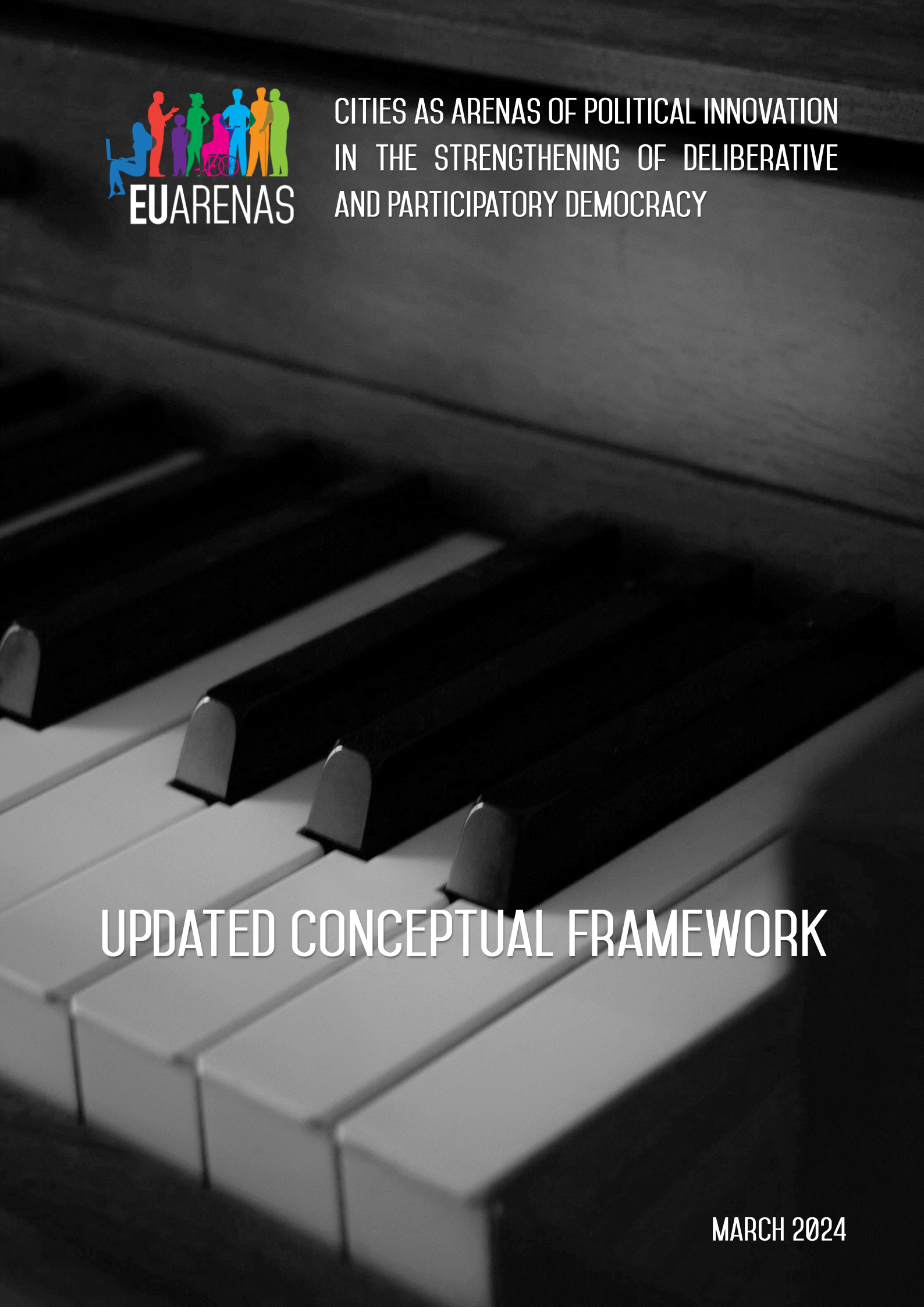

EUARENAS

CITIES AS ARENAS OF POLITICAL INNOVATION IN THE STRENGTHENING OF DELIBERATIVE AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

UPDATED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

MARCH 2024

EUARENAS investigates the ways in which social movements coupled with local government reform initiatives, manifesting themselves in local-level experiments, create momentum for political change that include more inclusive and participatory forms of governance.

For more information:

euarenas.eu

Grant Agreement	959420
Duration	January 2021 – October 2024 (46 months)
Coordinator	University of Eastern Finland
Contact	Professor James Scott (james.scott@uef.fi)

About the document:

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Publication date:	March 2024

EUARENAS has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement Nº 959420.

INTRODUCTION

This document marks the closure of an over 3-year long conceptual development and theoretical debates within the EUARENAS project. While we entered it with particular knowledge of theories and debates in the field, we quickly discovered that heated academic debates are usually narrow and limited to one field. The EUANREAS project, on the other hand, consists of a diverse consortium that not only comprises practitioners from civil society and local governments but also academicians with backgrounds in various fields: social geography, economics, politics, law, philosophy, psychology, cultural study – to name just a few. In the duration of the EUARENAS project, we realized that the relatively simple conceptual frameworks used for studying and designing participatory and deliberative processes in mainstream political science or public and legal philosophy are constantly being challenged by discoveries from across various social sciences and new interpretations provided by philosophy and the humanities.

Therefore, the character of this document is different from our first deliverable, D1.1 Conceptual Framework. Whereas in the first phase of the project, we were preparing the ground for common discussions and working on the projects' empirical and practical parts, here our task is to reflect on these results and the learnings of the process as a whole. Therefore, we depart from the previous, introductory form, and instead "update" the issues already signaled in the first deliverable, which were further deepened in the D1.2 State of Democracy Debate. Of course, we also recognize that not all important concepts have been properly acknowledged in the initial phase of the project, but came to be recurring themes that we recognize here. Such an issue is the role of the economy and the commons or the integration of findings from psychology and cognitive science to the inclusivity of participatory and deliberative processes. On the other hand, we have more specific interventions in particular concepts, such as populism that is conceptualized in urban settings, or propose new notions that are more precise in describing phenomena studied in the EUARENAS project – PR-ticipation and the piano of participation.

However, the main goal of this deliverable, and the Work Package 1 in general, is to critically rethink the underlying concepts of deliberative and participatory democracy. Thanks to the variety of results and approaches undertaken by the interdisciplinary or even intersectoral consortium, the potential for a critical inquiry is vast and multi-layered. As we recognize in our deepened study that so far the theory of participatory and deliberative democracy has been mostly normative and idealistic, we decided to problematize it against the empirical and practical findings. Therefore we treat mistakes or problems not necessarily as technical issues to be solved on a way to perfect democracy, but rather as indicators of the nature of the political and social reality of present-day Europe that need to be taken into account if we are to understand and design such practices in an effective way – even if more limited in scope and reach. Such vision is especially present in three essays: the opening one that rejects the binary between bottom-up and top-down understanding of governance and participation, and the two closing ones that further deepen this study first by challenging a similar binary of consensual and conflictual approaches to political ontology, and further by proposing a revised model for future studies. This approach allows us to unveil the hidden complexity behind the apparently "simple", or even "simplistic" conceptual framework that permeates the current scholarship and practical knowledge of deliberative and participatory innovations.

1. BEYOND THE BOTTOM-UP AND TOP-DOWN BINARY OF PARTICIPATION

Throughout the EUARENAS project we study how some European cities have become testing grounds for new ideas in urban governance and how those concepts are developed and implemented. They are intended to be a response to frequently mentioned, most difficult questions in discussions about the contemporary city – problems of housing, education, transportation, health services, pollution, tourism industry, gentrification, neighborhood conflicts, subordination of residents' needs to the interests of economically privileged elites, discrimination, segregation, crime. As we have been emphasizing from the very beginning, failure to deal with these problems at the scale of states, regions, and cities is related to the wider crisis of democracy, or even politics. New thinking about dealing with the major problems of today directs us towards what we call increasing citizens' political participation and deliberation.

The observations made as part of our project confirm what is emphasized in many scientific studies - such solutions can increase citizens' sense of responsibility for city management and encourage further involvement in solving specific problems. However, it is crucial to convince the authorities that citizens should co-decide on budget spending by identifying specific investment goals. And here we encounter one of the main problems, because when we compare the initial assumptions regarding the scope of the decision-making process, we quickly see how the impact of our project and the processes we studied has been limited by local authorities and the impossibility of implementing all the results, recommendations or demands cast by citizens and civil society organizations.

The reasons for limiting the dynamics of these processes depend on various factors. In many cases the initial idea of citizens' participation in shaping the city policies, urban plans, and budgets - the idea of which was to redefine the functioning of civic democracy - was increasingly ignored. At the highest level of generality, it can be said that there is a structural opposition and contradiction between gaining power in elections as part of representative democracy by political groups and giving decision-making to citizens or listening to the voice of activists and even experts. From the point of view of political philosophy, power is not acquired to be shared. Since Machiavelli, the classic definition explains, that politics is the pursuit and maintenance of supremacy (control, rule, authority). Even in countries considered exemplary democracies, where the competences of local governments are also increasing at the expense of the central government, and local authorities invite residents to co-decide about the city, members of political and interest groups will still not gain power to share it. That's why sometimes it is said that deliberation is giving citizens false responsibility and the illusion of decision-making; tools such as the participatory budget instead of building a community, stimulates competition and change citizens to rivals through participation can be just a slogan instrumentalized by the field of politics.

So are we dealing with utopias? As Henri Lefebvre wrote in *Right to the City*, utopia should be considered experimentally, its implications should be observed in the field. The discussion on who has the right to the city is, of course, not mentioned here by accident (see: Lefebvre, 1968; Harvey, 2008; Merrifield, 2014). The concept of the "right to the city" embodies the notion of just and sustainable urban development, underpinned by democratic governance, equality, and social justice principles. It constitutes a communal entitlement held by urban inhabitants, particularly those belonging to marginalized and disadvantaged groups, empowering them to validate actions and institutions in accordance with their cultural norms. This entitlement facilitates the complete realization of the right to autonomous decision-making and an adequate quality of life.

It is clear in that vision that citizens must have real decision-making power and a sense of responsibility. Grassroots efforts and spontaneously emerging coalitions aimed at solving specific problems turn out to be of great importance in this context. A grassroots movement denotes the mobilization of individuals within a specific community to assert political influence. Leveraging collective action at the local level, grassroots movements and organizations endeavor to effect change across local, regional, national, or international domains (Ekins, 1992). These movements operate on the foundational principle of self-organization, wherein diverse structures, such as communication platforms, are constructed, and various strategies are

deployed depending on the objectives. Decision-making within grassroots movements is characterized by a bottom-up approach, contrasting with the hierarchical nature of traditional power structures, lending it a more organic and spontaneous quality. It is very important to distinguish here grassroots democracy from participatory democracy, with the latter encompassing a broader governance framework often complemented by top-down initiatives such as consultations, citizens' assemblies, and participatory budgeting. Based on the experiences in WP3 and WP4 it can be assumed that grassroots democracy is considered as part of citizen democracy. In the context of what has been said above about power relations, it can also be considered that grassroots are sine qua none of democracy in which deliberation and participation are supposed to play an important role. This can be shown on the example of councils appointed by city mayors, of which we particularly studied the Wrocław Cultural Council, or Consulte set up in Reggio Emilia. One-off workshops in Gdańsk also resulted in the emergence of new citizen's organizations that became active in another areas of the district life. One public officer we interviewed who was engaged in the process even said that these new networks allow them to get firsthand knowledge about local issues and become responsive to citizens' demands.

