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Steps to a Theory of Non-State Representation

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Brito Vieira, Monica (ed.) Reclaiming Representation. Contemporary Advances in the Theory of Political Representation. New York and London, Routledge 2017.

Castiglione, Dario and Johannes Pollak (eds.) *Creating Political Presence. The New Politics of Democratic Representation*. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press 2019.

Disch, Lisa, Van de Sande, Mathijs and Nadia Urbinati (eds.) *The Constructivist Turn in Political Representation*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press 2019.

The publication of these three edited collections between 2017 and 2019[1], illustrates the relevance of the concept of representation in political theory. An intellectual movement that started in the 1990s revitalised the interest in representation, after it had receded to an embattled background as theories of participation and deliberation explored the real and potential anti-democratic drifts in representative democracy. These collections trace the history of this movement, map the theoretical field of representation, and indicate its methodological, analytical and normative trajectories.

The contributors to these collections are key actors of what can be called the "Reclaim Representation" movement. "Reclaiming", as in the title of Brito Vieira's collection, shares the iterative particle of "re-presentation" and recalls the influential "representative claims" theory which many of the pieces discuss (Saward, 2010). "Reclaiming representation" also acknowledges that intellectual theories are themselves representative claims (Disch, 2019b). These collections study the democratic potential of representation, the conditions of its legitimacy, and its relation to emancipation. They investigate whether representation contributes to identities and strengthens political voice. While much of the traditional theorization of political representation has operated within state-centric frameworks of methodological nationalism, these collections often focus on non-state representational politics. In so doing, they also prepare the ground for further explorations of transnational representation, a particularly promising field of enquiry.

Facing semantic complexities and a galaxy of uses, these authors resist the temptation to conclusively pin down representation (Thomassen, 2019b). Instead, they accept the polisemicity of the concept. The tension between the wish for a resolved meaning and its impossibility is addressed by embracing complexity, context, and fluidity of meaning-making. This is not only a scholarly posture, as representation is constantly

shaped in the conflictual spaces between representatives and represented. In this relationship, political action is (per)formed. This kind of political action is not a mere acting-out of the power dynamics underpinning representative systems (Disch, 2019b; Mansbridge, 2019a). It is also about the possibility of emancipation. Repetitive enactments of social roles are different from democratic representative relationships. By exploring the boundaries between describing, analysing and norming the authors investigate their recursive relationships (Disch, 2017, p. 2019a and 2019b). Ultimately, these authors explore the tension between immanence and intentional change, between structure and agency, between the social and the political.

Combined, the thirty-eight chapters survey the key aspects of the debate. These include the centrality of representation in democratic theory and practice, its ubiquity beyond electoral frameworks and the nation-state, the politically constitutive dimension of symbolic representation, representation and democracy as forms of life and society rather than mere institutional arrangements, the uses of representation by social movements claiming to be anti- or post-representational, and the conceptualisation of the field in relational and systemic terms. This comprehensive research programme offers an alternative to disfigurations of democratic systems (Urbinati, 2019a). These disfigurations affect democracy by foregrounding the role of experts, personalised leadership, and plebiscitarian mechanisms. They can be countered with more sophisticated understandings of representation, rather than with its denial in political discourse and practice. These collections untie representation from the electoral process and extend its boundaries beyond the narrow context of representative democracy to include the broader field of democratic representation.

The collection edited by Brito Vieira develops along three axes: a conceptual analysis; issues of legitimacy and responsiveness; and considerations on democracy from the vantage point of representation. The chapters reflect on ontological questions (Rehfeld), focus on how representation works (Saward), discuss the empirical-normative divide (Sabl and Disch), and test the boundaries of the field of representation studies (Näsström, Urbinati and Montanaro). This collection helps both define and extend representation around a constructivist barycentre. Its overall drive, both theoretical and political, is that "reclaiming representation is crucial for our understanding of why democracy functions the way it does, and for exploring how it might function differently." (2017, p. 10).

