Nadia Urbinati
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The ancients deemed democracy the government of the poor. Democracy exists, Aristotle wrote in his *Politics,* when the supreme power of the state is in the hands of the multitude of free-born but poor citizens who do not possess much property.[1] But to the moderns, democracy is the government of the middle class, as Alexis de Tocqueville learned from his 1830 journey to America.[2] The moderns have made democracy a government that fits a market society, which needs a multitude of consumers, people neither too rich nor too poor.

The link between the socioeconomic composition of the citizenry and the form of political presence that representation entails is worth stressing, not only in order to conclude that our government resembles more a mixed constitution than a democracy,[3] but, moreover, to appreciate the complexity of participation (and exclusion) that characterizes representative democracy.[4] Actually, the kind of participation that indirect democracy encourages is even more demanding than that of direct democracy. The exigency of work was the main obstacle to participation that ancient Athens had to counter; it did so by paying a day salary to the citizens who showed up in popular courts and the assembly. Making political participation not economically penalizing was enough of a strategy to make democratic liberty secure for all citizens. Being poor was not as prejudicial to political power as it might be in a representative democracy, because direct lawmaking was a strong power in and by itself and did not require citizens to create additional strategies to make themselves heard, other than for going to the assembly and voting.[5] Not by chance, in ancient Athens the object of contention between democrats and antidemocrats was the right to vote in the assembly, and whereas the former tried to make this right easy for all, the latter always tried to deprive the many of it.

In modern democracy, participation is so complex that citizens may see political power curtailed without being deprived of their right to vote. Here, silencing democracy does not necessarily translate into such an extreme reaction as expelling the many from the demos like in ancient democracy. It is enough to make citizens' indirect political presence weak or their voices unheard. The fact that representation, not simply voting, is the means by which citizens' voices can be heard entails that citizens need to do something more than going to vote; they have to make some additional efforts or use a variety of strategies for their voice to be heard. In contrast to direct democracy, in representative democracy the poor may easily be reduced to silence even if they enjoy an equal right to vote. For this reason, therefore, voting cannot be seen as the only certain expression of democratic power.[6]

Voting for representatives is also not enough because a free mandate makes the representatives legally irresponsible to their electors and their responsiveness to them wholly voluntary and very selective. We thus have no guarantee that the elected will act as our advocates. In addition, as Dara Strolovitch argues in this extremely important book, socioeconomically weak citizens also have no guarantee that their advocacy organizations give voice to their claims and reach representatives. Indirectness in the exercise of political power makes us understand why it is crucial that modern democratic society is made up of a large middle class, consisting of citizens whose social condition gives them the opportunity and social power to exert their influence over their representatives. But poverty and social marginality translate easily into disempowerment, which means lack of organizational as well as representative advocacy. In a society in which political liberty passes through universal suffrage and representation, a new form of disfranchisement becomes possible: that of formally enfranchised citizens whose social status makes them easily underrepresented.

Strolovitch offers us strong and uncontroversial evidence that a minimalist conception of democracy is blind to the different degrees of influence that citizens are able to mobilize. Her book proves what some theorists of representative democracy have been suggesting in the last 20 years: that in representative democracy, the threats to democratic equality (and political liberty) can be made visible only if we regard representation as a form of participation. Unequal advocacy is a form of erosion of democratic equality that is unique to modern democracy. Because of this informal and indirect form of political inequality, socioeconomically marginalized and disadvantaged citizens are stripped of that which the ballot is supposed to give them: a *point d'appui* in society and in the institutions in which laws are made. Their political exclusion takes the form of not being heard and effectively represented. The author's work clarifies what political participation means besides voting: It means not merely electing some citizens to do the job that the majority of the citizens cannot or do not want do, but also counting upon effective advocates both outside and inside state institutions.

Clearly, although democracy requires that the right to vote be equally distributed—one head/one vote is the principle that defines the sovereign power of the citizens—it does not extend this principle to representative voice. As mentioned, representation involves the activation of a more subtle and complex power than authorization, namely, the power of judgment, or creating opinions and giving them political effectiveness. For citizens to participate in the making of the political life of their country, some

Nadia Urbinati is Nell and Herbert M. Singer Professor of Contemporary Civilization in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University.

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"extra efforts" are needed besides going to the ballot. Participation requires associational skills, time, and financial means, along with advocates who are willing to engage in a cause and be effective in advancing it. Advocacy entails, to paraphrase John Stuart Mill, passionate and intelligent partisans, political leaders, and representatives who are close enough to their citizens to feel their cause but distant enough from them to be able to envisage the best strategy for winning their cause.[7] This mix of personal capacities, voluntary engagement, and collective participation in social and political movements is an essential component of representation in modern democracies. An important consequence of this complex form of participation is that representation is not an alternative to participation. In fact, it requires participation; put a different way, we might say that representation gives the best of itself if it is linked to participation. Indeed, it is actually at the level of advocacy organization that the disproportion in resources between groups of citizens turns out to be most radical.

Strolovitch shows how and in which circumstances representation can impact citizens unequally. Moreover, she raises the crucial question of how we can distribute advocacy fairly among those who have strong advocacy organizations and those who have not, and what kind of extra effort is needed besides those efforts that all citizens perform when they do more than simply voting. Strolovitch applies to advocacy John Rawls's second principle of justice and argues that inequalities in advocacy are justified "only if they work to the benefit of the least advantaged" (p. 212). It is not my intention to evaluate the practical proposals she advances in order to induce organizations to implement these "extra" strategies (i.e., including women, low-income people, members of minority groups in advocacy associations, and political and social movements), many of which closely recall those adopted by European parties and unions. Rather, I want to stress the fact that if Strolovitch approaches the issue of representation from the perspective of democratic equality (thus looking at its unequal impact on people), it is because she regards representation as a democratic institution, not a betrayal of or a second-best alternative to something (direct democracy) we can no longer have. It becomes clear that representation is a form of participation when we discover, as she does, that representation is much more effective and robust in its impact for some citizens than for others.

Affirmative Advocacy makes us appreciate the reason why representative democracy should not be rendered merely as electoral democracy, and why representation must be seen as a form of participation, rather than its alternative. Only from this perspective can the lack of representative advocacy become visible. And only from this perspective can the normative force of Strolovitch's strong conclusion be fully appreciated: "Considered together, the small proportion of social and economic justice organizations within the overall interest group system and the biases within these organizations themselves powerfully demonstrate the tremendous hurdles and disadvantages faced by groups such as women, racial minorities, and low-income people in their quest for representation in national policies" (p. 210).

Notes

1 Aristotle 1977.
2 Tocqueville 1969.
3 Manin 1997.
4 Urbinati 2006.
5 Hansen 1997.
6 Przeworski 1999.
7 Mill 1861.

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