Nevertheless, throughout this process, grassroots movements, watchdog organizations, and informal associations emerged, aiming to exert influence on governmental decisions by galvanizing the creative community. Indeed, a fundamental question emerges: can grassroots initiatives effectively unfold within the confines of participatory democracy without top-down intervention? Maybe participatory democracy inherently presuppose the necessity of citizen activation, albeit not necessarily in direct response to genuine community needs? The case of Wroclaw illustrates how authorities may utilize councils as a means to bolster their image (for more, see the chapter on PR-ticipation), ostensibly portraying openness to dialogue and a willingness to heed societal voices, but to some extent we deem these practices essential to any participation. Authorities demonstrate a reluctance to cede decision-making prerogatives, whether concerning matters such as staffing managerial positions, allocating financial resources, or initiating programmatic endeavors. But on the other hand, all processes that we have observed are still centered around the notion of governance. In the most successful cases observed in this project, civic participation was not only dispatching from grassroots towards a cooptation with local authorities, but very often local NGOs and activists engaged in organizing and facilitating such events. Our partners piloting the Vunki Mano Hackaton in Voru are themselves an independent (or quasi-independent) NGO, which has often been pointed out as their advantage over public officers, more dependent from the government.

The revolutionary potential inherent in overturning top-down policies via deliberative and participatory social innovations observed in this project is undeniably constrained. We may witness a cycle of progress and regression. There exists a possibility that citizens could become disheartened with participatory democracy, perceiving it merely as a tool welded by authorities where their input – decisions – holds marginal significance. They may question why their chosen initiatives have not been promptly implemented, attributing delays to bureaucratic inertia and the dominance of economic elites' interests.

At present, initiatives rooted in bottom-up management, adopted by numerous European cities, are still evolving in diverse manifestations, as evidenced by our EUARENAS project. However, it is imperative to not only highlight "good practices" and solutions worth imitating, but also look out for threats - and this is a guiding maxime for the conceptual development build on the project's findings. The stakes in the game today are no longer just another vision of the city with the issue of building connections, places and flows of ideas or creating spaces of communication and social inclusion that can blur the lines of exclusion and conflict. In many countries, participation, deliberation, and a sense of responsibility for the space immediately surrounding us remain the only hope for the future of democracy amidst the multitude of crises ahead.

Knowledge gained from WP 3 and WP 4, and lessons learned from the project, especially on specific practices that strengthen participatory and deliberative democracy in urban areas, hold significant potential to bridge the widening chasm between political decision-making processes and EU citizens. Indeed, solidarity finds fertile ground within the shared spaces of urban environments, where proximity facilitates

communal bonds among inhabitants - even if the notion of commons is recently under a lot of stress across cities in Europe (see chapter 4). It is within this context that we place trust in the potential of urban democracy to foster societal progress. But this cannot be done without the discussion on the right to the city and without rethinking the meaning and relation of bottom-up and top-down action, or even going beyond this binary distinction.

Initial attempts to distinguish between top-down and bottom-up practices stemming from the projects first conceptual framework (D1.1: 20) proved to be impossible in a cross-case analysis or when investigating the course of our pilots. Such a strict categorization only obscures the spectrum of "grey areas", where government officials might be more participatory than civic organizations, where activists are conflated with local politicians, experts, and facilitators who work with (or in between) all sides, or where grassroots and autonomous movements become engaged - but also rooted within - public governance efforts. This is a broad space for conflicts, exclusions, and covert hierarchies to hide, but also a space for opportunities to unravel, change to be initiated, and democracy to be performed.

It is with this challenge to the top-down and bottom-up binary categorization that we open these spaces for more concrete conceptual interventions in this deliverable, discussing threats and possibilities that the immensely comprehensive empirical and practical study of the EUARENAS project allowed for elucidating. Uncovering a variety of roles, functions, and inputs that every stakeholder can bring to a participatory process leads us to recognize vast, rarely conceptualized spaces that have already been evident, yet difficult to accurately name and understand.

2. PIANO OF PARTICIPATION – A HARMONIOUS FRAMEWORK FOR CONTEMPORARY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In the grand concert hall of democracy, the ebonies and ivories of participation are not merely black and white, but a spectrum inviting a symphony of voices, each note resonating with the timbre of civic engagement. The EUARENAS project proposes a novel conceptualization: the "Piano of participation", an orchestration that plays not just with the harmonics of traditional theory but with the dissonances of contemporary practice.

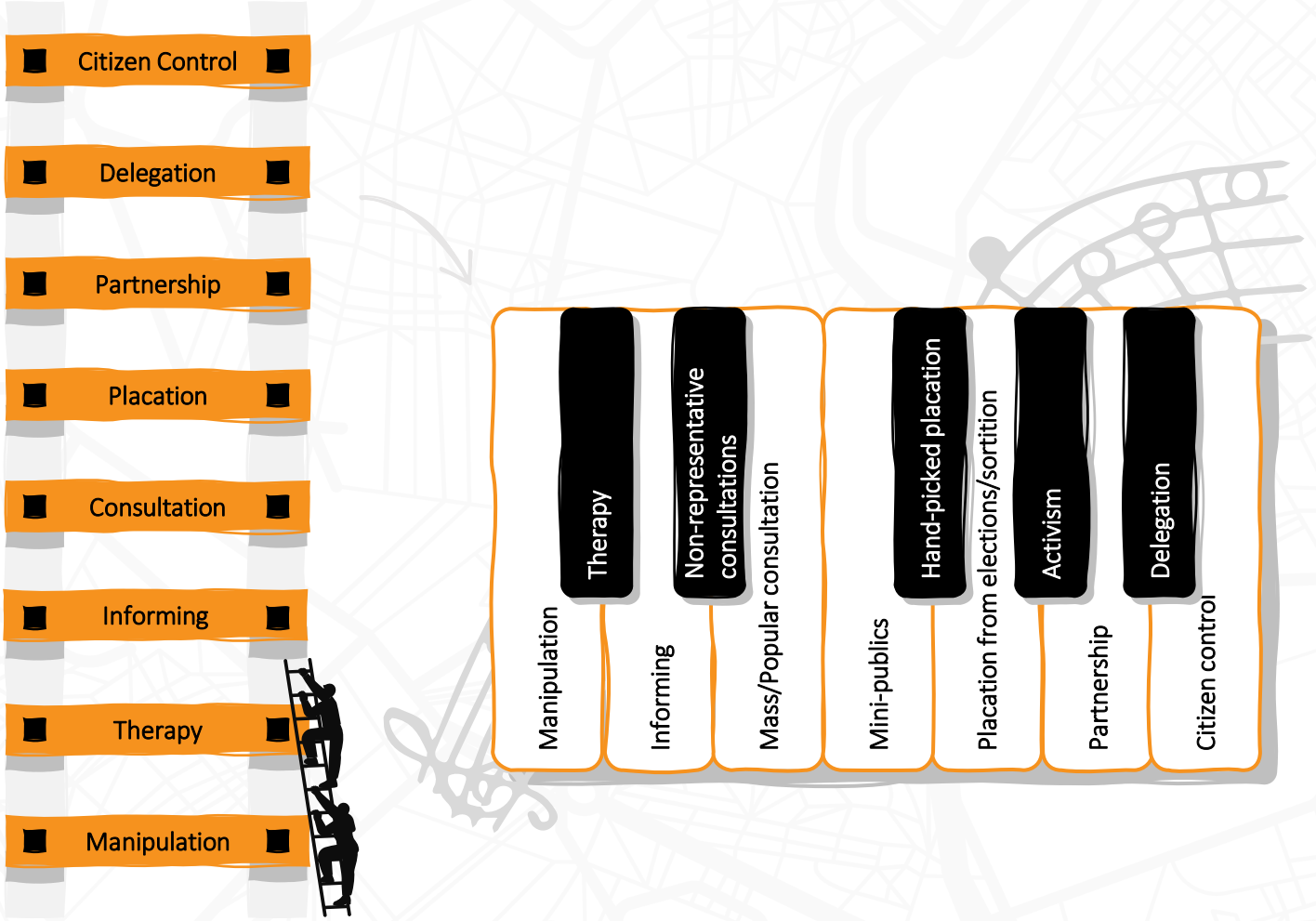
The Arnstein's Ladder of Participation has long been the score from which practitioners and theorists of civic engagement played. Yet, as the EUARENAS project unfolded, a critical eye cast upon this model revealed its anachronistic nature. Anchored in WP3 and WP4, Arnstein's paradigm faced scrutiny, not for its irrelevance, but for its inability to encapsulate the full spectrum of participatory democracy that resonates in the contemporary era. The criticism, as delineated in our previous deliverable (D1.2: 61-65) highlighted several lacunae. The ladder's rigidity fails to account for the vast possibilities of engagement that go beyond mere rungs. It overlooks the vivacious space for activism, be it structured or spontaneous, peaceful or rebellious. The ladder is too static to describe the intricate and often ambiguous dynamics that characterize participatory processes today. It falls short in recognizing the critical roles of public institutions beyond governance – those as cultural and educational entities, as well as the pivotal influence of private sector entities. The ascending hierarchy of the ladder inadvertently implies a superiority that neglects the cyclical and dynamic nature of participation, ignoring overarching frameworks such as corporatism or pluralism that inform these processes. Additionally, throughout the consortium's work, we have identified more issues – e.g. the "citizen control" is normatively heavy in a pluralistic and agonistic context, which we partially indicate in the first essay, as collaboration between different actors is needed. Moreover, it has also been pointed out during the pilots that it doesn't acknowledge whether a process is socially inclusive and diverse or not.

In search of an alternative, the EUARENAS project found serendipity in Wittgenstein's metaphor of "throwing away the ladder", transforming it instead into a horizontal layout akin to the keys of a piano. This 'Piano of Participation' is not an instrument for universal application; it is an ad hoc composition, stemming from a need to address the unique variances observed in the case studies of WP3 and the toolkits of WP4. Where we find it more useful than Arnstein's ladder of participation is that 1) we introduce more "steps" (or to be more precise: "keys" or "notes") into our imaginary of participation; but we also 2) imagine that playing a piano is more complex than climbing a ladder. Thus, we draw on elements of music theory to indicate the complexity of participation.

In this reimagined framework, consultations are not mere transactions but involve a range of possible tones, depending on the criteria for the selection of participants. We separate non-representative consultations (where only a handful of people appears), mass and open participation such as in participatory budgeting, and consultative mini-publics. Similarly, we differentiate placation between hand-picking by the authorities or organizers (as one half of Wrocław Cultural Council members) and the selection of participants via elections (as in Consulte or the other half of WCC) or sortition. We also introduce grassroots activism into this orchestral mix, recognizing these efforts as distinct notes that contribute to the richness of participatory practices. Each 'note' holds potential, demanding to be acknowledged and integrated into the larger composition of civic discourse.

The 'Piano of Participation' borrows from music theory where chords symbolize the simultaneous inclusion of citizens and authorities in various phases of participation. When describing a complex process we recognize that the citizen's engagement varies in its different elements and phases, and whereas in some areas they might be in control, the general frameworks are often controlled by the authorities. Melody, where notes follow one another, mirrors the singular narratives that arise in the participation process – here the Gdańsk process is a good example, where non-representative consultations were an 'Ouverture' for a mini-public-based participatory workshop, whose results are later implemented into the urban and

expert phases of preparing the district's Masterplan, whose final shape is decided upon by the City Council.



For a piece to resonate, it must be attuned to harmony and rhythm, requiring multiple players – the stakeholders – to perform in concert. They become metaphors for the synchronization of stakeholders around the common theme (see chapter 4 on the challenge of the commons), with citizens and institutions engaging in a collaborative composition. Repetitions reference the cycles and helixes of ongoing participation, while improvisation spaces allow for creativity and responsiveness to current civic realities. Yet, in this concert of participation, there is room for improvisation—the spontaneous creation that allows for organic responses to the ever-changing tempo of societal needs. However, this musical analogy carries with it a cautionary note. The application of this metaphor should not be overly rigid, akin to the mathematical precision of music theory. The civic arena is far more improvisational and varied than the twelve notes on a piano. The "Piano of participation" invites us to recognize the expanded octave of civic engagement, incorporating those pitches and tones previously unheard or unacknowledged in the formal scales of Arnstein's Ladder.