The book edited by Castiglione and Pollak unfolds in three movements. The first looks at whether representation contributes to democratic empowerment. Arguments are made about the possibility to develop citizens' political competencies (Warren [2019a], Urbinati, Fossum [2019a]) and subjectivities (Diehl) through participation in representative dynamics. The second investigates whether representation allows inclusion in decision-making and recognition. This inclusion can happen through individual partisan and autonomous politicisation as well as the construction and representation of groups (Hayat). It can also happen in battles for political hegemony (Disch), forms of surrogate representation (Montanaro) and through minipublics (Whiteside [2019a]). The third movement of the book explores the relationship between representation and democracy (Ankersmit), importantly also in transnational forms of governance (Lord). This includes the contributions by Saward and Mansbridge. For Saward, electoral representation is part of a wider dynamic of democratic representation, whereas Mansbridge illustrates the systemic interdependence of political, administrative, and societal representation.

Disch, Van de Sande, and Urbinati's collection also has a tripartite structure. In the first section on origins and genealogy of the constructivist turn, the authors discuss a research agenda (Castiglione and Warren, 2019b) and trace its conceptual history in studies on deliberation and in French poststructuralism (Biba [2019b], Flynn, Breckman, Geenens [2019b]). This section includes a welcome translation of Lefort's "Démocratie et représentation", a key inspiration of the constructivist turn. The second part explores normative matters. Hayat reflects on inclusion and offers a theory of representative claims as propositions. Marchart (2019b) analyses the challenges and paradoxes of fully inclusive representation. Thomassen considers the opacity and instability of meaning in representative claims. Urbinati focuses on the creative power of ideology. The third section articulates criticisms of the constructivist turn, though it had also been problematized in earlier sections such as in Geenens's view on myopic aspects constructivism that focus on the micro-aspects of representation and miss its systemic dimension. See also Breckman's analysis of a still structural understanding of symbolism in many constructivists who fail to appreciate fully the crucial rupture performed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) away from structural Saussurean symbolism. The chapters in the third and last section consider the role of constructivist representation in both the critique and reproduction of power relations. They foreground semantic complexities (Mulieri), questions of property and propriety (Devenny) and conceptions of representation in contemporary protest movements (Van de Sande).

Disch's introduction (2019b) provides the intellectual coordinates of the constructivist field. It has four poles. First, Saussure's structural linguistics studies the differential processes through which signifiers acquire meaning as a function of their position in broader webs of signifiers. Second, systemic accounts of social interaction shift the stress from the rational individual to the environment in the formation of beliefs, interests and preferences. Third, Berger and Luckmann's (1991) "social construction of reality" conceptualises social reality and human activity as mutually constitutive. Fourth, post-structuralists, especially Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and Derrida (see 2016), deconstruct the metaphysics of presence that underpins the responsiveness paradigm of mandate representation. Post-structuralists also analyse representation as constituted through both iteration and articulations between social actors. In what follows, we highlight six themes foregrounded in these collections which, in our opinion, constitute their core contribution to debates on representation. We conclude reflecting on normative matters raised by the collections.

Symbolic Representation

The contributors to these collections place the constitutive political role of symbolic representation at the centre of their theorizing (Breckman, 2019b). Whereas they pay tribute to and continue Pitkin's foundational work (1967 and 2004), they also move beyond her criticism of fictions and performances in debates on political representation. For Brito Vieira (2017), Pitkin, in her indictment of Hobbes, failed to appreciate his crucial delineation of representation as constitutive. For Rehfeld (2017), Pitkin limited her analysis to democratic representation, conflating the four distinct semantic areas of represented, representative (noun), representing and representative (adjective). For Seward (2017), representation is a constitutive event, not limited to elections, that involves both

representatives and represented. His interest is not mainly in what representation is but in what representation does as a political performance involving five actors. Apart from the canonical triad of subject, object and referent, he also includes a maker of representations and an audience. This stress on the constitutive role of symbolic representation contrasts with Pitkin's association of it with fascism. For Brito Vieira, the ability of the representative to make convincing portraits of Pitkin's constituency is "a vital aspect of acting out representative power relations" (2017, p. 45).

