

RADICAL DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

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“There’s no need to fear or hope only to look for new weapons” – (Deleuze 4)

## Intro

The United States is one of the most advanced digital societies in the world, yet the structure of our democracy has remained relatively unchanged by innovations in social technology. Yet today, these radical and rapid digital changes to our society are exposing the weak spots in traditional democratic politics, as seen in the rise of the populist right online and in executive office, a trend exacerbated by neoliberalism’s ability to disable emancipatory politics. In Brazil, for example, WhatsApp provided small groups of “influencers” on the political right the ability to manipulate stories and create misinformation. While not implicitly repressive or undemocratic, WhatsApp’s impact on the Brazilian election is characteristic of a greater trend of digital manipulation of democracy, almost always carried out by the few against the many, which for the most part, empowers those with the social, economic, and technological means. Yet, digital networks also offer the possibility for a more direct and representative form of democracy, led to and through by coalitions of identification and disidentification. The internet provides an unparalleled opportunity to rethink our democratic systems as a new type of network: a network of comrades. By studying how the digital does and can change our democracy, history reopens, particularly the history of the class struggle. Yet with each iteration of innovation, capital subsumes the potential for liberation, and further entangles the knot by which we are paralyzed in bondage to a capitalist system in a state of constant deterioration, with seemingly nothing coming up to take its place. For Slavoj Žižek, the disintegration of capitalism is a process out of sync with popular force. He concludes that “the paradox of our predicament is therefore that while resistance to global capitalism seemingly fails again and again to halt its

advance, it fails to recognize the many trends which clearly signal capitalism progressive disintegration. It is as if the two tendencies, resistance and self-disintegration, move at two different levels and cannot meet.” (Zizek Thief 14) As a result, democracy finds itself trapped in electoralism and identity politics, in which selfish equilibrium obstructs the creation of the popular will and the maximizing of social welfare.

Digital democracy crucially exemplifies both the weaknesses in democracy and the opportunity for increased representation and equality. For Jodi Dean, the positive and negative impacts of representation and equality are to be expected from the integration of digital networks and analogue systems of governance. Her term for this is Communicative Capitalism, which she describes as

The strange convergence of democracy and capitalism in networked communications and entertainment media. On the one hand, networked communications technologies materialize the values heralded as central to democracy. Democratic ideals of access, inclusion, discussion, and participation are realized in and through expansions and intensifications of global telecommunication networks. On the other hand, the speed, simultaneity, and interconnectivity of electronic communications produce massive distortions and concentrations of wealth as communicative exchanges and their technological preconditions become commodified and capitalized. (2)

These democratic ideals must be cultivated by any system of digital democracy. Here, Dean asserts that, under the influence of the neoliberal market, the digital is inevitably detrimental to the rights of the individual to liberty, freedom, and equality. This does not mean, however, that we must stand down to the march of innovation. Much like one identifies the biases hidden in computer code, we must shape our platforms, and indeed our very democracy around the

inevitability of discrimination. This requires the centering of ethics and theory in critical design. As Pianini and his co-authors advocate, “there is an urgent need to reverse the relationship between the digital democracy process and its enabling software platform: currently, the latter dictates the former.” We must use the digital to fight against the digital’s erosion of democracy, and even, to re-envision the nature of democracy itself, in order to provide “representation not merely [as] a matter of tallying the votes of abstract individuals or tracking the will of indeterminate public,” but rather as “a matter of getting the legitimate and determinant concerns of actual groups of people concretely integrated into the deliberative process.” (qtd. in Farneth 120) In doing so, digital democracy attempts to break the ties of electoralism by breaking free of the limitations of capitalist realism and identity politics.

At the crux of this is radical digital democracy’s attempt to confront neoliberalism. The neoliberal project is fundamental to the capitalist realism that disable radical change in politics, and the identity politics that disable the creation of radical coalitions around common struggle. According to the Mark Fisher, neoliberalism is best understood as a project aimed at destroying the experiments in democratic socialism and libertarian communism that were efflorescing at the end of the 60s in the beginning of the 70s. Within neoliberalism, the invocation of competition functions as an ideological weapon with “its real aim is the destruction of solidarity, and, as such, it has been remarkably successful.” The individual within this system must naturally look after their own self-interest in an environment of scarcity, though it is the disabling of the collective interest which so often creates and maintains the permanency of scarcity. As a result, the individual is given the agency to act, yet only within the resignations possible under the subject’s condition of precarity, subordinating public life to market forces. Neoliberalism as such pushed the left towards capitalism, and specifically towards the post-

Fordist form of capitalism that prevailed throughout the 1980s. The ultimate consequence of these policies of continuing crises is the emergence of what Mark Fisher calls Capitalist Realism. Within neoliberalism, “capitalist realism is an expression of class decomposition, and a consequence of the disintegration of class consciousness. Fundamentally, neoliberalism must be seen as a project which aimed to achieve this end.” Capitalist realism naturalizes this end. One of the key ways capitalist realism accomplishes this is by focusing class consciousness around the question of sub-alternativity, the subjectivity of experience combined with the objective nature of the norms of constitutive identity. According to Jameson, as quoted by Mark Fisher, “This means that the lower classes and carry around with in their heads unconscious convictions as to the superiority of hegemonic or ruling class expressions or values which they equally transgress and repudiate in ritualistic And socially and politically ineffective ways.” (qtd. In Fisher 167) In today’s political environment, this is articulated through identity politics as a dissolution of the classificatory apparatus itself. According to Matt McManus’s analysis of the politics of Slavoj Zizek,

“identity politics is a false solution to the real problem of how to recognize other people in their radical alterity. It imposes moralistic demands that encourage us to interact with others in the highly constrained and often insincere manner that is sometimes known as political correctness.”

As such, neoliberalism can uphold capitalist realism through a focus on identity. Digital democracy must incorporate an understanding of this in its attempts to untangle politics and identity in order to allow for the emergence of a universal will, which will in turn be amplified and enabled through the democratizing benefits of social media and the public sphere.

The unique argument put forward in this piece is that, if we are to use digital tools to increase representativeness, equality and justice in democracy, we must use a dual, complementary approach. The first of these will be based on identity, reconciliation, and public action. The second will be anonymous, based on antagonistic alienation of the individual from collectively defined identities, and will attempt to create new coalitions based around the continued failure of policy to be universally beneficial and unilaterally accepted. By creating a new digital public sphere, digital democracy utilizes digital culture as a means for the implementation of the war of position in politics. This digital will, however, must assert its presence within the public sphere through dissent and radical action. This paper is split into three sections. In the first section, “What Could a Radical Democracy Look Like,” I lay out the form and functions that digital democracy could implement as an integrated platform. The second section, “How Would a Digital Democracy Work,” examines how such a platform would function and how it would be integrated into our democracy. Finally, the “Between Theory and Practice” section looks at the complications inherent in the implementation of digital democracy.

## What could a Radical Digital Democracy Look Like?

### A MODEL FOR DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

Digital democracy encompasses the suite of advances in software that have pushed forward new visions of democracy through the facilitating and reactionary force of digital communication, particularly through networks and their abilities to increase user’s political engagement. These practices include individuals’ political interaction through both digital democratic and non-political digital spaces called platforms. In *Social Media and the Public Sphere*, Christian Fuchs

defines platforms as digital enclosures, such as Facebook, that “combine multiple functions that are indispensable to social movements, from the public to the private, for access to large audiences, and facilitate intimate interpersonal transactions.” (Fuchs 58) For example, Facebook is a non-political platform that both facilitates public organizing and digital discourse. While platforms like Facebook and Twitter have enabled mass mobilization and dissent, their systems are designed to encourage mass alienation, to suppress the possibility of change perpetuated by capitalist realism’s tendency to make progress inevitable while eliminating possibility in the moment. These platforms function as their own ends, whereas radical digital democracy is merely the means by which to unlock this possibility in the public sphere. In his book *Twitter and Teargas*, Tufekci writes that, “for social movements, an algorithm can be a strong tailwind or a substantial obstacle.... consider how the black lives matter movement now nationwide in the United States encountered significant algorithmic resistance on Facebook in its initial face.”

(122) In the aftermath of the movements recession from the mainstream narrative, however, Black Lives Matter and similar movements, suppressed and resisted at every turn on digital battlefield, are seen by the masses as relics produced by social media, rather than by the systematic oppression their movements emerged from.

In contrast to social platforms for digital democracy, New Zealand’s Loomio, which emerged out of the Occupy Movement, is formatted to facilitate political discourse, debate, resolution, and legislative change. Through a centralized subscription, paid for by government or business subscription, all users of the software are given the opportunity to engage with existing debates, give input, and connect with citizens within the digital sphere in order to establish policy and organize offline mobilization. Through the creation of groups, individuals can interact, make proposals, vote on proposals, add amendments, and choose topics of discussion. “Loomio [is] a

tool designed for horizontal movements that wants to keep the participatory structures of the assembly model to facilitate decision-making... 60% of the traffic to Loomio was coming from Spain, where Podemos won crucial offices.” (Tufekci 276) This proves the effectiveness of the model of political digital democracy at creating a movement, but not at sustaining a movement against the opposition of establishment authority in politics or bringing together new coalitions which allow us to see our alienation and dissatisfaction as constitutive parts of capitalist realism’s assault on what Mark Fisher calls Red Plenty. For Fisher, “real wealth is the collective capacity to produce care and enjoy.” Yet, capitalism “is set up to block red plenty. Capital necessarily and always blocks or access [to the creation of common wealth].” (577) Digital democracy platforms like Loomio help in the creation and maintenance of digital networks, which can in turn become political coalitions that have the possibility of representing the collective wills of alienated individuals if nurtured in the right digital environment. Yet apps such as Loomio can only facilitate change within the existing political discourse. Without a focusing of the political desires of the users, the political digital democratic platform can only modernize traditional parties, but cannot help the people break free of the electoral powers it feeds into. Loomio will always be a tool of Podemos in Spain, and its platform in this nation will always be arranged according to the will of the party.

While the use of non-political platforms as digital political space has existed since the dawn of the blog, the creation of digital political spaces is an emerging idea, with public knowledge and use of digital democratic platforms increasing every year. In Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, for example, where the Latinno organization has been tracking e-participation, there were 206 innovations for e-participation between 2000 and 2016, 141 of which were still active in 2017. (Pogrebinschi) In Europe, digital democracy has gained political credence through the rise of the



digital party,<sup>i</sup> which attempts to work the reactive and representative elements of digital democracy into the existing party based, capital dictated political system. In Asia, digital democracy serves a customer service model in places like Indonesia,<sup>ii</sup> or has taken an active role in governing, such as in Taiwan, while avoiding liberational and radical action. Therefore, while many platforms are emerging to serve a digital political role, none are formed around a logic of liberation, and none are independent of political and/or economic manipulation. It is along these lines that most digital movements, such as the Arab Spring, and movement-based platforms, such as Rousseau, fail. It is imperative, therefore, that this platform be a non-economic entity, with no profits, ads, selling or sharing of data, or corporations. While organizations such as Facebook and Loomio operate based on profits, and platforms such as Participa and Rousseau are based on political capital, this platform will completely avoid capitalization or partisan politicization.

Digital democracy can crucially be split into two complementary, yet contending parts. These platforms will include respective functions for mediation of the democratic process, education, and reconciliation, “in order to overcome domination and to build solidarity among the members of community.” (Farneth 3) The first of these platformed groups of networked functions, called E-Participation, mirrors existing social media sites, but with an implicit political element essential to the creation of and interaction with content. It is imperative that the political and local nature of the platform's content is retained and encouraged by platform culture and organization, based in survivalism and affect theory. Affect theory The second platform, the more innovative of the two, is E-Deliberation, similar in design to the current state of digital democracy platforms around the world, but with a key focus on building coalitions based on alienation, and on mediating the class struggle with the political process, attaining the greatest

progress for the many with a fine eye to the inevitable failings of the movement's claim to universality. This follows Mouffe's statement that,

“we accept that every consensus exists as a temporary provisional hegemony, as a destabilization of power, and that it always entails some form of exclusion.” (205)

With the dissolution of the purpose of the original rupture comes the need for new priorities in expansive hegemony.

Crucially, these two platforms complement and contrast each other, enabling the creation of new types of coalitions, both in a political war of position and a social war of culture, for the promotion of a more representative and fair democracy, particularly for those most alienated from the socio-economic hegemonic political order. It is in the pairing of these two platforms that the political subject that the work of mediation and reconciliation can progressively fail towards greater equality.