The EUARENAS project itself is an ode to the multifaceted nature of civic involvement, as we emphasize in this deliverable. It recognizes the grassroots activism, a potent "note" in the symphony of participation, emphasizing the bottom-up crescendos that challenge and enrich the existing composition of governance, but ultimately becomes its intrinsic part, sharing the top-down limitations inherent to politics. The interludes of consultation and placation – the "notes" that we study the most in the EUARENAS repertoire – further expand the canon, each bringing a unique rhythm to the collective melody of governance. Our venture into the realm of urban and rural melodies (chapter 4) has underscored the nuanced variations between the two. In the former, participatory budgeting and citizens' assemblies resonate with the complex harmonies of a jazzy metropolitan life. In the latter, rural hackathons reveal a simpler, yet profound, folk tune of community engagement. The "Piano of participation" thus becomes an instrument of exploration, a means to understand the diverse manifestations of democratic expression.

In urban populism (chapter 5), we encounter the dissonant chords of conservative and progressive sentiments, each vying for dominance in the civic symphony. Here, the “Piano of participation” must be played with caution, ensuring that no single note overpowers the rest and that the resulting music remains a true reflection of the community's collective will. PR-ticipation, with its various shades (chapter 6), presents an even more complex challenge. Political PR-ticipation risks muting genuine civic voices in favor of orchestrated performances that serve the interests of the powerful. Civic PR-ticipation may strike the cacophony of opposition without contributing to the melodic progression of solutions. Expert PR-ticipation, on the other hand, risks monopolizing the composition process, stifling the improvisational creativity that gives life to the civic concerto.

The “Piano of participation” invites a reframing of civic engagement, acknowledging the complexities and dissonances inherent in democratic practices. As we move forward, we must attune our ears to the subtleties of this instrument, embracing both the classical and the contemporary, to compose a masterpiece worthy of the democratic ideals we strive to uphold. In essence, the “Piano of participation” presents a symphony of civic engagement, more inclusive, dynamic, and reflective of the real-world complexities than any ladder could be. It represents a harmonious blend of the theoretical and the practical, an acknowledgment of the past and an adaptable tool for the future, echoing the diverse melodies that constitute the participatory democracy of today.

3. COGNITIVE CAPABILITIES AND THE INCLUSIVITY OF DELIBERATION

The conceptual debate on the limits of inclusivity of deliberative processes rests on the recognition of cultural, discursive, and structural discrimination based on class, gender, and race. Upon this debate it is recognized that certain elements of the design of deliberative and participatory spaces should be implemented in order to make these voices more heard and respected in the process of rational debate. We posit that these should be deepen in two ways:

First, the strive for inclusive deliberation should not be reached by making “the Others” as rational and capable as “normal” people (we describe the role of “otherness” in the last two essays of this deliverable). This solution lessens the negative impact of analytically understood rationality on the actual inclusion and diversity, but still keeps it hegemonizing and exclusive potential at the core of deliberation. Rather, the actual inclusion - as understood by subjects of the EUARENAS research activities - can be achieved in a move away from rationality, and towards maintaining respectful and equitable relations.

Second, we indicate the need to deepen the understanding of cognitive barriers that extend the aforementioned limitations of race, gender, and class, though they might be related. In particular, our focus lies on older or neurodivergent participants. While measures to make these process accessible to people with seeing, hearing or mobility disabilities are often recognised, the EUARENAS project recommends continuous extending such measures to other groups. From a conceptual perspective, we stress the need to focus on cognitive capacities and their limitations. If we design deliebration in a way that is suited for the most sharp, comprehensible, and educated minds, it will necessarily be exclusive to many participants, or even discourage people from participating.

One of the psychological problems in the deliberation process may be the cognitive inequality of its participants. The sources of this inequality can range from innate or externally induced deficits, through the level of education to age-related inequalities. In this text, we have addressed the latter problem, which poses a particular challenge for deliberation. It stems from the fact that Western societies are experiencing a rapidly aging population, so both the problems of people of this age and their participation in democracy are becoming crucial for its maintenance and development.

Psychological and sociological data on the elderly show that, first, they are capable of processing information as efficiently as people of younger ages, and second, that participation in social life is extremely important to their well-being. It is also clear that their experience can be of great importance to the proper and fruitful deliberation. Nevertheless, it seems that their participation requires certain conditions. Research shows that the rate of information processing may be somewhat lower, and there are difficulties in mobilizing memory resources, especially immediate memory.

Therefore, we have done qualitative and quantitative exploratory research on the problem of older people's participation in deliberation. During a focus group on the Wrocław Citizens' Assembly, a theme of concern for the elderly was raised. The interviewees described the difficulties faced by the elderly panelists. One of them expressed the following statement:

> *This process in itself is already designed to be very complicated, and I think that when you are an elderly person with some cognitive limitations already, it is really difficult to accept so at the level of all this meritory that was at the beginning, at the level of just getting used to this amount of data, and still to this procedure.*

The above statements may suggest that elderly individuals face numerous problems during deliberation events. In order to verify this hypothesis, during a pilot study conducted at a workshop in Gdansk, we investigated the relationship between the age of the respondents and their evaluation of deliberation. We asked participants to rate their impact on the discussion, the frequency of speeches, the merit of the discussion, being understood by other participants and an evaluation of the organization. We obtained information from 13 people between the ages of 37 and 72. The data did not suggest any relationships between the above questions and age. The sample size is limited, but the smallest p-value is 0.494,

suggesting that there is no relationship between age and performance in deliberation. In addition to the small sample size, a limitation of this study is that it is based on participant self-reporting rather than objective indicators of deliberation quality.

	correlation with age (Pearson's r)	p-value
frequency of speeches	0.169	0.581
impact on the discussion	-0.046	0.882
being understood by other participants	-0.077	0.803
merit of the discussion	0.208	0.494
evaluation of the organization	0.139	0.650

Moreover, the interviews collected in Reggio Emilia suggested the existence of an opposite relationship to the one described in Wroclaw. The elderly there found it easier to speak up, and younger participants were identified as the group with difficulties in active participation. The difference with Reggio Emilia can be attributed to the different meanings ascribed to old age by the public in Poland and Italy. As is well known, such attributions significantly affect the attitudes of the people involved. It can be assumed that the participants in the deliberations in Regio Emillia felt more empowered to speak up and were not bothered by the stereotypes associated with old age that prevail in Poland. This result suggests that recommendations should be tailored to the social and cultural conditions of individual countries and perhaps even local communities.

We wondered what could be the reason for the difference between Wrocław and the other cities, and whether, based on this, we can try to identify factors that facilitate the participation of older people in deliberation. The main difference between the assembly in Wroclaw and the Gdańsk workshop seems to be their lengths. The Wrocław Citizens' Assembly lasted all day, while the workshop meeting in Gdansk was only three hours long. We reviewed the literature to see if long durations can impair the functioning of the elderly. We also looked for other mechanisms that might make deliberation more difficult for senior citizens.

The elderly may experience cognitive decline, which can affect memory, attention, and decision-making abilities (Jessen et al., 2020). They may struggle to keep up with the pace of discussions or to process complex information, making it difficult for them to fully engage in the deliberative process. They may also need more frequent breaks during deliberation due to issues with concentration (Rodrigues, Panderaida 2015). Fatigue and difficulties with sustaining attention are common issues in older age, which can impact their ability to follow longer discussions and stay focused on a topic for an extended period of time.

Another psychological factor that can influence the involvement of senior citizens is social isolation. As people age, they may become more socially isolated (Chen, Schulz 2016) due to factors such as retirement, mobility limitations, or the loss of friends and family members. A state of social isolation can make it difficult for elders to participate with others in the deliberation process for two reasons. Those living in isolation are unlikely to participate in local political events, and if they do, they may perform worse due to lower social skills.

Elderly individuals may be subject to age-related stereotyping (Dionigi, 2015) or biases from others, which can result in a sense of marginalization or exclusion. This can be particularly challenging in a deliberative process, where each voice is intended to be recognized and esteemed on equal footing. Elderly individuals may perceive that their contributions are not being taken seriously or that they are being treated unfairly based on their age.

We would like to emphasize that the themes raised here are hypotheses based on a review of the literature. The empirical data we obtained do not provide a clear answer to the question of how elders function in deliberation. Similar attempts were made to assess the inclusivity of participatory processes to

neurodivergent people, who can foster the analytical process of understanding of the debated issue (Rozenkrantz et al. 2021, Brosnan et al. 2022) but also be distractive or unattentive if the conditions of the space are not right. In this case, inclusive approach is not only about the ethical commitment to inclusivity (Tabor, 2020) can drastically improve the quality of deliberation and the outcome itself, but requires a special attention and preparation already in the planning phase.

Despite these challenges, there are some strategies that can be employed to help ensure that elderly or neurodivergent individuals can fully participate in deliberative processes. But the benefits of recognizing such special needs and cognitive limitations of people are not restricted to the groups that we have mentioned, but can positively impact all participants as well. Some of the strategies can include:

- Choosing a venue that is accessible for older adults, including wheelchair accessibility, ample seating, and accommodations for hearing and visual impairments
- Ensuring that the panel is held at a time and localization that is convenient for older adults, taking into consideration factors such as mobility limitations and transportation options
- Providing accommodations such as several-minute breaks every hour, accessible restroom facilities, and water or snacks to help ensure that older adults can comfortably participate in the deliberation process
- Considering incorporating technology or other assistive devices to help older adults participate more fully in the discussion, such as closed-captioning, translation services, or larger print materials
- Being aware of the potential challenges that older adults may face in the deliberation process, such as difficulties with concentration or sensory sensitivities, and take steps to address these challenges as they arise
- Analyzing the image of old age in different societies to select appropriate ways and means to facilitate the participation of this group of deliberative people.
- Bringing this problem to the attention of the deliberation leaders (facilitators) so that they can respond flexibly to existing situations of impediment.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND THE STATUS OF THE COMMONS IN VARIOUS URBAN (AND RURAL) SETTINGS

Participatory processes that we encountered in the EUARENAS project are differentiated by their goals, scope, and employed methods, although they all encounter some level of difficulty in orientating participants towards mutually cooperative attitudes that go beyond negotiations of different personal interests. To surpass such individualistic thinking and start considering common, public good, participation and deliberation necessitate an understanding of cities as commons (Foster, Iaione 2016), which have been undermined by the neoliberal ideological shift since the late 1970s, promoting individualism and market orientation at the expense of collective resources, collective action, and cooperation. Consequently, the commoning-oriented approach to urban governance, criticized as inefficient or a conduit for corruption, has faced neglect, impacting cooperative capabilities across various regions, albeit with varying degrees of intensity. What becomes evident from the analysis conducted in the EUARENAS project, this contemporary "tragedy of the city as a commons" (Kornberger, Borch 2015; Wang, Chen, 2021; Knibbe, Horstman, 2022) has certain universal traces across the UE. Still, vast differences occur in particular local contexts, thus providing various conditions for successful deliberation. A better understanding of these nuances is essential in understanding the opportunities and limits to participation in various urban and rural contexts across Europe.

The neoliberal shift in the late 20th century has led to a diminished emphasis on commons, often criticized as wasteful or corrupt, impacting the capacity for collective action, as well as creating overall conditions where various stakeholders and interest groups preferred non-participatory approaches to policy-making, such as lobbying. The alienation of the private sector that resulted from unprecedented globalization observed in recent decades makes it especially difficult to involve this stakeholder group in the participatory procedure. While we see a rising interest in participation coming from small and medium local businesses, more vested in the communities and understanding the mutual interdependence, large transnational corporations that often benefit from the exploitation of urban commons intentionally opt-out from participation, anticipating that its result might have a negative short-term impact on their economic interests. Thus, they employ different tactics (such as lobbying on different government levels) to counter the potential influence of policies aiming at securing or restoring urban commons, often championed in participatory processes.

The spatial differentiation of the EUARENAS consortium resulted in the possibility of comparing regional effects of neoliberal domination, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), where the post-colonial influence of Western ideas has been profound in the post-systemic transformation. This influences both the dominant modes of political rivalry on the party level and the attitudes of social stakeholders, such as NGOs and citizens (Grabkowska 2022). This is perhaps the most evident when comparing two Citizens' Assemblies studied as cases in WP3. The case from Copenhagen, Denmark, seems to be mirroring the co-governance model, where the political decision is delegated to the citizens, with the entire city council - both the ruling coalition and the opposition - agreeing to accept the citizens' verdict. Such unanimity was not achieved in Wrocław, Poland, where the CA has been seen by various stakeholders and the majority of participants as the mayor's "gambit" to back down from his previous electoral promises.