Disch summarizes saward's formulation representing in politics, as in painting or theatre or literature, involves making claims that put forward 'verbal and visual images' of a constituency together with images of the would-be representative as a personality or symbol that must have 'a certain resonance' with those whom it aims to represent. Saward (2010:, p. 36) maintains that claims-making constructs not a 'referent' but 'an idea of' the represented. (2019b, p. 7)

The signifying idea takes position in a network of signifiers and this gives it its relational meaning. Moreover,

[f]irst, acts of representation take place within a context of beliefs and practices that constrain the kinds of appeals that are likely to be taken up. They exist in institutional and infrastructural 'matrices' that are fully material, not purely linguistic (Hacking 1999). Second, representation does not constitute the represented *tout court* but rather as a democratic political subject. Absent representation, there may be a population but there cannot be a people, constituency or group (Disch, 2019b, p. 9).

This process is unidirectional, unlike bourdieu's radical constructivism which attributes to representation the 'power to make groups, to manipulate the objective structure of society' by the symbolic force of words (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 138). Such a notion of constructivism may be conceivable in theory; it affords no purchase on politics. (Disch, 2019b, p. 9)

Their full social materiality notwithstanding, representative dynamics configure what Mulieri describes as the weak constructivism that the authors of the collections subscribe to (2019b). The representative dynamics play out in the political sphere, and though they are influenced by the social positioning of those involved they are unable to significantly influence social structures. This highlights an important aspect of the constructivist approach. Vis-à-vis Pitkin's analysis of the mutual relationship between the social and the political, Disch stresses how, for the constructivists, emancipation is a political activity whose struggles and outcomes remain in the political sphere. For Disch, the relationship between representatives and represented takes place "within a context of beliefs and practices that constrain the kind of appeals that are likely to be taken up" (Disch, 2019b, p. 9). A population with its "beliefs and practices" can become a people by being imagined, prefigured, in a multiplicity of representative articulations.

This performative model seems to divide polities in authors and audiences. Disch addresses this criticism and rejects the suspicions of manipulation of passive audiences by self-interested political elites. For her, the complexity of representational dynamics is such that they cannot be steered by any single player. Just as meaning is determined by the relationship between signifiers arranged in complex matrices, in representative dynamics claimants make proposals the meanings of which depend on the participation of the audiences being addressed and the competition with other claimants. Whereas this approach is open to criticism for underplaying power differentials in the representative

performance, it suggests a role for audiences beyond the mere choice of preformed frames (as if in a Schumpeterian competitive field, see 1950). Instead, it proposes that all actors involved contribute to the creation of the symbolic field.

However, a tension remains about differential contributions by claimants and audiences. It is a crucial tension invoking structural considerations of influence and power (Devenny, 2019). Moreover, for these reviewers, unwarranted presumptions of equality and horizontality in political organisations and social movements may contribute to a depoliticisation that could lead to exclusion and domination in decision-making.

Crises of Representation And Political Investments

The institutions and values of representative democracy currently face several challenges. These include decreasing party memberships, quasi-parties or movement-parties, rise of populism and antipolitics, personalisation of political leadership, turn to technocratic and expert knowledge to address exquisitely political matters, as well as disempowering perceptions of an unbridgeable disjunction between politicians and citizens. The collections under review acknowledge the dissatisfaction with representative politics and observe a trend towards horizontal politics aimed less at comprehensive programmes of change than at democratic practices in the here and now. In this context, they reflect on social movements like Occupy Wall Street, and more broadly the so-called Squares movements (Van de Sande, 2019b), as well as the growth of parties like the 5 Stars Movement, Podemos and Syriza (Urbinati, 2017 and 2019a). The argument could be consolidated by broadening the gaze beyond Europe and the US, but the point is convincingly illustrated.