Using the terms E-Deliberation and E-Participation, I categorize the functions that I find critical to the digital reformation of democracy. While these are not new terms, their use here is novel, with the definition of each dependent on the other. I fit these functions into the identity based and anonymous frameworks of E-Participation and E-Deliberation, using the benefits of each system to mitigate the potential consequences of digitizing politics in the creation of a new public sphere.<sup>iii</sup> This system of democracy, therefore, avoids many of the elements of digital networks that are so corrosive to the democratic process, while crucially opening the possibility for revolutionary coalitions, processes of confession and reconciliation, and the continued advancement of the war of position. The war of position, as written by Gramsci, is

A study of how these innovatory forces [self awareness of group autonomy and the creation of a basic consensus] developed, from subaltern groups to hegemonic and

dominant groups, must therefore seek out and identify the phases through which they acquired: i. autonomy vis-à-vis the enemies they had to defeat, and ii. support from the groups which actively or passively assisted them; for this entire process was historically necessary before they could unite in the form of the State. It is precisely by these two yardsticks that the level of historical and political consciousness which the innovatory forces progressively attained in the various phases can be measured – and not simply by the yardstick of their separation from the formerly dominant forces. (qtd. in Mouffe 39)

In the creation of a digital democracy, Gramsci's conception of the collective man as the autonomous subject must become the prioritized will of around which all can identify through a shared relation to struggle. Yet, while Gramsci's conception of a war of position is fought through cultural movements, theorists such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe conceive of the war of position as a limited discursive model at the scene of political academic debate, in which diverse classes create a historical bloc aimed at the creation of counter-hegemonic institutions and worldviews. Here, the war of position is built out of a focus on the relationship between the individual, the groups they are a part of, and expansive hegemony. According to Chantal Mouffe's analysis of Gramsci,

This had to consist in the creation of an active, direct consensus resulting from the genuine adoption of the interests of the popular classes by the hegemonic class, which would give rise to the creation of a genuine 'national-popular will'. Unlike the passive revolution, in fact, where vast sectors of the popular classes are excluded from the hegemonic system, in an expansive hegemony the whole society must advance. (27)

Digital democracy, then, must encourage a connection to expansive hegemony, allowing all citizens to connect through centralized struggles, and through the limitations of the individual

through their connection to communities of identity. In doing so, digital democracy must enable more than a struggle between classes; a digital war of position must reveal the connections between diverse irreconcilable struggles which can then be connected to the foundational struggle of class. The digital war of position must raise class consciousness out of such logics of equivalence between class struggles to enable rupture. Whereas traditional social media and political projects strive towards the creation of coalitions of individuals in opposition to an exterior hegemonic force, digital democracy must fight a war of position based on each individual's experiences of struggle that result from the limitations of their identities. In doing so, this project attempts to create a radical new digital public sphere, characterized by the internet's interactivity and connectivity, in which "people reveal their otherwise private preferences to one another and discover common grounds." (Tufekci 26)

To do this, digital democracy will be split into two platforms: E-Participation and E-Deliberation. The E-Participation platform is designed to be an identity based centralized platform to facilitate digital presence in democracy in order to enable political action offline. Social media allows users to share their unique experiences of identity and politics, and allows for the creation of narratives and bonds among citizens who might otherwise have lacked communities of identity. Social media also allows for instantaneous mass distribution of information, giving users unprecedented access to the events and stories that make up their world. The data created by the sharing of these experiences of humanity can then be used by the platform to help build an algorithmic understanding of the groups and individuals that make up the demos in a democracy. For these reasons I have sorted the following digital functions, already at work in separate capacities in the digital sphere, within the domain of the E-Participation function: Groups, Knowledge, Individuals, and News.

The E-Deliberation platform is designed to be an anonymous platform that facilitates the creation of new political coalitions in correspondence with local and federal government's efforts to represent the wills of their constituencies. This uses the digital's power to anonymize and gather data to create communities of dialogue around issues of struggle outside of the realm of identity. At the same time, the platform benefits from the organizational power of the internet, and its ability to increase access and influence, which can capitalize on social media engagement to increase active participation in the creation of laws. These advantages are suited to the political and contentious areas of debate and policy in democracy. For this reason, I have sorted the following digital functions within the anonymous and access-controlled E-Deliberation platform: Voting, E-Congress, Citizen Service, Events, and Administration.

## Lacanian Digital Democracy

With the fall of the Soviet Union, communism has been allowed to reimagine itself outside of a capitalist-Realist international political mindset, the exact belief that suppresses hope for utopic political ends. Today, the Soviet-style state, based on the identity of the proletariat as the revolutionary hegemonic class. Out of the ruins of communism, which deterministically viewed the class struggle as the only aspect of identity, a new possibility arises for the creation of a liberational antagonistic politics, in which our collective alienation allows us all to identify with the proletarian position. As a result, the revolutionary process can "not be restricted to a movement organized on strict class lines which would tend to develop a pure proletarian consciousness detached from the rest of society." (Errejon 39) This was the mistake of the past; we cannot be so faithful to the individual revolution as to the war of position.

The End of History, and the rise of the United States as the main major superpower, is thus the historic end to a communist project focused on revolutionary ends rather than revolutionary means (particularly, as envisioned through the War of Position in the digital public sphere). Accordingly, Žižek asserts that “revolutions are only possible against the background of their own impossibility... One has to take the risk and intervene even if reaching the goal (appears and is in some sense) impossible.” (Belated 430) With the End of History, therefore, comes the realization for the left that communism should exist as a bargaining position, or a tide, continuously realigning itself against the current and future needs of the representative many in relation to the unrepresented vulnerable and unseen in politics. It is more important, therefore, that applications enabling digital representation and political influence do not use the empowering of the masses as the end, but rather as the means to push towards greater equality through the war of position. In other words, “the question of the actuality of the idea of communism is... that of discerning in it our actual tendencies which points towards it.” (qtd. in Agon 430) Digital democracy, then, should aim at aligning the popular and personal wills of the electorate with that which is universally threatening.

Along these lines, Mouffe breaks with Marx in her view of the "relational and unstable character of all social identity," which retains a focus on relations of power and domination as the driving undercurrent of radical politics and social change. (3) This view coincides with Žižek's view of the politics of alienation and its importance in the building of coalitions that push forward the war of position. The result of this "recalibration of hegemony was the concept of antagonism," a force with a permanent and ontological function that interpellates subjects to the hegemonic ideal, expressed as "an illusory fullness of identity," (Mouffe 3) within which we are led to our subjectivity by following the dictates of the signifier and the way of life “natural” for the

identity. This antagonism persists in the super ego and the big other, and is reinforced by our corporeal forms.

Perhaps, then, digital democracy's most dangerous tendencies emerge in its fully reconcilable algorithmic system that reinforces communicative capitalism's reactivity. Through the reinforcement of satisfaction and identity, Michael Kearns' analysis in *The Ethical Algorithm* explains that platform's power "over users rests largely and their ability to set the rules by which attention to content is acquired rather than by picking the winners directly (necessitated because of the inevitable failure of the old coalition to represent and command enough power to change) with a number of popular sectors that are clearly unhappy but nonetheless without political reference points." (Kearns, 134) In this way, attention can co-opt the narrative of any moment, and speak over the voice of grassroots popular movements. If a network is empowered in the process of governing and that network is reliant on that which occupies the most space in digital discourse, then attention can become the center of the political project instead of the needs of the proletarian class. This can be seen, for example, in the mainstream media's COVID-19 coverage, which focuses popular anger on Trump instead of on the material conditions that exacerbate the severity of the crisis. Such a shift in attention is made even more likely due to the differences between determinist politics and politics of desire, the second of which is enabled through the platform's digital war of position. For Gramsci, this is because the war of position is an example of successful hegemony, whereas deterministic politics driven by attention and digitization reinforce the power of the structure by waging a continuously disarming passive revolution. This is fundamental to Capitalist Realism and neoliberal electoralism. Mouffe writes that,

"what [Gramsci] called successful hegemony, that is to say, expansive hegemony...had to consist in the creation of an active, direct consensus resulting from the genuine

adoption of the interests of the popular classes by the hegemonic class, which would give rise to the creation of a genuine 'national-popular will'. Unlike the passive revolution, in fact, where vast sectors of the popular classes are excluded from the hegemonic system, in an expansive hegemony, the whole society must advance" (27)

Digital democracy must account for the diversity of struggles that exist within capitalism, and must use the incompatibility of diverse popular wills to create a war of position aimed at the maximization of social welfare. Unlike revolutions of the past, which operated exclusively on the level of class consciousness with a focus on the proletarian class, digital democracy must shape its digital public sphere to enable coalitions around common struggles. Such struggles, which emerge from the subjectivity of our identities and our resignations in the face of capitalist realism, disable identification with those precarious in the face of labor and scarcity. In other words, digital democracy must take into account why revolutions don't occur, and why individuals choose to support policies that obstruct the social welfare and freedom of others. Yet, digital systems, as they have been shaped by US neoliberal policy and libertarian capitalist ideology, are fundamentally deterministic in the executability and termination of coded systems. For this reason, algorithms often repress action by coalescing attention around what is pleasing to the user, creating digital bubbles that further disable digital movements from connecting to the diversity of struggles caused by capitalism.

We must work towards a hegemonic digital politics, whose goal is "ongoing management and displacement of antagonisms, but never their final resolution." We must use the limitations and capabilities of technology to follow the prospects of "Hegemony and Socialist Strategy" in our search for a radical and pluralist democracy in which "numerous groups and identities would be recognized in their autonomy and joined together in ongoing coalitions of citizens unified by



their antagonism to various aspects of late capitalist society." Here, "such antagonisms were the underlying condition of any plural, democratic community." (Mouffe 4) By focusing on the possibilities for rupture through the subject of lack, Lacanian theory opens new possibilities for a series of ruptures to puncture capitalist realism, opening up the space for radical political change.

## Affect Digital Democracy

However, rupture is not an option for all subjects within the political system. In fighting resignation, we must find and center issues that represent the needs of those who cannot live with the status quo, pushing on the death drive to encourage cooperative understanding and radical action through joint identification of a source of struggle that crosses deterministic identity lines, allying the selfish will with the maximum social welfare of the coalition.

This is the trouble with rupture, and the fall of every revolutionary movement; with rupture comes a change of coordinates and circumstance. According to Chantal Mouffe, "a rupture occurs when the coordinates that organize existence undergo a shift." (Distillations 130) The subject must be willing and able to tolerate this dislocation, particularly by focusing on the traumatic, foundational ruptures at the root of our politics that cause the greatest precarity as an attack on solidarity. These can be found, for example, by focusing on biopolitical conditioning that cannot be overcome, in circumstances where identity biopower is used to control and patrol bodies based on aspects of biological identity. (Here, however, we must not forget that the body is mutilated by the signifier and that the very biology of the individual body is understood ideologically as a tool for categorization within Capitalist Realism. This is one in a series of resignations which must be taken on in the pursuit of a war of position. We cannot, however, let ourselves become resigned to being depressed realists, resigned to capitalist realism.

Here, then, I suggest the pairing of Affect Theory with issues of constitutive identities (unsurpassable identities we take on from social conceptions of biological difference) in the construction of a social digital public sphere, proposed here as the E-Participation function. Affect theory is a body of theory that seeks to arrange affects, subjective experiences of bodily feelings, into discrete interpersonal categories. These emotions function as cultural practices that limit the subject's ability to move beyond negotiation and survival, and are rooted in constitutive aspects of identity. The pairing of E-Participation and affect theory is made based upon Hegel's conviction, as analyzed through Molly Farneth's *Hegel's Social Ethics*,

“to the notion that social practices stand at the center of human life. Through social practices, human beings become subjects, and through social practices, these subjects create, maintain, and transform the norms of their shape of spirit.” (Farneth 11)

Our identities are the means by which we interact, express ourselves, and organize subjects in and out of identity groups, which Hegel writes about as classes, in a similar way to how Marx imagined the rise of the worker's proletariat. Yet these same classes block subjects from joining the fundamental class, leaving behind the traumatic history of the signifier and stretching towards the universal. E-Participation seeks to enable the process of reconciliation, while allowing individuals to connect their individual experiences of alienation to the collective alienation of the working class.

Affect Theory and E-Participation are highly compatible, as both focus on providing visibility, giving guidance for survival, and creating community around our acts of resignation. Together, Affect Theory and E-Participation enable the network to digitize the experience of expressions of identity in the public sphere, and expand how subjects can use digital media to re-articulate and re-evaluate the signifiers and the excess of meaning of the classes we are identified with.

Affect Theory gives agency to those in precarity, allowing for their survival. The focus here, rather than rupture, is calibrated to the mundane realities of wounded subjects, to whom lack cannot be universally identified. For such subjects, rupture is often more threatening than the self-inflicting violence of inaction, particularly in nations like America where mass incarceration puts any semblance of freedom in the balance for those who do not meet the mandates of late capitalism with the limitations of constitutive identity.

Even when a moment of rupture occurs, even in the most perfect of circumstances, revolution can never satisfy the political desire of the subject. In the fight for revolution, we inevitably fail our desires when we realize there is no obstacle stopping it. This is because, as highlighted by Freud, no object can satisfy the superego,<sup>iv</sup> yet we are driven to repeat the initial loss of subjectification. The superego's loss is structural, evacuating agency from the subject, leaving only the possibility for meditative therapizing of the loss in the moment of subjectification. Instead of finding success, we thus repeat the failure of the satisfaction of our political and social desires. This guarantees the persistence of the object of our desire, a collective politics and communist utopia, as lost.