Further disparities were observed in the capacities of citizens and local authorities to engage in co-governance and co-ownership in community life, as evidenced in the project pilots. It contrasts the experiences of places like Reggio Emilia, with its thriving social centers rooted in a long communist/socialist tradition, against (paradoxically) post-socialist cities like Gdańsk, where lower levels of trust and readiness for participatory efforts have been noted, especially during the second iteration of the pilot. These differences in the "culture of participation" level in public offices and civil society have been indicated as one of the key factors influencing how successful and advanced can participation be, both when it comes to the quality of the results and their further implementation. While those two cities both have a long-standing tradition of public participation, connected to a communist stronghold in Italy and an

anti-communist cradle of Solidarity in Poland, in Gdańsk it has not been cultivated as a social practice throughout the decades after transformation. Only recently the cities as commons approach has been championed by certain urban movements (Grabkowska, 2022).

Additionally, although it was not the original research objective of the EUARENAS project, our study provided a unique opportunity to compare both urban and rural settings to foster a deliberative approach that transcends personal interests. The comparison between Gdańsk and Voru - both in CEE countries - emphasizes the potential for rural areas, exemplified by the Vunki Mano Hackathon, to exhibit a propensity towards a deliberative approach that prioritizes communal over individual interests, attributed to the inherent 'bonding' potential in less urbanized environments. One of the essential definitions of the city proposed by Zygmunt Bauman is that it is a “space where strangers stay and move in close proximity to each other” (2003: 106). Rural areas that are less populated offer their inhabitants more familiarity with each other and more identification with the area in which they live. While smaller municipalities tend to have fewer resources to implement advanced, expensive and organizationally demanding innovations such as the Citizen’s Assemblies, they may very well develop smaller tools (such as the Hackathon) that can be very effective and yield a high impact on local communities and their influence on local policies.

However, the urban-rural divide can also generate conflicts. This has become evident in the second pilot in Gdańsk, in which the territorial diversity of the Olszynka and Orunia districts enacted a class disparity as an unintentional vector of power. Farmers and low-income working-class citizens who were given the opportunity to share a deliberative space with urban middle classes not only faced difficulties in delivering public speeches but also were not ready to agree that the participatory event was just one part of a larger policy-making process. Instead, they expressed the sense of being deceived and the feeling that their demands were not explicitly implemented, taking on a populist stance, as described in chapter 5. This has been mirrored by pity or contempt from some officials or even fellow participants who criticized such attitude as “entitled”.

In essence, the EUARENAS project provides a nuanced examination of the intricate dynamics between neoliberal ideology, public participation, the concept of commons, and the varying capacities for cooperative governance across different contexts. While participatory and especially deliberative theories have typically been built around the concept of the common and public (common) good, the need to stress that urban commons, or even “cities as commons” have to be central to this process is relatively novel in this study. The EUARENAS project further underscores the need for an inclusive and informed participatory approach that acknowledges the diverse challenges and potentials within urban and rural settings, as well as the critical role of local communities and authorities in fostering deliberation and co-governance.

Participatory processes and the commons are intricately linked in an ever-evolving feedback loop, indicating that a realistic and detailed assessment of the state of the “commons” in the local society is a key step in the preparatory phase of any participatory and deliberative event. This can help to predict a potential level of engagement of citizens, local stakeholders, and politicians, alongside their attitudes towards each other and the readiness to overcome individual perspectives. More advanced participatory methods that require high levels of trust and mutual respect might be rejected by all stakeholders in certain municipalities, as a result of being detrimental to the evolution of the understanding of “city as commons”. On the other hand, well-selected and adjusted tools implemented and developed over extended periods are essential to long-term process of shifting general civic attitudes from neoliberal individualism to a more apprehensive orientation towards the common good.

5. URBAN POPULISM

While the original approach of the EUARENAS project was to understand how participatory and deliberative democracy can be used to counter populism or incorporate it as a democratic component of modern societies (see: RT 1.2 and RT 1.3, D1.1: 33-35, D1.2: 25-30), throughout the lifespan of the project we have encountered forms of populism that are specific to the city as a unit of analysis, and as such differ from national or transnational populisms described elsewhere in the literature. Thus, we focus our attention on this phenomena to describe this urban type of populism and its particular forms, and based on that we envision certain possible challenges and opportunities for urban participatory and deliberative politics.

To tackle this task, we follow up on the ideational definition of populism that combines an anti-elitist attitude with the deep dissensus of hegemonic norms and policies, organized around common struggles. This means that they combine the dissatisfaction of current policies and a more general negative attitude towards the political system and elites. Moreover, we see populism as strategically interested in making or expanding coalitions oriented negatively (anti-systemic), rather than willing to compromise on their visions or enter into co-creative public exercises with those actors (politicians, officers, "other" activists) that they deem illegitimate. While this first characteristics - dissatisfaction with policies and norms of political systems - opens the opportunity to participate in and initiate social innovations aiming at re-democratization of the existing institutions, the second component - negative organization - predicts the domination of non-deliberative attitudes, posing potential challenges to urban democracy.

In the urban setting, we recognize two distinct forms of populism, which are a particular reflection of a broader right-left populist division. However, since there are nuanced differences, we will refer to them in this chapter as conservative and progressive populisms.

The conservative populism focuses on protecting the individual freedoms that are being curtailed as a result of urban policies. They especially focus on the freedom of movement with personal vehicles, criticizing any pro-health, pro-climate, and anti-congestion policies that reduce the number of car lines to prioritize public commuting or restrict the entry of older cars into the city centers. They understand that these policies - as with any difficult public choice - might be controversial, but are not interested in debating these issues. As expressed by one of the participants in the second pilot in Gdańsk: *vox populi vox dei* - participants, especially those from the rural part of the debating district, were disappointed and even enraged when they learned that they needed to enter negotiations or their propositions can be limited e.g. by ecological standards or general urban plans.

Conservative populists' vision of participation is via popular referenda, believing that their "common sense" propositions should prevail when no in-depth public discussion occurs. Therefore, they see it as a 'democratic' way to stop progressive urban developments and act against the elites and authorities. The difficulty to invite them to deliberative bodies has been expressed throughout the project, e.g. in Wrocław's Citizens' Assembly none of the non-progressive NGOs contacted by the organizers responded to their invitation. In a follow up to this CA - which has not been directly studied in the project, but is known to us via the cooperation with the EUARENAS Community of Practice - which was a relatively smaller event modeled after a Citizens' Jury, conservative activists not only engaged in an attempt to dominate the deliberation inside the room (e.g. by presenting false narratives and fake arguments, inviting biased experts etc.), but they also organized large demonstrations in front of the event's venue, claiming that it is illegitimate and thus putting pressure on organizers and other participants. In the interviews conducted in Budapest, city officials also said that participatory fora they offered in Józsefváros lacked constructive criticism, but became a platform for expressing grievances: *People always seem to be critical with the local government because they are quick to point out if they think something is wrong, but rarely acknowledge is something is good or going the right was.*

Finally, what we found interesting from these studied cases, the policies they oppose are often associated with the EU - or at least they are presented as such by various right-wing populist parties and nationalist movements. In their discourses they are also against European climate initiatives and policies, and they

were particularly mobilized by the Fit for 55 program, which they view as “forcing people to eat bugs and give away private property”. Therefore, on the national level, these populists might also prompt initiatives that propagate “exits” from the EU for the sake of “self-determination” in urban policies, aligning them with right-wing nationalists parties or movements.

On the other hand, many progressive, middle-class urban movements can also be understood as populist under our definition. They position themselves against the local elites demanding a radical acceleration in infrastructural investments in public communication and social services, as well as a turn towards more participatory politics. They view rational public deliberation as a ubiquitous mechanism to finally implement their ideas, which should come as no surprise given that most urban movements today are formed by educated middle-class citizens who are skilled in such modes of speech. In some cases - e.g. in both Wrocław case studies - we have also seen them being actively engaged in a struggle against (moderately progressive) local authorities, not interested in compromising or listening to their arguments, but rather taking a very suspicious stand from the beginning and organizing the whole debate so its outcomes expressed the radical opposition to what they assumed was a political goal of the city president.

Contrary to the conservative urban populists, the EU standards and policies are often invoked as a rationale for their propositions. This would not align this type of populist with some European left-wing populists who oppose the EU for championing neoliberalism and global capitalism, being committed to its deep and radical reforming - or leaving, if this proves impossible. This difference can first and foremost be explained by the class position of this progressive urban populism, composed mostly of middle-class professionals, who otherwise would not be likely to support state-level populist parties or movements, yet are more radically opposed to their particular, local elites. These values - norms of rationality - are typically aligned with Habermasian discourse ethics, as they represent a very similar, middle-class understanding of the public sphere. Therefore, they are being more “naturally” accepted as legitimate voices in deliberation, as they use similar and accepted codes of mainstream science, as well as rhetorical skills to formulate arguments.

Altogether, the urban types of populism we observed in the project were invigorating toward participatory politics, but not necessarily added to their deliberative potentiality. They seem to combine a cynical view of politics with an idealistic approach, which means that they see politicians as toxic and therefore any cooperation as corrupt, while their own views and goals they see as ultimate or universal, thus not subject to disagreement, negotiation, or compromise. Thus, this lack of a pragmatic approach and willingness to debate might be the biggest challenge to organizers, facilitators, and other participants in participatory and especially deliberative processes.

Interestingly while these two populisms radically differ in their political views and imaginaries - vision of the city, understanding of the commons, concern with climate change and migration, attitude towards EU - they rarely engage in a direct confrontation but rather project the policies and values of each other to local authorities: for conservative populists, the authorities are extremely pro-European and leftist, while urban movements see the same authorities as conservative and regressive. They tend to treat the authorities as a single entity with unified interests and strategies, thus being blind to nuances that we detect as key factors for successful deliberation. A key example of this attitude can be illustrated by a common situation in which officers responsible for participatory processes are at the same frustrated by the unwillingness of the rest of the office or key local politicians to consider participatory outputs as relevant, and at the same time attacked by certain activists for not listening to the voice of the people.

The integration of both conservative and progressive populists into deliberative, co-creative processes is therefore challenging, especially if they enter them with malevolent intentions to take over the debate or turn it into an ineffective quarrel between two rivaling positions fighting over the core values and assumptions about social and political norms and values. However, their exclusion would mean the loss of important resources that are important for the quality of the results and their democratic dimension. Progressive populist movements are often unwilling to compromise on their visions of the city because it is already well-researched, data-driven, comprehensive, and worked out in lengthy, yet narrow (expert)

deliberations. On the other hand, conservative populists do voice important practical concerns that are important, if not vital, for many people outside of the middle-class bubble, so often dominating the discourses in and about urban policies. As some cases we examined show - e.g. CA in Wrocław or Deal in Wigan - *it could be a small number of voices being heard consistently* that prevail in the recommendations or actually implemented policies. This raises questions about the actual inclusivity or diversity of these participatory practices.

This aesthetical distinction between preferred modes of participation also discloses an interesting insight into the differences between different ethics of participation. Aggregative one, preferred by reactive populists fond of referenda and unwilling to compromise their interests and values in a debate focused on commons and the common good, champions methods such as protests, referendum, and a simplified, plebiscitary version of participatory budgeting that became widely implemented across Europe. Popular vote relies more on a simplified message that is often attractive to a broader audience, and the abuse of misleading information or fabricated facts is more difficult to counter than in a properly designed deliberative setting. On the other hand, the consensual ethics of participation - epitomized by deliberative practices, but also present in advocacy or solidarity organizations based on volunteering, and even organizing protests and public performances - is employing a different tactic. It is relying on rationality and a certain set of debating competencies (eloquence, erudition, experience) more typical for middle-class urbanists, who has been identified in key debates of the 90s as those who can abuse rational consensus to protect their visions of commons and the hegemonic norms that protect them (see: D1.2: 43-47). As one of the city activists described, *When we first heard about citizen's assemblies, we thought that we finally found a way to force local authorities to implement our policies*. But because they are more akin to hegemonic values that also create deliberation, these progressive populists' arguments - even if they are unwilling to compromise or listen to other rationales - are more likely to be accepted as justified in a deliberative setting.

