Exploring the Limits of Participatory Democracy

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Abstract
Policy makers and many academics often define participatory processes as a tool to enhance democracy and to increase legitimacy. This paper presents empirical work in Flanders (for the Flemish government) and Tuscany (as part of the 6the Framework project 'AG2020' of the European Commission) followed by theoretical reflection on the conditions for success and failure of participatory democracy. The central proposition is that actors of participatory processes have mutual role expectations. Managing these role expectations at different levels at the same time is a necessary condition for building successful participative processes. In reality, this condition is often not met and the management of expectations is neglected by a lack of either financial or human resources. Especially in new democracies or transitory societies, participatory democracy bears some immanent dangers within it. This paper is an important contribution to the debate on democratisation since he offers a theoretical framework that (1) helps to understand and explain how and why participatory processes proceed and that (2) makes it possible to monitor ongoing process in order to improve their management.

Introduction

The 'people of the West' consider democracy as the best model to steer a society. For centuries, our ancestors experimented with various forms of government, resulting in an incremental process of democratisation (Van Caenegem, 1995). But just when representative democracy finally was established (e.g. universal suffrage for Belgian women in 1948), the model proved to be incompatible with the emerging risk society and its growing complexity (Duit & Galaz, 2008). This resulted in (1) devolution and the recognition of the importance of regions and (2) the exploration of more direct forms of democracy. The emancipation of May 1968 and the claim for the right of self-determination of each individual can be considered as manifestations of the same trend. Centralistic government became multi-level and multi-actor governance (Bekkers, Dijkstra, Edwards, & Fenger, 2007). At the same time, decolonisation occurred, and the number of sovereign states that needed a constitution increased. Later, the end of the Cold War was framed as a victory for liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1992). Democracy –or attempts to establish a

constitutional order leading to democracy- was spreading throughout the world. Of all modes of democratic governance, participatory democracy, and especially deliberative democracy, is often framed as the most democratic, thus the most desirable. Our research tackles this assumption by investigating the conditions for successful participation, and out of those conditions, by discovering the limits of public participation. This paper helps to locate the hinge point between effective and ineffective participation. But it also goes beyond the strict academic interest by offering a practical framework to manage participatory processes in order to make democratic transition more sustainable and democratic.

Two research projects are the inspiration for this paper. The first was a policy-oriented project for the Flemish government in 2006 (Van den Eynde & Goorden, 2006). The Flemish Agency for Environmental Affairs (Agentschap Natuur en Bos) was experimenting with deliberative procedures in six areas in Flanders which were already delineated as protected areas. Stakeholders were invited to participate in the composition of a nature vision that would guide all policy action for the next 20 years in that particular area. From the collected data emerged a pattern that revealed a system of mutual role expectation that was subjected to an iterative process of redefinition of expectations. Here, the foundations of the role expectations theory were established.

The second project was a European 6th framework research project on the future of agriculture in Europe: 'AG2020' (Van den Eynde & Goorden, 2007). Part of the project was the building of a social map of the Tuscan farming society. It also offered an opportunity to collect data to examine the role expectations theory for a second time. Although the data were less solid than in the Flemish case (due to language barriers) the pattern emerged again, this time with even more serious consequences for the democratic account of public participation.

This paper proceeds as follows: in a first chapter, the theoretical framework is presented by describing the four cornerstones of the theory. The second chapter provides a short overview of the methodological issues. The third chapter introduces the empirical work and shows how the theory of role expectations is operationalised. Thereupon, the fourth chapter links the empirical findings to the theory and explains causal relationships. Finally, the fifth chapter elaborates

more fundamentally on the consequences of our findings for democratization.

Theoretical Foundations of Role Expectations

As with many concepts used in social sciences, participation bears a certain degree of vagueness. Some scholars use it to describe voting behaviour, others to investigate demonstrations on the streets (Lim, 2008). For others, it refers to an active form of participation, for instance deliberation (Dryzek, 2000; Edwards, 2007; Nino, 1996). All of these conceptual claims are justified, but lacking in structure. For a proper understanding of our work, the reader has to understand perfectly what we mean when using the word 'participation'. Therefore, we introduce the distinction between external and internal participation and add it to the accomplished model of the participation ladder (see table 1) (Barnes & Kaase, 1979, 1997; Edelenbos, 1998). The numbers in the last column are the values used in the empirical work of role expectations. If an actor (e.g. a farmer) wanted to be consulted, this role expectation was coded as '2'.

