the scope of the emancipation that this thesis aims to promote. For example, I.M. Young argues that theories of democracy should be critical and should expose exclusions and power-dynamics within the existing political sphere (2001: 688). Hammond argues that critical theory should facilitate emancipation from 'direct domination by specific agents or governments (such as discriminatory or otherwise oppressive policy); direct domination by extra-constitutional "agents of distortion"(such as economic lobbies able to bypass democratic procedures); and indirect domination in the form of ideological belief systems' (2018: 5). Hammond further argues that emancipation from the ideological belief systems extends to the sphere of normative values. As such, critical theorists should facilitate and provide room for the subjects of their theorising in which to challenge or transform political

concepts (Hammond 2018). As a result, in my understanding, a normative conception of democracy that follows critical theory should provide space for members of the polity to create or challenge the normative values that their polity realises. Critical theory, in this view, supports my aim of identifying a conception of democracy that allows the communities in question to decide how they want to govern themselves.

While the conception developed in this thesis follows the critical tradition, its focus on extending the scope of emancipation to the sphere of defining democracy aligns with radical democratic approaches. For example, Jacques Rancière (2006), argues against defining democracy as a set of concrete institutions. For Rancière, democracy equals a disruption of those norms and procedures in the society that legitimise the system by maintaining the relationships of unequal power (Purcell 2015; Rancière 1998). As a result, democracy relies on self-emancipation from such prescribed norms, and as one could argue, also from the norms of what democracy should be. A similar rejection of any prescribed democratic arrangements can be found in anarchist thought. In Uri Gordon's interpretation, anarchist theory relies on the rejection of domination in all its forms (2007). In anarchist thought, domination extends to the 'impersonal sets of rules regulating relationships between people – rules which are not autonomously constituted by those individuals placed within the relationship' (Gordon 2008: 33). Consequently, anarchists share a devotion to diversity and pluralism, both towards themselves and towards what would constitute a better, more democratic arrangement. As Gordon argues, the anarchist project focuses on self-liberation; however it does not prescribe any particular forms or aims for this process (2008: 40). Similar to the conception developed in this thesis, the anarchist project is institutionally open-ended.

**Elements of Political Liberalism**

This thesis also follows several elements of a different philosophical tradition, namely political liberalism.[32] More precisely, the thesis assumes ethical individualism, focuses on the coordination of people's conceptions of the good and welcomes in the public sphere all opinions in conditions of pluralism, except those beyond the bounds of reasonable pluralism. From the perspective of assessing the quality of democracy in amorphous sites, these elements are particularly important in sites that are pluralistic, and in which there are no mutually agreed upon collective values.[33] I now explain in more detail each of the elements of liberalism that I adopt.

A conception of democracy which adopts ethical individualism treats individuals as the primary unit of normative concern. This is opposed to views which claim that it is groups or communities that should be such units of primary concern (Robeyns 2005). In moral philosophy, ethical individualism can be illustrated by the view that 'only individuals can be the ultimate point of reference of moral obligations and hence the justificatory source of morals and ethics' (von der Pfordten 2012: 452). In reference to political concepts, such as freedom or political rights, ethical individualism states that to achieve, for example, freedom of a political group, the freedom of each member of this group is necessary. By contrast, others believe that freedom of the group is prior to the rights and freedoms of individuals.[34] At the same time, commitment to ethical individualism does not challenge the existence or value of social groups, associations or communities (Robeyns 2005).

The conception of democracy I establish in this chapter is also liberal to the extent that it focuses on the coordination of people's conceptions of the good. For so-called liberal theories, the political organisation aims to allow citizens to pursue

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[32] For example, in polities other than the nation-state. For more information on the theoretical foundations of liberalism and the differences between liberalism and other philosophical traditions, see Waldron (1987).

[33] However, for liberals, these elements are important regardless of actual circumstances.

[34] For example, during the famous ruling of 'Wisconsin v Yoder' in the US, Amish parents asked to be relieved from the requirement of sending children to public schools after the eighth grade (Fischel 2012). Here, one could argue that, for the Amish community, the rights and freedoms of the group are prior to the rights and freedoms of the individual.

their conception of the good (Korsgaard 1993). In what follows, for the conception of democracy developed in this chapter, the people's conceptions of the good are valuable in their own right. Furthermore, individual values are the building blocks of social coordination. Liberalism often assumes a degree of pluralism in terms of preferences and values that members of any given society follow (Bellamy 1999). In conditions of pluralism, social coordination based on individual conceptions of the good can create tensions when these conceptions are irreconcilable. Following the liberal solution, the conception of democracy I develop welcomes, in the public sphere, all opinions except those beyond reasonable pluralism. Here, reasonable pluralism includes all opinions drawn from reasonable comprehensive doctrines (see Rawls 1993).[35]As such, it is a pluralistic conception of what belongs to the public sphere.

Radical democratic and multicultural authors often focus on ethical individualism as an object of their critique (see Young 1990: 228-9, Sandercock 2003: 191). However, as I explain at the end of this chapter, the conception of democracy I develop can accommodate their concerns.

**Other Assumptions and a Preliminary Definition**

Beyond the critical theory tradition and elements of liberalism, the conception I develop also follows several basic assumptions. Following chapter 1, I define democracy as a property of a polity. This polity can refer to a system or a single forum, and it can be further defined either as satisfying particular institutional or procedural constraints or as being organised so as to realise certain normative values. In this chapter, I focus on an account of democracy that would promote the value of political emancipation for members of the given polity. Democracy within the system consists of various interconnected actors, procedures and outcomes which

[35] Reasonable comprehensive doctrines are those which can be supported by individuals who 'are ready to propose principles and standards as fair terms of cooperation and to abide by them willingly, given the assurance others will likewise do so' (Rawls 1993: 36-7, 49).

dynamically influence one another.[36] Democracy realised in a system is corresponding to a thick notion of 'the political' employed by the critical theory tradition. Democracy so defined allows for an assessment of formal and informal rules of collective life, such as social norms.

The conception I develop herein should also promote the value of political emancipation in an egalitarian manner. This is because, I assume, democratic decision-making needs to refer to an egalitarian arrangement, in line with the way the term 'democracy' is used in ordinary language (see also Harrison 1993).[37] Furthermore, democracy in this thesis is a political concept; as such, it belongs to the thick sphere of 'the political'.

To derive a conception of democracy that can accommodate assumptions of an egalitarian arrangement, ethical individualism, and be a tool of political emancipation, I offer a preliminary conception of emancipatory democracy. Here, I call a polity an emancipatory democracy if, and only if,

> *its system of collective decision-making, which regulates collective life, is organised so as to equally promote the political emancipation of each of its members.*

From now on, I refer to this definition as designating *a conception of emancipatory democracy*. At this stage, this definition remains vague because it does not explain what is meant by political emancipation and how one ought to interpret the notion of equality. Hence, in the following sections, I focus on making this conception more precise. I start with a conceptual analysis of the term 'emancipation'. More precisely, in the next section, I provide a conceptual analysis of this term and investigate its

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[36] Regarding the notion of systems, see Mansbridge and Parkinson: 'A system here means a set of distinguishable, differentiated, but to some degree interdependent parts, often with distributed functions and a division of labour, connected in such a way as to form a complex whole. It requires both differentiation and integration among the parts. It requires some functional division of labour so that some parts do work that others cannot do as well. And it requires some relational interdependence, so that a change in one component will bring about changes in some others' (Mansbridge et al. 2012: 4).

[37] Here I assume that a notion of democracy which is not egalitarian does not match the everyday use of this term and as such is counter-intuitive. See List and Valentini (2016: 9) on the *ordinary-language plausibility* requirement.

suitability for assessing democracy in unconventional sites. I then go on to analyse the meaning of emancipation and how to understand the notion of equality.

## *3.2. On Emancipation*

In this section, I provide a conceptual analysis of emancipation and identify several aspects of this term. I am interested in emancipation as a concept which can guide a political project. Such an emancipatory project should, in principle, lead to the abolition of potentially oppressive circumstances and guide the creation of better political and social institutions. Hence, in this section, I investigate the concept of emancipation and ask what it should look like in order to be suitable to fulfil the aims of this thesis. Here, I contrast emancipation as *a process* with emancipation as *a state of affairs*. Furthermore, I elaborate on emancipation in its *positive* and *negative* meanings, as well as its *internal* and *external* features. The reason for undertaking this conceptual analysis is to identify an aspect of emancipation that would be suitable for assessing democracy and for describing political emancipation. I conclude by arguing that, in principle, each of the identified aspects is suitable for this aim. At the same time, I argue that, what I will call, the positive external aspect of emancipation is *necessary* for the concept of emancipation to be suitable for assessing decision-making systems and for guiding political change.

### Different Aspects of Emancipation

Emancipation, etymologically, refers to the idea of breaking free from some set of constraints. The term's initial meaning comes from Roman Law, where it meant a release from legal bondage (Coole 2015: 532; Gardner 1986). In this meaning, emancipation refers to an act of breaking free so that a subject is no longer the property of another person (Coole 2015). Since the meaning of the concept of emancipation has shifted since its origins in Roman Law, in this section I investigate its modern meaning.

I start by distinguishing between emancipation as *a process* and emancipation as *a state of affairs*. The distinction between *a state of affairs* and *a process* reflects a distinction between circumstances *z* and the process of aiming at arriving at circumstances *z*.[38] While emancipation in most common usage refers to the process, its Latin suffix *–ion* reflects both the process and the state of affairs (Stevenson 2010). More analytically, emancipation as *a state of affairs* reflects a situation in which a person or a group of people *are* emancipated. For example, following the initial meaning of emancipation applied in Roman Law, an emancipated person is no longer the property of another. In this example, the concept of emancipation is used to describe *a state of affairs* in which the given person is not constrained by legal bondage. In contrast, emancipation as *a process* reflects a situation in which a person *becomes* emancipated. A procedure of gaining independence can reflect emancipation as *a process*.

Emancipation understood both as *a state of affairs* and as *a process* is equally relevant for the theory of democracy. Emancipation as *a state of affairs* refers to an emancipated group of people. Alternatively, a group which is in the process of securing or acquiring, for example, certain rights or opportunities, is in *the process* of becoming emancipated. This distinction is helpful as it can refer both to democracy as a polity and to a process of democratisation, respectively. A polity is an emancipatory democracy if it features certain emancipatory characteristics. For example, one can argue that a given polity secures freedom from some form of coercion for all its citizens. Consequently, a polity is in the process of emancipatory democratisation if it is in the process of gaining some emancipatory characteristics. For example, emancipatory democratisation could occur through a democratic transition, as in the case of a previously non-democratic country that is becoming a democracy. However, emancipatory democratisation is also relevant for dynamic communities where the content of membership is changing. Here, democratisation can refer to new members who, by joining the polity, gain certain rights or opportunities.

[38] Here, *z* can be further specified by a relevant conception or theory.

Furthermore, it is possible to think of emancipation as referring to two dimensions. The first dimension answers the question of whether emancipation is employed as a *negative* or a *positive* notion. A *negative* aspect of emancipation refers to a *removal* or an *absence* of a certain phenomenon or condition(s). Here, for example, breaking free from some sort of legal constraints or domination would reflect a negative aspect of the concept of emancipation. A *positive* aspect of emancipation reflects the *presence* or *introduction* of some kind(s) of condition(s).[39] Here, for example, emancipation can mean gaining certain rights or freedoms. The *internal* vs. *external* dimension describes the character of the phenomena or conditions to which emancipation refers. Emancipation can refer to conditions which are *external* to the agent of emancipation or conditions which are *within an agent's capacity*. Here, an *external* aspect of emancipation can refer to socio-economic conditions or features of the polity of which an agent is a member. For example, it can refer to emancipation from conditions of structural oppression. An *internal* aspect of emancipation can refer to the internal features of the agent, such as their abilities or desires.[40]

These three dimensions create a *two x two x two* matrix of different aspects of the concept of emancipation (Table 1). It is possible to see the roots of these two dimensions in the classical analyses of freedom by, separately, Erich Fromm (1984 [1942]) and Isaiah Berlin (1969).[41] These aspects are a result of the conceptual analysis, which means that each of them needs to be further fleshed out by a substantive theory or understanding of the concept of emancipation. How emancipation is used within the existing literature can, and usually does, cover one or more of these aspects at once. I now discuss each aspect of emancipation and analyse its suitability for assessing political decision-making systems and describing political forms of emancipation.

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[39] These two notions of emancipation are conceptually distinct. However, in the literature, they are often elided. To illustrate, emancipation can be used to describe a process of removing some circumstances and simultaneously introducing new ones.

[40] Again, these two dimensions are conceptually distinct yet they can be elided in the literature.

[41] Positive freedom in Berlin's understanding would be a *positive internal* concept according to my typology, while negative freedom would be a *negative external* notion.

External or internal?

| Negative or positive? | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **1. Negative external**<br>*state of affairs / process* | **2. Negative internal**<br>*state of affairs / process* |
| | **3. Positive external**<br>*state of affairs / process* | **4. Positive internal**<br>*state of affairs / process* |

Table 1. Different aspects of the concept of emancipation

The first aspect of the concept of emancipation, *negative external* emphasises *z* where:

*z = the removal or the absence of relevant agency-restricting features external to the agent.*

Definitions of emancipation as *negative external* are widely used in the current literature, such as an understanding of emancipation as the removal or absence of some social constraints. In this meaning, emancipation is used in the current critical theory literature which often defines emancipation as breaking free from circumstances of domination (e.g. Bohman 2005; Dryzek 1990: 2-22; Held 1980: 250; Kompridis 2006: 20) or from 'those forms of social life and of the juridical, political, and cultural orders which have become a straitjacket' for a person (Horkheimer 1982: 230). Domination can be defined in various ways; however, it often refers to conditions external to the agent. For example, some theorists define domination as unjust or oppressive power relations existing in society (Allen 2014). In turn, Pettit argues that domination is best described as the condition of a mere possibility of an arbitrary interference (Pettit 1996, 1997). Both of these conceptualisations are contingent on the external factors which constitute domination, including factors

which constitute oppression or arbitrary interference. Both of them are challenged by the theoretical literature.[42] However, a *negative* and *external* aspect of emancipation need not rely on such contested concepts. In political environments, such non-contested conditions could refer, for example, to the absence of an oligarchic group or a dictator making all decisions.

This aspect of the concept of emancipation is suitable for describing a democratic polity. More precisely, a *negative external* aspect of emancipation emphasises features of decision-making, or elements of the political setting, which need to be removed in order to make a polity democratic. This aspect of emancipation is also suitable for assessing and criticising a polity. However, a polity characterised by an absence of any consequential institutions of decision-making might then also be described as emancipatory, provided there is at least no domination in that society. Therefore, on its own, a negative external aspect is not sufficient for the concept of emancipation to be suitable for assessing real-life polities and their decision-making processes.

The second aspect of emancipation, *negative internal,* focuses on *z*:

*z = the removal or the absence of relevant agency-restricting features of the agent him- or herself.*

This aspect of emancipation refers to the absence or removal of some characteristics of the agent of emancipation. Here, it is possible to imagine that a person who is emancipated is freeing oneself, or is free, from some limitations. For example, it is possible for members of an authoritarian society to free themselves from the fear of the authorities and punishment despite the lack of change in the political system. This aspect of emancipation can also be suitable for assessing democracy, especially if one defines democracy in a thick way. This aspect of emancipation may mean a removal or absence of inability to make a decision. It may be impossible to introduce democracy if all the members of society are not able to make up their mind.

[42] For further discussion of arbitrary constraints, see List and Valentini (2016) and Lovett (2016).

The third aspect of emancipation, *positive* and *external*, emphasises $z$ where:

$z$ = *the presence or the acquisition of relevant agency-conducive features external to an agent.*

This aspect of emancipation refers to the presence or introduction of some features of the decision-making process, or socioeconomic conditions, in which the agent is situated. It can refer to, for example, the presence or acquisition of rights, status or opportunities. *Positive* and *external* emancipation, for example, can describe the situation of women at the beginning of the twentieth century when they gained voting rights. This aspect of emancipation is also suitable for describing and assessing democracy. It emphasises the elements of decision-making or the political setting that need to be present to describe a polity as emancipatory. For example, to describe a country as emancipatory, it may be necessary that all participants in the decision-making process have a right to express their preferences (e.g. a right or freedom of speech) and that participants' collective preferences will influence the wider political environment.

Finally, the fourth aspect considers emancipation as $z$ where:

$z$ = *the presence or the acquisition of relevant agency-conducive features of the agent him- or herself.*

According to this aspect of emancipation, a person becomes emancipated when he or she gains new internal capabilities as an agent. This aspect of emancipation is applied, for example, by the Foucauldian scholar Dianna Taylor, for whom emancipation means an ability to engage with the conditions of power critically and to modify, negotiate or reverse these power relations (2009: 52). Other examples could include gaining new capabilities, such as the courage and skills for public speaking. This aspect of emancipation is also suitable for assessing democracy because it emphasises the presence of a person's internal features which are

important for democratic decision-making, for example, an ability to make one's mind up. This aspect of emancipation is of special importance when democracy is defined in a thick way. However, it is important even if one defines democracy, simply, as a decision-making procedure.

The conceptual analysis in this section sheds light on the concept of emancipation and the way it is currently applied in the wider social and philosophical literature. It demonstrates that emancipation is a rich, nuanced concept with many facets.

**Which Aspect of Emancipation is Suitable for Political Emancipation?**

After analysing different aspects of the concept of emancipation I can analyse which aspect is suitable for the aims of this thesis. By providing examples of these different aspects of the concept of emancipation, I have shown that all of these aspects are relevant for the analysis of a democratic polity. In order to describe and guide real-life institutions, internal and external, positive and negative aspects of emancipation are important. This is because the external aspect of emancipation shows what needs to be present or absent in a certain polity. The internal aspect, on the other hand, describes what cannot be imposed on or taken from the members of the polity. Hence, all the aspects of the concept of emancipation are relevant for assessing democracy. However, it is the *positive external* aspect of emancipation that is a necessary component of any substantive conception suitable for assessing democracy. It is because this aspect describes what needs to be present to call a polity emancipatory. Imagine that one would like to assess a polity *only* in terms of the *external negative* aspect of emancipation. This exemplary polity will be emancipatory if its decision-making or the environment were characterised by the absence of certain features, such as domination. However, a polity which is characterised by an absence of any consequential institutions of decision-making might then also be described as emancipatory, provided there is at least no domination in that society. Hence, at least a minimal understanding of *external positive* emancipation, such as the presence of consequential decision-making, is necessary,

but not sufficient, for the conception of emancipation to be suitable for capturing democracy. Similarly, if one were to assess a polity only from the perspective of internal emancipation, then a lack of any institutions of decision-making could, in principle, count as emancipatory.

Further, all four aspects of the concept of emancipation are also relevant to the notion of *political emancipation*. To recall, in this thesis, 'the political' is a sphere regulated by formal and informal rules of collective life. At the same time, 'the political' is influenced by other factors, such as the laws of nature, coincidence or individuals' preferences (see Figure 1). 'The political' can influence individuals' preferences and their conceptions of the good. Political emancipation means emancipation in and with regard to the political sphere. As a result, political emancipation should refer both to the sphere regulated by the rules of collective life ('the political') and to the influence of this sphere on individuals. From the perspective of the individual, political emancipation then means emancipation regarding the rules of collective life and regarding the influence of these rules on oneself.[43] Here, all aspects are relevant: both *internal* and *external* aspects are relevant for the individual to be able to influence the rules of collective life and to control how these rules affect one's preferences and conception of the good. In the next section, I look at some illustrative accounts of emancipation and consider whether they are suitable for the aims of this thesis.

## *3.3. An Argument for Emancipation as Gaining Political Agency*

Up to this point, I have discussed several aspects of the concept of emancipation. However, these aspects could be filled with various, more substantive meanings. For example, the negative external aspect can mean both the removal of oppressive power structures or simply the absence of a dictator. Hence, for the political project within this thesis, a more precise meaning of emancipation is necessary. In this section, I zoom in and consider selected examples of substantive ideas of what

[43] Individuals do not influence factors affecting the political beyond the rules of collective life.

emancipation precisely means. I focus on illustrative examples that emphasise a *positive external* aspect, because, as I previously argued, this aspect is particularly important for assessing real-life political arrangements and sites of decision-making. Recall that the *positive external* aspect of emancipation concerns the presence of, or a process of acquiring, agency-conducive features of the agent him- or herself with respect to the rules of collective life. These features can relate to rights or opportunities. At the same time, the different meanings of the concept of emancipation, despite being primarily based on the *positive external* aspect, include internal or negative aspects. I focus on three examples of such meanings of emancipation: as a status, as a formal opportunity, and as a substantive opportunity. While these examples are hypothetical, they reflect arguments present in the current literature concerning the notion of freedom and equality of opportunities.[44] Following the analysis, I argue for political emancipation as a process of having, or acquiring, political agency.

### Emancipation as a Status

Emancipation as a status entails having, or acquiring, a certain formal political status or social standing. Here, emancipation can mean having, or acquiring, rights or political entitlements, for example citizenship status. Note that it is a relatively thin understanding of the concept of *status*.[45] For this meaning of the concept of emancipation, it is necessary that the emancipated agent has or acquires particular status or social standing.

This meaning of the concept of emancipation does not treat the aims and desires of the emancipated agent as an essential component. Here, as an example, one can imagine a minority group that has previously been disenfranchised from collective decision-making. For the thin status conceptualisation of emancipation, it

[44] In particular, I refer here to the debate on liberal vs. republican freedom (in particular: List and Valentini 2016; Pettit 2000, 2003; Sen 1985, 2001) and to the literature on the equality of opportunity (Arneson 2015). The status conception is inspired by a narrow interpretation of the republican freedom, while inspiration for the formal and substantive opportunity conception are based on the literature on the equality of opportunity and egalitarianism (Arneson 2013, 2015).
[45] For a richer conception of a status, see Anderson (1999).

is enough that this minority gains a citizenship status within the state. For example, members of this minority group can gain some political entitlements or a right to vote. This conceptualisation may, or may not, include negative and internal aspects. For example, depending on the status, emancipation could guarantee a lack of arbitrary interference and facilitate the removal or gaining of internal features, like self-confidence or the feeling of belonging.

However, this thin conceptualisation of status is not by itself sufficient for the aims of this thesis. The status conceptualisation does not leave enough room for the personal conception of the good and personal choice which are important for this thesis insofar as the latter adopts some elements of liberalism (section 2 of this chapter). Hence, such thin conception does not fully capture the normative assumptions of this project specified in section 2 of this chapter. Furthermore, such thin conceptualisation does not guarantee that the status is consequential. For example, one can imagine that there is a minority group which gains a particular political status which give this group certain rights. However, the rights obtained can be illusionary or very limited. For example, citizens from countries of the former Soviet Bloc had guaranteed political rights, such as the right to vote in local elections or freedom to associate (Vaxberg 1989). However, these rights did not result in an opportunity to bring about consequential change in the wider political system, such as changing political elites.

**Emancipation as a Formal Opportunity**

The second meaning of emancipation refers to having, or acquiring, a set of opportunities. Emancipation as a formal opportunity focuses on the opportunities for influencing rules of collective life, where the emancipated group has the choice of taking these opportunities or not. However, this meaning of the concept of emancipation is not concerned with the agent's aims and goals. Here, one can imagine a minority group that has gained an opportunity to influence the rules regulating some aspect of collective life. For example, this group has gained the

opportunity to decide what will happen to the public school in the area where they live. Imagine this group has gained a say to decide whether their minority language will be taught at a local school. Following this meaning of emancipation, this group is emancipated because it has gained the opportunity to decide what will happen in the local school. According to this meaning of emancipation, this group will be emancipated regardless of whether or not they take up the opportunity, as long as their decision is reflected in the outcome.[46] It is possible to imagine that this group's aims and desires do not concern formal education or public schooling at all. For example, members of this minority group prefer and practice homeschooling.

The formal opportunities conceptualisation goes a step further than emancipation as a status. Here, emancipation means, first, that the person or group has opportunities to influence collective rules and, second, that their decision is consequential. Furthermore, it leaves room for the importance of personal choice, regarding whether a person or a group decides to take up formal opportunities. However, this meaning is still relatively thin as it does not ensure that the opportunity to influence the rules of collective life is something that they find important and valuable. In other words, this meaning of emancipation does not go far enough to guarantee that the opportunities available to the people are in line with their conception of the good. As such, this meaning of emancipation does not fully capture the liberal assumption of the importance and value of one's conception of the good.

### Emancipation as a Substantive Opportunity

Emancipation as a substantive opportunity develops the formal opportunity meaning of emancipation developed above but outlines that the opportunities available to individuals or groups must be in line with their aims and desires. Here, available opportunities need to be in line with the emancipated agent's motivations and desires to account for emancipation. To illustrate, it is possible, again, to imagine a minority

[46] Hence, this choice is neither dependent on permission, nor on the content of an option (see List 2004).

group which has been given the opportunity to decide about a language programme in a local school. However, this time, the school's future is important for the emancipated group. For example, this group has been actively lobbying for the introduction of their group's minority language to a local school. Emancipation understood as gaining or having substantive opportunities, contrary to the status or formal opportunity conceptualisations, does include the aims and desires of the emancipated person or group. As such, this meaning of the concept of emancipation follows the normative assumptions of liberalism for which one's conception of a good is of special value. As a result, I will apply this conception.

One can observe that this substantive opportunity conceptualisation reflects *agency freedom* as conceived by Amartya Sen (1985, 1992, 1999, 2001). In Sen's writings, *agency freedom* is part of a wider conception of what he calls 'development as freedom'. Development, for Sen, is focused on increasing the substantive freedoms that people can enjoy rather than increasing incomes, GNP or the modernisation of society and the economy (Sen 1999: 3). In turn, achieving development in this sense is dependent on individual agency. I now briefly describe Sen's conception of agency and its requirements.

Amartya Sen conceptualises *agency freedom* as a real opportunity to achieve a state of affairs one values and aims to achieve (Sen 1992).[47] To simplify the

[47] Here, I reconstruct Sen's approach. Sen writes that 'a person's position in a social arrangement can be judged in two different perspectives, viz. (1) the actual achievement, and (2) the freedom to achieve. Achievement is concerned with what we manage to accomplish, and freedom with the real opportunity that we have to accomplish what we value' (1992: 31). He then contrasts agency with well-being. 'A person's agency achievement refers to the realization of goals and values she has reasons to pursue, whether or not they are connected with her own well-being. (…) Corresponding to the distinction between agency achievement and well-being achievement, there is a differentiation also between a person's "agency freedom" and "well-being freedom". The former is one's freedom to bring about the achievements one values and which one attempts to produce, while the latter is one's freedom to achieve those things that are constitutive of one's well-being. It is the latter that is best reflected by a person's capability set, for reasons already discussed, while the former – agency freedom – would have to be seen in broader terms, including aspects of states of affairs that relate to one's agency objectives' (Sen 1992: 56-7). Here I exchange the freedom to bring about the achievements one values with the earlier definition of freedom to achieve. Hence, *agency freedom* can be defined as the real opportunity to accomplish a set of achievements or bring about a state of affairs one values. See also Sen's Dewey Lectures, especially the third lecture (Sen 1985).

argument, from now on, I refer to *agency freedom* as *agency* simpliciter.[48] Here, I assume that a person is an agent in respect of certain states of affairs *if, and only if,* these are in line with the agent's goals and values and the agent has a real opportunity to achieve them. Agency for Sen is connected to a real opportunity to realise one's aims and goals. It does not, however, mean 'that anything that appeals to him must, for that reason, come into the accounting of his agency' (Sen 1985: 204). Agency is not connected to an individual's impulses or urges (Sen 1992: 56). Rather, agents need to assess and judge their aims and goals according to their own values, obligations and desires. Agency in its full meaning requires the process of judging and evaluating these aims with reference to one's *conception of the good.* In other words, agency requires reasoned judgement. Sen defines the scope of these real opportunities as sets of state of affairs which are available to an agent (Sen 1985, 1992). This availability means that realisation of a given state of affairs is conditional only on an agent choosing it or on the agent's counterfactual choice.[49] In other words, opportunities towards these sets of alternatives are content- and context-independent.[50]

To conclude, I define emancipation as having or gaining agency in Sen's terms. One can notice that this definition emphasises a *positive external* aspect of emancipation but also cuts across other aspects. More precisely, for effective agency one needs to be able to exercise reasoned judgement and have a real opportunity to realise the state of affairs that one values. This opportunity, in turn, requires both positive possibilities as well as the absence of conditions which could hinder these opportunities. Following my analysis of political emancipation (as opposed to

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[48] Sen clarifies that an agent is 'someone who acts and brings about the change and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives criteria' (1999: 19). Agency, in general terms, can be seen as the ability to act and bring about such change (Schlosser 2015). In turn, for Sen, the scope of this ability, of exercising agency, is defined by the scope of *agency freedom*.

[49] The notion of a counterfactual choice means that Sen's definition of agency can account for *unchosen* states of affairs which are in line with the agent's conception of the good because they nevertheless *would* have been chosen by the agent under a counterfactual scenario.

[50] Content-independency means that the options available to an agent can be chosen, regardless of their content. If an availability of an option is conditional on the content, then this particular option does not belong to the set of options described by the agency freedom. Pettit's (2000) contribution to Sen's account shows that there is another condition of agency freedom, namely permit-independence. For Pettit (2000), this means that a particular option needs to be available to the agent unconditionally from some third-person good will or permission. List (2004) formally shows that Sen's understanding of freedom, as opposed to capability, also includes context-independence.

emancipation *simpliciter*), I can now define political emancipation as having or gaining political agency regarding the rules of collective life and regarding its influence on one's preferences and conception of the good. As such, I have narrowed down the notion of political emancipation and defined it as gaining or having political agency. In chapter 4 I offer a more precise operationalisation of political agency in workable conditions.[51]

## 3.4. On the Connection of Complex Equality and Political Agency

In this thesis, I have assumed that any notions of democracy need to reflect an *egalitarian* arrangement (see Harrison 1993). Consequently, the conception of emancipatory democracy I am developing in this chapter has an egalitarian component and assumes that the promotion of agency is realised in some conditions of equality. In this section, I argue that the social conditions of *complex equality* are necessary for the achievement of political agency. Therefore, I suggest, emancipatory democracy requires complex equality. The achievement of complex equality satisfies the requirement of an egalitarian component of democracy. In this section, I introduce the concept of complex equality and, then, explain its connection to political agency.