However, they conceive of this political trend not as evidence of the end of representational politics but rather as a demand to reconfigure analytical and political understandings of representation. For these authors it is not representation *tout court* that is under pressure (Van de Sande, 2019b). Rather, it is the conflation of representation with mandate representation, typical especially in Anglo-Saxon political and academic contexts. The latter may be under increasing pressure; the former may help refocus the debate. Mandate representation is constrained by institutional settings whereby voting individuals transfer their sovereignty to a representative government. One of the core contributions of the constructivists is that they illustrate representation's much wider scope and dynamics.

When political manifestations of popular discontent raise compelling problems of social inequality and injustice, it is sometimes interpreted as rejection of representation. Instead, these authors find that activists do not reject representation but practise it differently. For example, the slogan "We are the 99%" is understood as a refusal of mandate representation in favour of identity representation:

the protesters assert 'their ability to speak like the people rather than for them'. (…) Acting 'as' retains the symbolic core of representation ('99%' is no literal measure) but withholds the transfer of authority. It thereby refuses two defining principles of representative government, election and 'distinction' (Disch, 2019b, p. 2).

Van de Sande (2019b) illustrates this point looking at the 99% claim not as anti-representational, but as a compelling critique of mandate representation in favour of more sophisticated representative practices aiming at changing the social. However, Ankersmit

(2019a) finds that this kind of synecdochical representation, which used to be prevalent in the Middle Ages and was replaced in the modern age by metaphorical forms of representation, is returning in current political discourses. For him, this is a worrying matter as it questions the centrality of sovereignty in modern political thought and practice, and this may jeopardize democratic government.

Representing Political Subjectivities

The constructivists suggest that constituencies, as political subjectivities, are created in and by the act of representation (Seward, 2017 and 2019a; Diehl, 2019a; Disch, 2019b). For Urbinati (2019a 2019b, 2017) a key condition of democracy is that judgements around issues of preference and interest can be made and changed freely. Judgements contribute to the creation of political subjectivities in a mutually constitutive way. For Urbinati and others, the stress is on how representative claims are responded to, conflicts mediated, and subjectivities shaped and re-shaped. However, issues of group interests are not resolved by these systemic dynamics. Deliberation and conflict transformation of current inequalities and exclusions need a long time and a range of political strategies. The strategies can include bounded political identities even at the risk of reifying them and making them less amenable to change (Mansbridge, 2019a). Disch quotes Urbinati's compelling words, according to which constructivist scholars portray representation both as constitutive of political identities and as a mobilising force which "does not simply allow the social to be translated into the political, but also facilitates the formation of political groups and identities (Urbinati, 2006, p. 37)" (Disch, 2019b, p. 5).

She further reflects on the construction of political subjectivities through processes of agonistic deliberation aimed at winning political hegemony. She resonates questions of the hegemonic war of position of Gramscian tradition when she writes that for the constructivists, representation and power are "intrinsically linked" (Disch, 2019b, p. 5). She agrees with Laclau and Mouffè that analysts of democratic societies cannot take 'groups', their 'interests' or their 'demands' for granted as a starting place in studying relations of power and conflict because power is implicated in the very constitution of such groups and in their positioning in relations of conflict and cooperation (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). (Disch, 2019b, p. 5)

The Time-Space Of Political Representation

In Pitkin's classical definition, representation is the making present of something or someone otherwise not literally present in the decision-making process. For Urbinati (2017, 2019a, 2019b), focusing on sovereignty as presence means highlighting the wrong kind of presence, unmediated presence. Representation replaces literal presence with political presence allowing the space necessary for the slower time of democratic decision-making. Through the latter, democracy achieves its most sophisticated form. Political presence allows distance and time to develop judgement to inform political action, as opposed to immediate unreflective and anti-political "acting out". Mature forms of sovereignty express themselves in the deferred time of mediated (involving others) reflection and judgement.

For Urbinati, Pitkin's stress on the making present of something not literally present, places presence in the realm of the social and represented absence in the political. According to Urbinati, representation does not bring absence into the political sphere, but instead, a mediated and more robust form of presence. A presence that is surer of itself after taking the time to investigate, reflect and judge. The presence invoked here is not only a spatial dimension, but also the temporal element of the political: it constitutes the here and now of politics. Furthermore, for Urbinati representation gives form to the time-space of politics in a dialectical process engaging the spheres of opinion and will. This process is not limited to the electoral moment. The sovereign is not absent from the sphere of will, it does not exit the political sphere immediately after mandating its representatives. Instead, it exercises judgement, influence and censure throughout.