Table 1. Ladder of public participation (Edelenbos 1998; Bogaert 2004)

Type of participation	Level of participation	nr
Internal participation	Self-government	6
	Co-decision making by consensus	5a
	Co-decision making by majority vote	5b
	Cooperation	4
	Advising	3
	Consultation	2
	Information	1
External participation	Public demonstration	0
	Petition	0
	Voting	0

Three clarifications on this model are required. First, the distinction 'internal versus external participation' refers to the difference between people who become members of the institutional policy-making setting (internal) versus people who remains outside this setting (external). The former share a more strategic position, the latter retain more autonomy. Some try to build a similar distinction by using 'direct and indirect democracy' (Dryzek, 2000). Second, public participation relegates the involvement of non-governmental actors in all phases of the policy

process. Third, deliberation is an advanced form of participation where the actors are involved at the highest level of the policy circle: they have a voice and vote to decide (level 5a en 5b). Information gatherings organised by public authority is less advanced since it only provides a voice to the actors.

The first cornerstone of the theory is constituted by the actors in the process. Conceptual clarity is missing and concepts like 'actor' or 'stakeholder', citizen, civil society, etcetera are often mixed up. This needs to be clarified. Table 2 explains the relation between actors and stakeholders; figure 1 clarifies the concept of citizen and civil society. By actors, we mean all members of a polity. Talking about European participation is talking about all actors of the European Union, although not all actors have an interest. Stakeholders are a more limited category.

Table 2. Actors in a participatory process

		A	
		With stake/interest	Without stake/interest
B	Acting	Stakeholder	Strategist
	Not acting	Stake discounter	Uninterested

(A) Having a stake or interest is defined by the attribution of that stake or interest. This attribution can be done by the people themselves (self-determination) or by other members of the polity. (B) Acting refers to behaviour that affects the policy process. From this follows four categories. First, talking about stakeholders, is talking about actors with a stake that are showing behaviour that affects the policy process. Second, an actor without an interest but showing this behaviour is a strategist. The rationale for this might be the expectation that spillovers of a particular policy process will affect other policy processes in which he has a stake. Third, a stake discounter is an actor with a stake but who does not act in order to defend its interests. And finally, the uninterested are those who neither have a stake nor act.

Figure 2 shows us the relationship between actor and polity. Governmental actors are politicians and civil servants. Citizen participants are both individuals and the organised civil society, often gathered in some organisational configuration like NGOs.

Figure 1. Position of actors in the polity
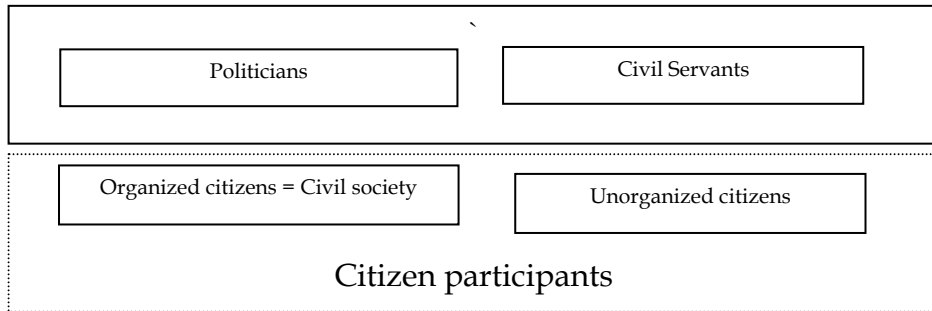
The second cornerstone is the initiative to start a participatory process. With the exception of self-governing arrangements, legitimacy requires all initiative for public participation in modern democracies to come from governmental actors since the primacy of politics, understood as the mandate to decide on public decisions, lies within the elected bodies. Therefore, there are actors with a mandate to initiate participatory processes and others who are not.

The third cornerstone of the theory contains the idea of role expectations (Luhman, 1995). Actors have expectations on the role they can fulfil in a policy issue. This role can be defined in many ways, but here it is understood as the level of involvement in the policy process expressed according to the model of the participation ladder (table 1). The initiator has expectations with regard to the roles of the actors, and especially that of stakeholders. This is called 'role supply'. It is an offer to join the policy process with a certain intensity of involvement. But actors who are not initiating, and especially stakeholders, also have expectations with regard to their contribution. This is 'role demand'. The differences between role demand and role supply are what provoke our scientific curiosity. How do they influence the sustainability and effectiveness of democratization? Role demand is determined by (1) strategy and (2) characteristics peculiar to that actor. 'Strategy' reflects a will and preference, nourished by either rational or irrational elements. 'Characteristics' is about the 'capital' of an actor. It contains elements like time, facilities, level of education, experience, status. An initiator who wishes a stakeholder to be involved at a high level of the participation ladder might overrate or fail to appreciate the limits of that actor.