When facing urban populists like the above, the role of regulators, moderators, and facilitators becomes further charged on ethical grounds. When designing the composition of the group (e.g. by defining filtering factors for transition or deciding on parameters of demographic/discursive diversity) or rules of discussion, and later allowing or stopping certain voices that act on the verge of breaking these rules. These can include common things such as interrupting others, but also tactics more typical for urban populism: supporting arguments with false information, or taking too long to talk (on or off-topic) effectively "filibustering" the debate and coming to an agreement. In order to facilitate the discussion toward a valuable and useable output within the limited time and scope planned for a specific event, a long process of finding a compromise is required. This can be easily delayed by hard-liner populists not interested in the rational debate, or even more - not sharing grounds for a rational debate due to the substantial difference in facts, values, and symbolic representations of the World they use in their argumentations.

The question of whether deliberative processes can provide an answer to the challenge of urban populism remains open. While it certainly can provide conditions for a change in cynical/idealist attitudes and initiate meaningful debate between populists (and other stakeholders and participants), the exact means to do this are yet to be studied. We predict that in some cases this will not be possible, as a populist stance is - for some - the defining motif legitimizing their activism (see the next chapter on civic PR-ticipation). In other cases, however, the role of moderation and the design that allows for an effective channeling of dissatisfaction to make space for a meaningful dialogue, but also to allow for a plurality of different rationalities to be treated as equal, seems crucial. The stakeholders we've interviewed, observed and learn from in the EUARENAS project are well aware of this problem and both practical and moral dilemmas they have to solve. But there is no "one-fit-all" solution to these issues. However, the differentiation between reactive and progressive urban populisms might help understand the particular practices needed for this task.

6. PR-TICIPATION

Since the launch of the EUARENAS project, one of our primary concerns in Work Package 1 has been whether sufficient conceptual and theoretical attention has been devoted to the power relations occurring within and around various participatory and deliberative events. In our examination of these concepts and their representation in the literature, we discovered that this aspect is significantly undertheorized. Further exploration of this gap through workshops with the consortium revealed that it is also uncommon for practitioners and researchers to consider such dimensions of power, although, when their attention was drawn to it, they had much to contribute on the subject. In the process of a more general reconceptualizing of the theory of participatory and, especially, deliberative spaces with a more nuanced understanding of power (which follows in chapters 7 and 8), we identified a recurring phenomenon across various groups we observed and studied. This led us to coin a specific term to describe it: PR-ticipation.

By PR-ticipation, we simply mean the use of participatory practices with the intention of building or maintaining one's desired political image without being interested in the actual debate and the citizens' input in yielding policy results. To some extent it is already described by the famous Arnstein's ladder and Missen's 'nightmare of participation' that we discuss in earlier deliverables (Arnstein, 1969; Missen, 2011; D1.2: 61-65, 76-77), or more recently by a juxtaposition of the terms co-production and faux-production (Grundy et al., 2022). These authors refer to 'tokenizm' as a way to indicate situations in which participation is organized by authorities, but has little influence on the actual politics. In fact, when discussing this concept within the consortium, its Community of Practice, and during presentations at conferences or panel discussions, we observed that it is indeed intuitively associated with the actions of politicians and public officials. Indeed, this is where examples of PR-ticipation are most commonly found (in various forms). In this paper we not only differentiate between different 'shades' of such understood PR-ticipation but we also recognize that the behavior of other actors could be described by this notion. Therefore, we deepen the conceptual understanding of possible 'tokenization' or 'fauxing' participation by differentiating two additional forms of PR-ticipation: civic and expert.

For **political PR-ticipation** we find it useful to distinguish between two modes: the 'white' PR-ticipation is launched by the willingness of local authorities to look more democratic, whether it is by 'listening to the people' or 'giving them what they want', but also when e.g. seeking legitimation to implement their unpopular policies. In these cases, they might either organize participatory events, but simply not include these results they dislike and never explain their decision, or even go as far as to try to manipulate the outcomes by how they frame the question, design the formula, or by experts they invite.

Of course, in a democratic society, every participatory event will have some PR background. Subjected to regular elections, authorities should rightly want their activities and engagement with local communities throughout their incumbency to be communicated and promoted, even if the process is not fully successful, as is often the case with experimental social innovations. For example, the case of Participatory Budgeting in Gdańsk or the Wigan Deal we examined in WP3 has been indicated to have very little impact on the city compared to how much it has been used to promote the participatory attitude of the authorities. One-sided communication that often did not invite much debate was noted by the citizens we have interviewed in these cases. Nevertheless, in our policy recommendations, we also stress the need to rely on broad marketing and PR techniques to build momentum around the participatory event to ensure its diversity (during the recrutation phase) and a long-term impact (after the event) (D7.4).

These elements indicate that such tactics are widespread, therefore coining a new and usable concept calls for more precision, even if it might never be possible to objectively distinguish a 'purely' PR-ticipatory event, unless politicians and organizers publicly admit so. So to call it a **'white' PR-ticipation** we require for the process results to be neglected and its conveying used by politicians primarily to boost their public image or use it for the sake of their own policy goals. The best example here is the CA in Wrocław which has been called by one of the activists we interviewed *a way out for the Mayor to back out from his democratic promises and use it against urban movements*. The example of the latter tactic stems from our

Gdańsk pilot, where one of the urbanists engaged in the process of preparing the Masterplan for particular districts called the involvement of participation *an important tool to finally force the city officials to implement our policy ideas*. Similar concerns has been voiced by one of the interviewees on Wigan Deal: For me, *the Deal was never really about democracy, it was about behaviour change, it was about austerity, and it was about cuts. And it wasn't citizen-led, it was selling a story about what an institution has achieved*. It is also related to another potential problem that arises from the study of the Helsinki case that takes participation very broadly is that the city administration might, in some cases, have a relatively narrow view of participation as something they develop to improve the quantifiable 'stats of customer/resident satisfaction'.

A much more malevolent and far more detrimental to the functioning of society, on the other hand, is a '**black PR-ticipation**', which we define as actions that utilize participatory and especially highly engaging deliberative practices to silence social opposition. A clear example of this is the Wrocław Culture Council, comprising of oppositional activists elected in a popular vote and city representative selected by the office, often to discuss decisions that have already been made. In that case, unproductive arguments and the rejection of all recommendations lead to the exhaustion and activist burnout of the civic opposition in the field of Wrocław's culture. It weakens and silences the loud criticism of the actions of city authorities, which poses a potential problem for the image of a politician who describes himself as a proponent of participation in the "city of dialogue." At the same time, it creates the illusion of including this opposition in co-deciding about urban culture, thereby allowing the part of the electorate less familiar with the details of city politics (ultimately, the majority of voters) to believe that his actions are inherently democratic or even oriented towards participatory sharing of power. A similar effect can be discussed in the context of "silencing" climate movements, which initially pushed for the organization of a panel through the organization of loud performative actions in public space, but as a result of a very negative evaluation of the CA, became somewhat discouraged from promoting such forms of engagement.

Until now we have focused on exploiting the existing concepts against the projects' evidence to propose two, more nuanced ways of understanding tokenism, the nightmare of participation, or faux-participation under the umbrella of 'political PR-ticipation'. But throughout the involvement in the project we also encountered somewhat similar tactics or attitudes from other stakeholders or key actors of the process, which allows us to switch to an explanatory mode and seek 'PR-ticipation' on previously uncharted territory.

First, we focus on citizens and NGOs, which might also be interested in participatory events or processes not for sake of the common good, but rather for their very own 'political or policy' goals, sometimes unrelated to the subject of process itself. Thus, **civic PR-ticipation** refers to a phenomenon where certain NGOs, social movements, and leaders engage in participatory practices not with the aim of fostering genuine dialogue, cooperation, or co-creation, but rather as a platform to consistently oppose politicians and public officers. This form of participation is marked by a conflictual or populist stance (see the essay on urban populisms), which some organizations harness as a strategic resource. Rather than seeking constructive solutions or engaging in policy-making processes, these groups prioritize the maintenance of a confrontational posture, using it as a means to galvanize support and enhance their visibility in the public sphere. The engagement is thus less about substantive contribution to policy and more about positioning themselves as defenders of specific interests or ideologies against established authorities, often capitalizing on public sentiment to boost their organizational profile and influence.

A particular form of such engagement might appear in participatory budgeting, at least when it is stripped of deliberative components and turns into a plebiscite. In Gdańsk and Helsinki, where PB was studied, it occurs that certain effective organizations heavily rely on this tool to serve their interest and monopolize the process. Also, some citizens just prefer to participate in the process only to express their position, interest, or general disappointment with local politics, without being really interested in the concrete results of the process or co-creating a solution with participants that do not share their views. While such an attitude still counts as participation, it is questionable whether it fits the minimum requirement of a

deliberative space, such as the readiness to change one's mind.

An interesting place of intersection of all three abovementioned types of PR-ticipation has been mentioned in the case of some Polish district councils, a widespread self-governance body that is regulated by the law and intends to be the most participatory element of the system, where activists and local leaders can consult urban policies in their districts. While they were not a direct subject of our case study or pilots, we have encountered their representatives both in Gdańsk and Wrocław, as well as through our Community of Practice. Among many examples we have encountered some that have been disregarded by city authorities or even antagonized by them, but also some that became platforms for certain citizens and organizations to harness political anger while at the same time refraining from meaningful actions.

Attention must also be drawn to the fact that deliberative methodologies are increasingly being commodified by experts who offer their consultancy to a wide array of partners, ranging from government bodies to grassroots movements. This also extends to researchers who study deliberation and evaluate existing practices. What we have encountered is that these actors sometimes lack a critical stance towards their object of study or design, instead promoting their proprietary methods or focusing their analysis on positive, breakthrough and hopeful findings that are more likely to be scholarly published or recognized - and provide more funding. Hence, we propose the label '**expert PR-ticipation**' to denote such a phenomenon, which might be also understood as a part of what is called 'policy enterpreneurship' , in which the participatory process just becomes means to individual ends - however inclusive, innovative, sustainable or equitable we see them. These specialists actively promote deliberative approaches in the public discourse, contribute to the execution of community initiatives, and disseminate their work through widely accessible publications. Such promotion, while effective in spreading the word about deliberative tools, risks inflating expectations beyond the practical capabilities of these practices, potentially leading to greater disenchantment.

Again, an example of such attitude has been noted in the analysis of the Wrocław CA: *At the outset, it seemed to everyone that the panel was the fastest route for residents to take power into their own hands—a portrayal also echoed by [the consultant for the first CA]*. The influence of the consultant on the process itself was also a point of discussion in the second focus group:

> *a certain segment of society closely working with the consultant insisted on a key criterion: that the panel's organization must involve someone who has run several such panels before.*

However, this collaboration was not well-regarded:

> *It appeared that [the consultant] was executing their own plan, under the condition that it be organized without any deviations. The only permitted deviations were the possible testing of other solutions proposed by them. If these solutions were not considered, the response was, "Then, thank you".*

An example of this collaboration is the reliance on a complicated selection process, which one of the discussants debated with the consultant: *[the consultant] was convinced that this specific, somewhat convoluted selection process was brilliant, that it was the most crucial element, but it made no sense. It didn't increase representativeness. It didn't enhance anything. [The consultant] merely wanted it to be so.* The collaboration with the consultant was terminated even before the formal commencement of the first CA.

Ideally, experts in public policy would face constructive criticism and guidance from a scholarly community that takes a discerning approach to such matters. However, this ideal is obstructed by a twofold challenge. Firstly, there is a visible lack of critical engagement with the application of deliberation, even when the engagement maintains a friendly tone. Secondly, a significant overlap exists between those who are considered experts in policy affairs and the leading researchers in the field. Consequently, there may be a tendency for these individuals to shy away from rigorous critique in favor of curating a repertoire of apparent triumphs, driven by a partial PR agenda.