This is because, as Freud outlines, there is a level of constitutive dissatisfaction, led by the death drive, that can never be cured. As subjects emerging into a world in which we are marked by the signifier, we neglect to see that it is the social environment that distorts us, not that we are distortions who cannot fit into a social environment defined by Capitalist Realism. This further destabilizes the precarious subject by cutting off the ability to join the war of position as part of the unmarked and alienated collective. The subject is therefore trapped in the ideology of Capitalist Realism, disabled and "alienated from one another or caught up in attempts to dominate one another, however." As a result, "[subjects] are incapable of generating enough

organized power or democratic authority to influence and contest officials' decisions effectively.” (Farneth 119) As a result, the individual loses agency and is forced into resignation.

In this way, the precarious subject cannot always choose to rebel, as the identity which constricts the subject are also foundational to the subject's initial traumatic encounter with the other. In other words, the subject's desire, unattainable, can only be satisfied through the sublimation of one displeasure into a more positive displeasure. Therefore, where identity is constitutive and not circumstantial, Affect Theory can thus provide a useful framework for navigating resignation in politics and its destabilizing effects on the creation of a war of position. In this view, the master signifier is rightfully seen as malicious. Still, the collective must cope with and work with the established system of politics and society in order to change it.

Though Affect Theory is important for the moderation of politics according to preset conditions of precarity and inequality, it is a mistake to center politics on stable identities instead of on coalitions of solidarity among subjects of struggle, which takes advantage of the moment and creates rapturous change. Rather, Affect Theory and E-Participation should be used to deal with the fallout of past politics that failed due to their resignations, distancing from universality, cannibalization of the politics of the initial movement, and failure to improve the subject's desires.

A Lacanian approach, therefore, will be taken to the project of E-Deliberation. This accomplishes two things. First, it allows for dual approaches, encouraging cooperative action between systematic and individual oppression. In particular, this allows for a split in temporal authority, with Affect getting priority in the short term, with room for compromise, and with uncompromising Lacanian deliberation and rupture as a long-term goal. It also allows the decoupling of politics of identity and politics of solidarity, allowing for a dual fight against the

causes and the effects of oppression in our society, enabling the fights of those castrated by coalesced signifiers to align with a new political space dedicated to economic inequality, and the will of the working class. It is imperative, however, that we understand the failing of Lacanian Theory with respect to Affect Theory, and how rupture often folds into resignation.

## Anonymity or identification

Digital democracy cannot express itself through identification alone, as past platforms and algorithms have. Instead, Mouffe asserts that

“our political initiative must move between these two tracks which have different paces, and two rationales that don’t always coincide. On the one hand, popular authority and all the pressing talk of the movement in conditions we haven’t chosen; on the other in parallel, a more molecular process of education and construction.” (115)

The first of these tracks represents the area in which digital democracy provides the most promise for the creation of a popular front from anonymous communities of dissatisfaction. This aligns with digital democracy’s E-Deliberation function. It is at this level that the actual work of governing and coalescing, indeed where the public politics of Hegel exists, that we create our anonymous political identities, and in our articulation of our individuality and divergence from community ties, situate ourselves as subjects who can bond around collective alienation and struggle.

The second track represents the social side of the social political movement, based more on the conservation of identity as a way to ground the pressing issues of the movement in the precarity of our lived experiences as subjects. This is for representing existing coalitions of identity and building ones, in identifiable digital space. Hegel’s work emphasizes the need for both of these in any society, for “without the first, we risk missing the historic moment for our country, we

live in the world of ideas. Without the second, it will be difficult to resist the powerful forces ranged against us in an enduring way.” (Mouffe 115)

Digital democracy, therefore, incorporates two methods of building coalitions and fighting for change within the war of position. Using anonymity, the system masks the elements of identity that obstruct the general will from coalescing disparate identity groups into the war of position. In doing so, E-Deliberation encourages the emergence of the comrade. Using identification, the system allows the user to build profiles, share their experience of identity as social subjects and consumers, respond to policy changes and failures, and call citizens into action. This helps sustain the war of position, protects the survival of subaltern groups, and allows for a broadening of the norms by which society is categorized. It is in the pairing of both that a society can address the wounds of the past while forging a way for the future.

Identification, however, must be removed from politics in order to open up the possibility for radical change. Anonymity is necessary to break the ties between identity and politics that lead to the perpetuation of unequal, exclusionary representation, in stagnation as well as in revolution. Instead of creating coalitions based on a common identification that temporarily allows for the convergence of heterogeneous goals, we must create coalitions around disidentification from restrictive norms and misconceptions that lead to divergent identities, of which even the normative hegemonic subject can find an opposition, if not an identification. It is also along these lines that subjects can create conditional identifications that supersede the individuals' inability to understand the other subject's person and politics. The digital public sphere offers us that possibility.

In this way, for example, a religious extremist could find common grounds of alienation with a trans woman. However, they might have no way of understanding the other's motivations and

their way of life, or of overcome the discursive barrier between the subjects in the digital realm (which is always primed for misinterpretation and reinterpretation). Yet, both might be alienated by the same forces within capitalism that result from subjectification, exploitation, and alienation by the present state of society. To do this, both groups need not let go of the identities they have come to identify with but must overcome their bounds to the identity community in order to embrace their individuality as subjects who coalesce around, but do not inhabit, our material creations of identities. The groups thus must be committed to the idea of a collective good for this process to work; any exclusionary politics, such as religious fundamentalism or fascism, must then be baited on the hook of collective action by favorable personal political progress. Just as “[revolutionaries] don’t want any sort of positive change to spoil the purity of the Revolutionary theory,” the “line of abolition”<sup>v</sup> causes the self-cannibalization of the identity in question, preventing the empowered identity from realigning with the popular will. By embracing anonymity in politics, the individual within the identity community cannot properly assert their identity and is less able to establish coalitions based on positive identity coalitions (as so often happens in the non-digital political forum), which are bound, such as those encouraged by fascism, racism, fundamentalism, etc.

In doing so, the hope is that even the most exclusionary politics can be indoctrinated into the collective by approaching common goals, which over time, can help reveal the overflowing of meaning from the subject in the face of the signifier. This can allow for critical breaks from identity politics and the progression of popular will that favors those who disidentify. At the same time, the use of anonymity can hedge against policies that favor individual identities who may subvert the popular will of their movement for the advancement of individual communities. Subjects tangled in the web of capital and identity can thus escape what Alex Williams has called

“negative solidarity,” the tendency for neoliberal subjects to race to the bottom. As a result, users can use the alienation of identity to connect to class consciousness on diverse grounds as part of the expansive hegemony of the war of position.

The process of radical digital politics, therefore, must remain a politics of disidentification, and mustn't be afraid of the death of the original populist subject in pursuit of a constantly moving war of position. It also must remove itself from the trappings of identification to prevent against the reinforcement of feedback loops within direct digital democracy, which could feed into a tyranny of motion. Such a hijacking of the system, whereby the influential class of a movement could lock other users out of the political process by continually changing the ground within democracy and society, would allow for the obstruction of the war of position, leading to totalitarian exclusion. Such politics, if promoted and given the ability to continually dictate changes of terrain in the political struggle by a feedback loop in the digital democratic system, threatens to produce artificial consensus. Identification is therefore conducive to capitalist realism's disabling of coalitions from the left, wherein “the closer you get to that consensus [of the ‘revolutionary’ identity] the further away you go from the possibility of a new [revolutionary] consensus,” (Mouffe 74) which is necessitated by the old coalition's inevitable failure to be universal, and in turn to evolve. Disidentification and the recognition of misidentifications are thus needed to displace consensus with dissensus.

It is, therefore, imperative that identity be distanced from the creation of a universal politics through the mitigating effects of anonymous networks, as any homogeneous identity could use their bonds of identification to create thought bubbles, encourage groupthink, reify identity and heighten inter-identity tension. This could allow for intentional manipulation of the system for personal goals, and could, for example, block the emergence of new revolutions in the war of



position by creating a fantastic digital ‘popular will.’ Such can be seen in the political virality of digital movements, such as KONY 2012, which popularize unaddressable trauma. By avoiding the fantastic ‘popular will’ as constructed within Capitalist Realism, digital democracy has the ability to move into the future, instead of resurrecting the communist past.

## Platform

Using the terms E-Deliberation and E-Participation, I categorize the functions that I find critical to the digital reformation of democracy. While these are not new terms, their use here is novel, with the definition of each dependent on the other. I fit these functions into the identity based and anonymous frameworks of E-Participation and E-Deliberation, using the benefits of each system to mitigate the potential consequences of digitizing politics in the public sphere.<sup>[1]</sup> This system of democracy, therefore, avoids many of the elements of digital networks that are so corrosive to the democratic process, while crucially opening the possibility for revolutionary coalitions, processes of confession and reconciliation, and the continued advancement of the war of position. In doing so, this project attempts to create a radical new digital public sphere, characterized by the internet’s interactivity and connectivity, in which people reveal struggles and personal experiences of identity.

## E-PARTICIPATION

First E-Democracy creates a centralized, noncommercial platform for E-Participation. E-Participation uses Facebook, and social media in general, as a basic model for the public display

of the politics of identification, which aids in the creation of networked communities in digital space. Crucially, the work of participation, education, and mobilization are processes of identification, reciprocal recognition,<sup>vi</sup> respect of authority, and orientation against a dominant, often competing, hegemonically valued identity. It is, therefore, crucial that personal identity is centralized in the process of political social mediation, or political social media. For this reason, the E-Participation platform should require a firm established profile, connected to an accountable identity.

Though identification is important, however, there is a strong likelihood that the necessitation of official identification with a state-affiliated server would be validly seen as a threat to privacy, personal safety, and wellbeing. Crucially, the E-Participation and E-Deliberation platforms are designed to enable the voices of both popular movements, like the enabling of the working class, and the voices of the unseen, the undocumented, persecuted, and alienated.

In making a revolutionarily representative system, we must enable those seen and unseen the right of participation in the creation of a “national popular will.” As a result of this, however, corporate interests with expansive access to technology, automated systems, and capital can use their resources to overload the system with an Oligarchy of the Notseen. The Notseen represent digital citizens who are not, or are not recognized as an individual within the given society.

These Notseen users can influence the system by taking advantage of the algorithm’s drive to produce attention.<sup>vii</sup> Another prominent example of the power of the Notseen is the Russian election interference campaign on Facebook in the 2016 US presidential elections, which undermined trust in government, manipulated individuals into producing media narratives, and even influenced voter turn-out.

The Notseen here is also complicated by the modern-day nation state, and the misalignment of open digital borders with closed and reinforced physical borders. More broadly, this reflects the exclusion needed to designate the bounds of community, legitimize authority and rule, and regulate and profit off of the work of those within the community. As a result of citizenship and the nation state, an individual actor on a political social media account can represent the interests of a “hostile” individual from an “opposing” community, or can be a human being excluded from the political process. In this way, the threat posed by Russian bots becomes entangled with the complications posed by real people outside of the political framework, such as refugees and undocumented immigrants, who live in a nation of perpetual risk. Both force the system to reinforce the dictates of what qualifies as a citizen. At the same time, both encourage the tide within digital democracy to address the complications of the nation state, bringing more people into the political conversation. As a result of the threat posed to the authority of the platform by the Notseen, access to E-Participation must be regulated. Regulation of the Notseen is described in the Government and Technology and Politics sections.

While the E-Participation mode of government affective work in its representation of identities, particularly non-normative ones, it is important that the goal of the platform be the facilitation of reconciliation through processes of education, organizing, coalescing, mobilizing, and articulation of new norms. In this way, E-Participation is a project focused on the constitution of the individual subject, the congregation of coalitions, and the processes of domination by which liberal capital uses identity as an economic weapon. In pursuit of this, the project will “be oriented towards the production of new forms of knowledge by trying to create a shift in the cognitive framework within which a problem is usually understood, represented and addressed –

thus by improving new possible ways and interventions within the social fabric where that particular problem manifests itself.” (Facchetti, 732)

In summation, E-Participation is a digitization of “mediation with closure,” taking the form of “grassroots democracy characterized by conflict and reconciliation.”<sup>viii</sup> (Farneth, 125) Here, the user's unique identity and user experience are emphasized, through the creation of groups who share positive aspects of human identification and lived experience, exemplified by the emotional reach of popular digital movements, such as The Arab Spring.<sup>ix</sup>

The purpose of this approach is to help build and support communities through networked capabilities, and to help connect these groups to the issues, structures, and laws, around which neoliberal democracy leaves individuals exposed to a universal notion of struggle. By implementing E-Participation with concern for dissent, as defined by Ranciere, and antagonism, as described by Mouffe, and reconciliation, as defined by Hegel, “design adopts a critical discourse. It is able to create new frames of sensing. These frames can be interpreted as interfaces that are able to create temporary, precarious spaces to rehearse alternative ways of thinking and acting... following Rancière, it is about the act of reframing.” (qtd. in Facchetti, 732). By reframing politics outside of the realm of identity, new possibilities open for radical digital democracy.