Michael Walzer (1983) introduces the notion of complex equality as part of his wider conception of justice. Walzer starts his argument with the claim that any society is necessarily pluralistic in terms of goods that ought to be a matter of distribution. Hence, there exist various goods that people value and which are distributed in various ways in society. For example, such goods can refer to money, political power, affection and honour. Walzer argues that all such goods are actually *social goods* (1983: 8), meaning that they are created and conceived by members of the given society who also, in the process, create the meanings of these goods. Hence, the meanings and the worthiness of the social goods are a result of social

[51] In particular, see section 4.1.

construction, of how members of the given society refer to the goods and what meanings they attach to them. Further, it is the social meaning of any good that dictates its rule or criterion of distribution. For example, Walzer argues that in a modern, Western society, love and affection have a very specific meaning, and each have their own, autonomous, rules of distribution. Trying to buy love would undermine its value. It implies that social goods and their distribution will most likely differ depending on time and context. This is because social goods and their meanings are products of particular societies at particular points in time.

Walzer (1983: 10) further observes that in many societies one good, or one set of goods, dictates or strongly constrains the distribution of other social goods. This means that this good or set of goods is dominant and that it shapes or provides access to other social goods. The good in question is often monopolised, which means that it is held by certain individuals or a group in a way that enables domination. For example, in a feudal society, it was a social position that dictated the distribution of other social goods, like privilege, political power and even affection. In a feudal society, the chosen group could use its social position in a way that enabled domination and the gaining of other social goods. In a capitalist society, it is often money that enables this. For Walzer, such societies are not just. However, he argues, the way to offer a better, more just society is not to target the monopoly and simply to redistribute the dominant social good. Such a single rule of distribution, in his opinion, does not exist. Instead, he argues that in just societies, relations between different spheres of social goods are regulated by conditions of complex equality. Complex equality is achieved when 'different people get ahead in each of the various spheres of distribution' but crucially 'they are unable to convert their advantages from one sphere into another' (Miller and Walzer 1995: 2). This can be contrasted with simple equality that 'holds that equality requires equal possession or enjoyment of some advantage x' (Miller 1995: 197). In conditions of complex equality, the monopoly may exist in a way that there may be groups having a higher share of one of the resources. However, this society is just insofar as those privileged in respect of one good will not be able to use it to gain privilege in respect of other social goods.

In a just society, all the goods should be distributed according to their own rule of distribution, which should be determined by the wider social meaning of this particular good. Therefore, in a just society, rules of distribution are separate from each other. As such, complex equality renders domination impossible.

In this thesis, I will employ *complex equality* as a description of social conditions and not as a measurement or aim of justice.[52] I assume that for complex equality to hold, possession of one social good cannot enable the gaining of advantage regarding other social goods. In this sense, following Walzer, complex equality requires relatively autonomous social goods with their separate rules of distribution shaped by their meaning. The reason for incorporating complex equality into this thesis is that it makes political agency, in the way defined by Sen, possible. In other words, complex equality is a necessary condition for political agency.

To explain this conditionality, consider a society in which there is no complex equality. Lack of complex equality entails that members of the given society can use their privilege regarding one sphere of life to gain privilege in other spheres. It also means that they can use their standing to gain privilege in the political sphere and enjoy a disproportionate influence on the rules of collective life. For example, it can mean that those with the highest earnings will be able to dictate political norms. Indeed, it may happen that they will not be interested in engaging in political life or in using their financial advantage for political influence. However, the mere possibility of this limits the political agency of other members of society. More precisely, the political agency of members of the society in the absence of complex equality is conditional on the privileged members not using their advantage to dictate the rules of collective life. In other words, in a society characterised by a lack of complex equality, members' political agency is not context-independent.

The argument above justifies why emancipatory democracy can only be achieved in circumstances of complex equality. Is it enough to call emancipatory democracy an egalitarian arrangement? In an egalitarian political arrangement, there

[52] Hence I will set aside Walzer's assumptions about the bounded character of political communities and the claim of community being in itself a social good (1983: 29).

exists an equal distribution of political capabilities. These political capabilities can refer to power, rights or votes. In my conception of democracy, political capabilities refer to political agency. A social condition of complex equality does not prescribe exactly how capabilities in the political sphere should be distributed. Walzer (1983: 304) argues that political capabilities should be distributed among those affected by the force of a more persuasive argument. It means that in the conditions of complex equality, there may be inequalities in political capabilities. There will be people who are more or less skilful in using argumentation. However, such conditions still describe an egalitarian arrangement. In conditions of complex equality, as Walzer argues, 'it is not the power that is shared but the opportunities and occasions for power' (1983: 310). Because of a lack of ability to use resources like money or heritage, or any other social good, to gain political influence or power, all members of the polity are treated as equal in their standing for competing on the force of better arguments if the conditions of complex equality hold.

To summarise, emancipatory democracy requires complex equality. The conditionality of emancipatory democracy on complex equality illustrates further the multifaceted nature of the notion of political emancipation I am using in this thesis. Political agency, and in what follows political emancipation, requires a lack of ability of some members of society to use their advantage to dominate the others. As such, political emancipation defined as gaining or having political agency relies on two – positive and negative – facets of the concept of emancipation.

## *3.5. Emancipatory Democracy Revised*

To recap, this chapter seeks to offer a conception of democracy that strives towards human emancipation. Due to the fact that the current literature is not clear about what emancipation means (Ray 1993: viii), I have undertaken a conceptual analysis. I then argued for an understanding of political emancipation as having or acquiring political agency in Sen's interpretation of agency. I also explained that complex equality is a condition of political agency, and, in what follows, of political

emancipation too. In order to reflect this analysis, I have arrived at a conception of emancipatory democracy. Here, a polity is a democracy if, and only if,

> *its system of collective decision-making which regulates the rules of collective life is organised so as to promote political agency for each of its members in conditions of complex equality.*

Emancipatory democracy needs to be further specified in terms of its institutional arrangements. This conception is not focused on the nation-state or its legal framework. By focusing on, simply, political agency as a substantive opportunity to influence any rules of collective life, this conception enables the assessment of prospects for democracy in amorphous polities. Finally, this conception does not prescribe precise institutions or procedures that the polity needs to have to be called democratic. In principle, any institutions, procedures and normative ideals can be democratic so long as they are in line with members' aims and desires. Emancipatory democracy enables members of the polity to choose how they want to be governed. As such, this conception also realises some of the wider aims of critical theory, such as facilitating emancipation from indirect domination by ideological systems (see Hammond 2018).

Before moving to the application of the conception of emancipatory democracy, I address two potential sources of criticism: my reliance on ethical individualism and complex equality.

Let's start with concerns regarding ethical individualism. For example, Young argues that within theories relying on ethical individualism, there is no place for acknowledging the value that group belonging provides (1990: 42-48). For Young, it is group belonging that is a source of individual identity and that enables individuals to understand the world around them (ibidem). Young accuses political theorists that relying on individualism of treating their subjects as 'autonomous, unified, free, and self-made, standing apart from history affiliations' (Young 1990: 45). Similarly, Leonie Sandercock argues that individualistic theoretical approaches are 'fundamentally flawed in failing to recognize and address systemic inequalities' (2003:

191). However, I argue next, my conception of emancipatory democracy can address their concerns.

First, I assume that individual agency can be reconciled with considering groups or communities as valuable in social and political life. Here, Will Kymlicka (1995) offers a particularly convincing account of how group belonging complements individual freedoms and abilities. Kymlicka argues that individual choice is 'dependent on the presence of societal culture, defined by language and history' (1995: 8). Further, Kymlicka argues that there is no tension between valuing individual and endorsing group rights, as long as the social groups respect individual freedoms (1995: 75-76). At the same time, a liberal focus on individuals, and their rights, is in tension with the practices of those groups which limit the rights of their members in the name of, e.g., 'group solidarity or cultural purity' (1995: 7). Kymlicka names those limitations as 'internal restrictions' (1995: 35). Similarly, individual agency, in my understanding, is not incoherent with group belonging or the value that this belonging provides. To the contrary, in order to exercise individual agency, one needs to be able to access the societal culture and meaning that belonging to a group provides. In particular, in order to exercise agency, a person needs to assess and judge their aims and goals according to their own values, obligations and desires (see section 3.3 of this thesis). It is, usually, group belonging and societal culture in which individuals seek the source of these values, obligations and desires. Further, I also agree with Kymlicka that internal restrictions are undesirable. Internal restrictions, imposed by the group on an individual, would be in tension with emancipatory democracy. In my understanding, one cannot exercise individual agency if their group limits their ability to do so.

My reliance on agency also responds to the concerns of Sandercock (2003). As I will argue later in this thesis, systemic inequality hinders individual agency (see section 6.1). Contrary to Sandercock's concerns regarding liberal approaches, my conception of agency is not in tension with the assumption that all humans are culturally embedded. Here, Sandercock argues that 'we grow up in a culturally structured world, we are deeply shaped by it and necessarily view the world from

within a specific culture' (2003: 102). However, in my interpretation, cultural belonging and identity provide a basis for choosing the state of affairs that one values and has reason to value. As such, individual agency is not in tension with group belonging.

The second potential criticism towards the conception of emancipatory democracy concerns the application of complex equality. Most famously, Richard Arneson argues that there remains very little actual equality in Walzer's conception (Arneson 1995: 226). Arneson starts with the observation that if one follows Walzer's focus on non-domination, then any distribution within autonomous spheres would be just, even if that distribution is highly unequal (1995: 239). Consequently, Arneson argues, complex equality allows for inequalities between the richer and poor and does not target the way such inequalities translate into differences in life opportunities (1995: 232). Further, Arneson is concerned that, following the rules of complex equality, those who do have advantages in some spheres of distribution, still may have an advantage in other spheres, even if spheres of distributions are entirely autonomous (1995: 233-236). From now on, I will refer to this situation as 'pre-eminence' of a social group. This happens, for example, when members of the wealthiest group are also the best educated and the most acknowledged but they do not use their wealth to achieve education or social acknowledgment. Finally, Arneson argues that focus on complex equality may obstruct some of the political projects that aim to establish more egalitarian conditions, for example, affirmative action (1995: 235). Affirmative action here provides a specific treatment to members of underprivileged groups, for example regarding access to education or employment. All these concerns lead Arneson to reject complex equality as an egalitarian arrangement.

I have a two-fold response to Arneson's (1995) concerns. The first is that in this thesis I employ complex equality as a condition of democracy, but not as a basis of a theory of justice.[53] Consequently, following the conception of emancipatory democracy, differences in political influence, under certain conditions, will be

[53] Indeed, complex equality is not enough to constitute a substantive theory of social justice.

democratic. However, following my conception, such differences are democratic if they result from agents' preferences regarding what the agents value and have reason to value. Such inequalities would not be democratic if they were a result of other factors, for example wealth, beauty or group belonging. Consequently, inequalities of wealth that translate into inequalities of political opportunities are a concern for the conception of democracy I develop in this thesis. In that sense, the conception of emancipatory democracy does not lose sight of the value of human equality, regardless of group belonging or background. However, I acknowledge the second aspect of Arneson's critique which concerns the risk of pre-eminence. Consequently, I operationalise complex equality as relying on a plurality of social goods, non-domination and lack of pre-eminence (see section 4.1).

To summarise, this chapter sets out the theoretical foundations for thinking about democracy in a way that goes beyond what is presented by existing definitions of democracy. For this reason, it is a key chapter in the present thesis. In the next chapter, I investigate further how emancipatory democracy can be utilised in assessing real-life decision-making.

# 4. Sites of Emancipatory Democracy

In this chapter, I provide an analytical framework for assessing real-life arrangements from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. To recall, so far I have established a normative conception of democracy that focuses on the value of political emancipation. In this chapter, I operationalise this conception by identifying several conditions which can guide the assessment of real-life democratic arrangements. Furthermore, I provide specific examples of how actual decision-making can be assessed according to these conditions.

By converting a normative conception of democracy into empirically-oriented conditions, I follow what I call a *method of operationalisation*. This method is successfully applied to a large body of literature focused on empirical applications of normative theories or democratisation of new or unconventional sites of decision-making (e.g. Dryzek and Niemeyer 2010; Koenig-Archibugi 2012; Levi et al. 2014; Moravcsik 2004; Zweifel 2006).[54] The method of operationalisation follows an assumption that 'any democratic metric derived from ideal theory must, therefore, be "calibrated" in order to assess whether the current arrangements are the best that are feasible under "real-world" circumstances' (Moravcsik 2004: 337). Furthermore, it applies a 'domestic analogy' (Koenig-Archibugi 2012: 163) between these new sites and better known and well-studied democratic sites. The analogy works by the assumption that new sites, such as the international arena, are similar in some respects to better known and studied ones, for example a domestic site of a nation-state. Hence, if something holds true on a domestic level, it can also hold true on the international level (see Suganami 1989). This body of literature looks at the core claims and empirical consequences of given normative theories of democracy and, on

[54] Dryzek and Niemeyer (2010) analyse governance networks from the perspective of a normative conception of deliberative democracy. In turn, Moravcsik (2004) and Koenig-Archibugi (2012) analyse the possibility of democratising the European Union and the global arena, respectively. Zweifel (2006), similarly to Levi et al. (2014), analyses several international organisations.

the basis of analogies, investigates how different democratic sites will perform in light of these core claims. To illustrate this method, Thomas Zweifel (2006: 18) creates an analytical framework for evaluating transnational democracy based on normative theories of delegation and agency. This analytical framework is based on multiple dimensions according to which Zweifel (2006) further assesses decision-making within particular international organisations. Similarly, in this chapter, I establish an analytical framework for assessing sites of decision-making from the perspective of emancipatory democracy based on several emancipatory conditions. I also analyse how particular sites of decision-making will perform in relation to these conditions.

This chapter proceeds as follows. I start by establishing an analytical framework for assessing real-life democratic sites via a selection of conditions of emancipatory democracy. These conditions are based on the normative conception of democracy introduced in chapter 3. More precisely, I identify conditions of reasoned judgement, choice, counterfactual choice, and achievement as conditions of political agency. Further, I identify the existence of one social good, integrated distribution and pre-eminence as conditions that undermine complex equality. In order to provide a rigorous analytical framework for the assessment of real-life governance, I propose a typology of the most commonly discussed democratic polities. In particular, I investigate social groups, nation-states, local administrative units, international organisations, governance networks and the global arena.[55] I further illustrate the applicability of the framework and chosen conditions by assessing real-life examples from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. The final section concludes.

## *4.1. An Analytical Framework for Emancipatory Democracy*

This section provides an analytical framework for assessing real-life decision-making from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. The aim is to establish clear and

[55] I define each of these polities in section 4 of this chapter.

parsimonious conditions which will guide such an assessment. Just to recall, I have argued that a polity is a democracy if, and only if,

> *its system of collective decision-making which regulates the rules of collective life is organised so as to promote political agency for each of its members in conditions of complex equality.*

Here, *political agency* refers to the substantive opportunity to influence the rules of collective life in line with what each member of the polity values and has reasons to value. Furthermore, political agency requires members' ability to control the influence of these rules on their preferences and conceptions of the good.

It is possible to analyse real-life social and political arrangements from the perspective of emancipatory democracy by analysing the extent to which institutional arrangements in a given polity promote political agency for each of its members in conditions of complex equality. A polity can be assessed by analysing the extent to which it promotes *reasoned judgement, choice, counterfactual choice,* and *achievement* for each of its members in conditions of *complex equality*. These conditions are based on the requirements of political agency in Sen's understanding (inter alia: 1985, 1999; 2001), assumptions about a wide scope of 'the political', and assumptions about an egalitarian nature of democracy (see chapter 3). I now discuss each of these conditions and provide examples of institutional arrangements that can satisfy them.

**Operationalisation of Political Agency**

The first three conditions of emancipatory democracy are conditions for political agency.[56] Political agency, following Sen, depends on conditions which can be conceptualised in terms of the following desiderata:

**(A)** ***Reasoned Judgement*** – Members use reasoned scrutiny to assess or create rules of collective life.

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[56] This is my own conceptualisation, not Sen's. Hence, it is an interpretation.

**(B)** ***Choice*** – Members of the polity select which rules are implemented from the rules created or assessed by their reasoned scrutiny.

**(B')** ***Counterfactual Choice*** – Members of the polity do not select the rules, but they would choose the given rules if in a position of a chooser *and* for the same reasons.

**(C)** ***Achievement*** – Selected rules are implemented.

Let's assume that political agency will be labelled as *y*. Following Sen, *y* can be interpreted as:

$$y = A \wedge (B \vee B') \wedge C$$

It means that conditions of (A) reasoned judgement, (B) choice or (B') counterfactual choice, and (C) achievement are singly necessary and jointly sufficient for political agency. Note that either choice or counterfactual choice may count as a condition for political agency. Let me explain these conditions further.

### (A) *Reasoned Judgement*

To satisfy a condition of reasoned judgement, members need to use reasoned scrutiny to assess or create rules of collective life. In order to understand how this condition can be satisfied, it is helpful to recall Sen's understanding of reasoned scrutiny. For Sen, reasoned scrutiny means 'to subject one's choices to the demands of reason' (2002: 4). At the same time, Sen does not provide more specific conditions of what this precisely requires other than self-reflection on what a member has a reason to value or want. This way of conceptualising reasoned scrutiny leaves freedom to decide on what one values or wants. As such, it is a condition which does not have clear and testable measurements and depends on the members of the polity itself. At the same time, it does not mean 'that anything that appeals to him [a person

– MW] must, for that reason, come into the accounting' (Sen 1985: 204). Reasoned scrutiny is not connected to an impulse or an urge a person happens to have (Sen 1992: 56). Sen (2002: 50) also notes that it is unrealistic to demand constant reasoned scrutiny for every single decision. As a result, people must also rely on wider social rules or past experiences. This, in turn, requires opportunities to revise past decisions regarding rules of collective life.

Reasoned judgement also requires members' ability to control the influence of these rules on their preferences and conceptions of the good. I will refer to this aspect of reasoned judgement as the *independence of self*. This condition follows from how I have defined the sphere of 'the political' and being an agent regarding this sphere. More precisely, being an agent regarding 'the political' requires an ability to control the influence of the rules of collective life on one's own preferences. This ability is essential for exercising reasoned scrutiny and assessing what one has reasons to value or want.

Since reasoned scrutiny depends on members of the polity itself, their self-independence and their own reasoning, institutional arrangements cannot guarantee or impose the condition of reasoned judgement. Such guarantee or imposition would go against the notion of rationality as originating in and being judged by members themselves. However, it is possible to analyse whether a given institutional design provides room and resources for polity members to engage in reasoned scrutiny. It is also possible to assess whether institutional arrangements provide effective mechanisms to revise implemented rules of collective life. For example, certain institutional arrangements – such as free and open education, provision of relevant and reliable information or creating room for formal or informal deliberations across the polity – can enhance opportunities for exercising reasoned judgement. Institutional arrangements to revise existing rules of collective life that would create opportunities for legal amendments to existing rules, or a forum for discussion and reflection on existing rules, are examples of institutional arrangements that enable the revision of established rules. It is also possible to observe institutional arrangements which violate a condition of reasoned judgement, for example arrangements that

require impulsive decision-making, or those that coerce, mislead or indoctrinate members of the polity. For example, propaganda and the sharing of false information before elections can be an example of institutional arrangements which deliberately violate a condition of reasoned judgement.

### (B) *Choice* and (B') *Counterfactual Choice*

Satisfaction of the condition of choice requires that the rules of collective life are selected by the members of the polity. Counterfactual choice requires that some rules are selected because members would have selected them had they been in a position of choice. More precisely, a choice by a third party can count as part of agency if the member in question 'would choose them and for that exact reason' (Sen 1992: 65). This means that Sen's definition of a member A's agency accounts for states of affairs not chosen by A, which are in line with A's conception of the good and because A nevertheless *would* have chosen this state of affairs (under the assumption that A would have reflected on the given matter).

While the choice or counterfactual choice can be facilitated by various institutional arrangements, these arrangements cannot impose force or coercion (Sen 1987: 57). Here, relevant institutional arrangements that satisfy these conditions can include voting, voicing preferences or engagement of a trusted proxy. An example of an institutional violation of the condition of choice would be a dictatorship, in which members are not able to select rules of collective life or to voice them. An example of an institutional arrangement that violates the condition of counterfactual choice would be a representative who selects the rules of collective life for the member regardless of what the member, upon reflection, would have chosen.

### (C) ***Achievement***

Satisfaction of this condition requires that the rules of collective life selected, or counterfactually selected, by members are indeed implemented.[57] Here, the implementation of rules cannot be dependent on what rules the members have chosen, or on some external acceptance or permit. In other words, the options available to members need to be content- and context-independent. This means that the set of alternatives is not dependent on anything else: luck, choice content or permission.[58]

Institutional arrangements satisfying the condition of achievement would guarantee collective life under the rules selected by *each* member of the polity. However, in conditions of pluralism, this is a highly demanding condition.[59] To illustrate, imagine a situation that arises when individual members have each selected different rules of collective life, and yet a simple majority is applied to achieve a social choice result. Imagine that this social choice result is further implemented. In this situation, only those individuals who selected the rules supported by the majority have their choices implemented. In a situation of diverse preferences combined with the application of the majoritarian method of aggregation of preferences, implementation of individual preferences is *de facto* content-dependent.

In order to account for this problem, it is possible to differentiate between:

***Weak achievement*** – Selected social choice preference towards the rules of collective life is implemented.

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[57] Sen calls satisfaction of these conditions 'realised agency success' in the case of personal selection or 'instrumental agency success' in the case of a hypothetical choice (1992: 57-8). Sen also writes about choice but no achievement – sometimes an agent attaches a value to the process despite not achieving the state of affairs. While such a state is not part of agency success, it can have some importance for general freedom.

[58] Pettit's (2000) contribution to Sen's account argues that there is another condition of agency freedom, namely permit-independence, and List (2004) formally shows that this is the case.

[59] On this and several paradoxes of aggregating preferences and judgements, see List (2011).

***Strong achievement*** – Each individual's preference towards the rules of collective life is implemented.

This differentiation can help us in thinking about institutional designs that satisfy or violate these conditions. An institutional design satisfying weak achievement will implement the results of any chosen egalitarian decision-making procedure. An institutional design which violates this condition ignores the social choice preference of the members of the polity. A good illustration would be a political system that fails to acknowledge the result of an election. Other examples could include a decision-making procedure whose agenda is controlled, and cannot be changed by members of the polity (content-independence violation), or a procedure in which implementation of a selected decision is dependent on the acceptance by an external body or agent (context-independence violation).

Strong achievement is much more challenging to satisfy. The only situation in which each individual preference is the same as the social choice result is that of unanimous preferences and consensus. It is possible to aim for and achieve unanimity in small fora, which are not porous and whose members trust each other, or in a case of emergency.[60] The condition of strong achievement could be, in principle, satisfied by a prescribed division of tasks between individuals. In other words, each individual could be assigned as a 'dictator' for some aspects of a polity. However, such institutional design, would not satisfy previously discussed conditions of choice and counterfactual choice.

## Operationalisation of Complex Equality

The final condition of emancipatory democracy refers to *complex equality*. Complex equality is a necessary condition of political agency and reflects the egalitarian component of the concept of democracy. At the same time, the condition of equality

[60] The potential institutional design, which would not fully satisfy the strong achievement condition but would move towards it, could create several avenues through which individual preferences towards the rules of collective life could be implemented. Hence, some of the preferences could be implemented as formal rules, others as informal, in various aspects within the polity.

follows the egalitarian understanding of agency in Sen's wider ideal of a good political system (Sen 1992). Furthermore, complex equality is important for my conception of democracy since it grounds political agency (section 3.4).

The condition of complex equality refers to the social circumstances within the polity and the way in which social goods are distributed. Due to the pluralistic nature of this condition, complex equality is best conceptualised as a set of negative conditions (see Miller and Walzer 1995: 285). Therefore, complex equality does *not* hold if any one of the following conditions obtains:

a. ***One Social Good*** – there exists only one social good within the polity.

If in a given polity there is only one social good that is worth distribution, complex equality does not hold. For example, if income is the only good that is important for all the members of a given society, complex equality does not exist. This condition refers to Walzer's assumption that any society is necessarily pluralistic in terms of the social goods which are important for members of this society.

b. ***Integrated Distribution*** – ownership of one (or some) social goods enable gaining an advantage regarding other social goods.

If possession of some social good enables an advantage to be gained in respect of other social goods, then complex equality does not hold. This could be illustrated by feudal societies in which one's status at birth enabled the gaining of power, love, and even, allegedly, divine grace.

c. ***Pre-eminence*** – even if the rules of distribution are separated, it still happens that it is the same person or group that holds most of several (or all) valued social goods.

Finally, if it happens that there is the same person or group that is advantaged regarding several social goods, then complex equality does not hold. Pre-eminence can happen even if distributions are not necessarily correlated. For example, it can *happen* that, contingently, there is a group within the given society that happens to be advantaged in several spheres despite their members' intentions or actions. Hence it may happen that members of this group have the highest income, they are the most acknowledged and most desired. This situation does not reflect conditions of complex equality (see Miller and Walzer 1995: 283, and section 3.5).

The above three conditions allow us to analyse actual polities from the perspective of complex equality. If no social good, person or group of people are dominant and the distributive rules for the different social goods are not correlated, then complex equality holds.

**Operationalisation of Emancipatory Democracy Summary**

In this section, I have provided conditions which can guide an assessment of real-life political arrangements from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. Hence, I have discussed conditions for agency, namely *reasoned judgement*, *choice*, *counterfactual choice and achievement*. I have also discussed conditions that are against *complex equality*. I have provided examples of institutional arrangements that fulfil these conditions and examples of arrangements that violate them. I will treat these conditions as a tool with which to assess and compare real-life arrangements. Hence, each of these conditions can be realised to a greater or a lesser degree. This allows a comparison between the particular polities and can guide the direction of institutional change. In the next section, I introduce the concept of *types of polities* and provide a typology of the most common types. Further, I provide examples of real-life polities across all the types and analyse them from the perspective of emancipatory democracy.

## *4.2. Types of Polities*

So far, I have operationalised the normative conception of emancipatory democracy into empirically-oriented conditions. These conditions can now be applied to the assessment of real-life settings. However, the social world is a complex phenomenon and real-life decision-making can be influenced by a variety of factors. This, in turn, poses challenges to the assessment of particular decision-making sites. In order to undertake the assessment in a rigorous manner, I now introduce a notion of *types of polities*. Types of polities, despite differences relating to specific socio-political arrangements, have several core similarities. These core characteristics, I argue, facilitate the assessment of real-life arrangements from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. Hence, in this section, I propose a taxonomy of different types of polities. This taxonomy can act as a point of comparison with existing democratic sites and, as a result, it can guide the democratic assessment of new or unconventional sites.

To recall, I define a polity as:

> ***Polity*** – a site of decision-making that regulates itself by the use of collective rules (formal and informal).

Now, it is possible to investigate whether different polities are more or less democratic. For example, one can investigate how democratic the European Union (EU) is, or the United Kingdom (UK) or even London. Polities can be embedded in one another, or overlap, but it is possible to distinguish their boundaries conceptually. For instance, London is a part of a bigger polity of the UK and (at the time of writing) the EU. An example of partially overlapping polities could be the EU and NATO. It is also possible to establish more general *types of polities* which, despite having differences, will have some core similarities. These differences refer to actual socio-political arrangements in place. Hence, the UK and Zimbabwe are both examples of a type of polity called *state*, despite them having substantive socio-political differences.

The current literature on democracy is broadly engaged in the assessment of different types of democratic polities. The most commonly analysed types include social groups, the state, local administrative units, governance networks, international organisations and global governance.[61] The list is not exhaustive; the types listed above are only those most frequently discussed in the literature.[62] In this section, I investigate whether the characteristics of different types of polities will influence their assessment from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. At this stage, I am interested in the characteristics of types and not of particular examples of polities. Hence, I will look at the characteristics *across* the types of polities, not *within* them. Here, I suggest that the following characteristics, across the types of polities, influence democratic assessment: the character of direct decision-makers and the character of those in whose interests' decisions are being made, the porosity of the polity, sovereignty, distance between decision-makers and those in whose interests the decision-making is undertaken, and, finally, the complexity of the collective decision-making.

The first characteristic concerns the character of the so-called direct *decision-makers* and the character of those in whose interest the decisions are being made, namely the *members* of the polity. Sometimes these two groups have the same membership, for example in small social groups. However, with increasing size, many of the polities rely on representation instead of direct decision-making by its members. Representation means that the membership of the group of direct decision-makers is not exactly the same as that of the polity, although usually membership of these groups overlaps. From the perspective of emancipatory democracy, representation can pose obstacles for the realisation of the political agency of the polity's members. More precisely, the selection of the rules of collective life through representatives contributes to members' political agency if, and only if, the members (upon reflection) would have chosen these rules too and for the

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[61] For a detailed definition of these types, see the following section 4.3. Different Polities Though the Lens of Emancipatory Democracy.

[62] For example, there is an emerging literature on the possible democratic assessment of corporations, but since this literature is still under development, I have set aside this type of polity.

same reasons. As such, it is a challenging condition to be realised in the case of political representation.

The porosity of the polity refers to the control of members over changing membership. Low porosity reflects the ability to control who can join and leave the membership of the polity. In turn, high porosity reflects the inability of members to control changing membership. With globalisation and technological development, such as affordable air travel, polities with traditionally lower porosity, like states, have become much more porous (Leydet 2014; Zweifel 2006: 11). Higher porosity can pose challenges for institutional design that seeks to promote the political agency of its members. This is because it is more difficult to promote political agency if the membership is changing and the number, character, identity or values of members are unknown.