The fourth cornerstone of the theory is the iterative character of role determination. Indeed, role expectations are changing during the process. It is this dynamic environment that offers the climate of success or disaster of participatory processes.

Methodology

The origin of our theory lies in a process of inductive theory building. As member of a Flemish research project, we embarked in a participative policy process as participant observers. Later on, we did 11 in-depth interviews with key informants. By observing the praxis of this process, we discovered the magic of role expectations and discovered the bias of the participative democratization thesis (Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Pateman, 2000 (1970); Rosenberg, 2007). We reject this thesis (i.e. that stakeholder participation and deliberation are supportive for democratization) and found out that the degree of good management of participative processes (from bad to excellent) is key for successful interaction between public participation and democratization. Considering the Flemish case on its own, it can be considered as a 'crucial case design' (Gerring, 2007). After the confidence crisis between stake holders and public authority (May 2003, see below) legitimacy and credibility of rural spatial planning was low. The process we observed was an attempt to build public support for rural policy. As far it was a single small-n case study (Gerring, 2007), one could argue that this crucial case approach is legitimate (Bryman, 2004; Eckstein, 1975; George & Benneth, 2005).

Later, we decided to elaborate the case study design and to go again into the 'empirical wild'. We decided to choose a new case. The Tuscan case was a 'strong case' (Leuffen, 2007). Since 1970, Tuscan civil society was organized around deliberative round tables. It is well established on the institutional dimension. As we show at the end of the paper, the 'democratization through participation'-hypothesis does not even hold in this case too. Considered together, this approach was 'a most similar system'-design, with the key variable (strength of participative tradition) very different and other variables rather similar (like civil society network, institutional design, etc)

From Theory to Empirics: Fieldwork in Flanders (Belgium) and Tuscany (Italy)

The iterative aspect of role definition defines how the theory must be operationalised. The field work in Flanders (2006) revealed the importance of changing expectations. In this case, participants attended a series of round table meetings with specific expectations. The official (legal) agenda was the development of a 20-year conservation vision. The initiators of the round table (civil servants) convened this meeting with various objectives in mind. Besides the policy objective, building support, legitimacy and credibility towards the minister in charge was their main goal. For these reasons, they supplied a high level of participation. The stakeholders (farmers, nature conservation organisations, hunters, tourism …) were invited to participate. They entered the process with specific expectations and reservations. All actors had a fresh memory of the crisis of confidence that hit the rural round tables in 2003. It was a delicate endeavour to reconcile the expectations of the participants.

Given the evolving nature of expectations, role expectations are to be measured at different moments, i.e. timeframes. Figure 2 shows a schematic overview of two time frames.

Figure 2. Time frames of role expectations. PL = participation level (0-6), i = initial, e = expected, a = actual, RT = role tension
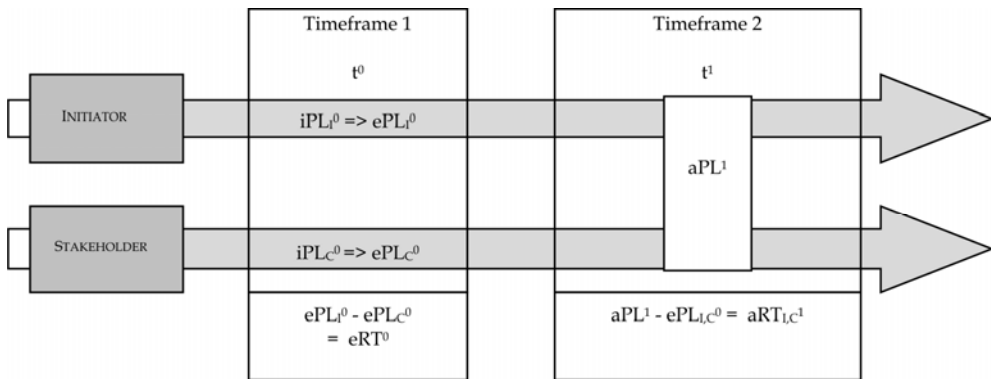
This scheme shows how initial but unrealistic role expectations create role tensions. A stakeholder who expects to participate as co-decision maker (level 5) but who's role was restricted to being informed (level 1), experiences a role tension of '4'. It also could be the other way around, resulting in role tension '-4'. One should not take these values as absolute. There importance lies in the pattern that they reveal. So, role

tensions can be positive (if role demand is lower than role supply) or negative (if role demand is higher than role supply). Thus, role tensions = role supply minus role demand. Equilibrium of role expectation is reached where role demand and supply are equal.