Importantly, however, this platform also gives the opportunity for the mobilization of new communities based around collective alienation from hegemonic norms, such as paternalism, heterosexuality, elitism, and so on, as they around K-number of shifting groups in the E-Deliberation platform. These groups, enabled through E-Deliberation's model focused on disidentification with interpellated identity, give individuals and collectives embodying Gramsci's war of position the ability to encounter the other to whom you may never be able to

identify, but with whom they share a collective disposition by the dominant ideology, and by the joint experiences of the affirmation and policing that is implicit in all conservations of and expressions of culture and joint positive identification. Through the E-Participation platform, both coalitions of mutually identifying political subjects and coalitions of alienation and oppression can amplify the voice of popular movements, enabling the empowerment of a war of position by encouraging the changing of culture, the proliferation of new norms, the creation of new types of value, and the active participation of the community in the process of legislation and political representation.

## E-DELIBERATION

The E-deliberation platform will aim to increase the representativeness and equality in democracy, while facilitating the creation of new types of coalitions through an algorithmic focus on the variables of fairness, accuracy, and displacement from the dominant norm, which, though it operates in many different directions and to varying degrees, displays a common mythic characteristic that alienates the individual from a hegemonic, naturalized unobtainable norm. Therefore, rather than dealing with the "properly" interpellated subject's conferred identity, as in the Hey You! moment of the constitution of the subject, E-Deliberation deals with the "che vuoi" subject who is not hailed by ideology, but who heads the call of identity anyways. Within this framework, the signifier has no proper objects to call upon. Rather the subjects retroactively create material conditions that allow for the grounding of the signifiers in their own subjectivity. This illustrates that there is no proper subject of interpolation. Rather there are individuals who become subjects as a result of their hearing of calls which will always be incorrect, but whose alienation they cannot overcome. Using the 'Che vuoi' subject, it can be seen that an individual can be called by all identities and even in the correct identities they only

are correct in the grounding of the identity group within the subjects acceptance of the signal fire. If all subjects are seen as incorrectly interpellated, we can see how the correctness of the signifier within the identity group helps to confine the individual to their subjectivity, leading to alienation. Here, a Lacanian understanding of alienation is used, in which alienation is the fundamental condition of the human subject within the symbolic order. In *The politics of Alienation and Seperation: From Hegel to Marx and Back*, Zizek explains that

a human subject is not only a speaking being but, more radically, a being spoken, traversed by language, its truth lies outside itself, in the decentered symbolic order which forever eludes human control; every dream - of “appropriating” this alienated symbolic substance, of subordinating it to human subjectivity - is a humanist illusion.

Accordingly, the agency of the individual is compromised in its subjectification. Yet central to the notion of alienation is its relation to labor and capital, through which commodity fetishism designates a relationship between “the appearance of value and the structure that caused this appearance. For Marx, alienation designates the transformation of ones labor into conditions of subjectivity. The project here, then, is to connect the alienation of identity with the alienation of labor within expansive hegemony through an exploration of misidentification, disidentification, and the pain of subaltern groups lacking common essence. (Mouffe 39)

Within this theoretical framework, the alienated subject is the individual who performs identities-in-difference, which Munoz explains “emerge from failed interpellation within the public sphere.” (Munoz, 7) These examples of “false positives” in the hailing of subjects mirror the false positives that the Maxwell equation of algorithmic equality tries to weed out of the selection process, optimizing the equation by reaching a level of fairness called the Pareto curve, a line on which any decrease in either accuracy or fairness causes an inverse reaction in favor of

the other. Using the concepts of false negatives as a mirror for the che vuoi subject that is alienated by ideology, an algorithm can theoretically identify the moments in which we disidentify with the norm, and create coalitions around a rejection of the hegemony of the master-slave dialectic of ideology and subject. The Radical Digital Democratic algorithm is described in detail in the Algorithm section.

As the E-Deliberation platform is based around the creation of new types of norms and Lacanian relation to hegemonic ideology, the user remains anonymous. While the user's profile is still attached to their identity in the E-Participation platform for the sharing of data, connecting people, and the refining of the algorithm, all E-Deliberation profiles will lack a personal user-id, with unique ids instead being given in each new thread and function. These unique IDs, while contextually variable, will be tied through a unique E-Participation user ID. Here, E-Deliberation will gain the data produced by E-Participation, though not the other way around. This will allow for the user to keep track of others in debates and conversations, while removing the accountability and focus on identity which characteristically disable identification with the class struggle, and makes impossible any coalition with subjects who cannot be understood, rationalized, and identified with.

The anonymous E-Deliberation platform will be focused on concrete legal action and political posturing for the promotion of equality in society through law. The E-deliberation platform will have five functions to these ends: Voting/Polling, Citizen Service, E-Congress, Events, and Administration. These functions will aid in decision making through the mediation of the law for the creation of positive universal change. The platform will focus on the assertion of presence from the digital public sphere into the public sphere, through mass mobilization and tangible policy changes. The goal of this platform is to do the legislative work of rethinking the law and

repairing the mistakes of the past, but with an eye for the inevitable failure of all political movements, and the impossibility of creating a truly universalist policy in an unequal tangle of capital and identity.

## Functions

### E-PARTICIPATION FUNCTIONS

The E-Participation platforms will have four functions that aim to facilitate political coalescing, strategizing, dispersal, and retention of knowledge and monitoring of the failures and successes of the political process. These functions will be groups, knowledge, individuals, and news. Each will be its own distinctly separated areas, though posts may refer users to different relevant areas of the site.

The first E-Participation application is the groups function, which facilitates the creation and sustaining of communities. This includes functions to view other group member's activity and to facilitate in the organizing of political initiatives and activist networks. This function will do so by connecting users to people they know, relate to, or share common political goals and characteristics with. This is similar to how social media algorithms connect people based on the attention economy. Groups have the power to take collective in group actions as well, such as to remove a user or change group structure, with the sustained support of the group members over a delayed time, utilized to fight against corruption of groups by trolls, and resist the reinforcing power of the echo chamber of internet reactivity. Even in the absence of identifying characteristics, the unifying power of digital networks can help bring people together. Political scientist Benedict Anderson called this phenomenon of unification “imagined communities.



People who would never expect to meet in person or to know each other's name come to think of themselves as part of a group for the shared consumption of mass media like newspapers and via common national institutions and agendas." (Tufekci 5) Thereby, the network creates instant connections and communities, Users are able to define their identity and their membership within groups subjectively. Through the network, users can thus use the group's function to communicate directly and instantly with others through the internet's power to morph space and time.

Second, the E-Participation platform will host a wealth of data and historical knowledge as part of its knowledge function. Knowledge, here, "emerges from the practices of people who share a community," (Farneth, 9) whether as data or material culture brought into the digital space.

Historical education is essential to the process of reconciliation and recognition, two processes cited by Hegel as essential conditions for the opening of the political process, and the overcoming of the master-slave dialectic between subject and ideology through a continuing process of confession and failure satisfy a universal notion of progress in representation. The publicly accessible knowledge stored here will help inform people inside and outside of the group and will help conserve marginalized identity and cultural memory against neoliberalism and the creep towards assimilation. This will provide an avenue through which positive expressions of identity can help to show the illogicalness of existing normative estates.

The role of cultural memory also plays a huge role in the conception of identity, particularly in the relation and intersection of opposing identities, which muddy the water of the subverting force of capital. Far too often, always in fact, the trauma of lived experience in an unequal social, economic, and political world involves the history of oppression and obscures the unifying characteristic of antagonism. By engaging in a process in which we document our identity, the

process of history opens up, allowing for critical examination, reevaluation, recognition of trends, marking of failures, successes, and injustices, and allowing for the process of reparation through mutual recognition and a deep process of confession and reconciliation with the other. This can then be used to inform evaluations of policies and coalitions, through the sharing of differentially private data to the E-Deliberation algorithm for the creation of agonistic coalitions. This is similar in function to programs from the black community, such as the Imhotep program. A pioneer of the black internet and an early exploration of identity in the digital blogosphere, Imhotep's Africa Insight database "included a torrent of information about black issues. It informed folks about everything from black colleges to black elected officials." (McIlwain 89) Currently, the UBP is the largest database of this type within the black community.<sup>x</sup> By building such a database of knowledge, both algorithms and subjects can be better informed and empowered to make change.

Third, the E-Participation platform will include a section for the sharing of and creation of personal content, called individuals. Whereas the history section focuses on the documentation and reconstruction of past inequality and positive expressions of identity and community, the sharing section is focused on how the individual dynamically fits into the current socio-economic environment; here, it is an expression of citizen and user as subject and site of authority that overloads the meaning of the given norm, and allows for the articulation of new identities and norms. This function, therefore, is forward-facing and independent, not explicitly political but explicitly related to the political subjectivity and struggle of the individual. This allows for positive expressions of the affirming aspects of identity and community, and grounding the political project of the war of position and its coalition of alienation in the real human experiences and connection of social media posting.

These posts, though not directly expressive of the oppression of subjectivity, reflect “Spinoza’s more rigorous analysis of sorrows,” which “show how the sad are typically not engaging directly and sensitively with the world, but with their own frozen images.” (Fisher 698) For Mark Fisher, these function like “outdated data caches.” (698) If treated as such, other user’s identification and disidentification with the sorrows of subjectivity can be used to track the internal and interpersonal interactions of the individual with identity, and this in turn can be datafied.

E-Participation is also a platform for citizens to air their discontent with policy proposals, legislative action, and the fallout of political action and inaction. This is similar to Instagram in general, and in specific, to political social media such as the communities of the early Black net, and the account IndigenousX in Australia. Research shows First Nations people in Australia are using digital networks, social media, and relatively inexpensive media production to connect, resist, and talk back to the powerful. (Phillips et al., 172) IndigenousX is one such account, giving a rotating panel of First Nations people the ability to share stories of community, hardship and identity through Instagram. Platforms such as these use the power of connective action, to help aid in the process of representation and help build community.

This platform, however, will not have a traditional debate structure, particularly with the threat of contentious comment threads and E-aggression, and due to the potentially face-threatening result of an identity based public social media platform. Here, debate and commenting are given their own area and are detached from the production of content. Debate here is taken more as an interaction, which may or may not be contentious, about a global or specific local issue. While debate can be detrimental to progress, comments become especially damaging to the political process when they are expressed as a negative expression of identity. This can also lead to comment bias, “which can promote visibility for the occasional quarrels that have garnered many

comments.” (Tufekci, 161) This leads to increasing polarization, a process which replicates and reinforces the bonds of social and political identity in society, stalling revolutionary change and blocking the formation of revolutionary coalitions.

In many ways, such a platform reflects Mark Fisher’s K-Punk blog project, which aimed at creating a digital public sphere for political discussion in opposition to capitalist realism. This project similarly found problems with commenting in political social media. In the blog post “Comments policy latest 2004,” Fisher reflects that “the comments boxes have become almost completely unproductive. Almost all of the worthwhile discussion happens between members of the collective who if the comments boxes weren’t there might be inspired to produce their own posts... the comments boxes have heated things up and speeded things.” (Fisher, 703) By removing the comments sections, user authority over personal experience can be presented without challenge to personal authority, while interaction with policy is prioritized by its allowance of direct engagement. Therefore, while debate is essential to the process of digital democracy, and indeed to all processes of deliberative democracy, the enabling of comments and debate on sharing's positive examples of identity would be counterintuitive, and would threaten to lead to the same level of polarization, filter bubbles, and outrage elicited by E-Participation's antecedents, such as Facebook.

Yet the creation of a dialogue, and our reflections and reevaluations of seemingly concrete ideologies is also a crucial part of the process of reconciliation. For Mouffe, agonistic democracy requires an understanding of conflictual consensus, “where contrasting differences of principle acknowledge each other’s legitimacy but still remain opposed.” Mouffe stresses that “only by providing a stage (or stages) for the airing of radical differences can dangerous forms of hostility and violence be reduced.” (6) The commenting and debating functions, therefore, will be located

exclusively in the anonymous E-Congress function of the E-Deliberation platform, where debate over issues can be distanced from identity. By locating discourse in anonymous space, debates can focus on how we cannot and will not embody the ideal interpellated identity, and how we are alienated by deterministic conservative ideology instead of how the interests and experiences of diverse and intersecting identification categories conflict and disable each other's political goals. The E-Participation platform, therefore, remains a tool of positive expressions of identity, community, and reconciliation. In contrast, E-Deliberation focuses on negative expressions of identity, struggle, and mediation of the historical class struggle, which cannot be identified without asking the hard questions of identity through a forum of debate.

The last function of the E-Participation platform is the news function. One of the most influential capabilities of social media is its ability to quickly and effectively spread information. This spread of information is critical to the political process, allowing for more informed decisions, helping to keep groups and movements up to date, establishing a sense of trust and accountability essential to effective democracy, and highlighting the continued struggle of humanity. This information is also, however, dangerously volatile, due to the speed and reactivity of the internet masses, and due to the ease with which the Notseen can use social media to spread misinformation and repress reporting. For this reason, it is essential that the communities involved in news events have the ability to contest fake news in the admin section.

It is also helpful to increase the delay between reported political event and political action.

Imperatively, the platform will have to find ways of horizontally policing and regulating stories in a way that will not help the many at the expense of the few. The news function will operate primarily by identifying positive aspects of identity gathered from liquid user feedback, inputted

data, networks, use of E-Deliberation, and importantly, from inferences gathered through the creation of communities of alienation in the connected E-Deliberation platform.