This problem is exacerbated by the structural conditions of modern academia and research funding schemes available for the development of participatory methods that often rely on quantifiable, "objective" means. For example, the EUARENAS Index (D8.2) developed to measure the inclusiveness and impact of the pilots has been recognized as problematic, since it was not individually tailored to the city's particular needs assessments. We analyze this dilemma in depth in our previous deliverable when discussing the limitations of the functionalist/systemic approach to deliberation indicated by the interpretative approach based on a different social ontology (yet at least equally valid, as we claim in the last essay), (D1.2: 47-52). There is no definite solution to this fundamental dilemma, and some sort of a pragmatic compromise is needed. In the EUARENAS, we maintain our critical focus to be aware of these compromises throughout the whole process, to understand the limitations of the tools and actions we implement. However, the consortium partners also indicated during a workshop dedicated to this issue that they have encountered other, less reflective cases they cooperated with: *When evaluating one process we have noted that the organization initially wanted an iterative, participatory learning process (...) and now they just want impact evaluation to prove long-term impact in the first year of activity to be able to secure funding.*

Recognizing PR-ticipation across the spectrum might turn out to be a useful tool to mitigate at least some of its negative impacts. For researchers, whose impact on the practice of participation should not be undervalued, PR-ticipation might be the conceptual tool needed to turn their critical attention to more potential tactics to abuse these processes might encounter. For practitioners, understanding the local political context might help in assessing the risk of encountering a political PR-ticipation and take it into consideration when deciding on particular methods or their elements, such as framing of the question or fair informing citizens of these conditions so that they are not disappointed by how the outcomes are treated. Participants can also adjust their own tactics and, as a result, offer recommendations that will be more difficult to ignore. In the end, recognizing that in democratic systems all politicians - and public officers to a lesser extent - have to rely on their PR, might help frame the outcomes in a way that will satisfy both their political needs, and foster the citizens' input into policy processes. Finally, organizers and facilitators might be more aware of the potential problems they might encounter when working with particular experts (or studying their work) and activists, who display PR-ticipatory attitudes.

If the observation about the need to develop a critical yet amicable analysis of deliberative practices is taken to heart, the aforementioned considerations point to one particularly significant issue—the political dimension of these activities. The absence of suitable theoretical tools to describe deliberation from the perspective of political interests is as surprising as it is indicative of the considerable distance that deliberation theory still needs to travel to genuinely, not just declaratively, approach the realities of political system operations. However, the first step toward such a theory must be the abandonment of the hope that deliberation, and participation more broadly, represents a cure-all for the ailments of democracy or politics at large. Paradoxically, abandoning this hope may yield positive outcomes. Viewing deliberation not as a 'healing implant' inserted into an undemocratic decision-making system, but rather as an 'ordinary' political tool, is the first step toward understanding its limitations and potential pitfalls. A political analysis of deliberation enables the recognition of 'tricks' and PR maneuvers by those organizing it, including stakeholders and participants—ranging from large corporations and development firms, whose interests conflict with the common good or climate concerns, to selected non-profit organizations and informal movements with their own political agendas. It must be assumed that all entities involved in this process not only have interests but also numerous opportunities to steer the deliberation process in a direction that safeguards their own. In such a complex social process, this is unavoidable, but it does provide a chance to attempt to design the process with appropriate safeguards. It also allows for more precise tailoring of tools to the intended goals—whether it be legitimizing a tough decision, such as radical energy price increases to save the climate, or resolving and channeling conflicts. Finally, 'demystifying' deliberation for new social movements and civil society organizations is also a necessary step in the process of learning to use them as tools that support—not replace—efforts aimed at long-term social change, building broad coalitions, and laying the groundwork for further democratic innovations.

7. DIALOGUE BETWEEN CONSENSUS AND CONFLICT

This penultimate essay in our deliverable differs from the previous ones as it is less a direct reinterpretation of existing concepts based on the projects' findings, and more a general foundation for the conceptual framework resulting from the collaboration of the WP1 team throughout the project. In this chapter, we merge the findings and approaches brought into the project by two of the WP1 co-leaders, which have actually permeated our role throughout the EUARENAS works from the very beginning. Perhaps this could have been the first essay presented in the initial deliverable. Yet, we position it at the end of our work as a signifier, or a sort of diary, of a broader (nomen omen) dialogue, in which we first discovered the fundamental issues of deliberative and participatory theory today, and later discussed (but also differed on) the possible ways out of these issues. It also builds ground for the final conceptual proposition coming in this deliverable.

A recurring theme in statements of participants in focus groups and workshops commenting on EUARENAS research is the difficulty of communicating between groups of people with completely different political views. This problem is undoubtedly not limited to urban democracy alone but affects all strata of society. In recent times, this issue has become particularly important given the rise of political radicalism, a partial expression of which is the popularity of populism (see chapter 5). Since, as is generally believed, dialogue is the basis of liberal democracy, a situation such as the one described above must cause concern for the continued survival and development of democratic society. This anxiety is reinforced by the emergence of political illiberal systems, which retain only an envelope from democracy and are essentially just slightly disguised autocratic systems.

To analyze these problems of the democratic system, we need to consider the very nature of dialogue and its place in various theories of democracy. Indeed, despite the many declarations that dialogue is the heart of democracy, the theoretical depth and dilemmas of this concept are not given attention in works about this political system. Dialogue is treated as something transparent, self-evident.

The obvious exception is the theory of Jùrgen Habermas, who builds his political concept on the notion of understanding taken from Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics. It is expanded by the inclusion of the notion of language as action, as well as the concepts of semiotics related to pragmatics. With this comes a coherent account of dialogue, which leads to consensus by virtue of mechanisms that already exist in the very way language functions, moreover - in its primary function to communicate effectively. The conditions that the German philosopher describes as the "ideal communicative situation" must be met, that is, the absence of external pressures and the possibility for each interlocutor to inquire about the ways in which a given concept or expression can be used.

Of course, political realities mean that dialogue is always distorted in some way, which more often than not makes it difficult or impossible to reach an agreement. It is worth emphasizing that for Habermasians the effectiveness of dialogue in reaching consensus is primarily due to the fulfillment of formal conditions, which are largely independent of the environment or social and cultural milieu. Based on Habermas' and John Rawls' concepts, which are parallel to it in many respects, the technique of political deliberation has been designed to enable the widest and most comprehensive participation of all interested parties in reaching a consensus (D1.2: 43). We reflect on this more in this document when talking about inclusion and various conceptualizations of commons across Europe (see chapters 3 and 4).

Other democratic theorists, however, point out the limitations or even unsuitability of consensual dialogue for resolving political disputes. Of this circle, the most broadly recognizable are the concepts of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, from which also most internal criticism of deliberation stems (D1.2: 44-46). They share the conviction that political struggle is always a struggle for both social and cultural hegemony. Hegemony is always temporary, as new voices (forces) emerge in the background that seek to replace it with another hegemonic narrative. The mechanisms of establishing and overthrowing hegemony are linguistic, taking place in discourse. Their main mechanism is the struggle to endow with definite meanings the so-called empty signifiers, that is, concepts whose meaning is open to variety of possible concrete

fulfillments. Examples include such concepts as: "order", "justice", but also, and crucially for us, “democracy”. Each of these concepts carries a large emotional charge, which obviously has mobilizing power in politics. In this view, of course, it is difficult to talk about dialogue, political struggle is primarily about taking over the language with which social reality is described, which in turn entails taking and/or defending political power.

Based on these assumptions, Chantal Mouffe presented an elaborate political theory to describe the actual functioning of democratic societies. She takes into account the critique of liberal democracy carried out by German philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt. According to his position, conflict is always the essence of politics, and political struggle always takes place in the enemy-friend dimension. The only definition of an enemy is that it is an opponent to be destroyed. Chantal Mouffe, however, believes that the German philosopher was wrong that democracy is always illusory. She believes that the political potential of conflict can be domesticated if antagonism is replaced by agonism, and the enemy by the adversary. This creates a situation of struggle for a temporary hegemony in elections, by influencing or embedding public discourses, and also through direct participation. In such a perspective, of course, dialogue is not a very important element of the democratic system. Rather, it is a series of monologues designed to emotionally mobilize voters to support one vision of democracy over another. Mouffe stresses that her vision of the democratic process is radical, she calls it "radical democracy." This term stems from the fact that for the agonistic model described above to work, there must be a political mechanism for all competing voices to emerge in the public sphere.

So apparently, the two fundamental concepts outlined understand democracy and the role of dialogue in a contrastingly different way. On the one hand, there is the belief that we can always reach a consensus through dialogue, while on the other hand there is the belief that dialogue is impossible and consensus is basically unattainable. Thus, the only potential for democracy, according to the second option, is to adhere to formal rules that make politics an agon, with the enemy turning into the adversary.

Both options cite empirical evidence to support their ideas. The first, consensual, can cite parliamentary practice, but also the social negotiations mechanism developed after World War II that has been necessary for the welfare state to function. Mouffe, on the other hand, points to the failure of so-called "post-politics" or the Third Way, where politics was to be replaced by rule-controlled deliberation. It turned out that the attempt to rid politics of the potential for conflict resulted in the rise of right-wing populism, a danger of uncontrolled antagonism that could threaten the foundations of democracy.

In hindsight, various forms of dialogue must be confronted with Michel Foucault's concept of the social limits of any discourse. The French philosopher showed that power relations exist in every social and cultural sphere. They naturally also include dialogical discourses, especially those that are political in nature. The thesis, which is rather well established, leads to the undermining of an essential part of Habermas' concept, namely the idea of an ideal communicative situation in which no coercion would occur. This critique of the dialogical and consensual approach can apply to virtually any conversation, regardless of its purpose. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that those that are strictly political are particularly vulnerable to power relations. It is worth noting here that, according to Foucault's concept, power relations are generally implicit, in the sense that they are presented as purely professional interventions in discourse. In the case of interest, special emphasis should be placed on the role of experts and mediators (leaders) of discussion. They may carry out their functions believing in their impartiality and professionalism, but in essence they are the exponents of those power structures that Foucault calls the microphysics of power.

Is it therefore possible to overcome these limitations of dialogue? The French philosopher's position on the issue is quite ambivalent. On the one hand, he seems to think that the microphysics of power is inescapably linked to modernity and as such remains present in all social relations. On the other hand, however, Foucault himself fought for freedom, and supported all movements that seemed emancipatory to him, including to some extent (and before its hegemonic days) some elements of neoliberalism.

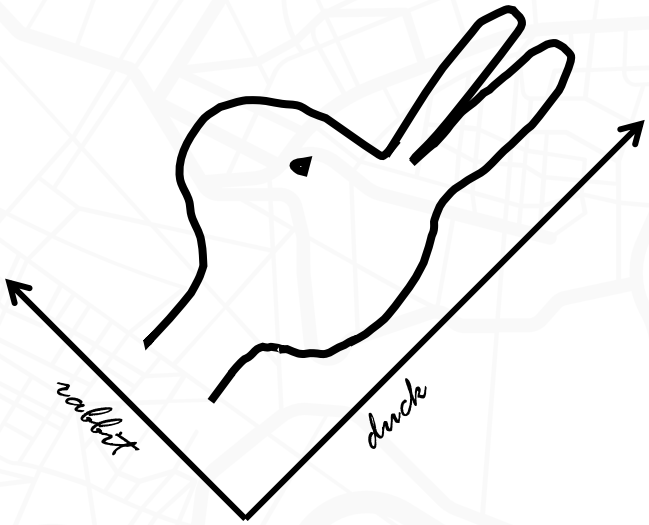
A certain attempt to get around this problem is the concept of non-consensual democracy proposed by the

co-leader of our Work Package (Koczanowicz, 2015). At its core is the belief that the main function of dialogue is not so much agreement, but better understanding between individuals or groups. Such a concept of dialogue refers to the work of Russian cultural researcher Mikhail Bakhtin. From the perspective of democratic theory, the concept of its non-consensual nature would be an in-between option to the two previously discussed. Unlike Habermas's approach that consensus is always possible, it assumes that agreement is rare, but there always remains the possibility of a better understanding. Such an understanding changes the trajectory of political struggle, even if the parties involved, seek full hegemony. The effectiveness of democratic dialogue procedures can be assessed by how institutions and procedures facilitate better understanding.