The third characteristic refers to the character of the authority of the polity. The polity can be sovereign, that is, it can be the 'supreme authority within a territory' (Philpott 2016). Since the Treaty of Westphalia, sovereignty was an exclusive characteristic of the nation-states (see Held 1995: 73-98). However, at present, modern states' exclusive power over their territory is weakened, while new sites and bodies are gaining more powers (Held 1995: 135).[63] Hence, a polity's authority can also overlap with other bodies or be subordinate. Lack of sovereignty means that members' political agency is limited, or, more precisely, that the achievement of their choices is not content-independent. In a situation of a lack of sovereignty, selected rules of collective life need to be accepted by the supreme authority within the particular area in order to be implemented. As such, the character of the authority of the polity (or a group) is consequential for the political agency of its members.

The fourth characteristic of the types of polities refers to the distance between the decision-makers and members of the polity. In its simplest form, distance refers to the lack of physical proximity between direct decision-makers and the members, if membership of these groups is different. The problem of such

[63] Most notably, the EU or intra-national corporations (see Zweifel 2006: 5-30).

distance can be illustrated by the first British Colonies in North America whose interests were decided on in Westminster. As Burke notes, representation stretching along two sides of the Atlantic was simply not possible (Burke 1775). Currently, thanks to the development of technology, physical distance is less of a challenge (Levi et al. 2014: 7). Another form of distance can refer to the lack of direct communication and accountability between the decision-makers and members. Such institutional distance can be illustrated by some of the international organisations, in which the decision-makers (officials) are not directly accountable to members in whose interest they make decisions. Distance can diminish the political agency of members of a given polity. More precisely, the greater the distance, the smaller the possibility of a choice, and the higher the possibility of distorted transmission of information between members and decision-makers. At the same time, greater proximity does not guarantee choice or counterfactual choice; that said, more distance makes such choice harder to achieve.

The final characteristic refers to complexity. Complexity is a feature of systemic decision-making in which interactions are not linear (Jervis 1997). Such decision-making can produce delayed or unintended outcomes. Furthermore, complex interactions between members are often affected by the relations of members with other actors. Complexity influences agency negatively because the consequences of actions and choices in complex systems are difficult to predict. Furthermore, the behaviour of individual actors in complex systems is hard to regulate. Decision-makers 'can rarely be fully constrained and will react in ways that those who seek to influence them are unlikely to foresee or desire' (Jervis 1997: 91). This lack of control challenges the exercise of agency in complex, larger polities, in which decision-making on the rules of collective life is facilitated via the representatives.

These characteristics and their distribution across the types of polities are described in Table 2 below. On the horizontal line, I have included different types of polities, and on the vertical line, I have included characteristics which, among others, influence assessment of the site from the perspective of emancipatory democracy.

| | ***Social Group*** | ***State*** | ***Local administrative unit (urban or rural polity)*** | ***IOs*** | ***Governance Networks*** | ***Global Level*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Who are the decision-makers*** | Members | Representatives and/or citizens | Representatives and inhabitants | States | Mixed: public, semi-public and private participants | Different models[64] |
| ***Members*** | Individual members | Citizens | Inhabitants | Citizens of the states | Citizens or inhabitants of relevant units | All people[65] |
| ***Porosity*** | Low | Increasing | Low to medium | Low | High[66] | Depends on the model adopted |
| ***Character of the authority*** | Subordinate | Sovereign | Depends on the type of state | Subordinate[67] | Limited by the external frameworks | Depends on the model adopted |
| ***Distance*** | Usually small | Medium to large | Small-medium-large | Large | Large | Large |
| ***Complexity*** | Low | Rising | Depends on the polity | High | High | High |

Table 2. Typology of different types of polities

This typology provides guidance for the analysis of new or amorphous sites of decision-making from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. More precisely, if a polity in question has similar characteristics to the types identified in Table 2 (above), one can expect that this polity will perform similarly in terms of

[64] Global governance is still under development but there is already a rich literature suggesting models of what it could look like if it is ever to be realised. More precisely, core models include voluntary associations of states, a world government, and global governance in a combination of state and non-state actors. For more on this, see Achibugi et al. (2012).
[65] Sometimes also future generations.
[66] Members can come and go as they wish. However, Sørensen and Torfing (2007) show that networks need not be open in character.
[67] An exception is the EU, which has some scope of sovereignty.

emancipatory democracy. However, such an assessment can also be affected by the actual socio-political arrangements and circumstances of the polity. These include, but are not limited to, the diversity of members, their social norms, accountability of decision-makers, modes of decision-making, the financial situation of the members and others. These circumstances refer to characteristics *within* the types. Hence, in order to undertake the assessment of new or unconventional sites in a rigorous way, I first propose comparing them with types of polities as identified in Table 2. Second, I suggest zooming in on and investigating the particular socio-economic arrangements in place. In the next section, I provide several examples of such two-tier analysis.

## 4.3. *Different Polities Through the Lens of Emancipatory Democracy*

In this section, I apply the typology of different types of polities (see Table 2 above) to analyse actual polities from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. In order to do so, I analyse decision-making in two exemplary social groups, as well as a state, an international organisation, and an example of a governance network. These polities have been chosen on account of their importance in the literature on democracy and because they offer interesting challenges to democratic governance.

### A Social Group

Scott and Marshall (2014) define a social group as 'a number of individuals, defined by formal or informal criteria of membership, who share a feeling of unity or are bound together in relatively stable patterns of interaction'. A small social group, often called a community, is an idealised setting for many normative theories of democracy.[68] Within a social group, members are able to know each other, observe each other and learn from these observations, and finally, they can directly take part

[68] For example, for many participatory or deliberative conceptions of democracy.

in the decision-making process. All these factors can enable inclusion, participation and understanding among all the members of the polity, qualities that are valued by many normative conceptions of democracy.[69] Hence, it is interesting to analyse if a small group can be an ideal site of emancipatory democracy as well.

From the perspective of emancipatory democracy, a small social group is an organisation of individuals. The authority in this polity is not sovereign. The polity itself does not have porous boundaries, decisions are relatively simple, and its members are considerably close to the decision-makers or decide in their own name. These characteristics make small groups a polity which can be fairly emancipatory. However, in small groups, it may be more difficult to control the influence of these rules on one's conception of the good due to personal ties among members of the group. This, in turn, can undermine the reasoned judgement of members by creating the possibility of unreflective conformity. Furthermore, the authority of small groups is usually not sovereign which means that the political agency of group members can be limited.[70] For a small group to become an emancipatory democracy, the institutional design would need to address the challenge of lack of sovereign authority and possibility of unreflective conformity. Now, I will look at particular examples of small groups and their socio-political arrangements.

The first group I discuss is a group created during deliberative polling events. Deliberative polling is a democratic innovation developed by James Fishkin (1991; Fishkin and Farrar 2008). Deliberative polling shows what the public opinion would be if citizens had time and resources to gain relevant information and to deliberate on important public issues. The process starts by selecting a lay group by a random sample (Fishkin 2011). The random sample is a guarantee that the group will represent the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of a given population. Citizens who agree to participate are invited to spend one or two days at the deliberative polling event. Participants receive a small stipend and are guaranteed transport and accommodation. The event starts with deliberation in small groups of

[69] For example, participatory or difference democrats, inter alia Pateman and Young.
[70] An example of a sovereign social group would be a hypothetical self-governing community living on a remote island.

up to 18 participants. Participants are provided with balanced material showing arguments for and against a certain case and that explain consequences of particular decisions. Deliberation is supported by a trained moderator. After deliberation participants meet in a plenary session in order to question experts. After the plenary session, participants vote in a secret ballot which guarantees they are free from social pressure to reach a consensus (Fishkin and Farrar 2008).

Deliberative polling has been designed as an operationalisation of some of the core ideas of the normative conception of deliberative democracy (Fishkin 2018). Hence, it is interesting to consider how the group will perform in terms of conditions for emancipatory democracy. The group created during the events does regulate itself by the informal rules of collective life and hence constitutes a polity as defined in this thesis, albeit a temporary one. However, the deliberating groups do not subsequently make binding decisions. Rather, the deliberation event results in a post-deliberation opinion poll. To recall, emancipatory democracy requires the promotion of reasoned judgement, choice or counterfactual choice and achievement in conditions of complex equality. Members have the opportunity to exercise their reasoned judgement thanks to moderated deliberation, provision of balanced information and designed time away from everyday tasks. However, Curato et al. show that small deliberative events create norms of conformity, which in turn can, though need not, undermine reasoned judgement (Curato et al. 2013). It is difficult to assess this polity from the perspective of complex equality since a deliberative polling group is a one-off event. However, during the event itself, there exist several social goods – like access to information or accommodation and payment – and their distribution is considerably equal in the simple meaning of the term. Further, moderators ensure that members do not use their advantages, like education or social status, to dominate the process.

Members of deliberative polling can freely select their preferred option, via a secret ballot, and the result is later acknowledged. However, authority of the group is not sovereign. All members are aware that the result of their decision-making is mainly consultative for the relevant authorities. Furthermore, the rules of

participation are pre-set and are not open to change or interpretation. Participants have no agency in establishing these rules. Despite this, in my analysis, deliberative polling performs fairly well on the scales of emancipatory democracy. If one were to treat deliberative polling as a separate and emancipatory polity, rules of decision-making would need to be open to change by members and the results of the event would need to be consequential.

A different example of a small social group which I will consider is a religious sect. A religious sect is an organisation of individuals who are organised around a charismatic leader who dictates the organisation of the group and the rules of collective life. Members are tied by strong social norms and ties of faith. Due to their common faith, members usually share a similar conception of the good. A good example of such a social group is the Unification Church founded in 1954 by Sun Myung Moon (Wilson and Dobbelaere 1987). It is a messianic movement organised around the cult of its religious leader and his family (Parsons 1986). As an example, I use a sociological analysis of the life of the group in Belgium (Wilson and Dobbelaere 1987). Indeed, religious sects do not seem to be an ideal polity for emancipatory decision-making given the dominant role of the religious leader. Unsurprisingly, the democratic performance of the religious group, analysed from the perspective of emancipatory democracy, is low because decision-making is confined to spiritual leaders. Complex equality does not hold in this group since the privilege in the religious sphere enables the dominating of other aspects of the social life of the group. The group's life is organised around communal activities, witnessing duties and fundraising which is organised by the spiritual leaders (see Wilson and Dobbelaere 1987). As a result, members do not exercise choice regarding the life of the community, and their potential preferences are either not achieved or dependent on the leader's acceptance.

**A Modern State**

A second type of the polity, which I analyse, is a modern state. The state is currently one of the most important actors in the social world and is an important democratic

polity (Dryzek and Dunleavy 2009: 1). Furthermore, the state is an explicit focus of many democratic theories (see chapter 2). As a result, it is interesting to consider if a modern state can also perform well from the perspective of emancipatory democracy.

Despite the fact that 'the state' is a contested concept (Skinner 2009), it is possible to identify its core characteristics. As John Dryzek and Patrick Dunleavy argue (2009: 2), 'the 'idea of "the state" rests on the notion that there should be a single, unified source of political authority for a territory, drawing upon the undivided loyalties of its population, operating in a well-organised and permanent way, and directed towards the interests of the whole society'. David Held (1995: 48) points to similar aspects by arguing that modern states are 'political apparatuses, distinct from both ruler and ruled, with supreme jurisdiction over a demarcated territorial area, backed by a claim to a monopoly of coercive power and enjoying legitimacy as a result of minimum level of support or loyalty from their citizens'. As a type of polity, a state is an organisation of self-regulating individuals that is sovereign but porous and complex. Members are often distant from the decision-makers in both physical and institutional terms. These factors pose obstacles to the realisation of political agency of state members. The modern state can, in principle, perform well in terms of emancipatory conditions, if a relevant institutional design addresses issues of distance, complexity, the porosity of the polity's boundaries and is able to react quickly to its changing membership.

The political system of the United Kingdom can provide an interesting illustration of a modern state when analysed from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. The British political system was famously an inspiration for Lijphart's Westminster model of governance (Lijphart 1999). Lijphart describes the UK as a majoritarian system, in which one of the two main parties forms the government and consequently rules, usually with the support of smaller parties. Thanks to the voting system, 'First Past the Post', the executive branch has, in principle, strong support within the legislature which enables the government to introduce and successfully pass bills in a bicameral Parliament. As such, according to Lijphart (1999), the UK

government can successfully realise its political programme and at the same time be held accountable to its constituencies. Similarly, according to Freedom House (2017), the UK is a 'stable democracy that regularly holds free elections and is home to a vibrant free press'. The 2016 report observes that the UK government is successful in securing political rights and civil protections. At the same time, the report notes rising concerns about migration.

Following this brief description of the UK political system, it is interesting to consider whether this modern state is successful in promoting the political agency of its members. Members of the UK polity (citizens) are formally equal under the law (see Equality Act 2010). There exist various social goods. However, some social goods enable other social goods to be acquired unjustly. For example, financial capital and birth can enable one to gain political power. As such, the UK falls somewhat short in respect of conditions of complex equality. While official members of the polity are UK nationals, one could argue that long-term residents who are fulfilling duties should also be treated as members. In a current political system, only a select group of residents is able to realise their political agency formally at the level of the state.[71] On the other hand, due to freedom of speech, all residents can engage in shaping the informal rules of the collective life via debates, campaigns, protests or other informal means.

In terms of satisfying the condition of reasoned judgement, the UK neither promotes nor hinders the exercise of reasoned judgement for its citizens. Media are free, and it is possible to obtain reliable information. Parliament invites questions from the public (see Freedom House 2017). At the same time, none of the current formal institutions provides a purposeful space for citizens' reflective engagement.[72] Furthermore, based on the EU Referendum results, some have argued that it is possible to purposely misinform members of the polity, which in turn significantly undermines the condition of reasoned judgement (see Renwick et al. 2016). Members of the UK polity can realise their political agency by voting for representatives, by

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[71] More precisely, members of the Commonwealth and Irish citizens. However, at the time of writing, EU citizens can also vote in local elections.

[72] At the same time, many civil society organisations do.

being elected themselves, or by participating in informal political activities. There exist communication channels between the representatives and the voters; however, these are not sufficient for claiming that voters realise their counterfactual choice via their representatives. In addition, the UK system does not currently allow for a citizens' initiative in which members of the polity are able to propose bills directly.[73] As a result, the achievement of personal choices is considerably limited.

To summarise, the United Kingdom provides some scope of political emancipation to its members. However, in order to increase this scope, the UK institutional arrangements would need to address the limted political agency of supporters of parties in the parliamentary minority, improve communication channels between the representatives and their constituencies, and increase the possibilities for direct lawmaking by citizens. There is also further scope for increasing reasoned judgement, by providing time and space for reasoned scrutiny and for ensuring the quality of distributed information. Finally, the UK institutional arrangements should further focus on securing complex equality.

**International Organisations**

The next type of polity I consider here relates to international organisations (IOs), which consist of three or more states bound by 'explicit arrangement, negotiated among international actors, for prescribing, prescribing, and authorizing behaviour' (Zweifel 2006: 6). IOs were initially created as multilateral agreements on a specific policy, and they lacked independent powers above the member-states. However, this has evolved, and modern IOs do possess such supranational powers (Zweifel 2006). IOs can be a challenge to democracy insofar as they have the ability to influence and act upon a particular member-state without the direct control of this member-state (see Herwig 2014: 111).

As a type of a polity, IOs are associations in which representatives or state officials make decisions in the interest of citizens of particular member-states,

[73] Such an initiative was proposed in 2008 but, so far, has not implemented (UK Parliamentary Website 2017).

regions or even the whole globe. Usually, IOs are not sovereign; there is a large distance between those in whose interests the decisions are being made and decision-makers. Decision-makers interact with each other in a complex way. All these characteristics negatively influence the assessment of this polity from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. However, the porosity of IOs is usually low since, usually, all the member-states need to accept new members.

Now, as an example of how IOs can be analysed from the perspective of emancipatory democracy, I will analyse the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO is a universal, voluntary organisation established in 1994 with the objective of liberalising world trade agreements. It is a body with legal personality currently consisting of 164 member-states (World Trade Organization 2017). The aim of the organisation is to facilitate its own trade agreements, to manage trade disputes, and to provide the forum for negotiation between member-states and non-members (Herwig 2014). Furthermore, this organisation aims to oversee national trade policies as well as to assist developing countries by providing specialised support and training (Zweifel 2006: 118). The WTO is governed by two top decision-making bodies, the Ministerial Conference and the General Council, both of which consist of representatives of country-members (World Trade Organization 2017). The WTO employs consensus as a practice of decision-making (Herwig 2014: 111). Decisions made by the WTO do not have a direct effect on the sovereignty of the member-countries as domestic law remains superior. However, decisions made via a specialised *dispute settlement mechanism* must be implemented by the states in dispute (see Herwig 2014: 112). Furthermore, as Zweifel (2006: 118) highlights, the WTO has the ability to introduce regulations which do have far-reaching effects on many other agents and polities, including non-members. Because of these far-reaching effects, many question the democratic character of this organisation (Zweifel 2006).

While formally all decision-makers are equal in the process, Herwig (2014) observes that trade agreements are, *de facto,* negotiated by key players who leave small

countries without any influence on the results.[74] Furthermore, engagement in the dispute settlements requires the participation of highly specialised trade lawyers which is costly (Zweifel 2006: 127). This shows that within the WTO, the good financial situation of the country translates into political power. This, in turn, undermines the condition of complex equality.

Furthermore, the WTO's decision-making process falls far from satisfying the conditions of reasoned judgement, choice and achievement. While the decision-making is made by representatives of the participating states – mainly ministers, ambassadors or their equivalent – their ability to be responsive to the aims and desires of those subjected to their decisions is very limited. While decision-makers will exercise reasoned judgement, their decisions will be limited by pressures of consensual decision-making and by the need to be accountable to their home government. Additionally, the scope for reasoned judgement by lay members of the relevant state is limited due to the considerable specialisation of the analysed issues.

**Governance Networks**

Finally, the last type of polity I investigate from the perspective of emancipatory democracy is a governance network. Governance networks are relatively recent polities, yet their presence and importance are growing (see Sørensen and Torfing 2007). A governance network is: '1. a relatively stable horizontal articulation of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors; 2. who interact through negotiations; 3. which take place within a regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary framework; 4. that is self-regulating within limits set by external agencies; and 5. which contributes to the production of public purpose' (Sørensen and Torfing 2007: 9). Governance networks are vertical and voluntary organisations of various public and private actors who organise themselves in order to manage or solve an issue of public interest (Sørensen and Torfing 2007). Members can usually join and

[74] As Zweifel notes (2006: 121), trade agreements are usually *de facto* negotiated during informal meetings attended by the US, the EU, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Norway, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, China, India, South Korea, Pakistan, South Africa, Egypt and a representative of ASEAN countries.

leave as they wish and they regulate themselves via negotiation with elements of bargaining (Sørensen and Torfing 2007, 2009). Due to their flexibility and focus on specific public purposes, governance networks can be a suitable response to growing complexity within decision-making (Sørensen and Torfing 2007: 12). At the same time, there are growing concerns about the legitimacy of these networks and their outputs (Sørensen and Torfing 2007).

As a type of polity, governance networks are highly porous and complex. They consist of a range of private and public, individual and institutional actors. Governance networks are self-regulatory, but their sovereignty is limited since they exist in a regulatory framework of wider institutional and legal architecture (Sørensen and Torfing 2007, 2009). Individuals, subjected to the decisions, are distant from the decision-makers. All these characteristics pose substantive challenges for the emancipatory potential of governance networks. In principle, governance networks can become more emancipatory if they create communication channels between those whose interests they aim to enhance and direct decision-makers. Furthermore, the relevant institutional design could try to remove barriers for interested individuals to join.

In order to elaborate on how real-life governance networks can be assessed from the perspective of emancipatory democracy, I now analyse a network established in Belgium (Crivits et al. 2017). The New Food Frontier (NFF) was a two-year governance process.[75] The network comprised a mix of industrial organisations, government representatives, consultants, NGOs, academics, and interest groups. The aim of the governance network was to bring together all the relevant parties in Belgium with a stake in the development of the country's agriculture. The network was initiated by a group of academics and NGOs and created its own organisational rules. In order to provide a relevant recommendation, it created a steering group and then proceeded with a round of deliberations (Crivits et al. 2017). After one year, industry representatives withdrew their participation,

[75] More precisely, it took place between spring of 2010 and May 2012 (Crivits et al. 2017).

while some of the members were excluded.[76] As a result, the governance network dissolved.

How did this example of a polity perform in terms of promoting the political agency of its members? Despite imploding, the NFF provided some scope of political agency for its members. In principle, all interested parties were able to join or send their representatives. Official representatives had autonomy and participated as private individuals. This autonomy and open deliberations serve to satisfy the conditions of reasoned judgement. At the same time, participation was costly in terms of time and effort, and not all stakeholders could join. In addition, participating interest groups argued for the exclusion of NGOs and academics as 'interest-less' which undermined participants' equality and, as a result, led to increased porosity. This also shows that some members of the NFF employed their formal status to influence the decision-making process by excluding other members. This, in turn, signifies a lack of complex equality. Finally, the NFF governance network dissolved without making any decisions. As a result, it failed to satisfy the condition of agency achievement. The NFF could have been more emancipatory if it had established better communication channels between the participants and the rest of the interested parties and it had addressed porosity. Furthermore, more successful governance would have increased the agency achievement for its members.

### *4.4. Summary*

In this chapter, my aim has been to provide an analytical framework for assessing real-life sites of decision-making from the perspective of a normative conception of emancipatory democracy. I have introduced a notion of *types of polities* and provided a typology of the most common democratic polities. I have also illustrated the relevance of my analytical framework and this typology by analysing several examples of polities from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. In the following

[76] Crivits et al. (2017) describes how interest groups argued for the exclusion of NGOs and academics as 'interest-less'.

chapter, I reintroduce the specific polity in which I am interested here, namely the mega-city. This time I explain what mega-city decision-making looks like and why there is a need for introducing a new type of polity.

# 5. Could the Mega-City be a Site of Emancipatory Democracy?

The relevance of the urban from the perspective of wider social scientific study, including the study of democracy, is connected to the increasing importance of urban areas in the modern world and the qualitative changes they bring about. While definitions of what constitutes 'the urban' differ substantively, 'the urban' most typically refers to either specific administrative units, areas of certain population density, with the population occupied in the non-agricultural sector or areas with historical city rights (Pacione 2009: 19-21).[77] Because of the development of technology and infrastructure, urban areas connect with each other and with places beyond their boundaries, and the urban way of living becomes the dominant way of life (Brenner and Schmid 2012; Magnusson 2011). As a result, non-urban areas are increasingly organised according to urban logic.[78]

Urban areas are also important from a social scientific perspective because they accommodate vital social phenomena and face significant problems. For example, Engin Isin (2000) argues that in order to understand many issues connected to citizenship and modern migration, a researcher must look at their spatial consequences in modern cities. Saskia Sassen (2010: 3) claims that the city is a place where 'major macro-social trends materialise'. Modern cities benefit from

[77] Just to illustrate, consider how differently the following three countries define urban areas: The Philippines defines urban as: 'cities and municipalities and their central districts with a population density of at least 500 persons per square km. Urban areas are considered other districts regardless of population size that have streets, at least six establishments (commercial, manufacturing, recreational and/or personal services), and at least three public structures such as town hall, church, public park, school, hospital, library, etc.'; Rwanda: 'all administrative areas recognized as urban by the law. These are all administrative centres of provinces, and the cities of Kigali, Nyanza, Ruhango and Rwamagana'; Bulgaria: 'all towns and cities according to the Territorial and Administrative-Territorial Division of the country' (UN Statistics Division 2011).

[78] Furthermore, for the first time, more than half of the global population lives in urban areas, and the UN predicts that by 2030 urban populations will reach 60% (UN DESA Population Division 2016). For the critique of using statistics as a rationale for the importance of the 'urban', see Brenner and Schmid (2014).

participation in the global economy, but they also struggle with the resulting immigration, social inequality and corruption (Barber 2013; Sassen 2000a).[79] Urban areas have a specific, dual, connection to climate change. They both significantly contribute to climate change by the production of greenhouse gases, pollution of waters and soil. However, urban populations are also highly sensitive to the effects of climate change: temperature increases, changes in water precipitation, rising sea-levels and the probability of extreme weather events (UN Habitat 2016a). For example, the UN reports that, in 2014, 1.4 billion urban inhabitants were at risk of natural disaster, while in the same year, nine out of ten urban dwellers were breathing air below safety standards (UN DESA Population Division 2016; UN Economic and Social Council 2017). At the same time, many argue, urban areas stimulate innovations, provide hope and facilitate resilience (Florida 2005; Glaeser 2011; Stratmann 2011). For example, dense urban centres, like New York or London, are more environmentally friendly than more sparsely populated areas since they use less energy per person (Glaeser 2011). Finally, urban areas offer vivid and inventive human capital which constitutes a potential for a better future (Magnusson 2011: 26).

Democratic scholars often consider the city's characteristics as essential for the functioning of good democratic governance. In particular, the relevant literature often focuses on public space. Here, public space is argued to provide visibility of different members of the urban polity and enable conceptualisation of collective claims. Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau (1985) argue that urban public space can accommodate and expose political antagonisms, which, in their account, are the essence of political life. John Parkinson (2009, 2012), in turn, argues that democratic governments should publicly finance and maintain open public spaces. As Parkinson explains, open urban plazas are the place where citizens can organise themselves and be seen. This enables citizens to create political narrations, make public claims, engage in decision-making and to hold accountable those responsible for the realisation of their decisions (Parkinson 2012: 47). Margaret Kohn (2004) points out

[79] Barber (2013) argues that cities suffer from similar problems, mainly inequality and corruption. Sassen's (2000b, 2000a) work is focused on how the globalised economy influences cities and reinforces some of their problems.

that in the urban public space, inhabitants meet as citizens. Further, in public space, inhabitants encounter the unfamiliar and, as a result, become 'more adept at accepting difference' (Kohn 2004: 201).

Some democratic theorists move beyond the visibility and heterogeneity of public space and portray the city as a whole as an ideal of democratic life. Famously, Iris Marion Young (1990) argues for city life as a normative ideal to accommodate pluralism of opinions and identities. For Young, city-life is a form of social relations, of strangers being together, that facilitates 'politics of difference', a form of political organisation based on equality and acknowledgement of group differences (Young 1990: 237). Here, Young considers public space as a factor that allows different groups to flourish and to create a wider environment of respect and acceptance. An influential proposal of democratic governance by Benjamin Barber (2013) focuses on horizontal networks that urban actors develop. Barber argues that the lack of formal sovereignty enables cities to perform functions and tasks that states cannot perform. In situations when the nation-states become more limited, and the core global challenges are overcoming boundaries of the nation-state, Barber sees the future of democracy within independent cities, represented and governed by charismatic Mayors.

Urban theorists complement this body of literature and often focus on questions of democratic and just organisation of the city. To mention a few, Lefebvre's 'right to the city' is an influential ideal of democratic urban life in which inhabitants can freely use the city space and hold a right to govern it (Lefebvre 1996 [1968]; Marcuse 2012). The realisation of this ideal would require both change within the socio-political organisation of the city and the limitation of international capital's influence (Purcell 2003). Leonie Sandercock (1998) challenges existing planning and governance practices and argues for a paradigm shift in a way modern cities are organised. Consequently, she argues for a new mode of bottom-up organisation and planning that relies on diverse local communities. Susan Fainstein (2010) develops an urban theory of justice. Fainstein's argues that just urban planning relies on three criteria: equity, democracy and diversity. Further, Fainstein suggests that democracy

in modern cities can be enhanced by practices beyond planning: advocacy in the name of the disempowered groups and group consultations (2010: 175). Oren Yiftachel (2015), in turn, argues for a new notion of urban 'metrozenship' that should include all residents of the urban areas who are bearers of various political and social rights thanks to their place of residence.

Finally, urban literature points to the political and democratic character of cities located in the Global South. This literature argues that urban areas of the Global South offer inspiration and lessons for new modes of development and creativity (Robinson 2006; Roy 2005). This literature often points to the informal sphere, settlements or labour, as a place rich in activities, norms and networks. Here, informality is not dangerous and hopeless, but is 'a terrain of habitation, livelihood, self-organisation and politics' (Roy 2011a: 223).

To complement this existing body of literature on democracy in cities, in this thesis I focus on the assessment of mega-cities from the perspective of emancipatory democracy. This chapter proceeds as follows. I introduce the ideal type of polity called a mega-city and describe its characteristics.[80] A mega-city is not a centralised polity, but a polity that accommodates different, loosely coordinated political fora and institutions unified by location and a public aim. Such diverse fora are regulated by different and sometimes contradictory rules of collective life, have different degrees of authority and are governed by different decision-makers. As such, a mega-city also poses a puzzle for the aims of this thesis. A potential critic could argue that due to this multiplicity of political fora, the mega-city cannot be a site of *emancipatory democracy*. In other words, one could claim, the characteristics of a mega-city are in principle incompatible with the requirements of conception of democracy developed in this thesis. I investigate this claim in detail and show that, paradoxically, because the mega-city is not a fully coherent, centralised polity, it can become a site of *emancipatory democracy*.

[80] This thesis will follow the classical Weberian understanding of an ideal type, defined as derived inductively from the real world and accumulating certain and most characteristic features of the analysed phenomena. See Lewis Coser (1977).