Finally, the platform will also show users news stories they are least likely to agree with based on the user's identity. By doing this, the likelihood of creating a filter bubble is decreased, and the user is exposed to a more diverse range of publications, encouraging intergroup dialogue and improving the community's oversight of news stories. This creates space for dialogue and disagreement, grounding the process of participation in the actions that catalyze political change, and more importantly, revolutionary change. This revolutionary change, the power of which can be seen in the digital revolutions of the Arab Spring, gives the digital public sphere a chance to exert influence over the public sphere.<sup>xi</sup> That is not to say that anonymity is not important in journalism, but rather, that news represents an establishment view to be assimilated and contested, while user experience helps to frame the article in question. In order to protect the anonymity of the journalist, news could also be proposed and posted through user ratification of events from anonymous sources.

## E-DELIBERATION FUNCTIONS

The E-Deliberation platforms will have five functions that aim to mobilize the political wills of the users of the E-Participation platform, giving users direct influence in the creation and adjustment of laws, and helping to actualize mass digital movements in the public sphere. These functions will be Voting/Polling, Citizen Service, E-Congress, Events, and Administration.

The first function of the E-Deliberation Platform is the voting engine. The voting engine is an innovation of digital democracy designed to increase turnout and increase the responsiveness and representativeness policymakers. Voting engines are used by most digital democracy platforms,

such as through Italy's Rousseau, and Spain's Participa to give users direct access to democratic function. The ultimate goal of this would be to give everyone the ability to vote with ease and convenience and to make decisions about proposed changes to the law made through E-Deliberation's legislative function. This would help increase trust in government and its ability to represent individual political will in relation to struggle accurately, by incorporating more voices and perspectives into the deliberative process.

Included in the voting engine is polling. Similar to voting, polling helps to assess public sentiment in a nonbinding way. Polling can also be used to gain data about users to refine a person's identity within the algorithm. Together, the aggregate group data gathered from this function will inform the decisions made, and the direction taken by the government.

It must be noted, however, that the framing of digital polls can be biasing, and these public polls with binary options cannot be prioritized or given functional power to change policy, or else risk creating a double bind of Capitalist Realist partisanship. In his analysis of the major developments in digital democracy, Paulo Gerbaudo notes that trends in deliberative democratic polling "point to a strong control of the leadership over the process of consultation, making e-ballots resemble more of a rank-and-file stamp of approval for foregone decisions. Almost invariably they return supermajority results in favor of the leadership position, with most of them boasting 80 per cent or above majorities for the winning proposal, in a way that is reminiscent of sham elections in countries of the Soviet bloc." (Gerbaudo, 140) It is important, therefore, that productive conversations be created by those alienated by specific effects of policy, society and economy that may encourage popular mobilization and increase the monumentalism of the moment needed to break through the facade of Capitalist Realism. In practice, this can be hard to do without accountability and trust in the mechanisms of government. So much can be seen in

the use of untrusted and untested digital democratic platforms, such as the Iowa Caucus app built by Shadow Inc, which failed to gather and assert election data with authority.

The second function of E-Deliberation is Citizen Service. Like customer service, this function aims to provide a customer service model for democracy, particularly at a local level, in order to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of government in the task of maintaining and regulating society. The customer service model of digital democracy is already at work in countries like Indonesia, whose Lapor! platform helps draw attention to pressing civic matters, particularly at a minute local level. According to Flew et al., “The Lapor! website was developed by the Indonesian government as a means by which citizens can report matters to the government and have them addressed.” (Flew et al., 65) This model helps with the short-term upkeep of society but ultimately fails to utilize the power of digital democracy to create any legal or structural change.

While Lapor! does not advance the war of position explicitly, it does increase the government's ability to give personal attention to citizens. Additionally, while Citizen Service may not make an impact on a global universal level, it helps improve responsiveness at the local individual level. This is a task the internet is uniquely positioned to execute, a basic solution to basic problems, though data on conditions may be indicative of greater themes of alienation and governmental neglect/malice. As a result, citizens can attempt to exit the “labyrinth of call centers” on the other side of functioning capitalism. However, without the other functions of this digital democracy, the fulfilment of mundane requests could be used to placate the need for radical liberational action. In the case of Indonesia, Lapor!’s customer service relationship “feels like a purely transactional one. Citizens are not invited through Lapor! to be involved and work together in discussing possible solutions.” (Flew et al., 65) This limits the radical potential of



digital democracy, and can be used to deter the possibility of Red Plenty by marketing a technology based neoliberal incrementalism as a solution to systemic, interwoven, structural problems.

The third function of E-Deliberation is E-Congress. This is perhaps the most important feature in the entire digital democratic system, and the distinguishing feature of deliberation that supersedes social participation in digital democracy. This is essential because, as Carpentier states, “genuine participation should be indicated by the redistribution of power or equalization of power in decision-making,” (Carpentier) and can thus open space for the kind of rupturous possibility that Capitalist Realism tries so hard to suppress, until it is forced to make these changes inevitable. Through E-Congress, citizens will have the chance to formalize the changes necessary for greater equality and representation directly. The E-Congress function will have three parts. First, through the use of an algorithm focused on collective traits of alienation, users will be grouped into various "parties" based on alienation from a normative identity. Here, “The task is always to build a people, a general will, from the pain of the subaltern groups who don’t necessarily have a common essence.” (Mouffe et al., 39) This will rely on the collection of data on individuals and groups in society, and the use of an algorithm that encourages conversation and coalitions among such group who lack such a common essence outside of the realm of struggle.

Next, these groups will have open discussions of current events and existing laws in the E-Congress forum. Here users will have the change to propose changes to the legislation, which will then be approved or rejected by the coalition of disidentification. Amendments can then be circulated to other coalitions and voted on, and in the event of a failure, can be opened up to

debate and alternate proposals. If a proposal gains sufficient support in the voting engine, the law will be sent to the legislature.

The success of the legislation and the coalitions that put it forward is important for the progress of the society and the war of position. Still, it is the failures of the legislative process, and the people that progress alienates in the process, that must remain the focus of any future politics. It is with the failures of yesterday that E-Congress must form the coalitions of today, but not necessarily the coalitions of tomorrow which arise out of the scope of the original rupture.

One example of E-Congress in use is the use of the digital legislative tools in Taiwan. “With the passage of the Referendum Law in 2003, the democratic system in Taiwan now provides citizens with referendum rights to directly participate in the establishment of policy (initiatives and referenda rights).” As a platform, Taiwanese E-Democracy has the goals of:

“(i) reaching and engaging with a wider audience in the policy process; (ii) providing more accurate and suitable policy-related information to the people; (iii) eliciting more in-depth consultations and discussions; (iv) quickly organizing the opinions of the people; (v) providing related and appropriate responses to citizens; and (vi) monitoring procedures and making evaluations at any time” (qtd. in Lee, 41).

While the system has not been entirely effective, perhaps due to its limited scope, it has provided greater voice to citizens, particularly the “information poor,” those already left out of the political process by increasing gesturalism and alienation. In Taiwan, it was not the Notseen, but the info-poor who were empowered by digital democracy in spite of the technology gap. Since those participants [who “hijack” democracy] are mostly also the ‘Information Poor,’ [researchers] do not share the commonly held view that the digital divide represents a continuing obstacle to e-democracy but, instead, has a positive effect on mitigating political divide,

elevating the quality of democracy and lowering the phenomenon of inequitable participation in this case.” (Lee, 43) Within the right mediated platform, this could eventually lead to a mobilization of new type of coalition, which offers the possibility for liberation.

The preceding functions of digital democracy allow for the establishment of politics around expansive hegemony. Yet, the creation of a digital public sphere is useless without the assertion of the digital war of position in the real world. Radical political change can be organized on the internet, yet this change is never guaranteed without a call to action. To accomplish this, E-Deliberation will include an events function, with a focus on dissent and popular mobilization. these groups will have access to an events function. This is similar to the Facebook events function. The events function is an extension of the groups function, and is to be used to help organize and mobilize protests, strikes, and other types of political insurrection. This allows users to organize with a larger social sphere in an ad-hoc manner, and to do so in anonymous space to avoid centralized surveillance threats to popular authority and individual safety. Based on his observations of the Arab Spring, and similar online protest movements, Tufekci explains, by “using social media and digital tools, protesters can organize in a large scale on the fly while relying on a small number of people to carry out work that previously required much infrastructure and many people.” (52) The groups function in E-Participation will be connected to the events function, allowing users to invite others to real-world interaction and collective action, whether in the form of an educational opportunity, community-building event, community service, or mass public demonstrations and disobedience. Here, individual users will be able to create events, will be able to use the space to organize with other active event heads, and will be able to use the function for organization and logistical support for the ad hoc work so imperative to the support and sustenance of political movements. Yet, while the events function

can be shared to identifiable users, the events themselves will be anonymous digital spaces actualized through active forms of dissent and protest. As a result, protests will be encouraged in the public sphere, pushing the expansive hegemony of the collective man towards active political change and the assertion of the presence of the people. The events of the Tahrir Square uprising, for instance, did not reach their height online, but through the mending of the digital movement to public discontent off of the internet. In order for true change to come, the internet can only guide and connect us. It is only through a recentering of the digital in the real world that digital presence can supersede the alienating forces of social media and create the connections needed for a war of position. Yet the internet also offers possibilities to realign the revolution following the initial rupture. Digital democracy must focus both on how to enable mass movements, and how to align those movements with the popular will as it shifts over time.

The final function of the E-Deliberation platform is the Administrative function. This function is in charge of the work of platform regulation and modification. It is here that digital democratic regulation of content occurs. Administration is also where structural change takes place within the platform. Adaptability to innovation is critical, particularly in a field as tied to technology as digital democracy. The data produced and consumed by the system also changes over time as the war of position shifts. Adaptability within the administrative function takes into account “the introduction of new technologies at ever increasing paces” which “may render anticipation of such important changes, and of their causes, impossible.” By giving users the authority to uphold the functioning of the platform, “anticipation gives the power to deflect and control force.” (Pitt 54) As a result, users are included in the maintenance of the standards of democracy.

Administrative changes are not only subject to those active within the Admin function; all changes must be approved by the community. Successful examples of community regulation and

maintenance can be seen on platforms such as Nawaat, a “small Tunisian anti-censorship and Internet freedom organization that has been working together for many years were there to help people in and finding bedding and spreading information.” (Tufecki 41) However, not all examples of community regulation are successful in maintaining the platforms they serve.

As part of the Admin function, users will be able to be a part of innovation and the maintenance of the digital community. This would include users in the maintenance and improvement of the platform, as well as the upholding of its standards of action and participation with the system.

This function is vital to the maintenance of the platform as a whole. Gerbaudo notes the importance of adaptability in digital democracy, writing that

“Online decision making is not a static system, but a dynamic process, which, as with all processes, and in particular democratic processes such as elections and consultations, is never completely spontaneous and neutral. It involves a number of organizational acts of supervision, management, collection, verification and communication of results, which may appear as merely technical but are in fact highly political in their implications.”

(127)

It is vital that the people, the platform’s users, play the key role in the maintenance and upkeep of this new digital public sphere. Users are digital democracy’s most vital sources of accountability and innovation, and the user must be seen as loci of authority over their own political and social experiences in order to facilitate a war of position and of reconciliation.

Kearns, for example, points out that almost all of Twitter’s key features “were first introduced by users and only later were taken up at a company as regular features.” (128) In other words, digital democracy must use the resources of the people in a demos.

User administration can also protect against many of the issues that arise from the Oligarchy of the Notseen. Currently, for instance, Facebook's real name policy is implemented through community policing, like most policies of almost all social media platforms. Report and takedown is encouraged by US laws that declare that these platforms are not legally responsible for content unless they fail to take down items that they are told violate the law. Community policing, however, puts social movement activists, and indeed anyone with visibility and precarity at a distinct disadvantage. (Kearns, 143) Community policing will, therefore, attempt to fight against the oligarchy of the Unseen.

In addition to community policing, the Admin function's place within the anonymous framework of the E-Deliberation platform will help prevent career admins from gaining prominence and overexerting influence on the platform's organization, functions and algorithms. This will fight against the Iron Law of Oligarchy, which states that "any self-organizing system, no matter how democratically it is originally founded and constituted, inevitably ends up being run by an oligarchy." (qtd. In Pitt 39) While active users of the administration function could create an oligarchy of the active that functions as a kabbalist bureaucracy, the admin function will be checked by the balance of community approval.

Therefore, while the Admin function gives power over the functioning of the platform, its build disables the forces of bureaucracy, which Gramsci describes as 'the most dangerous hidebound and conservative force'. The Admin function is designed to resist users' and groups' attempts at, "constituting a compact body, which stands on its own and feels itself independent of the mass of members." (Gerbaudo 41) As an added check on the power of active admins, changes will be subject to approval outside of the admin function. In addition, the commitment of the project to

creating agonistic coalitions for liberational politics will remain embedded in the ethos and code of the platform.