Introduction to the cases

The Flemish case (Van den Eynde & Goorden, 2006) was a policy-oriented research project on participatory policy methods (2006). As pursuant to the Regional Decree on Nature Protection (1997) the Flemish government set up six local participatory pilot projects to design Nature Directive Plans (NDP). NDP are instruments to develop a long-term vision (20 years) for the territory which is destined by the spatial planning policy as 'green area'. It is applicable to forests, protected areas, parks, and buffer areas. The constitution of the local participatory body was formally ruled by a regional ministerial decree implying the involvement of local authorities, nature groups, farmers, hunters, fishers, forester and large landowners (Box C and D in figure 3). Parallel to these formal local processes, an informal regional process of participation was initiated by the civil servants who were in charge of the NDP.

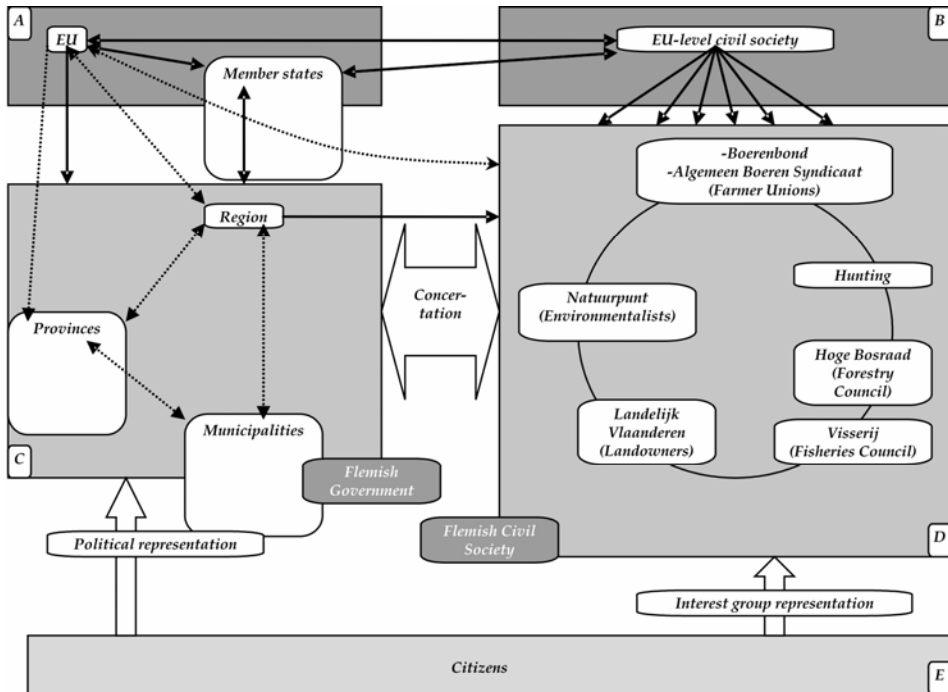Figure 3. Multi-level network governance system in Flanders\

Figure 3 shows the system in which NDPs had been established. Three observations can be derived from this figure. First, citizens are represented both through political representation as well as through interest group representation. This dual representation affects democratic legitimacy in three ways. First, citizens who are not a member of an interest group are less represented. Second, Membership does not guarantee a proper representation of one's interests. Our data revealed that the aggregation of interests of members can be heterogeneous. The largest Flemish farmer union Boerenbond, for instance, represents both small farmers as well as agro-industry. The interests of these members differ significantly (Van den Eynde and Goorden, 2006). Third, rational choice theory suggests that free rider behaviour makes it possible to profit from advantages without paying for membership.

Second, the figure illustrates the functional distinction of different modes of network governance (Bekkers, Dijkstra, Edwards, & Fenger, 2007). These are apparent by the mutual relations between the different bodies (Grande, 1996). The governance network of nature conservation stretches from the EU level to the local level.

