

CURRENT POLITICAL PHENOMENA (30481)

Debating Representative Democracy

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Do we really need politicians?

- In most countries, politicians are seen as untrustworthy and politics as a rigged game
- This trust crisis poses serious challenges to “vertical” dimension of democracy
- What are the remedies to this trust crisis?
- Should we take for granted the decline of political intermediaries and invest in “horizontal” dimension, e.g., expanding referenda and e-democracy?
- Or should we fix politics by improving the selection and incentives of elected officials?

Direct vs representative democracy

- Pettersson-Lidbom and Tyrefors (2014): RDD policy impact of direct vs representative democracy
 - Less redistribution in direct democracy
 - Elite capture?
 - 1) Collective action; 2) agenda setting; 3) secrecy
- Elements of discussion:
 - Size of government
 - Need for specialization
 - Interplay with techno-structures
 - Rent-seeking
 - Responsiveness vs responsibility

Democracy festivals

“Democracy festivals” are social platforms where people can physically get together, talk to each other, listen, get inspired, exchange opinions and debate ideas (diffusion: Nordic-Baltic region)



E-democracy

- E-democracy is the use of ICT to enhance and in some accounts replace representative democracy
- Elements of discussion:
 - E-government vs E-participation vs I-voting
 - Communication vs consultation vs conversation/decision
 - Example: [Petitions to UK Parliament](#)
 - Liquid democracy & Cyberdemocracy
- Contrasting views:
 - Arriaga (2014): From delegation to deliberation
 - Byung-Chul Han (2015): “In the Swarm”
 - Sunstein (2017): Social media & echo-chambers

The elusive quest for good politicians

- Other route → Back to James Madison (1788):
“The aim of every Constitution, is or ought to be, first to obtain for rulers men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of society; and in the next place, to take the most effectual precautions for keeping them virtuous”
- Improve selection and reform incentives of politicians
- But how? What are the drivers of political selection?
- Let’s discuss this topic in the attached slides: “The Elusive Quest for Good Politicians”

References

- Arriaga (2014), [*Rebooting Democracy: A Citizen's Guide to Reinventing Politics*](#)
- Byung-Chul Han (2015), [*Nello sciame*](#) [English Edition: [*In the Swarm*](#)]
- Dal Bo and Finan (2018), [*Progress and Perspectives in the Study of Political Selection*](#)
- European Parliament (2018), [*Prospects for e-democracy in Europe*](#)
- Freeman and Quirke (2013), [*Understanding E-Democracy*](#)
- Päivärinta and Sæbø (2006), [*Models of E-Democracy*](#)
- Pettersson-Lidbom and Tyrefors (2014), [*Democracy, Redistribution, and Political Participation: Evidence from Sweden 1919-1938*](#)
- Richardson and Emerson (2018), [*eDemocracy: An Emerging Force for Change*](#)
- Sunstein (2017), [*#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*](#)