## How Would a Radical Digital Democracy Operate?

### Government

Foundationally, this system will be tied into the United States' system of representational democracy. While the goal of digital democracy is always to be able to provide direct democracy to the people, it is important to understand the reasons for representationalism and the need to work within the existing constraints to begin to acquire enough power to truly change the system. The hope is that this power will accumulate as more politicians find themselves accountable to the passing of E-Deliberation legislation and emergency measures.<sup>xiii</sup> For this reason, issues will be sorted by the scale at which they approach issues on a national or local scale, allowing for the correct user correspondence, and with regard for existing laws with either the federal legislature, or with the user's local government. If proposals are accepted within the E-Deliberation platform, the proposal will be passed on to the corresponding governing body. The legislature would then have the ability to send the legislation back to E-Deliberation with adjustments, the ability to approve, or the ability to reject a bill. At this point, the action would be accounted for in the accountability platform, which will relay information on representation of the coalition's will over the will of the individual politician. Tracking politician's representation of the popular will will become more important as the platform strives to become a place for election in the future.

However, while it is important to reflect the will of those who are not seen in the political system, it is too much of a risk to the security of the system to leave the future of our democracy in the hand of the Oligarchy of the Notseen, or in the hands of an exclusionary popular will.

Without proper protections for identity, the realness of digital users would be undermined by the Notseen, and the system would lose authority. Yet, without representation, accountability, and administration, the digital public forum may operate, but it will be unable to negotiate and implement its policies in the real world.

It is also too much to ask that the American system of democracy in particular be transitioned from a representational republic to a direct democracy, especially when the approval and funding of the system would likely fall into the hands of congressional approval and citizen demand for the ability to interact more directly with representationalism. While citizens are sources of authority, it must be recognized that as subjects in late capitalism, we are not autonomous, and our motivation and likes in the world are influenced by our experiences of identity as consumers, while democracy relies on rational actors. The subject cannot act in favor of Spinozist realism. In fact, “the subject’s self-control is precisely what according to Freud can never be achieved.”

(Mouffe 17) Digital democracy, thus, must not fall into the traps of enabling a populous which cannot directly identify the source of their struggle, as is seen in direct democracy, nor take into account the impact their selfish motivations might have in impeding the creation of a maximally socially beneficial will.

For these reasons, the subject of digital democracy, within the modern nation state, the confines of its governments, and the threats of hacking inherent in the medium, must abide by the standards set by representative democracy over the dangerous potentials of a reactive direct digital democracy.

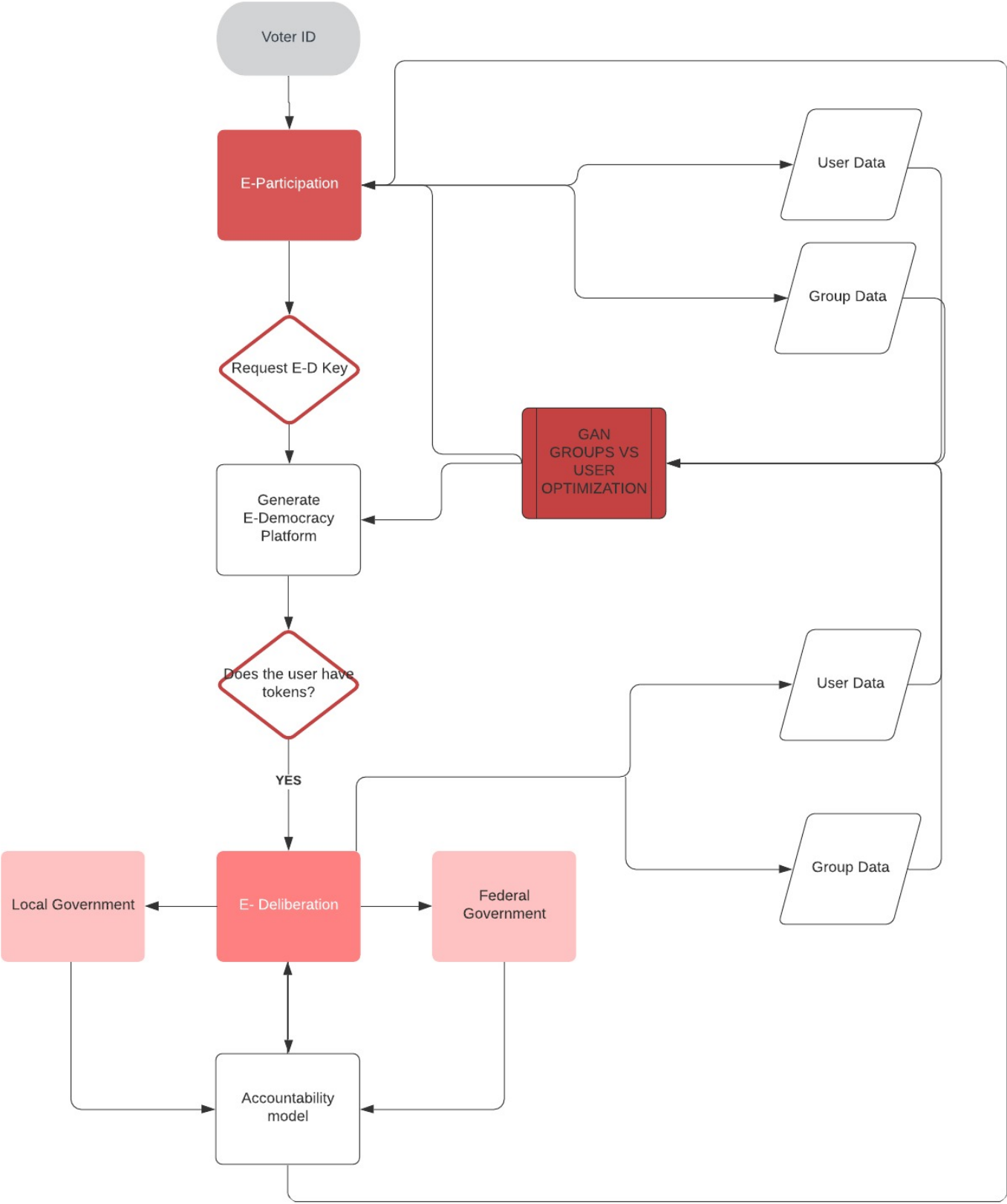


To accomplish this, digital democracy should form around social democracy as it has been established, using the standards of practice set up by the current political order where it can enable change. Democracy must adapt to overcome its entanglement with capitalism, yet the standards and trust on which it is built give digital democracy the foundation on which to build a way out of the future, now, following in the footsteps of Mark Fisher's K-Punk aspirations. To create a system of user accountability, for example, the best way to ensure security and trust is to use the existing system of voter registration. By using voter registration to determine user eligibility, the system can reinforce non-transference and encourage use by tying this information to valuable political functions (such as those provided by digital democracy).

Also, the system must also contribute to, and work with the representative democracy and reality onto which it is grafted. Digital democracy is not imposed onto a void, and it is not in itself a governmental system. It is instead a way to guide the current system. By assuming democracy could work towards true representativeness, digital democracy can provide some accountability for policy change in response to the will of the electorate. Just as socialism can be thought of in this system as a wave, by which the alienated classes may create radical change in a system arranged by capital, radical digital democracy can be thought of as a tide to open possibility in politics and society. Digital democracy, then, attempts to make democracy more representative of the will of the electorate, while building a political movement that exposes the ways in which the democratic system as it is, is not set up to properly represent collective wills. Radical digital democracy thus acts as a way to make the government representative of the coalitions that bring them to power, while making the coalitions of power more representative of the will of the people. In doing so, it takes into account the failings of the subject to act freely, and the danger this could pose for a system of direct democracy wherein populism always begins to converge on

the identity of its movement, pushing it towards the reification of the structure, perhaps with a shift in its hierarchies.

# Network Architecture



The first component of E-Participation that must be sorted out is the verification of identity which is necessary for activation and continued access to the E-Participation platform. This profile then gives users the right to use the E-Deliberation platform. Users will be able to create an account by registering to vote, and acquiring a unique voter ID. Here, the user's ID code becomes a manual account key, giving the user universal access to the functions of the E-Participation platform. This profile will necessarily be tied to a voter's local and federal position with the established system. By tying the user ID to a voter ID, the user's district and constituencies can be considered and used in the creation of an interactive platform prioritizing issues based on alienation and community, as outlined in the Algorithm section giving the profile connection to the user's presence within the demos. This allows a focus on both local and federal issues. A controlled and valuable login credential also helps control the process of user verification, increasing the value of the account credentials by connecting political social media accounts to a citizen's ability to vote and receive services within society. This reinforces the presence of the voter in the digital public sphere.

The user's E-Participation account, activated through a voter ID and individually chosen password, will then give the user the opportunity to access and interact with the E-Deliberation environment. Once their profiles are created, users can freely interact with the platform, reviewing and posting content, reading and posting news, exploring and contributing to events, reacting to the accountability platform, creating and maintaining group relations, and accumulating a cultural archive based on a wiki model. The users interaction with these systems will then produce data, which will in turn be fed into two algorithms that will compare the likelihood of action or inaction given an identity, creating a heuristic that measures the likelihood of the user matching the given identity as a result.

Next, users can gain E-Deliberation access through a verifier, which will check to see if the user's access request, issued by E-Participation, is valid with the given credentials. This is time and identity sensitive. The system will check to see that the user has an E-Participation account, and will check that the user's total number of actions do not exceed  $n$  tokens per day, and  $N$  access points per geographic area, through the use of distance bounding, which in this case is bound by electoral geography. Here, the user's ID fights against the problems that arise from the oligarchy of the Notseen. By making the individual's credentials powerful, valuable, and hidden from the user in more instances, as the user's actual personal master key to the system will enable increased security and non-transferability. This also ensures anonymity and decreases the risk of the user corporatizing or delegating the tools they receive in E-Democracy. As a result, the user will be able to use their account to access a master private key, which will give users the ability to vote anonymously with a master public key. This process will ensure differential privacy, and will encourage truth through global goal optimization and environmental benefits for the individual interest.

Once generated, the E-Deliberation platform will be interactive, allowing the user to explore the environment of political possibility and partisanship, but only allowing users to interact with the system if the user has enough automatically generating tokens, which are redeemable for deliberative action. The portal itself will be organized prior to the process of anonymization, allowing the algorithm to build a unique environment that encourages interaction with new types of coalitions. More information about the algorithm can be found below in the algorithm section. The platform's main function is to bring together coalitions of disidentification by starting around an issue of joint disidentification, with the goal of producing a piece of legislation that would help all identity groups involved.

In addition to enabling political movements, the network will enable special Emergency Proposals, aimed at protecting the most vulnerable in times of crisis. The emergency proposal enables measures to be voted on in response to rapid changes in E-Participation data, which are caused by the inevitability of catastrophe in the maintenance of Capitalist Realism. The emergency proposal function is designed to help subjects gain the agency to support rupture in the face of precarity and resignation, and to allow for rapid collective responses which prioritize the people and the maintenance of basic human rights. These rights, for example, include the rights to emergency care in crisis, such as right to care, housing, etc. in the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

The issues that crises highlight in the failure of the state, however, are often representative of larger themes of inequality produced and pathologized in the individual by neoliberal capitalism. Our response to crisis in the moment can and should be thought of as a realignment of the priorities that lead to unequal consequences in the face of tragedy, and give the collective the confidence and agency to act. Emergency proposals, therefore, will be taken back to the populace in the wake of crisis, and given the ability to evolve and progress the war of position in the fight for a collective future. Citizens will thus be able to vote on the permanency of crisis measures and action, and will be able to connect the failings of past emergency actions to the structure, inherent to the pre-rupture order. This adds a feedback loop to emergency policy, allowing for change to come out of crisis without the need to inscribe a scapegoat for issues that allow a universal convergence of struggle, though in an unequal manner due to the centrality of capital as a subject in capitalism.

# Algorithm

## Theory

Instead of pushing forward a deterministically based democratic model, which can at best reproduce the conditions of our unrepresentative and unequal democracy, this platform will be based upon a politics of alienation. This model of radical digital democracy, unlike other models of digital democracy which focus on the aggregative and deliberative proceduralism of democracy which conceal the hard kernel of truth around which the hegemonic ideology articulates the real norm. A more specific term for this kind of network is Holistic Agonistic Digital Democracy. In such a system, “Universality is not located over and above particular identities. It is an antagonism that cuts from within each way of life.” (Zizek 135) By forming itself around the inevitable lack in the subject, Holistic Agonistic Digital Democracy pushes towards a universal politics that leans into agonistic democracy and the uncanny subject. Here, the word agonism is used to highlight Mouffe’s notion of agonistic democratic theory, which she argued, “begins from the impossibility of reconciling all social demands without exclusion or violence.” (6) The dissatisfaction that result from the multidimensional subject’s conflicting wills, and from the superego’s inability to satisfy the desires of its broken subject, are the means by which digital democracy can use capitalist realism to fuel new waves of revolutionary change. Imperative to the project of creating coalitions of disidentification is agonistic democracy. The term agonistic democracy can be grounded in the term “che vuoi.” This is Zizek’s expansion of Althusser’s framework of interpellation of the subject (Hey you!), to which he adds the layer of jouissance. Zizek states,

What remains “unthought” in Althusser’s theory of interpellation is the fact that prior to ideological recognition we have an intermediate moment of obscene, impenetrable interpellation without identification, a kind of vanishing mediator that has to become invisible if the subject is to achieve symbolic identity, i.e., to accomplish the gesture of subjectivization. (Sublime 146)

This produces an overflowing of meaning in the subject, who, in the recognition of the other, orients itself towards the collectively created, yet highly dependent mythical identity of the signifier. In the process of interpellation, which is brought about by the encounter of uncanny subjects, we react to and are constituted as subjects by the alienation of castration and the misalignment of identities/estates with the true self. Though we might be fully aware of the inaccuracy of the call, we are presented only with the options to identify, disidentify, or misidentify with the norms of an identity’s jouissance and way of life. At the same time, our subjective actions are tied to the meaning of the identities we come to be known as. The ‘che vuoi’ subject is manifested in the algorithmic creation of digital communities; yet it is within these communities that alienation and struggle become caught in the politics of identity, and in the disabling of expansive hegemony.