## 5.1. *The Mega-city as a Type of Polity*

Looking at an urban area as a separate polity allows for an analysis of its decision-making processes and can guide potential reforms. Following the definition of the polity established in chapter 1, an urban area can constitute a polity if, and only if, it makes collective decisions and regulates itself by the use of collective rules. Indeed, urban areas are sites of collective decision-making and they self-regulate. Relevant administrative bodies, of both formal and informal character, facilitate urban self-governance. Most typically, urban polities share decision-making powers with the state (Urban Age 2014).[81] Hence, all urban polities can be defined as a polity governed by a mix of inhabitants, representatives, state and private or semi-public actors at various levels of governance. However, such urban polities will necessarily vary to a significant degree. Urban polities vary in their size, degree of autonomy, porosity, types of decision-making, and the character of their inhabitants. Some urban polities are relatively small, close-knit communities with a clear(er) structure of decision-making and accountability. Others have much more complex decision-making processes which include a variety of actors involved in overlapping, fragmented authority. They also experience a lack of direct accountability of decision-makers and rising informality within the decision processes. Mega-cities, in particular, are an example of such a complex urban polity.

Existing urban literature looks at urban polities from different angles. Authors such as Kübler and Lefèvre (2017), Frug (2014) and Fainstein (2010) analyse urban polities through the lenses of the power of the state. Another body of literature, focuses instead on the power of international capital, often without acknowledging the power that the nation-state holds (e.g. Harvey 2009; Harvey 2013). However, looking at urban polities either through the lens of the state or international capital may overlook the nuanced and complex nature of vertical

[81] However, urban areas in China are at one extreme, since the centralised state government controls the city decision-making almost entirely (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017). On the other end of the spectrum, 'city states' – such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Berlin – are either sovereign entities or enjoy a high level of local autonomy.

collaboration, partial sovereignty, and power dynamics that define mega-city governance.

Alternatively, Clarance Stone (2005, 2006), in his analysis of 'urban regimes', focuses on a complex nature of constraints and collaborations that constitute urban governance. Here, 'urban regime' is constituted by 'a set of arrangements or relationships (informal as well as formal)' which effectively govern an urban community (Stone 2006: 27). Stone's analysis of urban polities emphasises that instead of one key decision-makers, all the engaged actors are structurally embedded in complex relations, and it is not always easy for them to change these relationships. Here, successful governance requires active effort in setting common goals, building a coalition and mobilising resources (Stone 2005).

Oren Yiftachel extends the notion of 'urban regimes' and defines it as a 'set of long-term rules, institutions, identities, power relations, practices and discourses – that shape the structure of a particular society' (2015: 733). Yiftachel argues that while urban regimes are fragmented and loose, they successfully create and implement rules of collective life, e.g. regarding urban development, governance, and belonging (ibidem). As such, 'urban regimes' are characterised by sovereignty, albeit fragmented and often internally contradictory. Urban polities in this view are not limited to local service provision (like planning, housing, development) but perform functions characteristic to the state (i.e. issues of justice and redistribution, rights and belonging, participation). In the analysis of mega-cities, the nuanced perspective of urban regimes is particularly helpful as it emphasises a complex network of vertical collaboration, partial sovereignty, and power dynamics. As a result, this is the perspective I employ in my analysis of mega-cities, to which I now turn.

Mega-cities, as a form of human settlement, are relatively big, dense and complex urban areas (see Wirth 1938). They are also polities, as defined in this thesis, because they are sites of collective decision-making and regulate themselves by the use of collective rules. Looking at mega-cities from the perspective of urban regimes helps to identify them as polities that are not fully coordinated, but rather accommodate a variety of political fora. These fora are both formal and informal,

and concern international organisations, business corporations, the state, social movements, and cultural and social organisations. Political fora in mega-cities have overlapping but separate authority, which leads to vast governance fragmentation and results in a multiplicity of existing formal and informal rules of collective life (see Kübler and Lefèvre 2017). Further, porosity, scale, multiplicity of existing political fora, and fragmentation of their authorities create space for rising informality.[82] Here, informality refers to people and activities not sanctioned by the official urban authorities or that occur as a result of strategic deregulation (AlSayyad 2004; Roy 2005). While the conditions of informality are caused by the mixture of policies of the state, global economy and personal choices (García 2017; Roy 2005; Yiftachel and Yakobi 2004), the mega-city characteristics provide a rich ground for its development both in the Global North and the Global South.[83] Mega-cities are highly porous, and their membership is constantly changing. At the same time, global international corporations invest in cities, locate their offices or infrastructure within their territories and acquire urban land and properties (Sassen 2001). In mega-cities, public institutions often need to co-operate with strong private business actors on whose investments they depend (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017: 9). The willingness of the authorities to attract private investment may result in the creation of special, informal, opportunities to purchase land and properties (see Sassen 2001; Weinstein 2008). This, in turn, contributes to the existence of a variety of legal and para-legal orders and to a further rise in informality.

Because of the presence of multiple, loosely coordinated political fora, their fragmentation and overlap, mega-cities as urban polities cannot be successfully assessed from the perspective of the more bounded and traditional type of polities, like a nation-state or local administrative unit. Hence, I argue, a mega-city is better

[82] Here I refer to porosity as a feature of membership (porous membership is opposed to a bounded one). For a different meaning of porosity as a feature of the city space and mixing of private and public life, see Benjamin and Lacis (1978 [1925]).
[83] Here especially Yiftachel and Yakobi (2004) show how globalisation, the liberal economy and policies of the state are factors that create informality, while García (2017) argues that informality (in employment) is a result of the current nature of the labour market and personal choices.

treated as a different type of a polity. In this thesis, I will define a mega-city as follows:

> ***Mega-city polity:*** a site of collective decision-making consisting of inhabitants, representatives, state and private or semi-public actors in an urban area, establishing rules of collective life for the urban territory. Decision-makers can have formal or informal roles, at various levels of governance, while their authority is overlapping and often fragmented.[84]

The concept of the *mega-city* is already present in urban literature, and my usage only partially overlaps with this use. Hence, my application of the term requires some justification. Within the wider social scientific literature, mega-cities usually refer to urban areas of at least ten million inhabitants (Kübler 2012; Pelling and Blackburn 2013a; Sorensen 2011; UN DESA Population Division 2016; Yeung 2009) and the preposition 'mega' reflects their mass scale. However, for a type of polity, the exact number of inhabitants is not a key characteristic. Furthermore, the exact number of inhabitants is often arbitrary and relies on estimates. For example, until the end of 2010, cities with more than eight million inhabitants were considered to be mega-cities (Fuchs 1994; Gilbert 1996; Swerts and Denis 2015), while in China any city above five million inhabitants is classified as a mega-city (Chen et al. 2018). Similarly, from the perspective of collective decision-making, it does not matter whether the urban polity consists of two million inhabitants or 11 million inhabitants. Both numbers are high for democratic decision-making.[85] As Gilbert (1996) points out, there is also no valid reason to assume that an urban area inhabited by eight million people will be qualitatively different from one with a slightly different population

[84] Based on Norris' (2001) definition of metropolitan governance, which I have complemented with an urban focus, the mixed character of decision-makers at various levels of governance, the fragmented character and overlapping authority.

[85] Here, consider Dahl and his reflection on the challenges of size for non-representative forms of democracy. Dahl (1970: 67-8) claims that if 'an association were to make one decision a day, allow ten hours a day for discussion, and permit each member just ten minutes – then the association could not have more than 60 members'.

size. Hence, in this thesis, I will focus on the common characteristics of governance and collective decision-making rather than the size of mega-cities.

Furthermore, the concept of *mega-cities* is sometimes employed to describe big but not powerful cities, usually located in the Global South, as opposed to powerful global cities (e.g. D. B. Massey et al. 1999).[86] In this reading, mega-cities have a negative association with 'uncontrollable population growth, extreme concentration of poverty, deteriorating environmental conditions' (Zeiderman 2008). However, I do not employ this meaning of the concept. While most of the mega-cities are situated in the Global South, differentiating them from the mega-cities located elsewhere represents a post-colonial sentiment (see Robinson 2006). The urban areas of the Global South offer inspiration and lessons for new modes of development and creativity (Robinson 2006; Roy 2005). These are equally important to the experiences of the cities located elsewhere. There is also a methodological reason why I do not consider the division between the cities of the Global North and South as important for this thesis. The characteristics on which I am focusing are typical of mega-cities all over the globe. As such, one need not distinguish between big cities of the North and of the South.

Now, to further clarify the meaning and scope of the mega-cities, I will describe some of the key characteristics of this type of polity. For convenience, Table 3 below sets out the main differences between mega-cities and other types of polities.

[86] For a critique, see Robinson (2002, 2006) and Zeiderman (2008).

| | ***Mega-cities*** | ***Local administrative unit (rural or small urban polity)*** | ***Governance networks*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Who are the decision makers*** | Different models but de facto mixed: inhabitants, representatives, other actors (state, business, informal agents) | Representatives and inhabitants | Public, semi-public and private members |
| ***Members*** | Inhabitants | Inhabitants | Citizens or inhabitants of relevant units |
| ***Porosity*** | High | Low to medium | High porosity – members can come and go as they wish |
| ***The character of the authority*** | Overlapping with the state, other agents and informal spheres, fragmented | Depends on the type of the state – from some autonomy to being inferior to the state | Limited by the external frameworks |
| ***Distance*** | Small-medium-large | Small-medium-large | Large |
| ***Complexity*** | High | Depends on the polity | High |

Table 3. The mega-city in comparison to other types of polities

In my analysis, I assume that all the inhabitants are members of the mega-city polity. Here, I refer to *de facto* inhabitants and users of the city space, people who live their lives in the city and share the city living. It means that as members, I include registered residents, illegal or informal migrants and homeless who dwell in the city as well as those who commute to the city from the neighbouring areas for work and social life. It means that I exclude tourists, temporary visitors, and officially registered residents who nonetheless live elsewhere. Such demarcation of the demos enables inclusion in the analysis of those urban dwellers that are most vulnerable to oppression, namely homeless, unregistered migrants and those living in informal settlements. The official statistics and urban registers usually do not include these

people.[87] This way of demarcating the mega-city membership includes all the people who share the city living (see also Baubock 2003). Further, it overlaps with the notion of 'metrozenship' introduced by Yiftachel (2015). 'Metrozenship' includes all residents of the urban areas who are bearers of various political and social rights thanks to their place of residence. However, as opposed to formal citizenship of the state, 'metrozenship' focuses on material rights of residents.

The mega-city as a type of polity is porous. It means that it is easy to leave or join the mega-city.[88] High urban migration rates illustrate this. For example, migration from rural areas is responsible for about 50% of urban population growth in Asia and 37% in Africa, and 30% in Latin America (Tacoli et al. 2008). Further, many people commute to mega-cities from neighbouring areas due to their work, education or other commitments. For example, in Tokyo the equivalent of 20% of its registered population commutes on an everyday basis to the city, in Delhi (India) it is 19% while in London (UK) it is 9% (Urban Age 2014: 36). As a result, inhabitants of mega-cities often differ from each other but have their location in common. The scale of social diversity in many of the modern cities is best described as super-diversity (Berg and Sigona 2013; Vertovec 2007). Such form of diversity refers to ethnicity, country of origin, type of migration, legal status, educational status, access to employment, the level of interaction with other inhabitants, relation of migrants to people elsewhere, as well as the attitude of local authorities and residents towards other residents and groups (Berg and Sigona 2013; Vertovec 2007). These factors result in a mixed society with very different lifestyles, backgrounds and experiences. While such pluralism may create a positive social and economic dynamic, it might

[87] For example, the UN Population Division (2011) does not collect its own data but relies on national sources, more precisely on censuses and population registers. Using population registers has some advantages, as it provides information on a whole population of a given country. Such a method reflects the most current state of the population movement and hence demonstrates the flows of population (Goldstein 1994). However, population and census registers fail to include the temporary stays of illegal immigrants, often due to the fact that they prefer to remain unregistered. This may be due to various reasons, ranging from feeling a lack of need to register in a site where they will remain only temporarily, a lack of time or will, or the fear of being deported.

[88] However, mobility is much higher for better off members of the polity than, for example, slum residents (see WHO and UN Habitat 2010).

also create a challenge for peaceful coexistence between members with very different or contradictory conceptions of the good.

The mega-city as a type of a polity consists of numerous, separate decision-makers. Decision-makers include local inhabitants, their representatives, private companies providing outsourced service provision, state representatives, informal bodies like criminal organisations, religious and cultural institutions and many others. Often public institutions need to co-operate with strong private business actors on whose investments they are dependent (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017: 9). Here Kübler and Lefèvre (2017: 9) describe how 'authorities in megacities will be less willing or capable to constrain private business actors' due to a willingness to attract investment. Furthermore, the researchers note that big international companies are not only engaging in mega-cities' infrastructural development but also, thanks to the financial market, are financing much of the realisation of it. As a result, Kübler & Lefèvre (2017) conclude that the role of the private sector in mega-cities is more influential than in other polities. Furthermore, many formal city decision-makers need to co-exist and compete with national or regional governance systems (Sorensen 2011: 413). Furthermore, rising informality is typical for mega-cities, and much of the actual decision-making is done in the informal sphere and refers to norms and regulations alternative to the city or state regulations. The level and type of involvement of many different actors and groups can strongly affect the decision-making processes in the city. Many inhabitants of mega-cities do not have opportunities to influence the action of all the relevant decision-making actors, or their influence is very limited.[89] Often, large groups of inhabitants are not consulted on the policies that directly affect them.[90] Furthermore, these external actors are not accountable to the mega-city inhabitants. For the same reasons, the existence of informal decision-makers can challenge democratic governance within the cities.

[89] For example, inhabitants of mega-cities have an influence on the rules of collective decision-making with other members of the state. However, their influence is usually limited.
[90] Here, policies regarding slum eviction would be a good example. For more, see UN (2016b).

Here a good example can be the influence of criminal organisations, colloquially called mafias, on the city decision-making.[91]

Mega-cities exercise partial sovereignty. Officially, mega-cities are administratively and politically members of the nation-states (Frug 2014). Hence, the sovereign authority of the nation-state limits the political agency of mega-city inhabitants. Looking at mega-cities from the perspective of urban regimes helps to identify the complex nature of urban sovereignty that mega-cities hold. Formal and informal decision-makers in mega-cities can redistribute income, define rules of belonging (for example by issuing municipal IDs) and even exercise coercion. In terms of the division of official powers, mega-cities exhibit a wide variety of organisational structures, from unified metropolitan governance systems to multi-level or federal management types (Sivaramakrishnan 2015). For example, in Delhi, local powers are hugely dependent on the Indian federal government (Urban Age 2014: 32). The US mega-cities are subordinate to the state regulations, while Berlin in Germany enjoys a high level of local autonomy. Further, mega-cities are highly fragmented (Sivaramakrishnan 2015). For example, Tokyo in Japan is divided into 62 municipalities, 23 special wards, 26 cities, five towns and eight villages (Urban Age 2014: 35). Fragmentation can hinder collective action (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017) and can block the realisation of political agency. Overlapping formal and informal authorities may result in contradictory actions. However, the complex nature of mega-city authority can also paradoxically enhance inhabitants' political agency. As Benjamin Barber (2013: 146) observes, mega-cities can often realise aims that states cannot, because mega-cities are not constrained by the requirements of sovereignty. Furthermore, Michael Goldsmith (2012) argues that the fragmentation of urban governance enables flexibility and experimentation in institutional design. Such flexibility enables the removal of inefficient institutions as well as the creation of new ones.

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[91] For example, Roy (2011a) describes how organised crime often controls the land development in informal spheres of the city.

In mega-cities, the decision-makers are located at various distances in relation to inhabitants. The decision-makers can be very close and include, for example, local representatives living next door or a neighbourhood support group. However, some other agents and agencies involved in the decision-making are very distant from, or even unreachable by, the city inhabitants. In particular, private companies can be decision-makers over which mega-city inhabitants have little control (see Kübler and Lefèvre 2017). Furthermore, in mega-cities, the decision-making process is highly complex. It is, therefore, more difficult for the members of the polity and its decision-makers to fully understand the processes, predict the result of decisions and foresee the consequences of their actions.

To summarise, the mega-city is not the state. It is partially sovereign, but it does not have a centralised and hierarchically organised authority. The mega-city is different from an urban local administrative unit. The formal administrative and political system constitutes one of many overlapping political fora and systems of decision-making in mega-cities. Furthermore, mega-cities' decision-making procedures often overcome local and administrative borders (Fuchs 1994; Kübler and Lefèvre 2017; Swerts and Denis 2015: 3). To illustrate this, New York's metropolitan management extends over three states (New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut), while Mexico City spans three separate administrative districts (Mexico City proper, the State of Mexico, and the State of Hidalgo). Similarly, urban issues of sprawl, affordable housing, water supply, environmental pollution and degradation spill over the existing boundaries.

When compared with more established types of polities, mega-cities, from the perspective of collective decision-making processes, bear some similarities to governance networks (see chapter 4 of this thesis). Both of these types of polities consist of various, separate actors. However, these diverse actors are united by the realisation of public aims.[92] Both polities are highly porous and are limited by external frameworks (usually state regulations). Similarly, the decision-making within

[92] Mega-cities' public aim refers to the regulation of people's and organisations' behaviour within their territory.

these two types of polities is highly complex. However, there are also differences between mega-cities and governance networks. Different political fora within the mega-cities are often not aiming to coordinate their functions, but rather act separately or even competitively towards each other. Furthermore, mega-cities are embedded and spatial. This spatiality influences, for example, the distance between the inhabitants and the direct decision-makers. In the mega-city, certain key decision-makers may live on the same street, and it may be possible to meet them in a local market. However, other key decision-makers may be socially and physically removed and unknown or inaccessible to the average inhabitant. The problems and challenges that the mega-city experiences often have a spatial manifestation (like socio-spatial segregation, see section 6.1. of this thesis). Finally, within the mega-cities, informality plays a much more important role than in governance networks.

The character of the mega-city shows that, somewhat similar to governance networks, the mega-city can also be a challenging site for emancipatory democracy. First of all, mega-cities are not fully coordinated and coherent polities, and they rely heavily on the informal sphere. This means that the promotion of political agency by the formal institutions may be potentially jeopardised by the decision-makers in other, overlapping political fora. High porosity implies a continuously changing membership, while high complexity entails a lack of ability to foresee all the consequences of decisions once they have been made. However, in the next section, I argue that what appears to be a challenge – namely the multiplicity of formal and informal political fora – actually enables the promotion of emancipatory democracy.

## *5.2. On the Possibility of Emancipatory Democracy in Mega-cities*

In this section, I investigate whether the promotion of conditions that are required for the promotion of emancipatory democracy is, *in principle,* coherent with the characteristics of mega-cities. In other words, I analyse the possibility of promoting political agency for *each* member of the mega-city (see chapter 3). Following my

analysis in chapter 3, political agency has three conditions: (A) reasoned judgement; (B) choice or (B') counterfactual choice; and (C) achievement. Political agency, in my interpretation, is cumulative. Hence, the condition of achievement only matters for the realisation of political agency if both the conditions of reasoned judgement and choice or counterfactual choice are satisfied. Similarly, the choice needs to be based on reasoned scrutiny. However, a priori, it is not possible to determine which condition may be problematic in mega-cities. As a result, I investigate the condition of reasoned judgement and choice or counterfactual choice separately from the condition of achievement. This aids analytical clarity but also enables precise recommendations for potential adjustments in mega-city decision-making. In this section, I will not investigate whether mega-cities are sites of complex equality. This is because complex equality is a characteristic of actual polities and, in this section, my aim is to examine the mega-city as a type of polity. However, I will analyse the actual circumstances of mega-cities from the perspective of complex equality in chapter 6.

Overall, I argue that it *is* possible to promote political agency for each mega-city inhabitant. This is specifically because the mega-city is not a centralised, fully coordinated polity, but a polity consisting of various political fora and institutions unified by location and its public aim. Such different fora are regulated by diverse and sometimes contradictory rules of collective life, have different levels of authority, and are ruled by different decision-makers. I now proceed to analyse each of the conditions of political agency and the possibility of their realisation in mega-cities. I start with the condition of reasoned judgement.

**(A) *Reasoned Judgement***

This condition requires reasoned scrutiny of political norms. Political norms can vary from formalised ones, like the way of choosing a mayor or a particular legal arrangement, to informal social norms regulating neighbourhood interactions. Following my analysis in chapter 3, the condition of reasoned judgement is realised if inhabitants use scrutiny to assess or create the rules of collective life. It is possible to

assess mega-cities regarding the extent to which they promote inhabitants' ability to reflect on what they have reasons to value and want, their ability to expand their knowledge, and inhabitants' ability to revise rules of collective life chosen previously (Sen 2002: 38, 46-51). Furthermore, it is possible to investigate whether the political arrangements of the mega-city are violating the independence of the 'self' of its inhabitants, for example by engaging in brainwashing or misleading them (see chapter 3).

For the sake of the conceptual clarity, I assume that the condition of reasoned judgement is realised in a polity which has arrangements for exercising reasoned scrutiny, even if it does not implement members' preferences. Here, it may be helpful to imagine a city polity of philosophers ruled by a non-member dictator. Such a polity would fail miserably in promoting the political agency of its members but would not inhibit their reasoned judgement. I now investigate whether mega-city characteristics enable the promotion of reasoned judgement.

Let's consider, first, mega-cities' decision-making. Decision-makers in mega-cities are of a mixed public and private character; they consist of inhabitants, representatives, state and private or semi-public actors. Due to a multiplicity of political fora, these decision-makers are not always coordinating their efforts. Often, decision-making happens in the informal sphere. Some of the decision-makers are remote and unaccountable to the mega-city inhabitants, and some might even be unknown. However, the character of actual decision-making in mega-cities does not influence, in principle, the ability of inhabitants to exercise reasoned judgement. In other words, even if the decision-makers are remote and unaccountable, under relevant institutional arrangements, it is possible for the inhabitants to exercise a reasoned judgement. However, actual circumstances in mega-cities do matter. For example, for the condition of reasoned judgement to be satisfied, the institutional design should aim to provide as much information to the inhabitants as possible. In mega-cities, decision-makers who are unknown and unaccountable will most likely fail in providing information about their organisations. This can be demonstrated, for example, by business or religious decision-makers who influence the rules of

collective life in mega-cities (Magnusson 2011: 4). Many big corporate decision-makers do not provide information about their processes and aims. However, in principle, this could be changed by relevant regulations that stipulate specific requirements of transparency. Similarly, decision-making in the informal sphere can be either successful in providing information to the inhabitants or, as in the case of mafia, exclusive and fail to transmit relevant information to inhabitants.

High porosity in mega-cities means that the changing membership of these polities must be taken into account. High porosity could hinder reasoned judgement if it entails that members are continuously changing their membership status.[93] However, this is not the case with the inhabitants of mega-cities. There are many new inhabitants but, once they arrive, they stay long enough to be able to engage in reasoned judgement towards the rules of collective life. Again, actual arrangements can influence this condition. For example, it may be difficult for institutional arrangements to provide relevant information to new members, which in turn can hinder their ability to exercise reasoned judgement. Many new members are unknown to the relevant institutions, either because they have just arrived or because they remain in the informal sphere. However, a relevant institutional design can address this issue. For example, relevant arrangements could aim to reach all the new members and provide them with relevant information on the rules of the mega-city collective life.[94]

The authority of the political fora within mega-cities is fragmented, often overlapping with other bodies and polities, and is often informal. However, the character of authority does not influence the possibility of exercising reasoned judgement. Inhabitants can exercise reasoned scrutiny with regards to the rules of collective life even if the result of their reflections is not enforced.

Finally, decision-making in mega-cities is complex and different political fora within them react in a complex way too. Complexity means that members are not

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[93] That is, if members were constantly flopping in and out of membership.

[94] Some migrant communities are often already informally doing so since they provide newcomers with relevant information on life in the city. For example, the Polish community in London have a selection of websites and resources focused on providing relevant information for newcomers.

able to foresee or predict the consequences of their decisions (Jervis 1997: 91); hence some could argue it limits their ability to exercise reasoned judgement towards complex issues. However, exercising reasoned scrutiny does not require full knowledge of the situation in question or knowledge of all its consequences. Reasoned scrutiny is usually exercised on the basis of the information one already has. However, it also requires efforts in increasing one's own knowledge (Sen 2002: 38). As a result, a complexity of decision-making, and the limited information resulting from it, on its own, does not hinder the possibility of exercising reasoned judgement.

To summarise, it is possible to promote reasoned judgement in mega-cities. Depending on actual circumstances, reasoned judgement can be successfully promoted by different, formal and informal, political fora. It is possible to imagine institutional and social arrangements in mega-cities that promote reasoned scrutiny in multiple, loosely coordinated political fora. Such arrangements could include regulations that make it possible to revise previous decisions. Furthermore, the condition of reasoned judgement could be satisfied by innovations or policies that promote critical thinking among all mega-city members, for example, by means of open and free education, the provision of spheres for reflection or deliberation, free internet and library access, free literacy skills training. Institutional arrangements in mega-cities that aim to satisfy the condition of reasoned judgement would aim to provide more information on the decision-making processes and its consequences to the inhabitants. Transparency of aims and actions of distant or informal decision-makers is also desirable. Finally, an institutional arrangement that realises reasoned judgement could not mislead, coerce or brainwash the inhabitants.

**(B)** ***Choice*** and **(B')** ***Counterfactual Choice***

The second condition of political agency refers to the condition of choice and counterfactual choice. As a reminder, the condition of choice is realised when inhabitants select rules of collective life. In turn, the condition of counterfactual choice is satisfied when inhabitants do not select the rules, but, upon reflection, they

would have chosen these rules if they were in the position of a chooser *and* for the same reasons. I will now analyse whether inhabitants of mega-cities can actively make a choice about the rules of collective life or if the rules can be chosen because inhabitants would like to choose them, irrespective of whether these rules will be further implemented. More precisely, I will investigate if the existence of multiple, overlapping political fora undermines the possibility of exercising choice or counterfactual choice.

Let's start again with the character of decision-making in mega-cities. One of the important aspects is that there are a variety of political spheres in which inhabitants can exercise their reasoned choice. The existence of a variety of political fora, on the one hand, increases the possibility for inhabitants to exercise their choice, but on the other, increases the number of fora which inhabitants may not be able to influence. The relevant institutional and social design in mega-cities would, therefore, need to focus on increasing the possibility of exercising choice for inhabitants in the fora in which they want to exercise choice. Furthermore, an emancipatory institutional design can also promote the condition of the counterfactual choice for those not directly involved in any decision-making. For example, it can introduce modes of representation based on close connections and transmission of information between the decision-makers and the mega-city inhabitants.[95]

High porosity, in principle, does not influence conditions of choice or counterfactual choice. Changing membership does not influence inhabitants' opportunities for exercising choice or counterfactual choice. Actual arrangements are, again, crucial. For example, it is more difficult for the mega-city's political or social arrangements to facilitate choice or counterfactual choice for very new members. However, in principle, this can be addressed by relevant institutional design. For example, a 'welcome' package for new members with relevant

[95] Here, a critic could argue that such modes of representation cannot function if some of the decision-makers are remote or unknown to the inhabitants. However, additional decision-makers who do not channel the choice of inhabitants do not undermine political agency if, and only if, for each inhabitant there exists a decision-maker who realises their choice or counterfactual choice.

information on how to exercise their choice would successfully facilitate the satisfaction of this condition.[96]

The remaining two characteristics of the mega-city polity are not incoherent with the requirements of the condition of choice and counterfactual choice. More precisely, fragmented authority and, resulting from it, the partial implementation of rules chosen by the inhabitants do not undermine their possibility of exercising choice. Similarly, the complexity of the decisions in question does not influence the ability of inhabitants to chose what they value and have reasons to value.

To summarise, it is possible to promote choice and counterfactual choice in mega-cities. In mega-cities promoting these conditions, all members would need to either directly choose the rules of collective life in the political fora they have reasons to want to contribute to, or to have a trusted, well-informed proxy. I will now move to the final condition of political agency, namely achievement.

### (C) *Achievement*

The last condition for political agency refers to achievement. This condition is realised when rules of collective life selected (or counterfactually selected) by mega-city inhabitants are implemented. The realisation of this condition, in principle, requires the implementation of rules of collective life chosen by *each* mega-city inhabitant. Due to the impossibility of such implementation in almost any conditions of pluralism, in chapter 4 I have argued for differentiating between *strong* and *weak achievement*. Here, *strong achievement* is realised if rules chosen by each member of the polity are implemented. In turn, *weak achievement* is realised if a social choice preference towards the rules of the collective life of all members of a polity is implemented. I now consider whether it is possible to promote *weak achievement* in mega-cities.

I start again with the character of mega-city decision-making. At first sight, the presence of unaccountable, unknown decision-makers isolated from the

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[96] This is a theoretical solution. One can question the possibility of implementing this solution in practice.

inhabitants, who make decisions independent of inhabitants' preferences, is incoherent even with the condition of weak achievement. More precisely, even if all inhabitants engage in decision-making to select a social choice preference towards the rules of collective life, distant decision-makers will be able to ignore this preference since they are unaccountable to inhabitants. However, the mega-city is not a centralised, fully unified polity but a polity consisting of overlapping political fora. This, in principle, enables the implementation of different and potentially contradicting members' preferences by different decision-makers in different political fora and sites. This would require that decision-makers are accountable to and able to implement rules of collective life chosen by at least *some* inhabitants and that no mega-city inhabitant is left without his or her preferences towards the rules of collective life being implemented.[97] It is therefore much easier to satisfy than to require accountability of decision-makers to all inhabitants at once.

High porosity, in principle, does not influence the condition of weak achievement. As I have explained in the previous section, it is possible to imagine that a relevant institutional design would target the newly arriving inhabitants and then implement their preferences towards the rules of collective life. The character of authority, however, could be inconsistent with the realisation of weak achievement. To repeat, mega-cities are characterised by overlapping and fragmented authority, and other sources of authority can overrule a collective preference of all the inhabitants of mega-cities.[98] However, again it is possible to satisfy weak achievement for different groups of inhabitants by different bodies holding authority in different spheres. For example, some inhabitants may have their rules implemented in the informal sphere, others by the authority of the state, others by the city authorities. Hence, the character of the authority of mega-cities is, in principle, not inconsistent with the realisation of weak achievement.