Representation and the Ontological Primacy Of The Political

These collections do not share the anti- or post-representational stands that have often been taken by social movement activists and scholars. Instead, they claim a constitutive role for representation in democracy. Surprisingly, their theoretical insights do have similarities with some Squares activists as they both "reject the notion that social relations form the substrate of politics" (Disch, 2019b, p. 3) and foreground the ontological primacy of the political. The political autonomy of individuals and groups (a theme dear to many activists since the second half of the twentieth century) is lucidly summarised by Disch (with words closely resonating with Castiglione and Mark (2019a:, p. 5):

The social-as-substrate assumption formed the basis for post-World War II theories of representative democracy. As articulated by pluralists and social democrats alike, these theories held that politics manages relations of enmity and alliance that already exist outside of politics. Corporatists held these relations to be determined by the antagonism between capital and labour, whereas pluralists imagined that groups mobilise spontaneously when their political interests are threatened. Mid-century theorists of mandate representation did not believe that democratic political representation could 'mirror' society. They readily admitted that interests and opinions can and usually do undergo significant changes in the process of representation. (…) Yet these scholars subordinated politics to social forces by assuming that political representatives echo, reproduce or track pre-existing social cleavages. (Disch, 2019b, p. 3)

For the constructivists, this subordination is unwarranted. Hayat (2019a), in the representative relationship, confirms how the represented develop their identity as a function of their ability to assess and change their social position politically. Further, for Hayat, the articulation of representative claims needs a proactive role of the represented for representation to be inclusionary and consequently emancipatory. Constituency construction may be assessed along a continuum from individual and collective political inexperience to accomplished political maturity.

By addressing the social-as-substrate question, the constructivists formulate a criticism of Pitkin's stress on the logical priority of the represented and the requirement of responsiveness to the represented by the representative. To be sure, Pitkin also stresses the mutually constitutive nature of the representative relationship. This apparent ambiguity is perhaps a reference to a recursive process that the constructivists seem to aim to

resolve in favour of the constitutive creativity of the representative claim. Pitkin's stress on the logical priority of the represented suggests the logical impossibility of re-presentation of something which is not already present somewhere else or has not been present at some other time. Representation is always a representation of something. The represented may seem prior to the relationship but is only found *in* the relationship and *for* it. Indeed, both Pitkin and these authors agree that no representation happens in a vacuum. However, for the constructivists the represented is responsive to the representative claims about the identity of the constituency. This matter replicates structure/agency debates in terms of the logical or ontological precedence of constituency (social structures) or constituent (political claimant) and may seem just as impossible to conclusively resolve. Thomassen's wise caution against rushing to pin down representation could perhaps be heeded in this context as well.

Transnational Representation

The ubiquity and constituent role of symbolic representation beyond the electoral sphere, as well as the statements in favour of the primacy of the political, elicit the widening of the political field beyond the national container towards the transnational and the global. This is an expansive and inclusive approach to political representation at odds with the state-centric focus of some of the inspirations of the constructivist turn including Pitkin (1967, 2004), Laclau (2005), Urbinati (2006), Brito Vieira and Runciman (2008). While much of the constructivist political theory operates within methodological nationalism, the theory also offers many insights that help transgress it. For some constructivists, representative relationships are not bound, or limited, to the electoral process. Rather, they unfold through a communicative dynamic of claims and responses by would-be constituents. As already seen, this approach foregrounds the active meaning of constitution as opposed to both the logically prior as well as the territorially defined passive understanding of constituency.

The complexity of democratic politics, the emptiness of the locus of (global) power (Lefort, 2019b and 1988), the responsibility of decision-making about complex issues of planetary scale related to the environment, trade, terrorism and migration, make representation as understood by many of these authors necessarily transgress national boundaries. Concurrently, as trends towards consensus building and expert influence prevail, transnational processes might remove fundamental decision-making from representative assemblies and therefore from the (potential) scrutiny of voters (Mulieri, 2019b Näsström, 2017;).