It is the alienation of all individuals as uncanny subjects prior to their encounter with the big other, coupled with the impenetrability of desire represented by Lacan’s petit objet a, that produces the subject of interpellation. Here, Žižek explains that

“by being filtered through the sieve of the signifier, the body is submitted to castration. Enjoyment is evacuated from it, the body survives as dismembered, mortified. In other words, the order of the signifier (the big Other) and that of enjoyment (the Thing as its



embodiment) are radically heterogeneous, inconsistent; any accordance between them is structurally impossible.” (Sublime 146)

The subject, encountering the signifier, cannot fully identify with what is signified by the identities they are interpellated as, and in doing so, is alienated, unable to overcome the gap between the symbolic and the real, and unable to identify with the desires of mythically pure identities.

In his addition of the *voici* to interpellation, and in his identification of interpellation prior to identification, Žižek identifies the alienation necessitated by all interpellation, and in turn, identifies universal alienation as the source of struggle, around which we can create successful coalitions in the war of position. This, however, is only possible through continual mediation, which can be aided and expedited with the aid of digital technology. If we envision that alienation is a vector, which can differ in angle and length from the signifier, we can begin to conceive of an algorithm that prioritizes elements of alienation that, if overcome, could progress in the progress of collectivism within the war of position. This line would represent the “excess of meaning that escapes this signification.” (Lacan 306) Due to the universality of alienation, which is produced by all signifiers prior to the interpellation of ideology, these lines can connect the uncanny subject to a network of identifiers, at a distance that corresponds to the degree and type of alienation. The concatenation of each user’s individual alienations can thus be formed into a network, converging the uncanny individual around a unique data point in multidimensional space that marks their tangle in the ideological struggle.

By using data that indicate how people differ from predetermined mythical norms promoted by neoliberal identity politics, an algorithm could meet the needs of a war of position, which Mouffe argues can be progressed through “a process of disarticulation-rearticulation of given

ideological elements in a struggle between two hegemonic principles to appropriate these elements.” (Mouffe 36) Through the use of computing and algorithms, individual struggle could be mapped against many of the hegemonic principles made visible through our use of media and through government data, and made concrete by the material reality into which all subjects are born pre-interpellated without the agency to change. While the algorithm will be built around identity, Mouffe specifies the need to separate ourselves from the possibilities to which our identities seem bound in neoliberal politics and society, producing a politics that does “not consist of the confrontation of two already elaborated, closed world-views.” (Mouffe 36) The algorithm could thus escape not only electoralism, but in time, could offer a path out of the racial, sexual, etc. divide.

Therefore, rather than creating an algorithm based on statistical parity along lines of fairness and accuracy of the signifier, the E-Deliberation algorithm will network based upon what Kearns identifies as

“the mistakes we make in the form of false rejections. This opens the door to building predictive models that are imperfect and have an inevitability in machine learning as discussed shortly but still being fair according to this new definition which is called equality of false negatives.” (73)

Through the identification of the false negatives that improperly confine us all to the bounds of intersecting identities, the relationship between the individual and the community can be used to expose the relation between identity and struggle in order to work towards expansive hegemony.

## Implementation

The basic idea behind the creation of an algorithm of alienation is the pairing of Zizek’s understanding of the ‘Che Vuoi’ subject, defined prior to interpellation, and the use of General

Adversarial Networks to create an algorithm that prioritize interaction with ideas centered around the joint alienations that arise from identity. Che Vuoi and GANs both represent what computer scientists call “a problem of perception,” which compares the difference between predicted action and perceived action. This connects to our own problems of perception of identity in politics. While most types of algorithms are trained on characteristics of personal identifiers, General Adversarial Networks are deep learning programs that learn and categorize based on antagonism, and based on the closing of the space between the representational and the real. In his book *The Ethical Algorithm*, Kearns explains that

“The high-level idea [of a GAN] is to invent a game between two players...generator and discriminator...The goal of the generator is to create an [accurate output]. Discriminator is given a sample of fake output as well as a large collection of real [output], and has the goal of reliably discriminating between the fake and real...The regulator’s goal (fairness) may be in conflict with the Learner’s (accuracy).” (132)

Applied to the interpellation of ideology, as outlined by Althusser and added upon by Zizek, a GAN might be trained to look at the fairness and accuracy of the identities by which we are defined, allowing “universal humanity [to be] seen at the edges.” (Buck-Morss 79) Essentially, the algorithm would be built to enable non-identities. This would mechanize and empower “a person’s non-identity with the collective allow[ing] for subterranean solidarities that have a chance of appealing to universal moral sentiments.” (Zizek 140)

A GAN would function, on a theoretical level, by mapping “how one’s own universality is at work in the fractures of one’s particular identity.” Zizek describes the ‘Che Vuoi’ of interpellation as:

“interpellation prior to identification. Prior to the recognition in the call of the Other by means of which the individual constitutes himself as “always-already”-subject, we are obliged to acknowledge this “timeless” instant of the impasse...In short, the “unthought” of Althusser is that there is already an uncanny subject preceding the gesture of subjectivization,” (Zizek Reply)

This allows the platform to encounter the user identified prior to the platform’s categorization of the user based on the data they produce, or in other words, prior to interpellation. Here, the algorithm functions as the big other, and encounters the pre-interpellated subject in an environment of established normative identities, tracked and optimized across those who take on those identities. In its continuous encounters with the user, the algorithm determines how much the user cannot be identified by all the established and prioritized identities tracked by the algorithm. To approximate the user’s relative alienation and identifications, the GAN will test the fairness of the user being labeled in a particular class, which will then be compared with the accuracy of the class in predicting the actions of the user. This results in a tradeoff, wherein the fairer a class is in describing an individual, the less accurate the class will be with respect to the whole. It is by managing this tradeoff, known in statistics as the Pareto Curve<sup>xiii</sup>, that we can optimize the accuracy and fairness of the most powerful ideologies tied to identity. By using the user’s distance from these optimized, central identities in society, the materiality of the data collected by the platform can be juxtaposed with the actions motivated by the group they identify, misidentify, and disidentify with. In turn, the distance between the simulated real and the actual can be compared with the norms upheld by the conservation of identity.

## Data

Applying Žižek's notion of antagonism to a GAN, an algorithm can thus use data to highlight the "work of the negative that undermines every particular identity." (Žižek Thief 140) In order to allow for the creation of coalitions of alienation, the system must be able to calculate and orient users in relation to these negative identities, with which we may identify but can never fully inhabit, and the data, which can never be fully predictable.<sup>xiv</sup>

In the digital democracy database, a focus will be placed on the differences and unpredictability of the individual's user data with regards to identity groups that the profile indicates the user belongs to. This can be received in a number of forms. First, as the user's account is tied to government data and voter ID, census data could be collected and used to inform some of the rigid distinctions that exist at the federal administrative level, such as area of residency, ethnicity, economic status, etc. This can then be expanded upon by analyzing user's interactions and expressions of identity within the digital democratic E-Participation platform, and through their consensual sharing of support for particular platforms from the anonymous E-Deliberation platform on the E-Participation platform. This could take the form of likes, ID's or "hand raising" actions that signify the user's ability to identify with the experiences of others. Finally, dissent here will be seen in the data as a political action, against which individual and group priorities and alienation by policy can be measured. Using these data, the algorithm will then try to form predictive models of the individual and the norms of the identity, which dynamically inform each other over time. A neural net will then bring these data together with trends of identity, giving each input identity a weight with reference to the subject.

It is based upon calculating alienation that we must push forward a new radical model of digital democracy, through which, the continued mitigation of antagonism prolongs the constancy of the

revolution. The radical shift here is from a descriptivist proletariat to a non-descriptivist proletariat. Through non-descriptivist coalitions of capitalist displacement and the articulation of digital democratic systems around an impossible ideal and an unending process, the left can create the universal needed for rupture from the capitalist system.

## Accountability

Rather than working to hold politicians accountable by calculating a score to measure what is often immeasurable, the politicians use of the polis's agent accountability. The accountability platform is rather a process of recirculation and political discussion, tying the actions of the community and the legislating of the government to the process of continuous debate in democracy. While users cannot debate or comment in the E-Participation section, users can create individual posts that express their personal opinions and experiences in reaction to political action or inaction. In this way, users can respond directly to policy, allowing them to create new narratives tying politics to social precarity. This, in turn, can help facilitate political debate in the digital public sphere, exposing nuance in debates and allowing voters to explore the failure of politics to universally address the desires of the polis.

The accountability platform will also help to create a sense of trust in democracy. Users can be reassured that their policy concerns will not be ignored, and if rejected, these users will be given the means by which to continue developing and connecting to the universal needs of the community. Users will also be able to see and respond to digital democracy's intervention into politics, giving the platform itself accountability. Additionally, citizens will be able to monitor the actions of their politicians, giving the polis the means by which to encourage the responsible designation of agent accountability,<sup>xv</sup> and to give politicians incentive to act according to the

interests of their constituencies rather than in favor of corporate interests and power. The user will thus be given a clearer picture of political representation, and the politician can gradually realign their goals to the interests of the polis. As a result, the accountability platform encourages the politician to trust the polis's ability to create policy, share experiences, and address the problems in their everyday lives.

The accountability platform also allows for reciprocal recognition, and creates new opportunities for dissent-based coalitions, both of which facilitate new bonds of trust and respect between citizens within the polis. In order for a polis to function in the interest of the collective, Hegel argues that subjects must encounter the other with reciprocal recognition in which both users acknowledge the other's authority over their own experiences, recognizing the other's sense of accountability to seek the best lives for themselves as part of the community under conditions of risk.

Recognition is particularly important in the digital public sphere, where the subject encounters the other through mediation in contactless virtual space. In such environments, especially on platforms such as Twitter which are populated by anonymous users, trolls, and bots, it becomes easy to overlook the humanity and the struggle of the other. By recirculating community proposals in the accountability platform, the proposals put forward by the anonymous collective will in E-Deliberation can be grounded in the material conditions of the people who populate the E-Participation platform. In doing so, the users relationship of reciprocal recognition is reinforced; the user is able to articulate their authority as the policy touches their own lives, and can attempt to hold the policy accountable to the needs of the individual as they fit into the community. In doing so, the accountability platform allows for a shifting evolution of dialogue, policy, and coalition, and allows anonymous political actors new opportunities to express and

connect based on joint notions of struggle. By building reciprocal accountability among the users, the agent accountability of representational democracy can gradually give way to collective will, and the estranged subjects of politics can create a trusting bond with the notion of community, if not fully to each other.

Therefore, by recirculating the failures of policy, politics can reassure those displaced by political action/inaction of the continued effort to mitigate the precarity imposed by revolutionary change and compromising resignation. In particular, users can capitalize on the failures of electoral politics and politics to illuminate the anti-democratic effects of neoliberalism that discourage collective action and moments with revolutionary possibility. Users can thus reflect on the weaknesses of successful and unsuccessful community driven policy proposals, fighting against polarization and consensus, while allowing for the evolution of the priorities of the war of position.

In this way, the accountability platform tries to realign the priorities of representational democracy with a malleable popular will, decentralizing the politician, emphasizing policy over personality, and entrusting agent accountability in the digital democratic subject, as the platform attempts to create an algorithmic body without organs, which can articulate the wills of subjects in a struggle with mythical identities, yet not bound by the biological and psychological markers of those identities.



# Between Theory and Practice: Resistance and Reaction

## Technology and Politics: The Gap Between Theory and Practice

One of the main tensions in digital democracy, and in democracy itself, is the tension between inclusion and exclusion. In the creation of any polis, there must be a sense of trust and accountability underlying the foundation of the community. This accountability erodes in the face of the Oligarchy of the Notseen. Yet, at the same time, the Notseen crucially includes those human subjects not seen within democracy: subaltern subjects such as the refugee, etc. These subjects often represent the subjectivity closest to the universal will, because they are already alienated from many of the categories that constitute neoliberal society. These subjects cannot be incorporated into the platform without being incorporated into the society as a voter. The system, however, cannot legitimize its users without some form of accountability and credential non-transferability. Digital democracy, thus, must use these exclusions as a baseline for democracy “in progress.” No democracy is fully inclusive. This is enforced resolutely by the nation state and by the notion of citizenship. The exclusion of some in digital democracy, then, should not be taken as a necessary characteristic, but as a resignation to be reassessed in the progression of democracy. This can only proceed if the government in question retains the authority to act in the interest of the voters representatively.