This reference to Bakhtin allows for yet another philosophical inspiration, that is the philosophy of language games as expressed by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his "late" philosophical period. This approach, called hermeneutic or interpretive, has been adapted for the sake of study of deliberative processes by the second co-lead of this Work Package (Ufel, 2023). The Austrian philosopher invokes this term to characterize ways in which people learn and use language in real-life situations, as opposed to analytical or purely logical way he described in his first book, *Treatise Logico-Philosophical*. He states that such an analytical language does not have a practical application in describing what the use of everyday language actually looks like. Wittgenstein dubs it a "slippery ice" and calls for a metaphorical "return to rough ground". It is accomplished by understanding language as a game in which the meaning of words does not refer to abstract ideas, but is constructed and (re)shaped by social use, which is influenced by many factors – not just by critical reflection - and varies across the social spectrum (and even in how individuals use certain words).

Wittgenstein, with his concept of language games, liberates us from the philosophical dilemma of whether the original use of language is focused on communication and understanding, or on conflict. The language game, and implicit form of life, is so diverse and fluid that it contains both elements. The question of their primacy, and thus a return to the philosophical discussion on the characteristics of human nature seems metaphysical nonsense, from which further misunderstandings arise. In Habermas, it is entanglement in an idealistic view of politics and democracy; in the case of post-structuralists such as Laclau and Mouffe, it is the inalienable primacy of politics and, therefore, the impossibility of democracy. Any analytical attempt to define what "democracy" actually is in essence is doomed to be absurd. This leads to a conceptual disorder, which affects not only philosophical debates, but also, in this particular case, has negative social consequences.

Wittgenstein famously describes several modes of language-use in which people explain their concepts to each other ("perspicuous representation"), change their opinions or accept different points of view ("change of aspect", exemplified by the famous rabbit-duck illusion), or make up, solidify, change, and challenge social and political institutions ("following the rule").



While it is not our goal to reconstruct these Wittgensteinian terms meticulously in this essay, as it is done in the EUARENAS working papers or forthcoming publications, we invoke them to show a crucial point of Wittgenstein's concept: a non-binary and non-linear characteristics of language and its development. Philosopher proves it by a very detailed - and accurate - description of how language is actually developed and used in vary basic situations (e.g. when it is being taught to kids), but it nevertheless suffices to unveil an incredible complexity and diversity of language games. For example, the famous rabbit-duck case is used by Wittgenstein to show how a person can go in a split second ("aspect dawning") from not seeing one's point of view to accepting it. But this person can see both "aspects" simultaneously ever since this moment - or only for a while, until the other aspect "fades". But Wittgenstein also describe a potential situation of "aspect-blindness", situation in which some people simply will not change their viewpoint or accept other perspectives - so often a crucial issue in deliberation.

The same goes for other elements of his philosophy - "perspicuous representation" which is a process of getting to a reasonable conclusion, can intentionally or accidentally become a "misrepresentation"; a rule (or institution) to be followed can be understood as intended, but also misunderstood or intentionally ignored. The incorporation of Wittgenstein's concept of language contrasts the simplified ontology of Habermas and Rawls on the one hand, and Mouffe and Laclau on the other, with a vision of a field that is incredibly complex, vague, diverse and full of ambiguities and contradictions - and also power relations.

Such a profound change in the fundamental assumptions that underlie the processes of social dialogue, co-creative participation or democratic innovations, causes a radical change in how deliberation should be understood and designed in practice. Building on the popular type I and type II distinction (D1.1: 15-18) that relates to the focus point of deliberation, key rules of the process, and the expected effects, the impact of a different assumptions - let's call it type III deliberation - can also be summarized in three points.

Firstly, type I and II deliberations measured deliberation on the quality rational argumentation process or whether outcomes and institutions were deliberative. Type III deliberation focuses on the reconfigurations that take place during the deliberation process within the language games involved. Concerning previous types of deliberation, it can be concluded that both the conditions for the process of deliberation and its effects are equally important here. In both cases, the main difference is that the focus is on the actual processes taking place, rather than on the ideal (normative) types of processes, both on the side of the procedure and the institutional structure in which they take place. To describe the reconfiguration of language games using Wittgenstein's tools for description of language games are used: the grammar of language games and continuous aspect perception (as an essential subject of transformation), as well as following the rule, aspect dawning or change and perspicuous representation (as symptoms of disciplining, transformation and creation of language games and their grammar).

The second aspect in type I and Type II deliberations concerns the normative establishment of the principles of deliberation. The idealistic type I was restricted to rational argumentation based on logics and scientifically backed evidences, while type II allowed for some persuasive measures (e.g. narratives, personal stories, metaphors) only as long as it supported the rational argument for those less entitled to use such advanced figures of speech. There are two significant changes in type III deliberation. To start with, it seriously recognizes the exclusive potential of hegemonic "rationality", therefore all kinds of language games are characterized as persuasive, so the substantive distinction between rational arguments on the one hand and emotional or rhetorical statements on the other is disregarded. This does not mean that all differences between these means of communication should be swept aside. However, the normative conditions for the acceptance/denial of certain means and forms of communication are replaced by a strategic approach. The assessment of the legitimacy of the facilitation or restriction of certain forms of communication is determined by the previously set objectives of deliberation.

The third aspect, namely the established effect of deliberation, in type I and Type II deliberations refers to a rational consensus or its meta-forms, which bring a direct value of rationalizing and democratizing of policy. In type III deliberation, rationality and democracy as universal characteristics are deemed preposterous, while the process of deliberation itself can have various effects which have been regarded as its side

effects, indirect or simply additional benefits of deliberation. These effects can be epistemic - related to knowledge and values - or civic - enhancing relations and the quality of life for local communities. In the former case the effect is to increase knowledge and understanding of the problem, which is subject to deliberation, whether in the context of substantive decisions (concerning the allocation of resources) or normative decisions (disputes on values). In the case of civil goals, these are all aspects which relate to the impact of deliberation on the functioning of society and political institutions, e.g. through increasing social participation and legitimacy of power, bringing new discourses to the public mainstream, or through resolving social conflicts and building civic attitudes. Some effects - e.g. long term discursive changes in what the public generally see as a problem or which solutions are discussed or even favored - combine both epistemic and civic values.

The empirical material collected during the EUARENAS project makes it possible to identify several dominant trends in the dialogue within urban democracies, where our research focused. Attention was paid to the growing polarization of political positions (see the chapter on populism), although it tended to deal with “big politics”, divisions that occur on a national or European Union scale. Such divisions can disrupt dialogue at the local level - thy invoke “aspect blindness”. However, according to our research, the correlations are not clear-cut. Deliberations at the local level, especially if they involve specific projects, often lead to better understanding of each other, and in a few cases one can even speak of reaching an agreement. In fact, many of the surveyed social initiatives are aimed at precisely what organizers describe as an exchange of experiences, gathering feedback for decisions maded elsewhere in the governance process. In the theoretical terms described above, this would be the closest thing to a nonconsensual dialogue, as the goal is not so much to find concrete solutions, but to prepare common ground for them, i.e. to increase the level of mutual understanding.

It is possible then to hypothesize, although this would require further research, that the dialogue has a two-phase character: (1) preparation of common ground; (2) search for common, or majority-accepted, solutions. If we attempt to institutionalize this structure, we can assume that the minority, which has "lost" in the struggle for its solution to a problem, will at least understand the position of the majority. In some cases, participation might end up with just marking the visibility of certain issues or demands previously unrecognized, and this might mark just a beginning or a step in a longer struggle for a solid presence in public life.

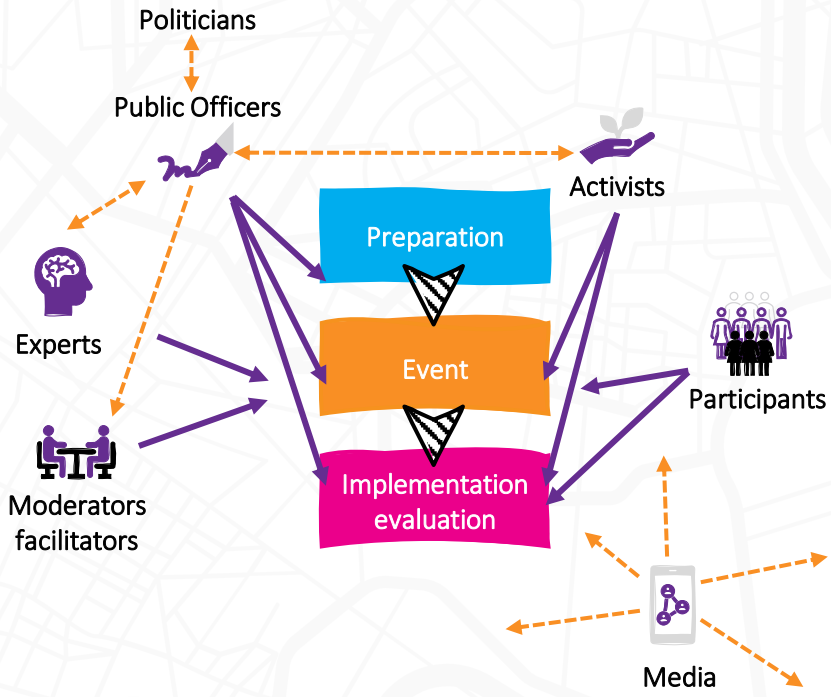
However, it can be thought that when local discourse very much begins to be linked to general political discourse, the mechanism of hegemony described by Mouffe and Laclau intervenes, making dialogue difficult or impossible, even at the linguistic level, as each side will understand the basic categories differently. Public deliberation - if indeed public, i.e. well communicated and focusing the interest of media and the community - becomes then an opportunity for a broader public to get a better understanding of values and ideas underlying the two sides of conflict, even if participants themselves got caught in a debate so heated, that it enacted “aspect-blindness”.

8. POWER IN DELIBERATIVE AND PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES

The final essay in this deliverable builds on the concepts signalled above, but focuses on a specific issue that comes from undermining the Habermasian dogmatism of the apoliticalness of participatory and deliberative practices, mediated by the invocation of rationality and the good will of participating citizens. Yet, as we show throughout the project, this spaces are filled with relations of power, either by direct or indirect influences or directives between politicians, public officers, and other stakeholders, as well as by more subtle but also powerful discursive norms of the society. In this final essay we propose a framework for understanding these relationships of power which has guided our inquiries throughout its various stages and work packages, especially in WP3 and WP4.

First, we distinguish three stages that ultimately affect the shape and effect of a deliberative or participatory event by focusing on its particular case (a similar structure has been employed for case analysis, see D3.3: 31-35) . The first stage is the preparation and implementation of a deliberative or participatory event in which politicians or officials decide to resort to this measure for public consultation or decision-making process and define its subject matter and shape. The second stage is the actual participatory event, taking place in accordance with the principles set out in stage one, but also leaving space for improvisation and adjustments. The third stage is the evaluation and implementation of its effects, which consists both of the implementation of specific decisions and of public discussion on its results and social impact. The evaluation of the process itself carried out here to some extent starts this cycle anew, when lessons are learned and decision is made about next participatory events - or their abandonment.

Using this template we also recognize key stakeholders in the process and group them into 7 categories: politicians, public officers, activists (including the representatives of local business etc.), experts, moderators and facilitators, participants, and media. The impact of individual actors on the reconfiguration of language games varies depending on their type and stage of the process. They shape deliberation directly, by filling the process with content and giving it dynamism, and indirectly, i.e., by influencing the actions of other actors. Media representatives also play their particular roles at all stages of deliberation, even though they are not causally linked to the decision-making process at any stage of the process. The power relations and impact on the process are depicted in the graphic below. With green arrows we denote a direct influence on the process, while with yellow ones we talk about the indirect influence that stakeholders have on each other. We describe them in details below.