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[97] Strong achievement here would require each inhabitant to be a 'dictator' in at least one of the spheres. This is, however, rather cumbersome due to high number of people in mega-cities. Here, each sphere would have to be so small or so insignificant that it would undermine any actual meaning of inhabitants' political agency.

[98] Particularly the nation-state in which the mega-city is situated.

Finally, decision-making within mega-cities is complex. Complex decision-making can produce delayed or unintended outcomes (Jervis 1997). In complex systems, implementation of any rules may influence the whole system in an undesirable, unexpected way. As a result, the implementation of the chosen rules of collective life may not bring the expected results (Jervis 1997).[99] However, here again, thinking about the preferences of different groups being implemented by different authorities within smaller fora and sites can reduce the complexity of mega-cities' decision-making from the perspective of their inhabitants.

To summarise, it is possible to promote weak achievement in mega-cities. Collective decision-making in mega-cities involves various decision-makers who regulate different aspects of collective life and exercise their authority in different political fora. Such different decision-makers, acting in different fora, can realise weak achievement of different groups of inhabitants. The realisation of weak achievement is possible if decision-makers were closer to at least some inhabitants and channelled their collective preferences. Furthermore, it would require each inhabitant to have their preferences implemented in at least one of the political fora within the mega-city. Thinking about the mega-city as different fora or sites with different decision-makers implementing different groups' collective choice may also reduce the complexity of the mega-city decision-making. As such, mega-city characteristics are in principle coherent with the possibility of realising *weak achievement*.

Now, let's look back at all four conditions of political agency, namely reasoned judgement, choice, counterfactual choice, and achievement. So far, I have argued that the possibility of realisation of political agency is consistent with mega-city characteristics when relevant actual institutional and social design is in place. This is not despite but rather because of the fact that mega-cities are not a fully consistent, unified polity but a polity that entails a variety of overlapping political fora and sites. To promote political agency, different political fora would need to focus on channelling reasoned choice or counterfactual choice of different groups of

[99] As such, complexity undermines the context-independence of political agency (see chapter 3).

inhabitants and consequently implement such choice. Such different sites can, in principle, promote political agency for all members of the polity.

Now, one might question if the realisation of political agency of different groups of inhabitants and in different political fora is actually egalitarian. Here, I want to restate that *emancipatory democracy* relies on both conditions of political agency and those of complex equality. Complex equality refers to the social circumstances in the polity, and hence its realisation depends on actual arrangements within them. Any polity will be in conditions of complex equality so long as no social good, person or group of people are dominant, and rules of the social goods are not correlated. As such, the realisation of complex equality depends on actual circumstances in overlapping and loosely coordinated mega-city political fora.

## *5.3. Summary*

In this chapter, I have analysed mega-cities as sites of collective decision-making and, to assist in the analysis of the particular and specific characteristics of mega-cities, I have argued for a different type of polity. Since the mega-city is an unusual type of polity, I have investigated whether, in principle, it can be a site of *emancipatory democracy*. I have argued that requirements for realising *emancipatory democracy* are not, in principle, inconsistent with characteristics of the mega-city. More precisely, I have argued that *emancipatory democracy* can be realised, because the mega-city is not a fully coordinated polity but a polity consisting of overlapping, different political fora unified by location and a public aim. These different fora are regulated by different and sometimes contradictory rules of collective life, have differing degrees of authority, and are ruled by different decision-makers. This multiplicity of political fora enables the realisation of political agency of diverse inhabitants of the mega-city. Institutional and social arrangements promoting *emancipatory democracy* in mega-cities would focus on promoting individual agency while ensuring complex equality among inhabitants. As such, emancipatory democracy is in principle possible in mega-cities.

However, in principle does not mean in practice. In my analysis so far, I have emphasised that the realisation of *emancipatory democracy* depends on real-life arrangements in mega-cities. Hence, in the next chapter, I zoom in on and examine the actual circumstances of living in mega-cities. As I argue, these actual circumstances create patterns of structural forms of oppression which in turn can pose a specific challenge to the idea of political agency realised in different political fora within mega-cities.

# *6. Inequality and Potential of Mega-cities*

In this chapter, I examine what the shared urban life of mega-cities looks like for its inhabitants. In particular, I investigate conditions of informality, urban poverty and socio-spatial segregation. The informal sphere refers to people, activities, rules and places unauthorised by the authority of the state, for example unregistered migrants, temporary, informal accommodation, or the grey economy (Roy and AlSayyad 2004; Roy 2005). However, I argue, conditions of informality can explicitly result in the constrained political agency of people living, dwelling or working in the informal sphere. Mega-city informality overlaps with and amplifies the effects of urban poverty and socio-spatial segregation, two other distinctively urban sources of disadvantage. Urban poverty is on the rise. This condition results in the inability of those affected to fulfil basic needs. While socio-spatial segregation can sometimes be voluntary, it limits life, work and political opportunities for those living in less favourable locations. Interconnected conditions of informality, urban poverty and socio-spatial segregation constitute conditions of *structural oppression* in which vast proportions of mega-cities' populations are unable to exercise their political agency. Furthermore, conditions of mega-city informality, poverty and segregation create conditions of *complex inequality* in which some people's formal status and good income enables them to secure favourable housing, reliable infrastructure, solid employment, social respect and political influence, while others live in unfavourable conditions. This is highly problematic and creates a rationale for seeing mega-cities as an important target for emancipatory democratic reforms.

However, conditions of informality also offer the potential for exercising political agency for mega-city inhabitants. The informal sphere accommodates a wide range of political activities, from small-scale individual actions up to collective mobilisations in the form of careful negotiation of the status quo or direct action against the existing order. Informality from this perspective provides a rich ground in

which political agency might be exercised. Further, mega-cities are also a sphere of a multiplicity of people, ideas and rules of collective life. The multiplicity of political fora in mega-cities creates a potential for challenging more powerful agents and for creating alternative rules of collective life. Overall, the findings of this chapter problematise the implementation of emancipatory reforms in mega-cities. At the same time, however, they show the direction of future democratic reforms.

## *6.1. Conditions Hindering Political Agency*

The actual circumstances within mega-cities explicitly hinder the political agency of their inhabitants. I start with one of the key characteristics of mega-cities, namely informality. Informality can constrain the political agency of people living, dwelling or working in the informal sphere. I show that informality often amplifies the effects of two other urban sources of disadvantage, namely urban poverty and socio-spatial segregation. Urban poverty, while problematic on many counts, hinders the political agency of those affected. Socio-spatial segregation and conflict similarly limits the scope of political agency. These conditions of urban disadvantage, while having separate and complex sources, tend to affect the same groups. As a result, I argue that informality, urban poverty and socio-spatial segregation in mega-cities create conditions of structural oppression and complex inequality. As a result, mega-cities need democratic and emancipatory reforms.

**Informality**

Mega-cities are a common destination for undocumented migrants, a ground for the development of informal rules of collective life, and a foundation for the development of a grey economy and settlements.[100] These phenomena refer to conditions of *informality*, namely places, rules, situations and people unauthorised by

[100] However, informality is no longer associated exclusively with poverty (AlSayyad 2004). For example, in many cities, especially those in developing countries, informal settlements are inhabited by the middle class (Roy and AlSayyad 2004; Roy 2005).

the state or other legal bodies. Informality is not created in the absence of formal rules, nor in conditions of disorganisation or anarchy (AlSayyad 2004). Rather, informality is a state of deregulation, a state of exception which 'cannot be fixed and mapped according to any prescribed set of regulations or the law' (Roy 2005, 2009). As such, the existence of the informal sphere is not a matter of providing relevant legislation, but a complex political struggle (Roy 2005).[101] According to Oren Yiftachel (2009), informal spheres refer to spaces 'in-between', which are neither legal nor illegal, neither approved nor forbidden. Conditions of informality result from a mixture of economic factors, state regulations and socio-ethnic policies of the state (Roy and AlSayyad 2004).[102] Informality is present in many kinds of cities, both developed and developing ones, in the Global South and the Global North.

In mega-cities, conditions of informality are especially pronounced, and in many of them, more than half of the population can be classified as informal, because of their status, employment or place of residence (see Davis 2006; Neuwirth 2005; Roy 2005). Informality as a status concerns unregistered, marginalised, temporary or 'floating' groups that settle in the mega-cities: illegal migrants, temporary workers or homeless (Yiftachel 2009). Informality in terms of land and accommodation often materialises as the existence of slums, which currently accommodate at least a quarter of the urban populations worldwide (UN Habitat 2016b).[103] UN Habitat (2003) indicates that in some countries, the percentage of the slum population is overwhelming. In the Central African Republic in 2009, 95.9% of all urban populations were slum dwellers, and in many other African countries, this percentage was greater than 80%. Since 2000, the global slum population increased on average by 16,500 inhabitants per day (UN Habitat 2016b: 8). The biggest world slums grow in mega-cities: Dharavi in Mumbai (India), Neza (Mexico), Orangi Town

[101] Roy and AlSayyad argue that informality in terms of land and development is a mode of urbanisation, 'an organizing logic, a system of norms that governs the process of urban transformation itself' (Roy and AlSayyad 2004; Roy 2005: 148).

[102] Here, especially Yifrachel and Yakobi (2004) show how informality is a form of specific socio-ethnic policies of the state.

[103] The term *slum* refers to a settlement that lacks one or more of the following: 'lack of access to an improved water source, lack of access to improved sanitation facilities, lack of sufficient living area, lack of housing durability and lack of security of tenure' (UN Habitat 2016b: 2). Slums are an exemplification of housing poverty.

in Karachi (Pakistan) (UN Habitat 2017). Informal settlements not only provide a place to sleep, but maintain whole social systems with their own social norms, regulations, housing rules and order. Those informal settlements are not disorganised; rather, they are characterised by a highly complex network of social norms that often function as alternatives to city regulations (Sorensen 2011). However, housing informality in mega-cities also materialises in the vast number of people living in temporary, hostel-type accommodation and semi-formal or informal developments organised beyond the formal control of the state (about the latter see: Soliman 2004). Hence, the para-legal development of new towns in India (Sassen 2001; Weinstein 2008), land acquisitions by big corporations organised on the basis of semi-formal arrangements, or land purcheses by criminal organisations in Tokyo and Mumbai all contribute to the informality.

In addition, informality refers to all economic activities that are not legally or socially protected (ILO 2013: 3). These activities can be illustrated by street vendors selling food or other goods, informal manufacturing or craftsmanship, waste pickers but also domestic household workers and people working from home. As such, these activities are not separate from the formal economy, nor are they illegal (Daniels 2004). Such activities are of immense economic importance since they contribute to more than 50% of the non-agricultural employment worldwide (ILO 2013: xi). A vast amount of such economic activities takes place in mega-cities.

Conditions of informality are often problematic. Poor-quality informal settlements may create health hazards for their inhabitants due to overcrowding and their localisation on steep or insecure land (Davis 2006; WHO and UN Habitat 2010). Such settlements are often more vulnerable to environmental shocks (Kraas and Mertins 2014). Many slums and squatter areas are situated on marginal land such as swamps and areas prone to flooding, for example in Jakarta in Indonesia, Manila in the Philippines, Lagos in Nigeria and Mumbai in India (Pelling and Blackburn 2013b). People employed in the informal sector tend to have several jobs or to combine income from legal employment with the additional income from the grey economy (AlSayyad 2004). This results in extended working hours, a lack of social

security or other work-related benefits, and contributes to further inequality among urban dwellers (WHO and UN Habitat 2010: 21).[104] The lack of a legal, political status creates a situation of economic and legal insecurity for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers (Tonkiss 2017). For example, in China, access to the state welfare system is based on formal residence status (Wu et al. 2014: after Tonkiss 2017). As such, the welfare system excludes vast numbers of migrant workers on whom much of the modern Chinese economy depends (ibidem).

Conditions of informality can be a source of political disadvantage, understood here as political agency that is either constrained or lacking altogether. To reiterate, political agency has three conditions, namely reasoned judgement, choice or counterfactual choice, and achievement (see chapter 3). Those living within the informal sphere may encounter difficulties in accessing employment, services and infrastructure in the formal sphere. People and groups occupying informal spaces are therefore excluded from equal membership in city life (Yiftachel 2009). Conditions of informality also result in a lack of physical and emotional security and often create anxiety. Psychological research shows that anxiety has an effect on and can hinder the ability to exercise reasoned judgement (e.g. Blanchette and Richards 2010).[105] Lack of acknowledgement by the state and other legal actors explicitly limits choice and counterfactual choice. Policies and practices regarding the informal sphere often do not include the concerns or interests of those existing or working there (e.g. Amakihe 2017; Alison Brown et al. 2014). On the contrary, many such policies act against individuals and groups in the informal space. For example, Brown et al. (2014) describe the plans to evict street-wanderers in Dakar (Senegal) and clearances projects in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). Similar examples include the removal of homeless before big events, for instance before the Olympics in London (UK) and

[104] However, current research also shows that many treat informal work as a link to a better and more formal job instead of an issue of basic survival (Sassen 2009: 67).
[105] More precisely, anxiety results in more threatening interpretations, increases estimates of the likelihood of future negative events, and creates risk-aversion during decision-making (Blanchette and Richards 2010: 585).

Vancouver (Canada) (Kennelly and Watt 2011).[106] Such tactics demonstrate the vast limitations of political agency of those affected by informality.

To summarise, the opportunities for the realisation of political agency are substantively different between mega-city dwellers in the formal and informal sphere. Because of the informality, mega-cities create conditions that Yiftachel (2009) has described as a system of *creeping apartheid*. 'The gradations of rights and capabilities are commonly based on inscribed classifications, such as race, ethnicity, class, caste and place of birth, creating and upholding a basic apartheid setting – one land, many legal statuses' (Yiftachel 2009: 93). As a result, informality can be undemocratic if it translates into inequalities of political influence. However, as I argue in section 6.2, informality can also provide vital democratic and emancipatory potential.

**Urban Poverty**

Inhabitants of mega-cities experience many dimensions of urban poverty.[107] While the increasing size of the world's urban population results in a reduction in poverty on the global scale, the percentage of the global poor who are urban dwellers is rising (see Lucci et al. 2018). Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon manifesting itself in a lack of monetary and non-monetary resources (UN 2018). David Satterthwaite (2001: 215) notes several aspects constituting urban poverty: inadequate income; inadequate asset base for making financial investments; inadequate shelter; inadequate or missing infrastructure (roads, sanitation, water); and inadequate public services (law enforcement, healthcare, education). Furthermore, urban poverty refers to a lack of (or limited) safety nets in the event of a worsening of the affected people's financial situation; inadequate legal protection of affected groups' rights; their lack of a voice and power within wider bureaucratic and political structures (Satterthwaite 2001).[108]

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[106] Also, on a much smaller scale, before the royal wedding in Windsor (Sherwood 2018).
[107] On the distinction between urban poverty and poverty, see Wratten (1995). Here I assume that urban poverty is poverty in an urban environment (after Lemanski and Marx 2015: 3).
[108] See also Miltin (2013). Furthermore, some scholars claim that urban poverty is seriously underestimated (see Lucci et al. 2018).

Mega-cities dwellers experience poverty both in terms of inadequate income and assets, as well as inadequate shelter. WHO reports that, worldwide, urban dwellers living in poverty use up to 70% of their monthly income on food provisions which results in them neglecting other needs (WHO and UN Habitat 2010: 24). In Lagos almost 40% of inhabitants live in insufficient housing and have low access to sanitation (Blackburn and Marques 2013). In Cairo and Kinshasa, some people live in cemeteries due to a lack of affordable means of accommodation (Davis 2006).[109] In developing countries, 881 million urban residents live in slum conditions (UN Habitat 2016b: 8).[110] Inadequate housing is, therefore, a significant problem for mega-city dwellers.

The structural elements of urban poverty are also stark. In Nigeria, only 3% of the general urban population has direct access to running water at their premises (Lucci et al. 2018: 304). Lack of relevant infrastructure, like roads and public transport facilities, contribute to the hardship of some of the mega-city dwellers. Many inhabitants cannot afford any motorised transport at all and spend two to four hours a day commuting on foot (Pucher et al. 2005). They are often using the same routes as motorised vehicles which puts them at risk of road traffic accidents (Pucher et al. 2005). Others, who can afford it, depend on overcrowded, unpredictable and often dangerous public transport (Pucher et al. 2005). In many mega-cities, life expectancy is declining due to limited healthcare, inadequate sanitation and poor environmental conditions (Burdett et al. 2011: 260; WHO and UN Habitat 2010). Problems with law enforcement make some of them a 'phobopolis', places in which fear becomes a common, everyday concern (de Souza 2014).[111] Finally, inadequate legal infrastructure to protect some groups and their powerlessness in the face of the political and bureaucratic structures result in a situation in which relevant decisions

[109] The existence of slums is correlated with poverty; however, slums themselves often do not accommodate the poorest. Therefore, slums are more a physical exemplification of housing poverty than of income poverty (UN Human Settlements Programme 2003).

[110] For a debate on those measurements, see Lucci et al (2018).

[111] To illustrate this, consider Karachi in Pakistan with a murder rate of 13.49 per 100,000 people, or Bogota in Colombia where the homicide rate is as high as 16.1 per 100,000 inhabitants (Urban Age 2014: 24). However, the homicide rate in Lagos is only 1.3 and in London it is 1.6. It shows that there is no direct correlation between high murder rates and income poverty (ibidem).

are being taken without the participation of the groups affected (Satterthwaite 2001). For example, decisions about forced slum evictions are made and implemented without the participation or often even any consultation with the slum dwellers.[112] Currently, UN Habitat considers forced slum evictions to be one of the biggest security threats to their inhabitants (UN Habitat 2016b). Poverty is analytically distinct from informality, yet the groups affected by them often overlap. For example, informal migrants often move to the cities to overcome poverty and to seek out better chances in life (Berner 2000). The poorest often engage in informal labour but also engage with the informal networks while looking for support.

Poverty limits the ability of those affected to reach the aims they value and have reasons to value (see Sen 1999: 87).[113] Conditions of urban poverty are connected to higher mortality, influence physical and mental health, and result in social discrimination and lower self-esteem (see Fuller-Rowell et al. 2012; Perlman 2004; WHO and UN Habitat 2010). Conditions of urban poverty undermine social cohesion and are an obstacle to sustainable development (UN 2018).[114] Beyond that, conditions of urban poverty are a source of concern because they limit the political agency of those affected. Conditions of poverty eliminate political agency of those who die prematurely or fall chronically ill due to malnutrition, poor sanitation, environmental pollution or crime. Conditions of poverty can hinder reasoned judgement. For example, 'daily struggle with poverty' leaves the people affected without the time to engage in politics (Phillips 1999: 74) and can limit the space for reflecting on the rules of collective life. The lack of time, self-confidence, and power of groups affected by poverty can, in turn, undermine the agency condition of choice. More precisely, the developmental agendas usually make decisions without the participation of people affected by poverty (Satterthwaite 2001), which violates the agency condition of choice.[115] Finally, dimensions of poverty can also undermine

112 For example, Amakihe (2017) describes forced slum evictions in Lagos, while Mitlin and Satterthwaite describe slum evictions in Zimbabwe (2013: 228).
113 Consider Sen (1999).
114 Hence, the elimination of poverty is a major priority for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN 2018).
115 It also fails to meet the counterfactual choice condition for agency.

the achievement of political agency. Lack of self-confidence or a lowered conception of self-worth may result in self-censorship. Groups affected by poverty may have lower hopes for successfully influencing political decision-makers and are usually less politically engaged (Phillips 1999, ch 4; Solt 2008). Inadequate infrastructure can have a similar effect. For example, difficulties in travelling restrict the ability of local groups to take part in decision-making processes happening in distant areas of the city. A major constraint on agency achievement is also the vast amount of time spent on additional work, queuing for drinkable water or waiting in line for sanitary services or travelling to shops or markets – tasks usually performed by women (see Chant 2013; Parikh et al. 2015, Phillips 1999). All these aspects demonstrate that urban poverty is a source of political disadvantage. Conditions of poverty seriously hinder the opportunities for those affected to influence the rules of collective life, to achieve the results they find valuable and have a reason to value. As such, poverty is undemocratic.

**Socio-spatial Segregation**

Socio-spatial differentiation within mega-cities refers to unevenness in the use of the city space by different social and economic groups and the concentration of particular groups in some areas. Famously, Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1988, 1993) define spatial segregation regarding certain patterns of residence.[116] However, newer approaches define segregation as patterns of both residence and actual usage of the city space (Schnell et al. 2015). Segregation can emerge as a result of individual preferences, market dynamics and the role of city regulations (Bailey et al. 2017).[117] Sometimes it takes the form of self-segregation, with the wealthy population isolating themselves from the rest of the city or religious groups establishing a defined space (see Schelling 1971; Sorensen and Okata 2011). Such

[116] More precisely, Massey and Denton define it along five dimensions: evenness: spatial distribution of (minority) populations; exposure: degrees of spatial proximity; concentration: spatial density of minority populations, centralisation and 'peripheralisation'; clustering: co-location of minority areas (D. Massey and Denton 1988: 281–315). In the following book, Massey and Denton (1993) famously showed the scale of racial segregation in the American cities.

[117] On individual preferences, see also Schelling's model of segregation (1971).

separation can take various forms, from gated housing to special districts. In planning public spending, metropolitan governments often prioritise those self-segregated, wealthy areas, by providing relevant infrastructure and designing transport routes at the cost of neglecting other parts of the city (Sorensen 2011). Additionally, André Sorensen (2011: 404) observes that the inhabitants of those segregated areas often withdraw from contributing to city-wide public services. This, in turn, reinforces the division between wealthy, segregated areas and the rest, which do not have access to infrastructure and basic services. For example, this is the case in the mega-cities of Kolkata, Delhi, and Bangalore in India (Roy 2011b: 100). Those less privileged often inhabit slums or ghettos. The term 'ghetto' refers to an area in the city which is occupied largely by one social group and characterised by either an involuntary character of residence in that area, poverty, unemployment, or poor quality housing (Gottdiener 2005: 119). Socio-spatial segregation is therefore correlated with poverty, but it is an analytically separate phenomenon. Similarly, segregation sometimes overlaps with conditions of informality. Those with an informal status, or living in informal accommodation, are more likely to live in unfavourable, segregated areas.

The urban literature argues that conditions of socio-spatial segregation result in a wide range of difficulties for those living in less attractive locations: reduction in job opportunities; worse education provision; marginalisation and isolation; disorder and violence (e.g. Sampson 2014).[118] Conditions of spatial segregation result in inequality in the provision of public services such as health and education, transport or energy infrastructure (Barber 2013: 188). Segregation also has a direct influence on the health, opportunities and well-being of inhabitants (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013: 274). Furthermore, these conditions may result in lower self-esteem or social stigma for those living in less attractive locations. Residents of lower-status settlements have more problems in gaining official employment and face discrimination (see Perlman 2004). They often see themselves as excluded from the

[118] However, there is also literature arguing that segregation can be a positive factor in the city, providing social solidarity networks (e.g. Bolt et al. 1998).

wider urban community (Perlman 2004). Finally, city regulators often equate low-income settlements with a lack of cleanliness and, what is more striking, the supposed moral decay of its inhabitants (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013: 262). As such, city authorities consider inhabitants of less privileged locations as morally less worthy, which, for the city authorities, justifies further exclusion.

Conditions of segregation are undemocratic since they create unequal opportunities to influence the rules of collective life for different groups of city dwellers. For those who live in the lower-status settlements, conditions of segregation limit the possibility of exercising political agency. More precisely, residents of lower-status settlements often lack a voice and face social stigma, and they may be excluded from various processes of decision-making.[119] Social stigma and exclusion, in turn, undermine the agency condition of choice. As Janice Perlman (2004) shows, the social stigma associated with living in lower-status locations, with an address line that is considered to be a worse one, can result in the groups affected feeling less worthy. Such a feeling affects their ability and willingness to influence rules of collective life, and so undermines the agency condition of achievement. Conditions of socio-spatial segregation therefore explicitly hinder the political agency of inhabitants of lower-status locations. However, they can also influence political agency of privileged members of the community. For example, Young (1999) notes that inhabitants of higher-status settlements do not encounter any other city inhabitants: they live in their protected communities. Such separation results in these groups not realising or acknowledging their privilege which skews their idea of what is normal and average. Hence, conditions of socio-spatial separation hinder their reasoned judgement and can undermine the achievement of agency.

### Ethno-national Conflict

Finally, describing the actual living conditions in mega-cities would not be complete without mentioning ethno-national conflicts that take place in urban areas. Modern mega-cities are strategic sites of symbolic and political importance for their nation-

[119] Slum evictions would be, again, a good illustration of this.

states. Due to urban density and presence of physical public space, such conflicts often materialise in mega-cities (Centre for Urban Conflicts Research 2012a). Consequently, several of the mega-cities are 'mixed', 'divided' or 'contested' cities, characterised by the presence of conflict among different ethnic, religious or language groups with episodes of bottom-up or state-orchestrated violence (Bakshi 2014; Centre for Urban Conflicts Research 2012a; Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003). In particular, ethno-national conflicts are especially important for living circumstances of inhabitants of Los Angeles, New York, London, Mumbai, Cairo, Nairobi, Sao Paolo and many other cities (J. Anderson 2008).

Consequences of ethnic and national conflicts within mega-cities are interconnected with effects of conditions of informality, poverty and socio-spatial segregation. In particular, researchers from the 'Centre for Urban Conflicts Research' argue that when the violent conflict erupts, urban authorities aim to mitigate conflict's consequences by the physical division of the cities, like building walls or buffer zones (Centre for Urban Conflicts Research 2012a). However, once the conflict ends, it is not easy to remove such barriers. The existence of such physical barriers leads to permanent segregation within the city, hinders social cohesion and stops the process of healing. Yiftachel and Yacobi (2003: 689) show that the state often deals with ethno-national conflict by 'forceful seizure, formal legislation, cultural discourse, and invisible apparatuses of control'. This happens when the official authorities deny political rights to members of the chosen ethnic group (e.g. Palestinians). In this way, as Yiftachel and Yacobi (2003) argue, official authorities often push members of opposing ethnic groups into informality. Such tactics are labelled by them as an 'ethnocracy,' in which one ethno-national group dominates and distributes urban rights on the basis of the group belonging. In 'ethnocracies', members of some ethno-national groups face problems in accessing housing, land and legal employment (Yiftachel & Yacobi 2003: 600). Consequently, their members experience exclusion, suffer from poverty and segregation.

Ethno-national conflict hinders political opportunities of inhabitants of mega-cities. In cases of the violent conflict, political agency of those killed or severely

injured is permanently removed. Those who experience violent conflict may suffer from trauma, anxiety or fear. All of these factors can limit inhabitants' ability to exercise reasoned judgment, may result in self-censorship and effectively limit inhabitants' ability to participate in political life. However, even non-violent conflict has political and democratic consequences. When the nation-state employs tactics of 'ethnocracy', as described by Yiftachel and Yakobi (2004), members of some ethnic groups struggle to have any influence at all in the urban polity in which they live in. Consequently, the ability to exercise political agency for such groups is severely limited. Further, Amin Ash points out the negative consequences of failed social cohesion in divided cities (2002). Such consequences include hate crime, harassment and further segregation. All of these factors influence the inhabitants' political agency.

Finally, it is essential to emphasise that the experience of negative consequences of ethno-national conflict is not limited to less-powerful groups. Rather, ethno-national conflict affects all the groups inhabiting mega-cities. For example, members of conflicting groups may not be able to access some parts of the city. In divided cities, inhabitants tend to limit their daily activities to the familiar neighbourhoods (Centre for Urban Conflicts Research 2012b). This, in turn, influences inhabitants' information base and can hinder their agency.

**Structural Oppression and Complex Inequality**

Dwellers of lower-status neighbourhoods, those affected by poverty, individuals and groups living and working in the informal sphere and unregistered migrants do not have the same political opportunities as the better off and legal inhabitants of the city. The agency of those affected by informality, poverty, socio-spatial segregation and conflict is limited. However, this does not result from the explicit action or bad intentions of any of the agents. To the contrary, the limited political agency here is a result of a mixture of structural aspects, i.e. social and cultural norms, market mechanisms, bureaucracy, and state policy (e.g. Perlman 2004; Yiftachel and Yakobi 2004). As such, I argue, conditions of informality, poverty and segregation in mega-

cities constitute conditions of *structural oppression*. Here, I will refer to structural oppression as a social or political constraint on or absence of agency (including political agency) that results in wrongful harm for the affected group.[120] As such, structural oppression can emerge from systemic factors and can be embedded in norms, habits and social rules. It can also result from actions – or even merely possible actions – of various agents.[121]

In order to support the claim that such constraints on political agency are indeed conditions of structural oppression, I will refer to the conceptualisation of this idea within political theory. For example, Young argues that structural oppression results in some sort of limitation of the capabilities of the affected agents to develop and express their 'needs, thoughts and feelings' (1990: 40). As she explains, the meaning of oppression changed from its traditional usage as an exercise of tyranny by a ruling group. Currently, Young argues, oppression signifies systemic, structural constraints that are not necessarily the result of the intentions or actions of an oppressive agent or agents. The causes of structural oppression 'are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules' (Young 1990: 41). Indeed, mega-cities' conditions result from such overlapping structural constraints. Conditions of informality are a result of patterns of migration, economic factors, state regulations and socio-ethnic policies of the state (Roy and AlSayyad 2004). Causes of urban poverty are multidimensional and include migration of poorer populations to the cities, dependency on cash and a lack of alternative ways of producing or acquiring goods, higher prices an in urban environment, the character of work, greater vulnerability to environmental risks, group and gender hierarchies, and other factors (Amis 1995; Chant 2013; Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013; Wratten 1995). Conditions of socio-spatial segregation result from the choice of mega-cities' inhabitants, but also economic dynamics and the official city regulations (Bailey et al.

[120] While wrongful constraint of agency is a matter of injustice, democracy should be concerned with a removal of constraints or the absence of political agency.