Another tension in digital democracy is the tension between computer and human fallibility. Much like humans, computers are imperfect machines. Computers cannot perfectly model or understand human sociality, just as the individual cannot fully conform to the ideological picture of any identity. It is the platform’s ability to use these imperfections, and to build on its failures in a cyber-human dialogue that allows digital democracy to act as a tide of socialism within a

neoliberal democracy. By focusing on the individual's failure to conform to the myths defining their identities and classes in society, by focusing on an individual's resignations and mismatched desires, and by focusing on the contradiction and limitation of these identities, the computational system can pinpoint the failures of ideology which allow the individual to connect to the collective outside of their subjectivity. By embracing the computer's inability to perfectly predict an event given a wide set of data on a particular phenomenon, the computer generated predictions based on data from identity communities can expose the subject's failure to conform to identity, which results from an overflowing of meaning from the signifier, and from the subject's failure to satisfy both their desire and their need to survive. By using a flawed prediction system, digital democracy exposes the ways in which perception and categorization are flawed social practices upheld by the ideology of identities. As a result, we can begin to create coalitions around these flaws, rather than around the elements of identity that block us from identifying with the other in politics. Instead of trying to create an algorithm that finds the identity of the subject, radical digital democracy's algorithm finds identities, some of which the user labels themselves as, and measures each identity's failure to predict action based solely upon the algorithm's prediction of the signifier.

Computational systems can also obscure the ideology underlying identities' presentations of rationality and authority. In doing so, those in charge of the operation of the digital public sphere can hide their manipulations of truth in politics to obstruct political change, encourage individually favorable actions, and in the event of the platform's success, can cut off access to the digital public square. If control of the platform falls into the hands of a few, and if platform changes are made without the continuous consenting of the polis, digital democracy can become a tool for individuals to manipulate and overstep the will of the polis. Digital democracy,

therefore, must be subject to the demands of the community in an open, transparent, and inclusive dialogue.

Additionally, computers can promote the inequality of benefits by creating new opportunities for exclusion through the centralization and digitization of the political public sphere. For those who do not have resources like computers, internet, tech-literacy, and time, digital democracy can close off possibilities and agency. Exacerbating this technological and logistical divide is the issue of enjoyment: we expect to be enticed by our social media and politics. For many, politics isn't enjoyable, and the idea of interacting with a platform that increases unwanted and unexpected digital interactions and exposes us to the realities of struggle is not appealing. Yet, these failings of the platform reflect less on its ability to encourage political action than on neoliberalism's successful discouragement of possibility in politics. Political agency is not a burden. Rather, neoliberalism's dismantling of the mechanisms of change in government weighs us down too much to revel in action. In gaining back agency in the political process, the individual can find satisfaction in the progress of the community, and in the pursuit of their own desires for a less precarious, more pleasing life. By giving the polis the means by which to address their discontents within society by creating new communal bonds, the individual will be better able to articulate and satisfy their political desires.

It is perhaps for this reason that current iterations of digital democracy, where they have been implemented, have encouraged engagement from the fringes of technological society. In Taiwan, for example, the "e-petitions" platform was most effectively mobilized by "digital have-nots." (Lee 38) In such cases, citizens who are already shut out of the political process in the public sphere and who lack the tools and the time are the most likely to engage when given the space and opportunity to counteract neoliberalism's imposition of blandness in politics. Therefore,

while the digital democratic system does not incorporate the needs of everyone in the community, particularly the most precarious who do not have the ability to engage in the political process, the system gives those who do have access the ability to address the norms that lead to exclusion from politics, allowing for the eventual expansion of the polis with the advancement of the war of position, and increasing voter turnout.

In addition, computer networks and data cannot be perfectly secured. This system of radical digital democracy uses data to create new possibilities for coalition building in the E-Deliberation platform. In the absence of this data, the user would be confronted by a flood of information that is not necessarily relevant to the user's needs or desires. Yet, today, data is the means by which we are tracked, commercialized, consumerized, and regulated within society. Where this data expresses subjectivities, the inferences made from this data can be used to limit possibility for the individual and the community. Gaining a better understanding of the subject gives those in control of that data biopower, the power to regulate bodies by manipulating motivations and marking targets who represent a risk to the established hierarchy and system. By collecting a large database of the polis, those with access to that data (whether they be the government, foreign nations, or corporations) gain the means by which to intervene in revolutionary movements.

Yet, just as it is naïve to assume that digital democracy could create a secure database of citizens, it is impossible to conceive of our society without the high level of surveillance we have already accepted into our lives. We have become products within the data driven economy. Amazon's Alexa listens to you and suggests songs on Spotify. Google and Apple share COVID-19 patients' movements and contacts with the government. Wiretapping is just one of many practices that became widespread in America in the wake of 9/11. With each crisis comes another means of

biocontrol, datafication, and entrapment within capitalism. Yet, why is it that we do not have the power to assert our privacy, and why is our data kept private from individuals to the benefit of corporations? Perhaps it is time for the people to take control of their own data. The trick, then, is to create data that are more useful for *Us* than *Them*. Instead of gathering data that reflects how we fit into the boxes dictated by society, we must instead create data based on our rejections of those dictates, which do not so much express our positions as subjects as they represent our oppositions to categorization. By focusing on markers that lay outside of identity, we create data that asks questions rather than gives answers, allowing the individual to explore the ways data cannot understand our human experiences, destratifying identity, and allowing for intervention. Therefore, while digital democracy creates a useful database for itself, it doesn't converge around a product for data to sell.

This does not mean, however, that privacy is not important. Security should always be of utmost importance in the creation of such a large database. At the same time, a person's interactions with the digital political public sphere are not always meant to be private. Personal data, unlike aggregate data, should remain accessible only to the individual themselves, and users should be discouraged from sharing this data. Ideally, the system would keep all of this data private. Still, we must find a way to get out of the neoliberal predicament from precarious grounds. To sacrifice our data is the ultimate resignation, yet it is the resignation that allows the revolution to stay alive long enough to save us. In time we can build security where before we had none. Yet this is a bigger project to take place within digital democracy, against a nation already primed to surveil and sell.

# Conclusion

The proposal sought here operates as a blueprint for a digital democratic utopia, built not upon the perfection of the system of democracy, but on the continuous imperfection of the democracy in its attempts to satisfy the myriad of problems that can and will continue to arise to threaten the rights and will of diverse coalitions and to threaten the ability of the network to maintain itself against the invasive force of capital and hierarchical power. While in many ways the platform is not perfect, and in other ways the platform could benefit from technological progression, particularly in the area of privacy and anonymity, the system built here envisions the way a democracy today could incorporate the advantages of different technologies into an integrated platform based on the needs that arise out of Lacanian theory and affect theory.

Radical digital democracy also operates in a world where so many people are compromised prior to the application of structures that open the possibility for revolutionary change. Particularly as regards privacy, many of the most vulnerable in society depend on their ability to protect their identity when they wish to stay anonymous, both online and in the voting booth. Citizens today, however, already operate within a context of compromised privacy. In the private sector, public data is combined with user data from all connected devices, allowing companies to capitalize on the surveillance of trends. These companies can then use this data to further drive consumption and further influence individual behavior. While data and display can be used to influence future choices, many of these trends operate to conform individuals to operable classes, which can be used both to target groups and to micro-target. This data is important, particularly when it can be used for collective action and progress, such as with census data which is used to allocate funds and make federal decisions for the people. The goal here, then, is to use data not to influence, but to expose the ways that the categories we fit into influence us into coalitions and political actions

that oppress rather than liberate the self, with regards for the need to “fail forwards” as a whole. The failure, here, is to be revealed in, not glossed over. It is in the failure that we realize the incompatibilities between the plan and the goal, that cause the result to be unsatisfactory, partisan, and partial.

While this paper proposes an integrated platform as a model for a futuristic revolutionary politics, it can also be taken in parts for its critiques and proposals regarding specific platforms, social networks, and systems of democracy. Specifically, this paper calls into question systems of representation in the new digital public sphere, with an eye for the incompatibility of Lacanian and affect based politics, which arises from the tension between what Mari Ruti distinguishes as rupture and resignation. By paying attention to the tensions between rupture and resignation that prevent revolutionary change, we can begin to think about how to develop technology that opens up possibility in progressive politics by building on the failure to produce a universal communist vision.

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<sup>i</sup> “The digital party is the new organizational template seen across a number of new political formations that have been created in recent years, from the Pirate Parties that have emerged in many Northern European countries, to left-wing populist formations such as Podemos in Spain and France Insoumise in France, down to new campaign organizations such as Momentum, driving the surge in popularity of Corbyn’s Labour Party in the United Kingdom. Despite their manifest differences, these various formations display evident commonalities in the way in which they promise to deliver a new politics supported by digital technology; a kind of politics that – as featured by different elements of this opening scene – professes to be more democratic,

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more open to ordinary people, more immediate and direct, more authentic and transparent.”

(Gerbaudo 4)

<sup>ii</sup> Customer Care is a type of participation that involves “having a customer-oriented service e.g. introducing customer care policy, providing a complaints/comments scheme” (qtd. in Flew 66)

<sup>iii</sup> The term public sphere “is drawn from the work of the German scholar Jürgen Habermas, who argued that a crucial factor in the democratic revolutions of modern times has been the emergence of an independent realm, a public sphere, a commons, where citizens could meet to discuss and debate politics as equals free of government scrutiny or interference.” (Tufekci 4)

<sup>iv</sup> According to Freud super ego is characterized by the quantitatively and qualitatively excessive nature of its demands whatever we do it’s never enough. (762)

<sup>v</sup> According to Guattari, the “line of abolition” is the fascist drive to destruction which is ultimately a drive toward self-destruction.

<sup>vi</sup> Here, Hegel is referring to “Two individuals who have come into conflict but who manage to reconcile cut each person is a locus of authority... Without relationships and practices of the right kind communities in societies can only be held together by violence manipulation or deceit” (Farneth 5)

<sup>vii</sup> In his book *Twitter and Teargas*, Tufekci explains that “for social movements, an algorithm can be as strong tailwinds or a substantial obstacle.” Tufekci asks us to “consider how the black lives matter movement, now nationwide in the United States, encountered significant algorithmic resistance on Facebook in its initial phase.” (Tufekci 122)

<sup>viii</sup> The emphasis here, according to Margaret Urban Walker, is restorative justice, which attempts to repair relations between alienated subjects “through acknowledging the needs of victims and



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requiring the accountability of those responsible for harm through truth telling apology and restitution for compensation.” (qtd. in Farneth 129)

<sup>ix</sup> As Zeynep Tufekci observes in *Twitter and Tear Gas*'s analysis of the Arab Spring, “our capacity for empathy is not necessarily limited by physical proximity.” He observed that “the experience of trauma was later recognized as a distinct phenomenon occurring among reporters and NGO workers who collected or interacted with social media from violence plagued situations.” (Tufekci 58)

<sup>x</sup> Early identity based digital forums such as these fit into the greater spectrum of afronet boards such as Inglewood Rooftop, The Black Net, Nefertiti, and Online in da hood. McIlwain explains the community building aspects of digital participation, writing: “their names were SYSOP's way of saying this is a black neighborhood in this electronic village. Afronet was a gate, keeping the race trolls at bay. For others, it was a door inviting black people to become a part of a real community.” (McIlwain 140)

<sup>xi</sup> Tufekci emphasizes that “Only a segment of the population needs to be connected digitally to affect entire environment in Egypt in 2011 only 25% of the population of the country was online with a smaller portion of those on Facebook, but these people still manage to change the wholesale discussion including conversations among people who never been on the site... two key constituencies for social movements are also early adopters: activists and journalists. During my research I found that activists in many countries were among the first to take up this new tool to organize to publicize and in some places to circumvent censorship.” (Tufekci 18)

<sup>xii</sup> In short, radical democracy does not “entail a total rapture with pluralist democracy... a radicalization of the principles of freedom and equality which had already been developed by social democracy.” (Mouffe )

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<sup>xiii</sup> “The technical name for this boundary is a Pareto frontier or Pareto curve and it constitutes a set of reasonable choices for the tradeoff between accuracy and fairness... can be used to quantify the goods solutions to any optimization problem in which there are multiple competing criteria.” (Kearns 81)

<sup>xiv</sup> This is made possible by the overloading of meaning inherent in the assignment of a signifier to a signified, who cannot be fully represented or predicted solely based on the alignment of identity coalition, whose signifier is necessarily limited to the dictates of “naturalness” of identity in society, and will inevitably vary from the systems predicted actions.

<sup>xv</sup> According to Farneth, Hegel’s agent accountability refers to “where an agent or representative act on behalf of a person or group and therefore owes that person or group and account of his or her actions” (Farneth 119)

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