As state boundaries become increasingly porous to various kinds of flows, we agree that including people and economic activity, political representation can be and should be rethought beyond the nation state. The new global landscape offers opportunities for both individual and group representation by informal and self-appointed representatives outside electoral institutions (Montanaro, 2017 and 2019a). In cases in which electoral mandate is impossible, these informal representatives contribute to create transnational constituencies by developing frames, images and symbols of the represented as political subjects. At the same time, the link between representation and democracy becomes more difficult to establish beyond the nation state. For instance, Mulieri (2019) finds that representational dynamics outside the electoral process could have

deeply undemocratic fallouts, including legitimation of elite-dominated processes and expert-led systems of governance. One possible field for further research that these collections help make possible is how these representational dynamics and transnational constituencies create something that can be conceptualised as *the global political*.

Normative Questions

These inspiring collections raise pressing normative questions on issues related to democracy and legitimacy in representative relationships beyond elections. One question refers to the core of Pitkin's theory of responsiveness. How could a representative's decision-making be assessed if not against the demands of those who are represented? For Disch, such questions miss the mark. She writes:

On one level, constructivists need not answer such questions. The claim that political representation, and democratic representation in particular, participates in creating that for which it claims only to stand is an observation. It is not a theoretical posture, resulting from a predilection for theorising representative democracy in one philosophical school rather than another, that constructivists are bound to defend. Yet, many scholars who subscribe to the constructivist approach recognise the normative problems it raises for democratic politics and are intrigued by them. (2019, p. 4)

This commitment to observation and description seems to simplify the relationship between facts and norms, between theoretical postures and observation. This position is softened by the acknowledgement that democratic representation "participates" in the creation of the represented. Such recognition invites the study of representation alongside systemic and structural dynamics, broadening the field contained between the responsiveness-constitution duality.

Consider, for instance, the limitations imposed on representation by structural inequalities and forms of (global) hegemonic power highlighted by Devenney's analysis of property (2019b). Devenney finds that the constructivists' awareness that social structures influence who gets to say what and under what constraints does not fully inform their theoretical stance. For Devenny, representation is not intrinsic to democracy. Equally, Näsström (2017) raises pressing questions of legitimacy especially at the transnational level. She wonders whether the stress on the role of the representative may limit the intrinsic democratic thrust of the representative relationship and in turn, of the constructivists' normative commitments. Sabl (2017) traces back the constructivists' normative expectations to Pitkin's work. Like Näsström, he discusses matters of democratic legitimacy and emphasises the current and virtually global perception by citizens of their limited ability to influence the representative-represented relationship.

For Urbinati (2019b), even if representational spaces are not inherently democratic, overall they have progressed along democratising trajectories. This has happened through the extension of suffrage in the realm of political will and through the deepening of judgement and the extension of deliberation in the realm of opinion. Emphasising how representation makes the social political, Urbinati insists that democratic representative relations must run in both directions between representative and represented. Surprisingly perhaps, Urbinati finds that Pitkin's is a politics devoid of politics, a politics of reason and knowledge. She finds that the politics of representation is performed in partisan conflicts that in turn drive the formation of ideas, interests and identities. Contrary

to some constructivists, she finds that partisan conflicts find ultimate mediation in (state-based) electoral institutions.

While being equally aware of the limitations of transnational representation, Montanaro (2017) allows for potentially satisfying democratic tests of non-electoral representation. She discusses self-appointed representation and shows how state-bounded representational spaces may impose artificial limitations to multiple and intertwined transnational identities and constituencies. Instead, systems of representation extend beyond state boundaries. Representation unbound, as it were, may facilitate the creation of new transnational subjects articulated in myriads of intersecting constituencies, themselves constantly in flux because of representational processes.