[121] It is because oppression signifies conditions of a lack of agency. Agency in turn is content- and context-independent. If a person's agency is dependent on the possible (in)actions of another agent, then their agency is not context-independent. For more on this point, see chapter 2.

2017). Furthermore, Young argues that structural oppression is systematically reproduced in the economic, political and cultural arrangements. Similarly, conditions leading to limited political agency in mega-cities are strengthened and replicated by everyday norms, practices and behaviours. To illustrate this, the social stigma associated with poverty, illegal status or living in less favourable locations is explicitly created and replicated by social norms and expectations.[122] The unwillingness of policymakers or private companies to invest in segregated or informal areas reinforces the disadvantage that inhabitants of these locations experience.

Following this understanding, structural oppression is distinct from oppression insofar as there is no correlate agent or a group intentionally oppressing others (Young 1990: 41). Similarly, Sally Haslanger (2012: 314) distinguishes between agential oppression and structural oppression, the latter being 'a social/political wrong; that is, it is a problem lying in our collective arrangements, an injustice in our practices or institution'. Now, one could argue that conditions of informality, urban poverty and segregation constitute mainly conditions of *unfreedom* as opposed to *structural oppression*. Both of them can be undesirable and may require a normative intervention. However, one can notice that unfreedom is a wider concept and refers to constraints or merely possible constraints of political as well as natural causes. For example, it is possible to describe as 'unfree' a person who, due to a natural disaster or incident, is not able to walk on their own. It does not seem appropriate to describe such a person as structurally oppressed. Here, the concept of *structural oppression* does not seem appropriate since it is usually used to describe harmful constraints of a social or political nature (Haslanger 2012: 314).[123] However, the concept of oppression may be relevant to describe the situation of this person in relation to a social environment that hinders their ability to participate in social life, e.g. lack of accessible spaces and modes of transport. Further, the concept of

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[122] Perlman (2004) explicitly shows how attitudes of slum dwellers changed over time and were affected by wider social attitudes. She argues that the myth of slum dwellers' marginality became the reality.

[123] Similarly, for Young (1990) structural oppression takes on five faces: exploitation; marginalisation; powerlessness; cultural imperialism; and violence – all of which are created and replicated by social and political factors.

unfreedom may or may not result in harm of the affected group. Hence, a shortage of a specific ice-cream flavour in a popular London ice-cream parlour may result in Londoners' unfreedom to enjoy this flavour. Again, it does not seem appropriate to describe Londoners in this situation as 'structurally oppressed'. It is because the lack of specific ice-cream flavour does not result in harmful conditions.

From the perspective of democracy, conditions of structural oppression are concerning and harmful because they lead to limited opportunities for the affected groups and individuals to influence the rules of collective life. People affected by conditions of structural oppression are subject to perpetuating disadvantage from which they are unable to break away. This creates highly problematic circumstances for inhabitants of mega-cities. To tackle conditions of structural oppression, one-off changes, singular individual actions or policies are not enough (see Young 1990: 41). Because conditions of structural oppression are embedded in social norms and often replicated without intention, structural changes are needed to address them.

Structural oppression is not the only source of concern for the inhabitants of mega-cities. The additional burden is created by the distribution of conditions of informality, urban poverty and socio-spatial segregation among mega-cities' populations. Distributions of these sources of disadvantage tend to overlap within mega-cities and affect the same groups. Certain groups in mega-cities are subjected to multiple sources of disadvantage. As a result, the 'durable inequality' identified by Tilly (1998) still persists in mega-cities and gender, race and citizenship status continue to determine inhabitants' opportunities (Tonkiss 2017). Tonkiss illustrates this claim by referring to many American and South African cities that still uphold urban inequalities on the basis of race.[124] Similarly, Hall and Savage (2016) argue that those with limited financial resources and those with insecure formal status are especially vulnerable to precarity and exclusion. Sassen (2000a) draws attention to the so-called 'dual city' hypothesis, referring to the polarisation of life chances in many modern cities as a rational consequence of globalisation. Yiftachel (2009) describes

[124] The intersection of race, income inequality and spatial segregation are most noticeable in the Northern cities of the US, which do not have past experiences of slavery (Tonkiss 2017).

the inequalities resulting from informality as a creeping apartheid in which a lack of recognition by the state undermines political and social rights. The phenomena called out by these scholars are especially problematic because they explicitly refer to the conditions of complex inequality.

To recall, complex equality is a component of the conception of democracy developed in this thesis, but it is also a necessary condition for political agency. Complex equality does not hold in polities in which there exist only one social good, or distributions of different social goods are correlated, and one or a few goods are pre-eminent (see chapter 4). Let us compare, then, these conditions with those of mega-cities. In mega-cities, there exist several social goods: location, employment, legal status, social status, infrastructure, education opportunities, income, and many others. However, possession of some of these goods provides an advantage in gaining other goods. For example, high income secures good housing in a pleasant and secure location, reliable infrastructure, good education opportunities, prestige and high social status. Further, those without legal status have disproportionately fewer political, social and economic opportunities. They cannot access employment, official housing or social welfare. Therefore, the rules of distribution of these several social goods are integrated. In mega-cities, there are also conditions of domination, meaning that members of some groups are able to gain an advantage regarding many social goods. It is those better off financially and those who can legally dwell and act in the city space who have access to better locations, enjoy good infrastructure and job opportunities and who receive social respect. As such, mega-cities are sites of complex inequality, in which rules of distribution are integrated, and domination of financial wealth is possible.[125]

Both conditions of structural oppression and complex inequality are problematic. Structural oppression entails harmful constraints experienced by many mega-cities' inhabitants. Complex inequality entails that having financial wealth

[125] Here I contrast complex inequality with simple inequality. Simple inequality holds where people are unequal regarding possession of various social goods. However, here the rules of distribution are not integrated and advantage regarding one social good does not translate to others. For an overlapping yet slightly different interpretation, see Walzer (1995: 290-1).

secures a disproportionate ability to gain other social goods, including political influence. The presence of these conditions means that the political agency of a vast number of mega-cities' inhabitants is harmfully limited and unequal (see chapter 3). It shows that mega-cities are socially and politically unequal. When consequences of informality, urban poverty and segregation amplify each other and harmfully constrain political agency, democracy cannot exist. As such, this chapter shows that mega-cities are undemocratic. The presence of mega-city inequality and oppression confirm that these cities should be of vital interest for normative scholars and that these cities need democratic changes. Furthermore, since conditions of informality, urban poverty and segregation have political consequences, they are, on their own, vital topics for political theorists.

## *6.2. Conditions Enhancing Political Agency*

Mega-cities are not all doom and gloom. Historically, there has always been a strong connection between cities and emancipation. For example, a German saying, 'city air makes men free' (*Stadluft macht frei*) refers to the liberation of the residents of medieval cities from the feudal constraints of rural life (Lees 2004: 6). Similarly, Italian renaissance city republics were enclaves of self-governance in otherwise authoritarian duchies (Skinner 1992). A city as a space of freedom is the main theme of a paradigm of urbanism. Here, I refer to urbanism as a particular way of living, historically created in cities, which is now gradually extending to non-urban areas (see Wirth 1938).[126] According to this paradigm, cities offer a specific way of living that is qualitatively different from other ways of life. Urban dwellers are free from their direct dependence on nature. Instead, city life happens in a human-made environment (Magnusson 2000).[127] For example, living in the city means emancipation from the darkness at night and extremes of temperature, from the

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[126] Urbanism as a way of life can be tracked to Luis Wirth. However, there is also a notion of urbanism as a technocratic practice (see Lefebvre 2014). For a critique of urbanism as a way of life, see Brenner and Schmid (2014). They argue that urbanism now is a global condition more than a separate way of life.

[127] This human-created environment is still constrained by natural laws.

vagaries of weather affecting subsistence crops and dependence on seasonal change. In cities, it is easier for groups or individuals to escape social rules with which they disagree and create a different way of living (Magnusson 2011: 22). As Simmel famously argued, 'the smaller the circle which forms our environment and the more limited the relationships which have the possibility of transcending the boundaries, the more anxiously the narrow community watches over the deed, the conduct of life and the attitudes of the individual' (1994 [1903]: 39). As such, he argues, bigger, urban areas create an environment of independence and offer individuals a degree of freedom.

Mega-cities share this emancipatory potential with other urban areas. However, thanks to their vast informal sphere and the multiplicity of the political sites within them, mega-cities offer emancipatory opportunities that are unique in kind. In this section, I show that the informal sphere provides a rich ground for exercising political agency. Furthermore, mega-cities' multiplicity enables exposure of the inhabitants to other rules of collective life which extends their information base and can support the realisation of political agency. Finally, the lack of an absolute, sovereign political power in mega-cities facilitates the appearance of new and different political agendas and movements.

**Informality**

By looking at the informal sphere as a source of emancipation, this thesis contributes to, and builds on, the paradigm of 'subaltern urbanism'. According to this paradigm, informality is not dangerous and hopeless, but is 'a terrain of habitation, livelihood, self-organisation and politics' (Roy 2011a: 223). This literature often points to the informal sphere, settlements or labour, as a place rich in activities, norms and networks. Informal settlements are spaces of busy economic activities (de Soto 2000: 84-93), and places of support and local help (e.g. Williams and Round 2007).[128] Engagement in the informal economy is, for new arrivals to the city, a step towards

[128] Williams and Round (2007) show how the informal economy in Moscow (Russia) acts as a ground for self-development and help for the city's inhabitants.

gaining more secure employment (Sassen 2009). Further, it can be a way of escaping the exploitative conditions of formal work in mega-cities (Barchiesi 2010).

Informality in this perspective provides a rich ground where political agency is exercised. Political agency in the informal sphere takes various forms, from resistance and exit to the positive contribution to the political arrangements of the city (Lindell 2010; Mitlin 2018). Political activities in the informal sphere can take the form of small individual actions right up to mass mobilisation.[129] However, political agency within the informal sphere does not appear in a vacuum. Rather, it emerges in the context of the strategic deregulation by the state which is further replicated by other agents. Political agency in the informal sphere is often explicitly or implicitly directed towards the state. In less explicitly political form, political agency strives for careful re-negotiation of the status quo. For example, Bayat (2000) writes about 'quiet encroachment' in mega-cities, namely small-scale, usually atomised mobilisation with only occasional or rare collective action (Bayat 2000: 545). He describes small actions, often against the official regulations, which are undertaken to improve the daily life of inhabitants. These can include illegal connection of the electricity supply or using city public space to sleep in or to sell merchandise. Thanks to quiet encroachment, mega-cities' inhabitants can gain more space and have access to more resources. This is a small-scale political struggle not aimed directly against the state or its apparatus which, however, acts against the city regulations. Similarly, Benjamin (2008) describes 'ordinary urbanism' in Indian mega-cities where inhabitants occupy unused land and properties. Finally, the streets of London are, in Hall's (2015) interpretation, spaces of 'everyday resistance'. In these shared spaces, formal and informal inhabitants are navigating between diverse groups, seeking solutions in disputes between those less and more powerful. As such, London's inhabitants re-negotiate their own position without the engagement of the state apparatus.

Political agency in the informal sphere can also be directly aimed towards or against the state. This is often the case with urban social movements, bottom-up

[129] Like the individual 'quiet encroachment' described by Bayat (2000) or more coherently organised civic alliances (Mitlin 2018).

urban struggles aiming at structural and political change (Castells 1977). Urban social movements often focus on specific agendas, for example access to affordable housing (New York, US), fair salaries (Cairo, Egypt), transport costs (São Paulo, Brazil), or challenging city development projects (Istanbul, Turkey) (after Blokland et al. 2015). More recently, urban social movements in cities in Iceland, Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Spain used mass protests and occupation of public space to raise objections against austerity measures and to demand more participatory ways of decision-making (Della Porta 2018; Felicetti and Della Porta 2018). While the success of these movements is often mixed, they show that urban social movements are able to challenge the status quo.[130] Mitlin (2018) argues that the strategies employed by urban social movements are not limited to contentious politics, but rather are a mix of contention, collaboration and subversion. Application of such mixed strategies can be illustrated by the alliances of Slum Dwellers International (SDI) created by civic organisations in India (Appadurai 2001), South Africa and Kenya (Mitlin 2018). These alliances do not only engage in self-management, data collection, and provision of relevant help; they also create close networks with similar organisations abroad. For Appadurai (2001), the Indian alliance is proof of 'deep democracy' and an example of an informal civil organisation that is equal to state-led agencies. Similarly, Holston argues that grassroots organisations in São Paulo were able to create an alternative to the state form of citizenship (Holston 2009). Grassroots organisation enabled inhabitants to articulate their needs, to gain confidence and knowledge about their rights, and influenced a creation of a new legal framework (Holston 2009: 256-7).

Overall, urban social movements often explicitly facilitate the achievement of political agency or urban dwellers but also help in mitigating conditions of urban inequality (see Mitlin 2018). Social movements can help to coordinate separate aims, facilitate collective action, and to realise inhabitants' political claims (Glaeser and Steinberg 2017). Further, even if social movements do not realise their intended

[130] Some of these urban social movements have grown into wider social movements, while others have failed to accomplish their intended aims.

aims, mass mobilisation, occupation of the public spaces in the city puts pressure on the official political authorities and, as a result, can contribute to enhancing the inhabitants' political agency.

**Multiplicity**

Modern cities are what Massey (1999: 281) calls 'the sphere of co-existing multiplicity', the space in which there exists more than one voice. In this space, inhabitants can meet and experience people who are different from themselves and who follow different rules of collective life. Following Young (1990: 237), urban dwellers belong to various clusters of affiliation but, in everyday life, they use spaces where they meet and interact with strangers. For Young, the heterogeneity of the urban public space enables different groups to flourish and to create a wider environment of respect and acceptance. Further, in the public space inhabitants encounter the unfamiliar and, as a result, become 'more adept at accepting difference' (Kohn 2004: 201). This diversity is often visible in the common spaces: plazas, streets, parks and bazaars. Such spaces are often used by less advantaged groups to conceptualise and express their claims, for example, women, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities (e.g. Sassen 1996; Wekerle 2000). Such common spaces further facilitate the exchange of information (e.g. Edensor and Jayne 2012: 21).[131] Usage of the public space is also connected to the visibility. For many urban scholars seeing others and being seen in the city has a political and emancipatory potential. For example, Hannah Arendt writes about 'the space of appearance' which is a 'space where I appear to others, and others appear to me' (1998: 198). For Arendt, appearing, speaking, and acting in front of the others is an act of freedom. More recently, Judith Butler (2015) argues that the appearance is a political act. For Butler (2015: 171), appearance refers to the visible presence, spoken words, networked representation and even acts of silence. In relation to political agency, appearance can

[131] For example, bazaars in Indian cities are multi-purpose spaces combining commercial, public and private activities and they provide space for social activities and the exchange of information and gossip (Edensor and Jayne 2012: 21).

be interpreted as obedience or resistance towards the existing rules of collective life. To illustrate, de Koning (2009) describes the visibility of Egyptian middle-class professional women in the coffeehouses of Cairo. For these women, such public visibility is a way of negotiating and reinterpreting existing religious, social and gender norms and as such is a manifestation of their agency.

Mega-cities are explicitly spheres of multiplicity. They accommodate a variety of loosely coordinated, overlapping political fora of both formal and informal character (see chapter 5). As such, they facilitate exposure to new ideas, agendas and styles of living. Such exposure has emancipatory potential: it provides inhabitants with new information and, as a result, increases their information base. Increased information can, in turn, facilitate reasoned judgement and contribute to agency achievement. Importantly, the heterogeneity of mega-city inhabitants facilitates the creation of a critical mass of people with similar demands and, as such, enhances achievement of their political agency. The multiplicity of political fora can also, at least for some, facilitate choice of rules of living that are to their liking (see Magnusson 2011: 22). To illustrate, Diouf (2003) describes the urban African youth which has been dispatched from family and community obligations and who use this to create new identities and social networks in African mega-cities. In this way, then, multiplicity facilitates emancipation by extending the scope of what is possible.

What is more, a multiplicity of political fora in mega-cities creates a potential for challenging more powerful agents. Political fora in mega-cities are organised in a complex dynamic of interconnection, subordination and interdependence. They are unequal in terms of the power they hold. For example, formal authorities of the mega-cities are much more powerful than those informal or subaltern ones. Further, due to the existence of complex inequality, in mega-cities there is a possibility of domination of financial wealth and those who possess it. However, despite existing power inequalities, none of the mega-city political fora has absolute sovereignty. Their power and authority are limited by other agents, for example by the state, international business organisations, or informal networks. Official authorities in mega-cities often co-operate with international corporations in order to attract

investment (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017: 9) or engage in business arrangements with criminal organisations (see Roy 2011a) which consequently results in limited power of the official authorities.[132] Informal fora, even if less powerful, can successfully challenge or obstruct the implementation of the legal order.[133] In this sense, a multiplicity of political fora, even if they are subordinate or marginalised, create a potential base for challenging the powerful agents. This potential, even if unrealised, is of an emancipatory character incomparable to polities in which a fully sovereign power exists.

### *6.3. Summary*

In this chapter, I have investigated the conditions of living in mega-cities. I have argued that mega-cities are affected by robust conditions of inequality, created by circumstances of informality, urban poverty, socio-spatial segregation and ethno-national conflict. These conditions have explicit political consequences since they hinder the political agency of those affected. Together they constitute conditions of structural oppression which cannot be eliminated by one-off changes but require deeper, structural changes. Because of the specific patterns of distribution of the political disadvantage among the mega-cities' inhabitants, these cities are sites of complex inequality. It means that in mega-cities those better off and with legal status have disproportionate access to other social goods and are able to dominate the rest. Structural oppression and complex inequality are both problematic from the perspective of this thesis and, as such, create a rationale for focusing normative and practical efforts on mega-cities. In the next chapter, I introduce emancipatory reforms that can guide such efforts.

[132] This limited power is also a result of limited financial resources (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017).
[133] For example, Schindler (2014) describes a regulatory scheme targeting informal labour in Delhi that failed due to the interference of other power holders, including informal ones.

# *7. Three Strategies of Emancipatory Reforms*

In principle, emancipatory democracy in mega-cities can be realised by institutional or social arrangements that promote individual agency and ensure complex equality among inhabitants (see chapter 5). In this chapter, I build upon this theoretical proposal and contrast it with the actual circumstances of life in mega-cities. Due to the fact that the actual circumstances of mega-city living hinder the promotion of political agency and constitute conditions of complex inequality, in this chapter I offer a set of strategies for democratic, emancipatory reforms in mega-cities.

By contrasting how emancipatory democracy can be realised *in principle* with actual circumstances of mega-city living, I arrive at three strategies of emancipatory reforms. More precisely, I argue that for mega-cities to become a site of emancipatory democracy, these cities need to implement the following strategies: (1) *promoting and equalising political agency*; (2) *re-wiring existing relations* between inhabitants; and (3) *pluralising legitimate political fora*. I elaborate on each of these strategies and explain what actual policies and institutions can make mega-cities more democratic. I point to a variety of tools that realise these strategies. The common characteristic of the suggested interventions is that they do not simply target the urban problems and propose a solution, but make inhabitants *key actors* of the change. In existing cities, such emancipatory interventions are usually accommodated by bottom-up, mid-level organisations, such as social movements, institutions of participatory governance and civil society organisations. While the majority of these interventions are already tested in an urban context, the scale of interventions necessary for the democratisation of mega-cities remains, so far, a theoretical consideration. Overall, this chapter constitutes a normative project of democratising modern mega-cities in an emancipatory manner.

## *7.1. What Kind of Interventions?*

In principle, emancipatory democracy can be realised in mega-cities. As I have argued in chapter 5, this is because the mega-city is not a fully coordinated polity but a complex one consisting of overlapping, different political fora unified by location and a public aim. The multiplicity of political fora helps to promote the political agency of diverse inhabitants. Institutional and social arrangements for emancipatory democracy in mega-cities would need to focus on promoting individual political agency and ensuring complex equality among all inhabitants. Following the operationalisation of political agency (see chapter 4), relevant arrangements would need to focus on promoting reasoned judgement towards rules of collective life, choice or counterfactual choice, and achievement for each inhabitant. Similarly, following operationalisation of complex equality, relevant institutional arrangements would need to support the existence of various social goods with separate criteria of distribution, to prevent domination, and to block the possibility of pre-eminence (see chapter 4).

However, *actual* life circumstances in mega-cities are far from the idealised institutional and social arrangements promoting emancipatory democracy. Inhabitants affected by informality experience constrained choice and counterfactual choice and frequently cannot realise their agency in the legal realm of the city. Conditions of urban poverty entail hardship and social stigma that influence all conditions of political agency of those affected. Conditions of socio-spatial segregation result in limited life, work and political opportunities for those living in less favourable locations. Finally, ethno-national conflict results in legal and physical exclusion. Hence, relevant democratic interventions in mega-cities need to focus on enhancing the political agency of people affected by these conditions.[134] I will refer to interventions of this kind as the strategy of *equalising and promoting political agency*. By following this strategy, the result would be to promote political agency and to

[134] In my analysis I focus in particular on addressing conditions of informality, poverty and socio-spatial segregation since causes of ethno-national, in order to be effective, require engagement of actors beyond the scale of mega-city (most notably the nation-state).

increase political opportunities of disempowered members. However, in a mega-city where structural oppression prevails, a one-off intervention seeking to promote and equalise political agency may be ineffective (see Young 1990: 41).[135] In order to address structural oppression, mega-cities need structural, systemic interventions over a longer period of time.

Further, the actual circumstances in mega-cities create conditions of complex inequality. While there are multiple and diverse social goods, their rules of distribution are intertwined, and domination is possible (see Walzer 1983). Since complex equality is a condition of agency (see chapter 2), its absence means that some inhabitants are not able to exercise their political agency. Relevant democratic intervention in mega-cities should seek to address this issue. Since inhabitants of mega-cities value and seek diverse social goods, but the rules of distribution of these social goods are intertwined, democratic interventions should separate these rules, block the possibility of domination and limit the chances of pre-eminence. I will refer to such interventions as *re-wiring existing relations* among the inhabitants of the polity.

Last but not least, the actual living conditions in mega-cities offer specific, dynamic emancipatory potential. The informal sphere creates a fruitful ground for exercising political agency. The multiplicity of ideas, agendas, styles of living as well as lack of a single sovereign political authority provide opportunities to create new and divergent political spheres. Here, relevant democratic interventions should not hinder these sources of emancipation, but rather build upon them. I will refer to such interventions as *pluralising legitimate political fora* within the mega-cities.

By comparing the ideal of emancipatory democracy with the actual conditions in mega-cities, I have arrived at three strategies of emancipatory reform. In the next section, I describe particular policies and institutions that can realise these strategies. My aim is to offer interventions that are possible within the wider political and economic circumstances in which the mega-city exists. This is despite the fact

[135] To illustrate, safe and free public transport to the voting station on election day. This sort of intervention does promote political agency but, on its own, is not an emancipatory intervention since it does not target wider structural constraints. After election day, inhabitants of the area will face familiar problems and wider lack of political opportunities.

that many conditions hindering the political agency of mega-city inhabitants are a result of the actions of the state or global economic agents. However, mega-city polities are partially sovereign and do not have the power to limit the influence of the state or global economic agents. The state can influence the mega-city and its decision-making (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017; Sorensen 2011). Similarly, many mega-cities directly rely on investment from global economic agents (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017). As a result, I offer strategies that do not explicitly target these agents but rather try to negotiate, and to take advantage of, the dynamics in which mega-cities currently exist.[136] At the same time, this thesis provides arguments and normative foundations for those normative projects that would like to challenge such wider political and economic circumstances in the future.

## *7.2. The Strategy of Equalising and Promoting Political Agency*

The first strategy of emancipatory reform in mega-cities focuses on equalising and promoting the political agency of all inhabitants. In this section, I have divided relevant interventions into citizens' empowerment and structural solutions. In this section, I offer a critical review of various strategies in an urban context and discuss which of them can successfully realise emancipatory democracy in unequal mega-cities.

### Inhabitants' Empowerment Solutions

If one wishes to promote the political agency of members of any polity, the most likely solution is to empower inhabitants and to include them in the polity's decision-making. Hence, in this section, I provide an analysis of relevant solutions in the sphere of collective decision-making and public policy. While these tools have usually been designed for the empowerment of citizens within the state, they can also

[136] This follows Yiftachel (2015) who notes that the state is often ignored by urban scholars which, as a result, undermines their democratising proposals. However, see also Barber (2013) who argues for autarky and autonomy as a way of democratising cities.

successfully function on the mega-city level. In the modern urban context, there are already many democratic tools and innovations that are successful in increasing the influence of citizens on the rules of collective life. In particular, I investigate direct decision-making in an urban context, participatory governance solutions, 'mini-publics', and 'popular spaces' (see Cornwall 2004; Fung 2006; Grönlund et al. 2014; G. Smith 2009).[137] Here, in order to count as emancipatory, relevant tools need to focus on the enhancement of all four components of political agency, namely reasoned judgement, choice, counterfactual choice, and achievement. However, such interventions may fail if they are not complemented by strategies that target conditions of structural oppression in mega-cities. Structural oppression consequently hinders the political agency of those affected despite existing policies seeking to promote it. For example, direct democracy or tools of collaborative governance habitually fail to include informal inhabitants. Many inhabitants face structural constraints in accessing such participatory fora as a result of, for example, work requirements or family obligations. Relevant solutions, in order to be successful tools of promoting and equalising political agency in mega-cities, need to have systemic effects and facilitate structural changes.

I begin the discussion with the tools of direct citizen engagement, namely referenda and citizens' initiatives. While the normative strength of these tools has been challenged by the recent application of referenda in populist settings, many still consider them as tools that can increase citizens' political agency successfully (see Elstub and Escobar 2017; Morel and Qvortrup 2018). The logic of these tools is to provide an opportunity for inhabitants to have a direct say in policy issues, but, usually, they do not guarantee the realisation of inhabitants' preferences. The majority of direct democracy tools are present on the national or state level and act as advisory tools for the official authorities who control the agenda (G. Smith 2009: 111). However, similar tools could be, in principle, introduced on the level of a mega-city. This might include an advisory referendum in which inhabitants vote on a

[137] The particular policies often overlap; hence the division for particular tools is not an analytical distinction but a reflection of labels present in the relevant democratic literature.

legislative issue proposed by the local authorities (Matsusaka 2018). Here, the result is consultative. The mandatory referendum, where the result is binding, is already present on a local level in Switzerland and the US (Matsusaka 2018). On the municipal level, the American city of San Diego, California is an unusual case since urban property development in some areas of the city requires a popular mandatory referendum (Matsusaka 2018). Another tool here is the citizens' initiative that allows citizens to propose new legislation after gathering a certain number of signatures (G. Smith 2009: 112-3). A significant limitation of direct democracy tools initiated by local or state authorities is that they usually offer very limited policy options for the inhabitants to choose from.[138] Hence, while inhabitants are free in exercising choice, the resulting achievement of agency is incomplete. Moreover, binding referenda usually do not realise the political agency of those who supported the non-majoritarian options. Citizens' initiatives seem to provide more scope for agency achievement since they are triggered by the citizens themselves. However, the implementation of the proposed bill or policy is dependent on support from the legislature, other official authority, or a popular vote (G. Smith 2009: 112-3). Hence, application of the citizens' initiative can also result in limited agency achievement.

Can referenda and citizens' initiatives act as tools of equalising and promoting political agency? One of their strengths in the context of mega-cities is that they are able to include a large number of people (Elstub and Escobar 2017). However, the scope of the ability of these tools to promote the political agency of the affected inhabitants is limited. While they offer some (relatively narrow) choice, they usually do not realise the achievement of agency. When used in isolation, these tools usually do not promote reasoned judgement (see Chambers 2001). The reach of these tools is restricted to formal citizens and, as such, these tools are not able to realise the agency of vast informal inhabitants of mega-cities. Referenda and citizens' initiatives are often sporadic in nature and, on their own, do not require any structural changes within the polity. Hence, they do not address inequalities of

[138] Note that there also exists a petition referendum in which inhabitants vote on an official proposal but the vote is organised in response to the inhabitants' request. It is present on the metropolitan level in the US (Matsusaka 2018).

information, they do not tackle socio-economic and social obstacles to participation, and they also do not address other inequalities in political agency beyond the question that is the topic of the referendum. For example, the city of San Diego in California, despite the presence of mandatory referenda, remains socially unequal with a high percentage of homelessness (The Regional Task Force on the Homeless 2018). Further, some argue that in divided, conflicted societies, referenda may serve to deepen existing divisions across the society (Kalaycıoğlu 2012; Lee and Ginty 2012).[139] As a result, referenda and citizens' initiatives, on their own, are not able to act as equalising political agency interventions in unequal mega-cities.[140]

Another tool, namely participatory or collaborative governance, refers to various practices that increase inhabitants' participation and control over the political decision-making processes and their implementation. The aim of these tools is to complement representative democracy via mechanisms that increase the efficiency, responsiveness and accountability of local authorities (Goodhart et al. 2011). Here, the actual interventions can take the form of decentralisation and expansion of local agencies' competencies (Fung and Wright 2001), direct engagement of civil society organisations (Appadurai 2001), participatory budgeting (Santos 1998; Sintomer et al. 2008), participatory urban planning (Forester 1999), neighbourhood committees and many others (see Goodhart et al. 2011). One of the most famous examples of collaborative governance is participatory budgeting (PB), a practice that originated in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre and subsequently spread all over the world (Baiocchi 2001, 2005; Cabannes 2015; Sintomer et al. 2008; Sintomer et al. 2012; N. K. Thompson 2012). Examples of participatory budgeting in mega-cities discussed in the relevant literature include PB in Yaoundé in Cameroon (Rawson 2017), Shanghai and Chengdu in China (Cabannes and Ming 2014; Qin 2016), Mexico City in Mexico (Rumbul et al. 2018), and many others. The main idea behind PB is to allow

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[139] However, the claims here refer to a national level and especially relate to the situations of ethnic conflict.