(1) **Politicians** and their subordinated (2) **public officials** under the current system conditions are the only actors who can initiate participatory processes, as well as the execution of decisions taken in the deliberation. The public pressure from particularly influential activists or from the media may prompt them to resort to such a form of governance, but ultimately it is up to the authorities if and to what extent they decide to delegate their powers to the deliberative body set up for that purpose. Once this decision has been taken, politicians have two fundamental issues to decide: how to define the topic of deliberation and what specific techniques to apply. In both cases, the objective and motivation of politicians in a given situation, as well as the financial and organizational resources that they are able to allocate to deliberation, play an important role in answering these questions effectively.

As we mention in our policy brief (D7.4: 9), the topic should be defined as precisely as possible. The policy maker, when defining the subject matter, defines certain language rules, which then affects the way participants, experts or parties to the dispute discuss the problem, thereby exerting some early influence on the final effect of deliberation. On the other hand, getting a result that accurately reflects the expectations of the authorities - not necessarily on the particular directions, but rather the recommendations themselves being SMART, i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound - increases the pressure on them to implement such policies. That is important since politicians and officials also have a casting vote on the evaluation and implementation of recommendations that result from deliberations. The statement which has become a certain truism in participatory circles is that the sensibleness of deliberation lies in ensuring its effectiveness, that is, in the implementation of its outcome, regardless of the political preferences of decision-makers. On the other hand, when the aim of decision-makers is to increase their own legitimacy, it is also possible to present a problem, a formula for deliberation and to select participants and experts in such a way that the achieved objective of deliberation is likely to coincide with the preferences or political agenda of the authorities. The requirement of the effectiveness of deliberation, irrespective of the conditions imposed in the process, should lead politicians to formulate deliberation in such a way and, if necessary, intervene during it, so that the solution it provides is not only an expression of the will of the participants, but also meets the requirement of feasibility.

(3) The category of **activists** who are stakeholders in participatory processes includes members of formal interest groups (both private and non-governmental sector), and informal social movements which express an interest in specific issues to be deliberated. Their impact on the process often begins at the stage of exerting pressure on decision-makers to resolve issues in a participatory way. The motivation for such activists may be, above all, a belief that their arguments have sufficient persuasive power to convince the deliberating public to come up with an appropriate recommendation and thus oblige decision-makers to pursue certain interests. Even if the process does not deliver outcomes predicted by activists, their arguments can be voiced and seriously discussed in public, therefore moving more towards the center of the political discourse. In some situations where there is a considerable conflict between different interest groups, participatory event can turn into an effective tool for mediation or even some platform for coordination.

Depending on the chosen formula of a deliberative event, activists may be direct participants in the decision-making process, or they may decide to act as a partial side to a dispute which will be judged by citizens independent of them. The role of the party is assigned to social activists or stakeholders at the stage of proper deliberation in one of the most extensive and popular social innovations today, namely the citizen assembly. The parties to the dispute present their positions to the participants, answer questions and criticisms of panelists, and refer to the arguments expressed by the other parties and experts. Functionally, their role resembles the latter, with activists as parties to deliberation explicitly declaring their ideological orientation or the particular interests they represent. Unless the parties act as participants in deliberation, their role in the process of deliberation should be limited to defending their position and seeking to include it in the final recommendations. The way in which activists interact with the reconfiguration of language games is therefore based primarily on persuasion, although they too, if possible, can react to the process of deliberation itself and to the arguments that arise there by modifying their position or developing it, while acting in accordance with the perspicuous representation mechanism.

The role of community leaders as active participants in the life of the community is essential in the third stage of deliberation, especially in terms of achieving its civic objectives. They can decide to refer to the completed deliberation procedure in their further activities, evaluate it, promote its results, and ensure the implementation and execution of the decisions taken. They can also be critical of it, considering the conditions of deliberation and the implementation of its effects with skepticism, thereby accusing the authorities of negligence, and negatively affecting the achievement of the legitimacy (by decision-makers) of the deliberation effect, which, however, is a normal and functional element of representative democracies.

Thereby, the selection of organizations and movements that influence the decision to deliberate and/or later participate in it as parties or participants puts policy makers in the role of gatekeepers, thereby shaping the deliberative reconfiguration of language games by limiting those games that appear at its entry.

(4) In classical terms of deliberative theory, **experts** and the knowledge they provide for participants in proper deliberation are objective and politically neutral. The hermeneutic model, following from the post-foundationalist criticism, should consider the limitations of this assumption and the fact that full information, and particularly its critical interpretation, are not available to participants in deliberation. Cognitive limitations of deliberation mentioned in chapter 3 of this document are of additional importance here. The very issue of the selection of experts is also a significantly biased decision made by politicians – although they may assign it to other stakeholders, such as organizers, parties or participants. The role of experts is authoritative and, as such, by imputation of their substantive knowledge, they have a significant influence on the designation of a grammatical framework for language games that will be considered important in the process of deliberation. Ideally, of course, the positions presented by the experts can be the subjects of discussion, but the asymmetry of knowledge gives them a significant advantage over other participants (including the parties to the dispute), especially in view of the limited time spent on deliberation when using tools that resort to the mini-public. The longer the process itself, the greater the chance of feedback, i.e., inviting more experts or asking them questions to dispel doubts about their positions or demanding new expertise.

Experts also play an indirect role in the planning phase of deliberation. They often form part of executive, supervisory, or advisory committees with decision-makers, and work as specialists in the fine-tuning of the details of deliberation. This is a separate category of experts, not related to the subject matter of deliberation, but involved in the process itself. Here, too, they should not be regarded as neutral actors in deliberation itself, because the choice of tools, selection criteria, rules for discussion, etc. has a significant impact on the shape of the final recommendations and on obtaining the desired deliberation effects. Moreover, they have their own well-established visions and dogmas regarding deliberation, which translate into specific organizational proposals (see “expert PR-ticipation” in chapter 6).

(5) The role of **moderators** is one of the most direct leadership roles that can be carried out in the process of deliberation not being an actual participant of it. Although they play a role strictly described by the rules of discussion imposed on them, their impact on the effect of deliberation is by no means neutral, as evidenced by empirical research and observations in our project. Often their engagement, trust they build with communities, or responsiveness to individual needs, is what makes the process fully inclusive and diverse. But they also might have their own personal biases, or - to refer to Wittgenstein once again - be “blind” to certain aspects and silent selected voices or issues. The way to neutralize their negative impact is to balance it by introducing additional moderators into the process, whose actions can cancel each other out, for example, when trying to take the floor away from somebody. In this case, however, the change is quantitative at best, but not qualitative.

The disciplining role of moderators cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, when they play a more active role in the process of deliberation, becoming specific facilitators of discussion, this requires the moderator to abandon their seemingly neutral stance on the dynamics of deliberation. They engage as persons who foster the development of new solutions and facilitates an agreement by highlighting common elements in the statements of individual participants or parties to the dispute. In other words, such a facilitator may

foster agreement through his/her active involvement in presenting "perspicuous representations" of individual arguments.

The roles of the different categories of deliberative stakeholders set out above are predominantly of disciplining nature, executing certain rules and grammars which structure the process of deliberation itself by limiting it in a number of ways. In such a situation, apart from a few described exceptions, the entire transformational and creative burden associated with the process of deliberation rests with its (6) **participants**. Obviously, each of them enters the discussion already under the influence of a particular set of language games, some of which will be similar to other, while some, probably, completely different. They should be regarded as starting points for a discussion whose essential objective is their transformation. What makes deliberation different from other means of political disagreement or public consultation is that it is not limited to articulation of its interest or to a negotiation of a compromise. Its main objective is to bring about a genuine change, which consists in the reconstruction of the grammar of language games brought to it by its participants.

In hermeneutic terms, participants' statements are never regarded as depersonalized, purely rational arguments. Adopting the perspective of language games demands that each such position should be treated as a confluence of many other views and games, which are influenced both by culturally conditioned rules followed by individual participants, as well as by their own interests and related emotions and aesthetic feelings. Therefore, the means of communication included in type II deliberation should be understood not so much as a persuasive complement to rational argumentation, but as inherent elements of sincere statements, which can lead to the 'loosening' of the grammar of existing rationalities and to their subsequent reconfiguration. When validity claim statements, supported by seemingly objective arguments, are accompanied by truthful personal narratives, revealing the accompanying emotions and self-interests, this opens up the possibility to deconstruct these appearances effectively. This may lead to a change in the "aspect" of the various participants in the deliberation, so it is particularly important in civil deliberations and in those epistemic deliberations where the considered issue is normative.

Participants can perform a number of different leadership roles (D1.2: 54-58), thus having at certain times the greatest influence on its dynamics. The most obvious of these roles is the leader of the discussion, the person who can act as a promoter or critic of a given idea or argument, and whose statement has a decisive influence on the adoption or rejection of a given concept. The additional two roles, which are also important in the deliberation, are the role of the conflict manager and the tribune. The first role concerns intervention aimed at resolving the escalating conflicts in deliberation, not necessarily of a substantive nature. The latter refers, in turn, to reminding the participants of the deliberation of the need to consider persons/language games which, although socially relevant, do not have an (effective) representative in a given participatory process. However, these two additional roles do not have to appear in the deliberation, as the first is situational and the second – although probably feasible in any mini-public – depends on the attitudes of individual participants.

(7) In the literature of the subject the role of the **media** has been mainly associated with the promotion of the idea of participatory and deliberative events and their results. In Habermas's works, the media are defined as important channels, transmitting 'communicative' power to the level of the system in which it is transformed into 'administrative' power. As promoters of deliberation, the media can also take part in the process of popularizing the idea itself among decision-makers and, once the decision has been taken to organize the deliberation, in informing about it, encouraging its audience to come as participants or to attend open meetings (if possible). In some cases - as in our pilot in Gdańsk - a singular interest of one journalist from a local portal was pointed as a single most important reason that motivated people to register for the workshop.

Moreover, despite the lack of direct participation in the process as participants or sides, the media can play an indirect role in the deliberation process itself. Their role as promoters of specific solutions or values should not be overlooked, as it is to be expected that some part of the participants before entering this process form an opinion and derive knowledge about its subject matter through the media. The mass

character of the media means that a single, uncontested source can influence the language games of many participants, setting out the framework for a possible effect even before deliberation begins. It is also possible to have some kind of deliberation – exchange of opinions – going on in the media, which accompanies deliberation, reliably reporting its course or trying to influence the course of the discussion.

This role varies in the context of traditional and social media. The latter, in particular, are an interesting case because, on the one hand, they promise to promote deliberation using modern technologies, but on the other hand they can significantly distort it, as they often limit debates to 'media bubbles' or situate them in very polarized, depersonalized settings. But their role is not simply negative - they can be an important tool for organization of social movements, spreading public information or narratives, and acknowledge people with their rights as citizens.

The general framework described above is only an initial conceptual idea that requires further operationalization via indicators or specific methodological tools to be able to more precisely pin-point the relations of power and influence within participatory and, especially, deliberative spaces. This to some extent can be found in WP3 research questions, as well as inquiries of WP4 and WP5. Further EUARENAS publications that will aim at synthesizing cross-project findings might find the hermeneutic model described above useful and add to its development.

SUMMARY

The conclusions presented here do not represent the final stage of the project's theoretical development. Instead, they signify the beginning of the next, extensive and meticulous process of their reassessment and corroboration. We will thoroughly reevaluate the projects' discoveries and achievements, subjecting them to fresh scrutiny in the newly shed conceptual light. This process will unfold through forthcoming academic publications and reports tailored for both scholarly and general audiences. Through this iterative approach, the concepts we introduced will undergo validation and refinement, unveiling the complex landscape of participatory and deliberative realms. Our aim is to lay the groundwork for future research, fostering theoretical innovation and enlivening academic discourses.

In sharing our findings, we express gratitude to all consortium partners and we aim at encouraging ongoing collaborative dialogue and mutual enlightenment. From its inception, the EUARENAS project has also been outward-facing, and we hope that the insights and hypotheses presented here will spark constructive discussions within our Community of Practice and resonate with a wider audience interested in the advancement of European democracies. While our findings may sometimes push boundaries, be provocative or challenge conventions, it is precisely our intention to stimulate critical discourse and inspire new discoveries, also – or even especially – those that may challenge and surpass our current perspectives.