Disch (2017) highlights how the represented fail to set agendas extending beyond the field defined by strategic conflicts among elites. She records the different and often diverging positions of theorists and citizens on normative and practical matters. However, rather than siding with the argument about the undemocratic thrust of representation, Disch suggests that a shift in the normative expectations about representation, from mandate to her mobilization model, would make them more realistic and deliver representation to democracy. For her, the relationship between representative and represented is not socially determined but politically constituted. Relationships in representative systems are characterised by, at one end of the spectrum, trust, authenticity and truthfulness. At the other end are suspicion, manipulation, and falsification. Viewed so, the opposite of autonomous and democratic representative action is thoughtless and coerced enactment. Democratic tests (including participation, accountability, legitimacy, openness, and transparency) could therefore be used to assess whether a representative claim is informed by thinking rather than acting-out, by mediated representation rather than immediate reaction.

The debate on political representation achieves with the constructivist turn its Copernican revolution. It is not the sun revolving around the constituency, but the earth around the representative. It is not the physical ontology of the social constituency at the centre, but the creative work by the political representative. As Disch writes, "not only has responsiveness turned the 'other way around' but, contrary to Pitkin, mass democracy needs it to do so for citizen learning to occur" (2019b, p. 6). To be sure, she concludes that "these findings do not make citizens pawns of elites, as Pitkin fears. Empirical researchers emphasise that individuals bring a multiplicity of considerations to bear on any given issue" (2019b, p. 6).

Pitkin's fear that symbolic representation would amount to fascist representation is perhaps not totally unjustified. In critical conjunctures, citizens may be swayed by frame-making elites. But even more, assuming the autonomous individual as member of a forming constituency is perhaps a wrong assumption. The autonomous individual is constituted by emancipating political relationships, not prior to them. Pitkin's fear is not so much that constituencies may become pawns of elites but slaves to societal dynamics of which the dominant relationship between representative and represented is itself a representation. Responsiveness, therefore, is not about control. Indeed, control may signal the prevalence of dynamics opposing the emancipation that Pitkin advocates. Denial of representation is often based on a background of distance between the representative and her constituency and on a further background of dispersion and fragmentation of that constituency. The normative assessment of

representative claims as relationships is therefore aimed at assessing the nature of the relationship between represented and representative.

A key contention of the constructivist literature is that audiences play a key democratic role in representational dynamics. Audiences would take up or reject representative claims. However, audience contributions may not be as empowering as maintained because they are only partially committed engagements. Combined with increasing disaffection and vote abstention, this may indicate a choice of exit rather than voice in the political sphere. Preventing an opportunity to learn from political experience, continuous and increasing disaffection and marginalisation may become entrenched and expressed in forms of populist and plebiscitarian disfigurations of democracy (Flynn, 2019b). In the face of these concerns, stressing the ability of individuals to shape the political debate seems to miss the mark. Indeed, the constructivists refer to alternative avenues of voice that may be missed by a limited approach to representation from an electoral-institutional standpoint. Yet the question remains whether participation in the representative field does take place in the way and to the extent described, or whether vast numbers of individuals are inevitably excluded from dynamics they are not aware of. In those contexts, Pitkin's fears are justified.

To conclude, the core normative investment of these collections is whether political representation can facilitate democratic empowerment and inclusion by providing legitimate and effective channels through which the citizenry is given some form of presence (through voice and influence, or by recognition and a sympathetic hearing) in decision-making and in the administration of power (Castiglione and Pollak, 2019, p. 4)

These collections provide a positive answer to this question. They connect it to the increasing democratization of political representation since Hobbes imagined the God-given right and duty of the king to make the people. Representative relationships could therefore further develop to become mutually responsible and emancipatory. These would be relationships that do not enact divine beliefs, unequal social structures and power imbalances, but work them through. This understanding of political action can be further scaled up towards the transnational and the global (see Teivainen & Trommer, 2017), one avenue for further research that these collections have grounded.

Note

1. Contributions to the Castiglione and Pollak collection are referred to as 2019a and contributions to Disch, Van de Sande and Urbinati's collection as 2019b.

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