[140] At the same time, referenda and citizens' initiatives can be employed as complementary tools. For example, they provide good information as to inhabitants' preferences and aims. As such, they can enhance the accountability of representatives and, as a result, improve the realisation of inhabitants' counterfactual choice.

inhabitants of a certain geographical area to allocate a percentage of the regional budget for the policies they deem to be most important. The decision-making process relies on meetings at the local level where inhabitants learn about the issues in question, deliberate and choose delegates responsible for overseeing and implementing the budget. In the most famous case of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, decision-making relied on several rounds of meetings and deliberations with a mixture of participation and delegation (Baiocchi 2005; Santos 1998; Sintomer et al. 2012). A different type of urban co-governance is a process of participatory urban planning. This tool has been successfully applied in urban contexts in Istanbul in Turkey (Akademi 2016), Philadelphia in the US (Sokoloff and Steinberg 2005), Perth in Australia (Hartz-Karp 2005) and others (see Forester 1999, 2018). In this process, city planners meet with public agencies' employees, inhabitants, elected officials, civil service bureaucrats and other interested parties. The process relies on public listening, expressing opinions, learning about the interests of others and finding the best planning solution (Forester 1999). Finally, Chicago in the US employs 'empowered governance' in which decentralised public agencies engage inhabitants in participation and deliberation in a system of central coordination and accountability (Fung and Wright 2001; Fung 2004).[141]

In principle, participatory governance mechanisms actively promote the political agency of the inhabitants they target. However, there exists a vast institutional variety of forms of participatory governance and very diverse contexts in which they are implemented; the degree to which these tools enhance the political agency of urban inhabitants also varies. For example, some, like participatory budgeting or empowered governance, promote reasoned judgement and provide a space in which citizens or inhabitants can gain new information. However, even during these events, inhabitants can rely heavily on the technical and administrative knowledge of public officials (G. Smith 2009: 60-1). Similarly, some inhabitants may be able to freely exercise their choice (e.g. some fora in PB), yet others may be

[141] Here, as Fung notes, central coordination provides local agencies and helps them to meet the public aim, but also holds them accountable regarding their effectiveness and the realisation of democratic principles (2004: 8).

limited or constrained by administrative representatives (e.g. collaborative policing in Chicago) (G. Smith 2009: 48-55). Participatory urban governance can promote agency achievement, but this achievement is often conditional and limited. For example, despite the very emancipatory approach to PB in Porto Alegre, the mayor of the city and the City Council still had the power to veto the budget (see Santos 1998). Within participatory governance tools, generally, central authorities remain in control of the scope of the created policies or, as in the case of Chicago, hold participants directly accountable in terms of their effectiveness (see Fung 2004).

Participatory and collaborative governance also varies in terms of its ability to act as an equalising strategy within unequal polities such as mega-cities. As Pateman (2012) observes, there is a huge difference between the initial practice of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre and some of its later implementations where citizen participation appears merely tokenistic.[142] In the initial application, participatory budgeting provided a positive example of democratic innovation being able to address inequality and structural constraints among the city inhabitants. Further, it brought up structural and systemic changes (Pateman 2012). The process attracted many poor and disempowered members of the city and resulted in infrastructural investments. PB in Porto Alegre sought to 'invert the priorities of the municipality based on the criteria of social justice' (Baierle 2011: 51). As such, the Porto Alegre example shows that collaborative governance can successfully promote political agency and bring about long-lasting structural change.

Another approach to increasing political agency focuses on complementing existing institutions by fora that do not include all the relevant inhabitants but rather seek to collect a representative sample. Such innovations are often labelled as 'mini-publics' since they attempt to recreate the demographic characteristics of the relevant population (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). Thanks to limited size, professional moderation and provision of the relevant information, mini-publics can create favourable conditions for deliberation and for exercising reasoned judgement.

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[142] The practice of PB is Porto Alegre was transformed and de-radicalised. As a result, it took on a less emancipatory form (Baierle 2011).

Individuals chosen by the (nearly) representative sample are invited to spend some time exclusively in the decision-making forum where they deliberate in both small groups and plenary sessions, and have a chance to familiarise themselves with all the relevant information (G. Smith 2009: 76). The process is supported by a trained moderator or facilitator (ibidem). However, the results of mini-publics are usually only consultative. Mini-publics in an urban context described in the literature include deliberative polling in cities of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (Fishkin 2018: 91-101), in Zeguo, Wenling in China (He and Warren 2011), deliberation meetings in Tokyo, Japan (Tang et al. 2018), citizens' juries in Melbourne, Australia (Parry 2016), and the 21st Century Town Meeting in New York, US (Civic Alliance to Rebuild New York 2002).

An important advantage of mini-publics is that they create favourable conditions for exercising reasoned judgement. However, such conditions are created only for the small number of people invited to participate in the forum. Further, mini-publics are limited in the way they realise other conditions of political agency (see also chapter 4). They are top-down approaches in which organisers control the agenda and manage the decision-making process.[143] The participants are free to exercise their choice in coming to a result of the decision-making forum, but usually they are not involved in the organisation of the forum or in the implementation of the results. Due to their consultative function, mini-publics do not realise agency achievement for their participants. In mega-cities, the ability of mini-publics to act as tools of emancipatory democracy is further limited due to the small number of participants and the reliance on official censuses or voting registries as a method of recruitment (see G. Smith 2009, ch3). Such a method of recruitment explicitly excludes the vast number of inhabitants who do not have formal status in the city.[144]

Mini-publics are 'not integrated into the overall system of representative government or democratic institutions, nor do they become part of the regular

[143] See Böker (2017) who argues that mini-publics, due to their top-down design, are necessarily unemancipatory.

[144] Here, however, an interesting counter-example is G1000 in Belgium that specifically targeted asylum seekers and homeless (Muhammad 2012).

political cycle in the life of a community' (Pateman 2012: 10). They are one-off events, and as such they are not able to address wider, structural changes. Due to the fact mini-publics have a consultative role, inhabitants' engagement in these tools rarely has an influence on policymaking and real-life changes within the polity. Despite the fact that some claim that such events have an empowering influence on the communities in which they are organised by increasing the confidence of participants, providing new skills, and increasing personal knowledge, these effects are limited to the small number of participants themselves (cf. Goodin and Dryzek 2006: 234). As a result, the scope of mini-publics as a tool to equalise the political agency of mega-city inhabitants is somewhat limited.[145]

Finally, as opposed to tools organised by the official authorities or democratic practitioners, ordinary inhabitants and grassroots social movements can create arenas that promote the agency of mega-city inhabitants. Such 'popular spaces' (Cornwall 2004: 2) can vary from almost spontaneous actions to more organised collective actions such as the mass protests against the redevelopment of the city space in Istanbul, Turkey (Leach et al. 2016) or anti-government protests in Kiev, Ukraine (Onuch 2014). 'Occupy Wall Street' is a good example of a consistently organised arena that aimed to enhance inhabitants' agency. The movement originated in New York, US, but inspired similar anti-austerity movements across the world. The common characteristic of the movements was the physical occupation of public space in the city and highly participatory decision-making based on respect, equality and (qualified) consensus-building (Min 2015). At the same time, radically horizontal decision-making and a lack of institutionalisation led to the dissolution of the movement. A different case of originally popular space that successfully increased the political agency of inhabitants of urban areas is 'Barcelona en Comú' (BeC) in Spain (Eizaguirre et al. 2017). Originating as a mixture of social movement and bottom-up

[145] However, mini-publics can complement other interventions thanks to their promotion of reasoned judgement. Furthermore, despite being consultative, mini-publics often act as an important source of information for the public authorities and, as such, can increase the counterfactual choice of inhabitants. In particular, fora like the British Columbia Assembly in Canada or the Consensus Conferences in Denmark act, or have acted, as important sources of information regarding citizens' preferences (Joss 1998; Sclove 2000; Warren and Pearse 2008).

organisations, BeC is a civic platform that successfully promoted and won a mayoral position in Barcelona. The BeC's decision-making, before the election, was horizontal and relied on thematic and neighbourhood commissions. Unlike the 'Occupy' movement, BeC implemented representative tools to choose the candidates for the local elections, and the final candidates were validated by electronic poll (Eizaguirre et al. 2017).

Popular spaces are bottom-up and as such are not restricted to the formally recognised inhabitants of mega-cities. Depending on the character of the movement or collective action, public spaces can promote reasoned judgement. For example, an important part of the 'Occupy' movement was learning about and gaining new political and social perspectives during the process (see Min 2015). In addition, popular spaces can facilitate the choice condition of political agency of those who participate. One important limitation of public spaces is their detachment from official decision-making mechanisms. As such, the claims and demands of participants of these fora often remain unrealised, which undermines the agency achievement of their participants. However, the case of BeC shows that it is possible for popular spaces to influence official decision-making mechanisms and facilitate consequential change. The platform, despite the lack of a majority in the local government, successfully implemented new social housing policy and policies on investment in poorer areas of the city (Blanco et al. 2019). However, even non-institutionalised popular spaces can contribute to emancipatory democracy in mega-cities by providing information on inhabitants' preferences and by creating political pressure on elected officials.

Popular spaces can also act as equalising tools. Due to their bottom-up origins, they often propagate structural changes and socio-economic reforms. For example, the BeC programme focused on employment, food prices, social housing and the improvement of public transport (Eizaguirre et al. 2017). However, as opposed to other governance strategies, the equalising effect of popular spaces is not conditional on their ability to influence official decision-making systems. Popular spaces can act as mechanisms that equalise the political agency of inhabitants, for

example, by providing tools of bottom-up education (Occupy) or by providing support to those affected by poverty (SDI alliance described by Appadurai).

To summarise, existing citizens' empowerment solutions can promote the political agency of inhabitants of mega-cities. However, since many of these solutions are one-off events, include only legal citizens, and are often inconsequential or applied in a tokenistic manner, the reach of some of them as tools of emancipatory democracy is somewhat limited. Furthermore, only some of these tools are able to target structural oppression and act as equalising strategies. Here, among the tools that indeed work as tools for promoting and equalising political agency in unequal contexts, I have included participatory governance mechanisms (co-governance) and popular spaces. In particular, I have mentioned emancipatory examples including the early stages of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre and various practices of democratic social movements. As a result, such solutions can be facilitated by a mixture of city authorities and bottom-up actors. In the next section, I will investigate structural solutions.

**Structural Solutions**

So far, I have discussed governance solutions as potential interventions promoting and equalising political agency. However, it is also possible to find relevant solutions that are explicitly focused on structural changes rather than on the collective decision-making mechanisms within the city. Such solutions are often part of wider developmental, migration or social policy programmes. In the critical analysis below, I look for solutions that not only address conditions of structural oppression within the city but also act as tools promoting political agency. For readers' clarity, I am discussing various solutions following the main source of mega-city conditions that they aim to target, namely informality, poverty and segregation. However, many of these solutions address several of these conditions at once. In the analysis below, I will consider whether the given solution targets conditions of urban oppression in a systematic way, as well as whether it promotes the political agency of mega-city inhabitants.

I will start by considering solutions focused on the conditions of informality. Recall that such conditions refer to the informal life of many mega-city inhabitants, e.g. informal status, settlement or employment. Conditions of informality are caused by the mixture of policies of the state, the global economy, as well as personal choices (García 2017; Roy 2005; Yiftachel and Yakobi 2004).[146] In a nutshell, problems of those affected by informality include uncertainty, lack of security, lack of recognition by the official authorities resulting in a lack of access to relevant infrastructure, explicit exclusion from the formal side of mega-city living, social stigma and marginalisation. This, in turn, translates into their limited or event absent political agency in the mega-city polity.

In principle, it is possible to address informality and its consequences by the state recognising and legitimising this sphere. Here, one can suggest policies such as registering unrecorded migrants, giving legal status to illegal migrants, providing property land deeds and residence rights to inhabitants of the informal settlements, or regulation of informal employment (e.g. Bacchetta et al. 2009; de Soto 2000). In practice, such solutions are often problematic. The legitimisation of property rights can lead to conflicts within communities and can consolidate gender inequalities (Roy 2002).[147] A legalisation policy can lead to increased prices for the properties and land, and as such displace the most vulnerable inhabitants (Berner 2000; Gilbert 2000). These problems show that legitimisation of informality is 'not simply a bureaucratic or technical problem but rather a complex political struggle' (Roy 2005: 150). For Roy, informality is a product of both strategic deregulation by the state and the way the state exercises its power. Complete regulation of all existing informality is often not aligned with the wider interests of the state (or its most powerful groups). Furthermore, the state does not have exclusive authority over mega-cities but rather shares power with a variety of local, national and international decision-makers. Aims and actions of these decision-makers can block legalisation. For example, Schindler

[146] Here especially Yiftachel and Yakobi (2004) show the role of globalisation, the liberal economy and the policies of the state as factors creating the informality, while García (2017) argues that informality (in employment) is a result of both the characteristic of the labour market and personal choices.
[147] Roy illustrates this with her research on Kolkata.

(2014) describes a regulatory scheme targeting informal labour in Delhi that failed due to the interference of other power holders. Zhang (2004), using the example of Chinese mega-cities, shows that even property ownership does not protect inhabitants from the vulnerability of the informal sphere. Indeed, property ownership rights are often violated in the name of economic development. Hence, legitimisation by the state can be unsuccessful in challenging the status quo.[148]

Alternatively, there are interventions that directly aim to increase social and political opportunities of inhabitants affected by informality. Such practices are often realised on the level of the city itself, and they involve a variety of local power-holders. Examples of such policies within the literature include sanctuary cities (Bauder 2017), community-based alliances that provide relevant services for slum inhabitants (Appadurai 2001) or social-safety networks for those working in the informal sector.[149] Here, the label of 'sanctuary cities' refers to urban areas that welcome undocumented migrants and asylum seekers and offer them some hospitality (Bagelman 2013). While the practices among sanctuary cities differ, in this section, I explicitly refer to those interventions that enable individuals without legal status to dwell, work in and benefit from city living.[150] For example, the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy employed by the USA sanctuary cities bans city services from requesting, recording, and passing on information regarding inhabitants' immigration status to the state and federal authorities (Bauder 2017). It also prevents them from providing support to immigration law enforcement (albeit with some exceptions). Several municipalities in the US issue their own identification cards while other cities accept foreign identity documents and thereby enable undocumented migrants' access to relevant city services (Bauder 2017; Varsanyi 2007).[151] For example, in the

[148] For a detailed critique of state-led policies targeting the informal labour market, see Standing (2011).

[149] However, for a discussion of explicitly self-help programmes, see the next section on interventions addressing poverty.

[150] In particular, Bauder shows that US and Canadian sanctuary cities aim to protect undocumented migrants, while in the UK, sanctuary cities only commit to welcoming such migrants.

[151] Examples of cities that issue their own municipal identity cards include New Haven (CT), San Francisco (CA), Oakland (CA), Richmond (CA), Los Angeles (CA) and New York City (NY) (after de Graauw 2014).

US the municipal identification cards policy targets a whole range of urban inhabitants, namely illegal migrants, homeless, but also people who identify as transgender and those seeking to reintegrate after a prison sentence (de Graauw 2014). Municipal IDs enable their holders to enrol children in schools, to access health and social care facilities and to interact with official authorities (ibidem). In this way, they can act as equalising strategies that enable people to break away from certain structural constraints. However, such strategies can also explicitly promote the political agency of many inhabitants. In New York, having a municipal ID 'opens pathways to civic participation and engagement' because without it many groups cannot access a town hall meeting, cultural centres and public agencies (Torres 2017: 364). Further, as Torres (2017) reports, municipal IDs allow the unregistered migrants, simply, to feel welcomed.

The policies or tools that aim to increase social and political opportunities of inhabitants affected by informality do not need to be organised by the official authorities. On the contrary, they can be successfully facilitated by other agents, such as civil society organisations, faith and social communities or international organisations. Famously, Appadurai (2001) describes the experiences of civic alliances that, building on local knowledge and participation, successfully address the needs of inhabitants of informal settlements in India. Similarly, Mitlin (2013) reports how social movements facilitate the reduction in urban poverty in South Africa and Peru. In turn, Alimuddin et al. (2004) describe successful collective action of the bottom-up networks which resulted in the construction of a fresh water pipeline in Faisalabad's (Pakistan) informal settlements.

Policies that strive to increase the opportunities of those affected by informality do not fully address conditions of structural oppression within cities. Hence, such policies and tools need to be supplemented by other structural policies that alleviate urban poverty, remove social constraints and challenge existing social dynamics. For example, they need to equalise access to education, employment and opportunities of those affected by informality so that they can benefit from the full range of social aspects that come with city living. Many such policies are part of

programmes explicitly addressing urban poverty. Further, they can be seen as complementing policies aiming to increase social and political opportunities of inhabitants affected by informality. In order to show this complementarity, I will now discuss three types of interventions addressing poverty, namely aid programmes, policies focused on self-help, and interventions focused around the human development paradigm.

Recall that the causes of urban poverty, which are multidimensional and complex, include migration of already poor populations to the cities, dependency on cash and a lack of alternative ways of producing or gaining goods, higher prices in urban environment, the character of urban work, lower resilience, greater vulnerability to environmental risks, group and gender hierarchies, and other factors (Amis 1995; Chant 2013; Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013; Wratten 1995). Conditions of poverty can hinder the well-being and health of those affected and vastly limit their life and political opportunities (see chapter 6).

Current policy responses to urban poverty often focus on the provision of aid programmes by foreign NGOs, international development banks or even the state (Satterthwaite 2001).[152] These actors are especially prominent in the mega-cities of the Global South. They aim to provide financial help and to assist in the development of local infrastructure. However, as Satterthwaite (2001) points out, such programmes often miss their target due to their lack of local knowledge and their detachment from local communities. Furthermore, for the beneficiaries of the aid programmes, there is minimal scope to influence or challenge the way in which they are administered and provided. Such programmes assume rather a passive role of the inhabitants affected by poverty. As such, aid programmes may fail to target poverty and do not challenge the voicelessness and powerlessness of the urban poor.

An alternative method of addressing poverty focuses on providing targeted local help to those affected by poverty so that they can use their own local knowledge and target their own specific needs. Examples of such programmes

[152] For an overview of historical policy responses and strategies addressing urban poverty, see Wratten (1995).

include community-driven slum renovation, 'self-help' projects, microfinance, or self-organisation of those affected by poverty (see Roy 2005). However, such programmes usually do not challenge the structural conditions that replicate structural constraints. As such, local self-help programmes can have limited success.[153] For example, they often fail to challenge existing oppressive gender dynamics. This is especially important since urban poverty often has a gender dimension (e.g. Chant 2013; WHO and UN Habitat 2010). As a practical example, when access to water is limited, it is usually women and girls who are responsible for water collection, which is both time-consuming and physically burdensome (Chant 2013; Parikh et al. 2015). This daily burden leads to girls dropping out of school which then contributes to their lack of education and increases inequality between genders (Parikh et al. 2015). Furthermore, many community-driven programmes focus mainly on physically upgrading slums. However, Perlman (2004) shows that renovating and improving the quality of housing in Brazilian favelas has not led to any change in other structural conditions. On the contrary, over 40 years, the social stigma associated with living in slums has increased, as has the violence and lack of security. This shows how important structural constraints are when addressing urban poverty.

Finally, there are several interventions focused on the agency of those affected by poverty and their ability to achieve the lifestyle that they, upon reflection, have a reason to value (Nussbaum et al. 1992; Sen 1992, 1999). These interventions refer to the 'capability approach' (Robeyns 2005) or a human development paradigm (e.g. Fukuda-Parr 2003). Unlike development aid or self-help programmes, these interventions do not focus on providing resources or targeted financial help to those affected by poverty.[154] Instead, such interventions recognise individual agency and aim to extend the scope of what those affected by poverty are effectively able to do and to be (Robeyns 2005). Hence, relevant tools and policies seek to extend the

[153] However, here the civic alliance described by Appadurai (2001) is an example of community-based help that was highly successful also in addressing structural constraints.
[154] It also because Sen (1999), from whose work the capabilities approach originated, defines poverty as capability deprivation.

scope of lifestyles available to people affected by poverty. In particular, Sen (1999: 39) argues for the extension of five types of freedoms, namely political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective securities. However, these freedoms will differ depending on the context and communities in question. For example, Frediani (2007) shows how these five freedoms can be operationalised in the case of squatter upgrading investment in Novos Alagados in Salvador da Bahia (Brazil). The programme has been considered a success by the World Bank due to the residents' participation in the process and its innovative design (Imparato and Ruster 2003). However, the residents of the upgraded area argued that the programme had fallen short of substantively expanding their social and political freedoms. In particular, Frediani (2007) shows how residents sought more possibilities to customise their dwellings, expanded chances for employment in the renovation areas, more living space within the flats, and overall higher engagement in the development of the project. This shows that the capabilities approach does not translate into a rigorous set of instructions but rather provides guidance in the direction of interventions towards an objective. For example, current interventions within the capabilities approach promote political empowerment and gender equality (see Fukuda-Parr 2003). However, they could also take other forms, such as access to free education, food distribution, improvement of public health services, etc.

Interventions focused on the capability approach have the potential to address both the consequences of poverty and its structural causes because such interventions do not focus on particular goals, but rather on extending the spectrum of possibilities available to those affected by poverty. To be successful in achieving their aims, such policies and tools need to address both the actual daily hardship and the deficiency of opportunities, infrastructure and goods. In order to extend opportunities for mega-city inhabitants to choose the lifestyle they want and have reason to want, relevant interventions need to address structural constraints hindering such choice: for example, gender hierarchies or social stigma associated with living in poverty. Furthermore, interventions centred around the capabilities

approach consider choices and preferences of the affected groups as a central aspect of any development or renovation programmes. As such, they consequently promote and enhance the political agency of the affected groups. To illustrate, Lucci et al. (2015) describe a successful programme of community toilets in Mumbai, India. The programme, initiated and delivered by an alliance of the NGO and community organisations, resulted in community-designed toilet blocks in many deprived areas of Mumbai.[155] One of the biggest impacts of the programme was not the delivery of this basic sanitary infrastructure but the increased agency of the slums' inhabitants. From the clients of city administration, groups affected by poverty become agents who design and manage the process (Patel et al. 2016).

Policies and strategies aiming to increase the scope of capabilities available to the urban poor could also specifically target inhabitants of remote or underprivileged locations. As such, they could also contribute to and complement other structural policies that seek to address socio-spatial segregation. Recall that socio-spatial segregation refers to the unevenness in settlement and use of the city space by the many different social, ethnic and economic groups and the patterns of concentration in some areas of the city. Segregation results from market dynamics, city regulations, historical circumstances, but also individual preferences (Bailey et al. 2017; Schelling 1971). Residents of less preferable locations frequently suffer from uneven access to the city life, worse infrastructure, worse or remote social services, lower employment opportunities, greater environmental risk and social stigma (see chapter 6). These factors further result in their limited opportunities to influence the rules of the collective life of the whole city polity. Furthermore, residents of segregated but prestigious locations often do not realise the difference between their standard of living and that of the other inhabitants, which skews their idea of what is normal and average (Young 1999: 41-2).

Currently, there are two approaches to targeting segregation: the first includes policies aiming to mix up the character of different areas and to facilitate the

[155] More precisely, the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) along with two community-based organisations, the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and Mahila Milan (Women Together). After Lucci et al. (2015: 20).

integration of different groups. Relevant tools and interventions here include policies of relocation, area renovation and diversification, quotas for affordable housing, shared ownership schemes, and mixed-tenure initiatives (Tonkiss 2015: 84-5). However, such interventions are often problematic. First of all, many inhabitants of mega-cities benefit from the proximity of members of their own particular ethnic, social or religious group. Even if such neighbourhoods are marginalised or isolated, such groups often provide security, support and help for mega-city inhabitants, and can be a source of pride (Young 1999: 244). Here, any interventions focused on slum clearance and resettlement can risk breaking up the existing networks of support. This is especially severe in the resettlement of disempowered groups who, as a result, lose social connections and locally-based jobs. However, interventions facilitating the movement of the better off into previously less favourable locations can be similarly unsuccessful. Here relevant policies would include new, prestigious housing or service developments in less favourable locations that seek to modify the character of the area.[156] Such interventions are often called 'gentrification', namely 'the rehabilitation of working-class and derelict housing and the consequent transformation of the area into a middle-class neighborhood' (N. Smith and Williams 1986: 1).[157] However, such social, economic or physical upgrading of an area often leads to the displacement of the lower-income population because, due to changing demand, the prices of goods and properties in the area rise (Marcuse 2015). This leads to increased private and public investment which changes the character of the area and further attracts business and a higher-income population (Marcuse 2015). As a result, the opportunities of inhabitants with a lower income or those from disempowered minorities are decreased. Those worse off are often forced to move away to locations which are less desirable and potentially even more segregated. Lees (2011: 164) points to the massive scale of gentrification-based evictions in a number of cities in Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia and the Philippines.

[156] For examples of housing development in Mumbai and London, see Harris (2008), and for a vast public transportation project in Metro Manila, Philippines, see Choi (2014).
[157] For a newer approach to defining gentrification, see Schlichtman et al. (2017).

In these countries, only in 2005, more than two million inhabitants were forced to move out, most of whom received no financial compensation.

The second solution to socio-spatial segregation relies on the provision of affordable resources to the less preferable locations. Young (1999) refers to these interventions as policies of disintegration, since they maintain the personal opportunity of choosing a location to live but address the negative aspects of such a choice. Relevant interventions here focus on systematic enhancement of appropriate infrastructure, services and life opportunities for those in the less preferable locations. However, in order for these interventions to promote emancipatory democracy and not gentrification, they should target the needs and enhance the situation of the disempowered and worse off inhabitants. Here such policies can include the provision of decent roads, reliable public transport, good educational opportunities, and accessible, affordable healthcare. When improved infrastructure attracts inward movement of better off inhabitants, such change should be used to benefit the worse off inhabitants (for example, by higher taxation rates).[158] Disintegration can be achieved by regulation of the activities of the local authorities, landlords, developers and businesses to ensure that properties are affordable despite the infrastructural development. Tools of disintegration can also focus on removing barriers for inhabitants of underprivileged locations that prevent them from accessing the city resources (Tonkiss 2015: 80). For example, regular and safe public transportation links can enable inhabitants of less favourable locations to access work across the whole city.

Policies of disintegration can address the consequences of socio-spatial segregation if they focus on the systematic improvement of life opportunities of all city inhabitants including those in less favourable locations. By moving city resources to less privileged locations, such interventions could improve the situation of many mega-cities' inhabitants. By removing barriers that prevent disempowered and marginalised inhabitants from accessing the wider city life and resources, such

[158] For an example, see the plans for renovation of the Elephant and Castle area in London (DeFilippis and North 2004: 79). However, from the perspective of time, the project did not prove to support local communities.

interventions could enable inhabitants to become equal members of the city. Increased visibility and greater access to wider city life and its resources can reduce the stigma and social marginalisation associated with living in less favourable urban locations. As a result, disintegration can change the socio-structural conditions replicating oppression, but it does not eliminate clustering when it is beneficial for the inhabitants.

However, the implementation of actual policies of disintegration is vital from the perspective of equalising and promoting the political agency of the inhabitants of the remote or unfavourable locations. For example, the cable car that connects one of the informal settlements in Medellín (Colombia) to the core transport network has reduced the separation of the informal settlements and enhanced their visibility (Davila and Daste 2011).[159] However, currently the investment's significance remains rather symbolic and has not led to the vast improvement in the political agency of the inhabitants of the informal settlements (see Drummond et al. 2012). On the contrary, more efficient equalising projects would rather promote participation of the local residents, and create the mechanisms of their control over the implementation and maintenance of the cable car.

To summarise, in this section I have looked at the structural solutions that address conditions of structural oppression in the mega-cities. While a variety of solutions exist, only some of them address the consequences and roots of informality, urban poverty and socio-spatial segregation in a systemic manner. Furthermore, there exists a variety in how these solutions are implemented. Some systemic solutions – like transport links between the remote areas or slum upgrading programmes – can address structural disadvantage, but they are not able to enhance inhabitants' political agency. Similarly, sanctuary city policies can enable access to social services but may not tackle social isolation and the informal inhabitants' lack of ability to affect the rules of collective life. Hence, the structural solutions that would act as tools of emancipatory democracy in the conditions of mega-city oppression

[159] It was also accompanied with construction of new social infrastructure, like housing and schools (Brand and Dávila 2011).

need to actively promote inhabitants' engagement and control over the process. Here, it seems especially helpful to think about various structural interventions under the umbrella of the capability approach. In other words, various structural interventions can be a tool of emancipatory democracy so long as they treat inhabitants as agents who are co-responsible for the processes.

### *7.3. The Strategy of Re-wiring Existing Relations*

After analysing policies focused on political agency, I will now move on to the second strategy of emancipatory reform. Emancipatory democracy relies on both political agency and complex equality. However, the actual circumstances that are characteristic of mega-cities create conditions of complex inequality (see chapter 6). In mega-cities, financial wealth enables the gaining of other social goods, like security, housing, education, higher social status and political influence. Further, those who lack financial wealth face severe barriers to living in security, accessing employment, decent housing and social welfare services. This shows that in mega-cities the rules of distribution of diverse social goods are integrated. Integrated rules of distribution limit the political agency of a vast number of mega-city inhabitants.

Relevant emancipatory reforms in mega-cities should aim to change this. More precisely, emancipatory reforms should aim to disentangle the rules of distribution of various social goods and block the possibilities for domination or pre-eminence (see chapter 4), thereby reducing complex inequality. In particular, in a mega-city context, relevant tools should focus on pre-eminence of financial wealth and formal status (see section 6.1). One might notice that some of the interventions equalising and promoting political agency, already described in the section above, can also act as strategies that target complex inequality. For example, provision of services to the informal members of the city or relevant infrastructure development in marginal areas enable inhabitants to access wider social goods and to increase the social and political opportunities of disadvantaged inhabitants. However, such interventions should be complemented by policies that explicitly seek to separate

rules of distribution of diverse social goods and that block the possibility of domination (for an explanation of these, see chapters 3 and 4). I describe such reforms as following the strategy of *re-wiring existing relations*. I will now briefly discuss them and then elaborate on agents that can be responsible for ensuring implementation of these tools.

In the modern urban context, there exist a variety of interventions that aim to separate rules of distribution and limit pre-eminence of wealth. More precisely, these interventions make it more difficult for those better off to gain privileged access to other social goods, like education, transport or health care. For example, publicly financed education stops those who have a higher income from using their wealth to access better education. Another example can include free public transport, like the system introduced in Tallinn, Estonia. Free public transport is available to all city inhabitants and while it requires formal registration of residents, it benefits the less advantaged inhabitants. A year after the system was introduced, 'public transport usage increased by 14%, and there is evidence that the mobility of low-income residents has improved' (Cats et al. 2017). However, projects like the public provision of social goods also help to block the pre-eminence of financial wealth. In the Tallinn example, free public transport is not delivered for city profit. As such, it de-incentivises public authorities from investing in transport development in the richer and more profitable areas. On the contrary, profit-oriented city transport often results in richer areas being better served and better connected. For example, Gilbert (2008: 444) describes how before the introduction of the more centralised rapid bus system, the private city transport in Bogota (Colombia) tended to focus on central areas leaving remote, poorer parts of the city without reliable transportation.

Re-wiring existing social relations in mega-cities might also include the maintenance of public and open leisure spaces available to all inhabitants. At the very least, green spaces for leisure, socialisation and play are a social good that should be available regardless of the inhabitants' financial situation (see Kohn 2004).[160] Privately owned parks, luxury shopping or leisure centres are merely pseudo-public, while they

[160] Kohn (2004) argues that public space is vital as a space where inhabitants meet as citizens.

remain controlled and exclusive (Madden 2010). For example, the privately owned and managed Queen Elizabeth Park or Paddington Basin in London are spaces of surveillance in which those who are visibly poor or homeless are not welcome (Ferreri and Trogal 2018; Shenker 2017). As a result, such developments reinforce the pre-eminence of financial wealth. Here, relevant interventions of re-wiring existing social relations could also include legal bans or additional tax burdens for purchases of city land or properties with the purpose of luxury redevelopment of existing leisure spaces.

Other legal interventions that seek to re-wire existing relations in mega-cities might focus on actions against rapid rent strikes. For example, some local boroughs in Berlin and other German cities are able to purchase rental properties and transfer them into public ownership, if they have reasons to believe that a new landlord will radically increase the rent (O'Sullivan 2019).[161] In Berlin, the radical rents increases have been associated with corporate landlords, often owning a vast number of properties. In a case of such radical rent increases, housing in whole areas can become accessible only to the better off. As such, the borough's purchases, in this case, act as interventions re-wiring existing relations and disentangling connected rules of distribution of various social goods (namely financial wealth and housing).

Reforms promoting complex equality in mega-cities also require interventions that remove the necessity of belonging to the formal side of the city as a requirement for accessing the city life and its services. Here, the already discussed sanctuary city policies or municipal identification cards can promote complex equality. Other relevant policies could include raising the registration requirements or the construction of new ways of defining the city budget. The importance of the former is illustrated by the city of Tallinn. In the aforementioned case, registration of the number of inhabitants allowed the city to gain a higher budget share from the central government to fund the public transport (Cats et al. 2017). However, public transport is only available to officially registered inhabitants. Here, changes in the

[161] For example, the borough of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg in Berlin has bought 15 buildings over last three years (after O'Sullivan 2019).

mega-city budget allocation – going from being based on the number of registered inhabitants to the de facto inhabitants' estimates – could help in establishing the conditions of complex equality. More precisely, if the mega-city authorities did not depend on the number of registered inhabitants in defining their budget, this would remove the incentive for them to make the city services unavailable to informal dwellers.

Informality in mega-cities refers not only to unregistered inhabitants, but also to a vast number of homeless members of the city. Many current policies and urban practices actually reinforce conditions of complex inequality. For example, 'anti-homeless spikes' installed in many places in London are physical alterations that prevent homeless people from using city architecture (like parks, doorways or pavements) as sleeping spots (Petty 2016). Many American and Australian cities have laws explicitly banning homeless from being on the streets (O'Sullivan 2012). As a result of such policies, homeless are unable to access the city space or city services. Such policies reinforce conditions of complex inequality because they effectively associate distribution of housing with distribution of many other social goods: using the city space, transport, personal security and respect. Hence, the requirements of complex equality require radical changes in policies towards homelessness that would facilitate equal access to the city space, regardless of one's housing status.

Described above are some examples of policies that focus on separating rules of distribution of various social goods in mega-cities and blocking the possibility of pre-eminence. However, one might wonder who should be responsible for implementing such interventions. In most cases, urban powers and budgets are limited and dictated by the national governments (see Frug 2007; Moonen et al. 2018). For Walzer (1983), the main theorist of complex equality, it is precisely the national government that should act as a guarantor of separate rules of distribution and that is best positioned to block pre-eminence. However, Walzer argues that complex equality is, theoretically, possible in relatively bounded communities that share a common understanding of diverse social goods and can agree on how these goods should be distributed within the community. The state, under these

circumstances, is the formal organisation of the bounded community. However, the national government can have very different interests and aims than inhabitants of the mega-city. As a result, the national government is not best suited to regulate rules of distribution among the inhabitants of a mega-city.

Furthermore, mega-cities are not bounded. Instead, they are porous with new inhabitants coming every day, drawn from many backgrounds. Mega-cities are also characteristically highly diverse, which means that social goods can be valued differently by different inhabitants in different parts of the city (see Harvey 2009, ch 2). Socially constructed social norms in respect of the meaning of social goods and rules of their distributions may not be consistent across the mega-city polity and across different groups.[162] As a result, some of the social goods and their distribution might be similar across the mega-cities, while others may differ. In this sense, it is difficult for any specific actor – whether a national government or a mega-city authority – to define fixed rules of distribution of social goods in diverse and porous mega-cities.

Hence, I would like to propose a collaboration of diverse political fora, already existing in mega-cities, and the official mega-city authorities as a way of ensuring complex equality in mega-cities. Many of diverse political fora in mega-cities have socially constructed rules of distribution of various social goods. For example, religious communities, neighbourhood associations, or social movements and popular spaces create their own norms regarding different social goods. As a result, those social groups and movements are vital actors in terms of providing information about rules of distribution of various social goods.

However, reliance on such diverse political fora is not enough for complex equality to hold. Many of the political fora in mega-cities are overlapping; they may have divergent or conflicting interests. Furthermore, complex inequality within mega-cities does not result from inequalities *within* the political fora, but rather *across* and *between* them. Therefore, formal, centralised authorities do have an important role to

[162] For example, transport is used differently and at different times by male and female inhabitants of mega-cities (Chant 2013).

play in implementing re-wiring strategies. The official authorities, based on the information provided by the diverse fora, can implement strategies of re-wiring existing relations. Furthermore, central authorities could act to increase social standing and importance of non-dominant goods.[163] Here, for example, free and open public space available to all inhabitants can increase the visibility of poorer or informal inhabitants and result in their recognition and a boost to their self-confidence. Such interventions may require mega-cities to have more ability to act separately from the state, but does not require financial autarky.

To summarise, in this section I have analysed some policies that support the establishment of conditions of complex equality in mega-cities. In particular, I identified exemplary policies that decouple the intertwined rules of distribution and block the possibility of pre-eminence. In particular, I have emphasised public delivery of some social goods (like education or transport) and the importance of open-access public space. In addition, I explained the importance of changing the existing policies that rely on formal registration of inhabitants, and argued for policies enhancing access to city benefits to all mega-city inhabitants. However, I have also identified problems with the implementation of such policies on the national and mega-city level. As a result, I have recommended that any strategies of re-wiring existing relations within the mega-city should rely on the rules of distribution created by diverse groups and fora that currently exist in mega-cities. However, it should be the mega-city authorities that implement actual policies and negotiate the conflicting rules of distribution and their interconnections across the whole polity.

## *7.4. The Strategy of Pluralising Legitimate Political Fora*

Mega-cities are not only areas of structural oppression. They are also spaces rich in democratic potential due to the vibrant informal sphere and multiplicity of political fora within them (see chapter 6). Effective emancipatory interventions should,

[163] For example, Miller (1995: 224) gives an example of increasing importance of public honours by public celebration and recognition.

therefore, build on these sources of emancipation. Here, relevant tools and policies should strive for equally acknowledging activities, people and places in the informal sphere. Further, democratic innovations should enhance the multiplicity of the political fora within mega-cities. I refer to these strategies as *pluralising legitimate political fora.* One can note that the strategies of equalising and promoting political agency reviewed above will also have a pluralising effect. Hence, the introduction of participatory co-governance or popular spaces will, de facto, pluralise legitimate political fora within the mega-city. Policies targeted towards mitigating the negative effects of informality can have a similar effect. All these strategies can be realised by a mixture of bottom-up and official actors. In this section, I elaborate on other strategies that result in pluralising legitimate political fora within a mega-city. In particular, I argue that the organisation of the mega-city government does not, on its own, have emancipatory consequences. Rather, it is the active support for multiple, diverse, bottom-up political fora and their incorporation into formal decision-making mechanisms that should be the basis of emancipatory organisation.

**Organisation of the Mega-city Authorities**

The first way of organising mega-city political powers lies in the decentralisation of its authorities. Such a process results in the creation of multiple jurisdictions responsible for the provision of public services (Tiebout 1956). The idea behind decentralisation is that multiple jurisdictions can provide more tailored services and can be more responsive to their inhabitants (King 2004). This model assumes that inhabitants could and would be able to move to other jurisdictions to find the one that best realises their needs (see King 2004).[164] Decentralisation increases the number of political fora that may create different rules of collective life. An example of a mega-city with significantly decentralised local government is the city of London with 32 local boroughs responsible for delivering the majority of services to its inhabitants (Frug 2007). While public transport is controlled by the municipal

[164] While the jurisdictions would be competing with each other for the inhabitants and resources they bring.

Greater London Authority, the municipal authorities do not have many powers to influence borough decisions in other areas (ibidem).

There are several problems with decentralisation as a tool for realising emancipatory democracy. First of all, decentralised authorities do not need to be more focused on promoting political agency than a centralised authority (see Purcell 2006). Inhabitants also face many structural constraints that may limit their ability to freely move to other jurisdictions. These mean that inhabitants are stuck in jurisdictions that do not promote their agency. Furthermore, some local jurisdictions may create wealthy enclaves unwilling to contribute to wider city services, which in turn reinforce conditions of complex inequality. For example, Frug describes the policies of zoning in the US cities that exclude the poorer neighbourhoods from benefiting from city investment (Frug 1999, 2017). In principle, decentralisation could work as a pluralising strategy, if local jurisdictions promote the political agency of their inhabitants and are committed to realising conditions of complex equality across the whole polity. However, in principle, this often proves to be difficult due to inequalities in the wealth of different boroughs and their unwillingness to welcome the poorer inhabitants within their boundaries (see Frug 1999, 2017).

The second way of organising mega-cities relies on centralised authorities. While the benefit of the centralised authority is the possibility of ensuring more coordinated distribution across different boroughs, the centralised authority does not act as a strategy of *pluralising political legitimate* political fora. Finally, the third way of organising power within the cities refers to multi-level governance. Most typically, in mega-cities power is divided between local and state powers (Urban Age 2014). Here, the local neighbourhoods are responsible for the delivery of some of the services with the control of the municipal government. Such an organisation may or may not be successful in realising the emancipatory strategy of *pluralising legitimate political realms*. On the one hand, if the boroughs are more independent, they may not be eager to promote complex equality. On the other, if the local boroughs are responsible and accountable to national authorities, then the agency of mega-city inhabitants is limited. As Frug (2007: 302) argues, 'neither centralization nor

fragmentation seems a good way to make public policy'.[165] Further, as the global Urban Governance Survey shows, on average the bigger the city, the fewer abilities are offered to citizens to influence local politics regardless of the organisation of the powers (Urban Age 2014: 26).

As a result, the organisation of the official city authorities, on its own, does not have emancipatory outcomes. The emancipatory consequences of the municipal or local government very much rely on the democratic character of the local government itself. Hence, democratic local government, regardless of its organisation, should be elected by and answerable to the citizens rather than to the national or regional bodies, and should aim to promote the political agency of its members. This may not be possible for many mega-cities in states that have centralised powers or are not democratically governed.

**Bottom-up Political Fora**

However, it possible for mega-city authorities to engage in strategies that effectively pluralise legitimate political fora, regardless of the official organisation of the local government. More precisely, mega-cities' authorities can actively engage in support for the bottom-up political fora and for urban social movements. Such political fora and movements refer to popular spaces described above, but also to hobby and interest groups, political parties, religious and cultural organisations, commissions and neighbourhood groups. Here, formal authorities could support not only fully organised fora, but also those temporary ones, organised loosely around particular issues. Support for bottom-up organisations, movements and activities can diversify existing political fora within the mega-cities which enables their inhabitants to benefit from multiplicity. This multiplicity supports the creation of new ideas and agendas (for a similar argument, see Phillips 1996). However, there are several risks connected to the strategy of supporting bottom-up organisations, movements and activities. In particular, they may contribute to polarisation across the polity, create echo-

[165] Here, see also Phillips (1996) for a review of normative arguments for and against local democracy.

chambers, increase competition and hostility, and undermine social cohesion. I will now address these risks and suggest how to overcome them in a mega-city polity.

Group polarisation, identified by Sunstein (2002), is an important challenge for the promotion of emancipatory democracy by bottom-up political fora. Group polarisation is a phenomenon of the predictable move in preferences towards more extreme positions. As a result of deliberation, the variance among group members decreases, individual differences tends to diminish, and the group converges towards a more extreme position, in relation to the range of preferences before deliberation (Sunstein 2002). For instance, mildly conservative groups become more strongly conservative after deliberation; mildly socialist groups become more strongly socialist, and so on. Polarisation is observed primarily in fairly homogeneous groups – precisely the ones which are the most likely to create separate political fora within mega-cities, like hobby or interest groups, local social movements, church and cultural organisations. Polarisation happens due to social comparison and persuasive arguments (Sunstein 2002).[166] Furthermore, if members of the group share a common identity and feel some affection or solidarity, then polarisation is even more likely to occur. Hence, members of an advocacy group organised against a profit-motivated slum upgrade will feel such solidarity and are more likely to polarise. Similarly, public officials already inclined towards the benefits of the privately financed upgrading project, via a series of discussions, are likely to confirm one another's existing opinion.

Group polarisation may be problematic for the realisation of emancipatory democracy in mega-cities because the bottom-up political fora are likely to accommodate inhabitants that are already similar in terms of their views. Polarised fora may create echo-chambers in which members only reinforce their own opinions.

[166] First, members of the group would like to be perceived favourably by others, and also want to perceive them favourably. When participants hear different opinions, they tend to change their preference towards the most dominant standpoint. Second, personal preferences presented during deliberation are partly based on which arguments the participant finds most convincing. Because the group includes participants who are already biased in some direction (as members of some social group with a common interest or supporters of a particular policy), the opposite arguments are underrepresented in this group. Hence, the group will find those standpoints most convincing which are most strongly represented by its members, which will result in the opinion shifting (Sunstein 2002).

This undermines the reasoned judgement condition of agency, creates hostility among political fora and hinders the ability of the polity to address whole-polity problems (see Kübler and Lefèvre 2017 for challenges of fragmentation). For example, Blokland et al. (2015) observe that local social movements and arenas for political participation do not enhance support and solidarity across various groups. On the contrary, they observe further fragmentation of interests and the weakening of social movements and competition. In a situation of socio-spatial segregation, like the one present in many mega-cities, the polarisation is even more likely to occur across separated communities. In such circumstances, better off communities are isolated and uninterested in the situation of disempowered communities. As such, polarisation may even further contribute to the status quo or worsening the situation of the disempowered inhabitants of mega-cities. For example, Frug (1999, 2017) describes how better off communities in the US apply policies of zoning to obstruct less privileged members of the city from settling down in their neighbourhoods.[167]

However, polarisation can also sometimes be favourable for disempowered groups as it can help them to clarify their opinion and to gain the courage to enter the broader public sphere (Curato et al. 2017: 33). This is one of the core arguments for so-called enclave decision-making within disempowered groups (see Fraser 1990; Mansbridge 1996). Furthermore, polarisation relies on both homogeneity of the group and the absence of other voices (see Sunstein 2002). As such, the promotion of various, overlapping political fora that cut across others can be a solution to group polarisation or at least mitigate it. These bigger overlapping political fora can refer to issues that cut across social groups, city districts, and agendas. For example, participatory budgeting, political parties or deliberative and collaborative modes of decision-making within the formal mega-city governance structures are good examples of such overlapping fora. Such overlapping political fora facilitate diversity of both viewpoints and inhabitants. As a result, official mega-city authorities that aim

[167] What is more, the use of the internet and social media can further amplify the phenomenon of group polarisation, insofar as people on social media are more likely to interact with others who are similar to them. See Sunstein (2001).

to promote emancipatory democracy should actively support and encourage the existence of such overlapping and more diverse political fora.

To summarise, in this section I have elaborated on the strategy of *pluralising legitimate political fora* within mega-cities. I have argued that the organisation of the mega-city government does not, on its own, have emancipatory consequences. Rather, it is the active support for multiple, diverse, bottom-up political fora and their incorporation into formal decision-making mechanisms that should form the basis of emancipatory organisation. In the final section, I summarise all the emancipatory reforms and propose a model of the emancipatory mega-city.

## 7.5. Towards an Emancipatory Mega-city

In this chapter, I have proposed interventions that promote emancipatory democracy in existing mega-cities. I have identified three principles of emancipatory reforms, namely equalising political agency, re-wiring existing relations among mega-city inhabitants, and pluralising legitimate political fora. By engaging in a critical analysis of the existing solutions, I have recommended several interventions that can make mega-cities more emancipatory. The particular interventions described in this chapter overlap and mutually support each other, thereby enabling mega-cities to become more emancipatory.

In particular, I have argued that it is possible to promote and equalise the political agency of inhabitants across unequal mega-cities by introducing co-governance mechanisms and by facilitating engagement of, so-called, popular spaces. It is, however, important that these mechanisms are consequential and not employed in a tokenistic manner by policymakers. Furthermore, I have argued that a wide range of structural interventions can address conditions of structural oppression in mega-cities and act as policies of equalising and promoting political agency of inhabitants negatively affected by informality, urban poverty and socio-spatial segregation. However, I have emphasised that the implementation of these tools differs substantively and only these tools that make the inhabitants vital actors in design and

implementation have emancipatory effects. Strategies of promoting and equalising political agency can be implemented by official authorities, bottom-up actors, and the combination thereof. Many of the reforms that this thesis advocates are already part of the wider developmental or urban renovation programmes. However, the originality of my proposal lies in its explicit focus on inhabitants' political agency as a solution to political oppression within the cities and in its demonstration that approaches focused on agency (e.g. capabilities approach) are also relevant for the mega-cities of the Global North.

In addition, I have argued that it is possible to re-wire existing relations in mega-cities in order to limit the pre-eminence of financial wealth and official residence status. Here I have emphasised public delivery of several social goods, the importance of open-access public space and dropping the requirement of formal registration for mega-city inhabitants. Such policies can be successfully implemented by the co-operation of bottom-up groups, social movements, associations already existing in mega-cities and the official mega-city authorities. Here, the bottom up political fora can provide information on the importance and distribution of various social goods. The implementation of rules of distribution of social goods across the whole mega-city polity should be coordinated and negotiated by larger fora, for example, the mega-city official authorities.

Finally, I have argued that the organisation of mega-city authorities, on its own, does not have emancipatory consequences. Both centralised and dispersed mega-city governance can be more or less emancipatory. Instead, I have argued for policies that support bottom-up political fora. In order to reduce the possibility of polarisation or selfishness of these fora, I have argued that the official city authorities should promote larger, overlapping political fora that cut across various neighbourhoods, agendas and opinions.

While the interventions suggested in this chapter have been already tested in an urban context, the question of the scale of interventions necessary for the democratisation of mega-cities has remained, so far, a theoretical consideration. One can notice that these recommendations do not only overlap and reinforce each other.

They also offer a direction for the interventions in existing mega-cities. The analysis in this chapter shows that the way to democratise and emancipate modern mega-cities relies on the coordination of social, structural and political reforms. Further, it shows that the key element of democratising mega-cities lies in the mid-range social and political fora: participatory governance mechanisms, social movements or bottom-up civil society organisations. I call these fora mid-range as opposed to more homogenous neighbourhood groups, associations, local clubs, and hobby circles or niche social movements.

Material discussed in this chapter shows that mid-range fora are able to promote the political agency of members of unequal mega-cities and successfully target conditions of structural oppression within them. Because these fora are bottom-up or rely substantively on inhabitants' support, they have better information about the citizens' preferences and have a vital interest in addressing citizens' concerns. Often, such mid-range fora are directly organised and managed by the inhabitants themselves which enable the promotion of inhabitants' agency. As such, the mid-range fora are better at promoting the political agency of inhabitants of diverse, porous but unequal mega-cities than the official authorities. Mega-cities' official authorities often have limited powers and are accountable to the central or state government (Frug 2007). Further, diversity of the mid-range political fora ensures a plurality of backgrounds and viewpoints. Such plurality helps to expand the information base of inhabitants, but also helps to minimise the possibility of opinion polarisation.

While the key aspect of democratisation of mega-cities lies in mid-range political fora, both the smaller, less diverse fora and the larger, representative ones do also play a role in democratising mega-cities. The less diverse fora refer to urban communities, neighbourhood associations, religious groups, interest clubs or advocacy groups. In an emancipatory mega-city, such fora need not be democratic on their own or devoted to conditions of complex equality. On the contrary, real-life examples described in this chapter show that very often neighbourhood associations or local communities are not interested in contributing to the wider polity. However,

such groups are often the very first source of information and support for many inhabitants (Young 1999: 244). They are also an important source of information on the meanings of social goods. Consequently, a democratic mega-city would not be able to function without larger, representative institutions. Emancipatory representative institutions should support mid-range political fora and implement rules of collective life created by these mid-rage fora. Larger, representative institutions should also implement and, if necessary, negotiate and balance different rules of distribution of social goods across the mega-city.

Overall, the ideas within this chapter offer a set of emancipatory innovations, institutions and policies suitable for democratising mega-cities. However, the exact shape of the reforms will differ depending on the mega-city in question. The set of guidelines is sensitive to common circumstances in these polities (chapter 5) and yet flexible enough to accommodate variation within them. For example, mid-range institutions can refer to bottom-up social movements or they can refer to institutions of co-governance, initiated by official authorities. Similarly, the ways of distribution of social goods within mega-cities can differ from one city to the next. As such, the emancipatory way of democratising mega-cities is pluralistic in nature and may result in different institutions and interventions in different cities.

# 8. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to argue that democracy remains a meaningful normative ideal that is suitable for guiding a positive change in amorphous polities, particularly mega-cities. To support this argument, I have first looked at existing accounts of democracy and argued that they are not well applicable to amorphous types of polities. As a result, I have introduced a new conception of emancipatory democracy that treats any polity as a democracy so long as this polity promotes the political agency of its members in conditions of complex equality (chapter 3). I have demonstrated the suitability of this conception for guiding democratic change in real-life polities by analysing a set of the most commonly discussed types of polities within democratic studies (chapter 4). I then looked more closely at one specific case of amorphous polity, namely the mega-city. While the mega-city can be, in principle, the site of emancipatory democracy (chapter 5), the actual circumstances of mega-city living distort the implementation of the emancipatory ideal (chapter 6). Consequently, I have proposed a set of reforms that, in current circumstances, could make mega-cities more democratic and emancipate their inhabitants.

This argument has some limitations. Perhaps one of the most notable limitations is that by focusing on mega-cities, this thesis does not suggest reforms for democratising states, smaller cities, rural areas or other types of polities. Further, while focusing on mega-cities, it does not investigate what sort of effects the emancipatory democratisation of mega-cities will have on other polities. I sought to overcome this limitation by creating a coherent framework for the democratic assessment of and guidance for other types of polities. As such, this thesis opens a two-fold research agenda. First, it provides theoretical foundations for assessing other democratic sites from the perspective of emancipatory democracy and for constructing emancipatory reforms suitable for these sites. Second, it encourages

investigations into the implications that such emancipatory democratisation of mega-cities might have for other polities.[168]

In focusing on mega-cities, a further potential criticism might be that this thesis unjustifiably prioritises the local scale. This criticism is reflected in Purcell's (2006) argument about the 'local trap' into which, he argues, vast parts of the literature on urban governance fall. The essence of the 'trap' reflects the incorrect assumption that the local scale is, in principle, more democratic than regional governance or a nation-state. However, my argument does not fall into the 'local trap', for this thesis does not imply that decision-making in mega-cities is necessarily more democratic than in the state, nor that the way to democratise the state is to devolve political powers to its cities. Rather, this thesis suggests, the democratisation of different sites may require different tools and institutions. Furthermore, in describing relevant emancipatory and democratic reforms for mega-cities, my approach does not favour local decision-making. On the contrary, I show that local decision-making can be anti-emancipatory and consequently emphasise the importance of mid-level institutions. As a result, the theoretical framework presented herein develops Purcell's (2006) argument and sheds new light as to when local decision-making is more or less democratic.

By introducing the conception of emancipatory democracy and operationalising it into a set of reforms for mega-cities, I have challenged two commonly held views in political and urban theory. The first is that democracy is in crisis. According to this view, the democratic normative ideal has lost its wide support and become irrelevant for addressing social problems. Those who hold this view point to declining trust in established democratic institutions (Foa and Mounk 2016) and argue that citizens in democratic states are either tired with participation (Crouch 2000) or are not able to make good decisions (Brennan 2016). As a result, those who hold this view argue that democracy needs to be replaced by better normative ideals and new modes of governance. The second view is similar in character but focuses on one of the places where, allegedly, democracy cannot work.

[168] This is similar to Meagher's argument (2012).

Those who hold this view, while often officially sympathetic to democracy, argue that mega-cities are too big, too complex and too fragmented for inhabitants to be able to govern them successfully (Daniels 2004; Kübler and Lefèvre 2017). The literature interested in governing cities suggests that a way to solve these problems lies in stronger mayors (Barber 2013), regional associations of cities (Frug 2014), or state-led intervention (Kübler and Lefèvre 2017).

In this thesis, I have argued against these views. I have argued that democracy can still be a meaningful normative ideal, suitable for the assessment of new, amorphous types of polities. However, in order to be so, the democratic ideal needs to be substantively redefined. From the perspective of emancipatory democracy, any polity can be democratic if it promotes a variety of direct and indirect ways for its members to realise their reasoned choices towards the rules of collective life. Further, lower participation rates and diminishing trust in democratic states expose the pitfalls of the current *institutionalisation* of the democratic ideal, rather than the ideal itself. Similarly, from the perspective of the conception of democracy developed in this thesis, the inability of citizens to reflect on the rules of collective life demonstrates that the current arrangements do not provide enough room for such reflection.

In addition, I have argued that it is, in principle, possible to govern mega-cities in a democratic and emancipatory way. By looking at the existing circumstances in those cities, I have arrived at a set of emancipatory reforms. The common characteristic of the suggested interventions is that they do not simply target the urban problems and propose a solution but make inhabitants the key actors of the change. In existing cities, such emancipatory interventions are usually accommodated by bottom-up, mid-level organisations, namely social movements or institutions of participatory governance and civil society organisations. As a result, in this thesis, I have argued that a positive change in mega-cities cannot rely on strengthening the powers of mayors, intra-regional governance or the state. Rather, modern mega-cities require a mixture of social, structural and political strategies realised by mid-range

political institutions.[169] Here I have also suggested that interventions which, in the mainstream political science literature, are not considered to be democratic need to be explicitly part of the emancipatory democratisation project. Hence, reliable transport, accessible education or the ability to access city services regardless of one's official status are essential for democracy in mega-cities.

The political proposal presented in this thesis to some extent resembles other urban normative projects, namely the ideal of 'the right to the city' proposed by Henri Lefebvre (1996 [1968]), 'together-in-difference' created by Iris Marion Young (1990), and 'empowered governance' offered by Archon Fung (2004). Like these normative projects, the project I have defended here sees inhabitants and their preferences as an essential part of the democratisation process. Likewise, it also considers structural issues like poverty, segregation and exclusion as serious obstacles to democratic governance. However, my project places its emphases differently than these projects. Unlike the normative projects concerned with the 'right to the city', my project does not focus exclusively on the bottom-up communities as a basis of democratic governance. This project problematises this idea by arguing that bottom-up communities can easily polarise or refuse to contribute to the wider city resources. Unlike Young's (1990) proposal, this thesis assumes that there is nothing intrinsically democratic in decision-making on the scale of the neighbourhood. Instead, I argue that diverse polities, like mega-cities, can be democratic if there exists a plurality of mid-level political fora that empower inhabitants and balance their opinions. Finally, this thesis closely resembles the project of empowered governance set out by Fung (2004) in which the central authorities delegate public policy tasks to citizens and hold them accountable for realisation of these tasks. While, like Fung (2004), I see the essence of urban democracy in a variety of co-governance institutions, I disagree on the interpretation of the top-down accountability of such institutions. According to the framework developed in this thesis, top-down accountability and control of co-governance mechanisms limits inhabitants' agency and, as a result, is

[169] At the same time, I have argued that the exact shape of the reforms will differ depending on the mega-city in question and the preferences of their inhabitants.

undemocratic. By contrast, emancipatory democracy requires that the central authorities are accountable to the inhabitants.

Overall, the argument I have presented here offers a defence of the democratic ideal in modern times. It shows that democracy can drive and guide positive change even in challenging circumstances like those in mega-cities. Further, this thesis shows that democratic governance in mega-cities is both desirable and possible.

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