The third observation is related to the multi-level mode of governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Kohler-Koch, 2003). Boxes A and C show how different governmental institutions are involved in the policy. In addition, civil society is organised along this multi-level conception of policy reality (although this is not worked out in detail in this figure). For instance, nature conservation organisations are not only organised on the regional level, but have local semi-autonomous bodies. In general, we can conclude that civil society has developed along the functional hierarchy of governmental multi-level division of labour. According to these observations, we can define the NDP policy system as a multi-level network governance system.

The second source of data stems from our research in Tuscany (Van den Eynde and Goorden, 2007). A social map of the Tuscan agricultural policy system was drawn from data collected by surveys and in-depth interviews. The general outlook of the Tuscan civil society system is similar to the system observed in Flanders (compare figure 4 with 5). The three observations of the Flemish system are applicable to the

Tuscan system, but we add two additional remarks. First, the Consorzio di Bonifica holds a special position since it is an intermediary organization between governmental structures and civil society. With regard to the former, its competence is the implementation of regulations for the management of the river basin in the Chianti province. While performing this task, they act as a governor. With regard to the latter, landowners of territory in the Chianti river basin are obliged to become members. Consorzio di Bonficia serves here as an interest organisation. This ambiguous position is a Tuscan feature that was not observed in Flanders.

Figure 4. Multi-level network governance system in Tuscany
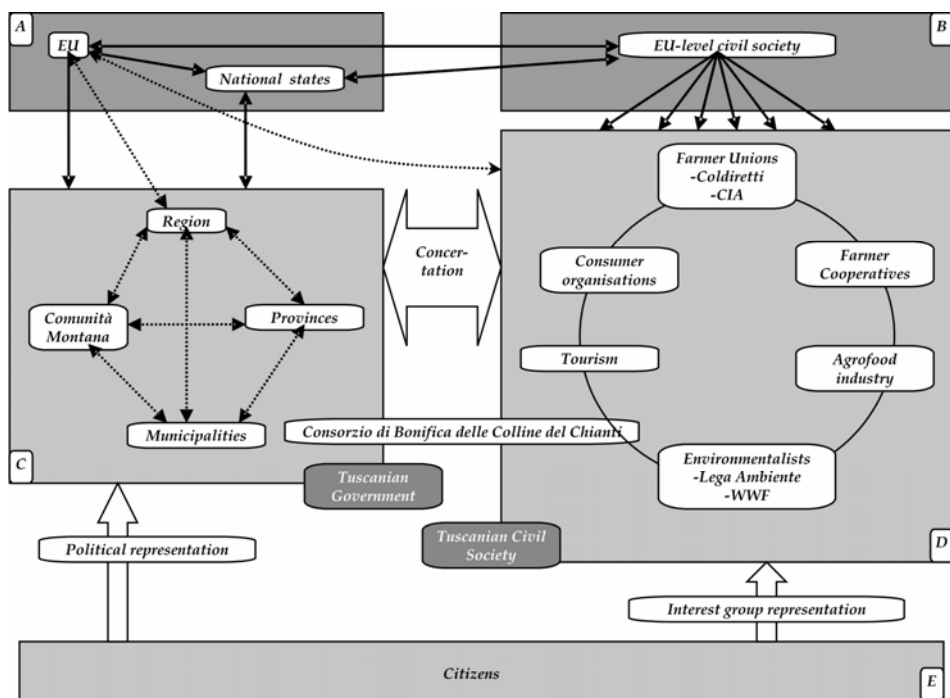
The second additional remark relates to the differences in strength of and experiences with citizen participation. The Italian political system was reformed in 1970 as part of the decentralisation campaign (Ginsbourg, 1990). Round tables became a far-flung tool to bridge the gap between government and citizens, to break with the tradition of clientelism, and to challenge corruption (Koff & Koff, 2000). The round table for agriculture is called the Green Table and is active on all levels.

Thirty-seven years of participatory experiences create a strong tradition of participation. The feeling of distrust to which Flemish actors were prone to in 2003 is completely absent in Tuscany. As was mentioned in the chapter on used methods, this difference -together with the similarities (rural area, institutional network)- makes the case design an appropriate 'most similar' design.

Analysis of the governance system

We start with a short presentation of the Flemish data. Subsequently, findings concerning trust, legitimacy and thickness of the network will be presented. The thickness of the network (understood as the number of contacts, the frequency of contact, etc.) is analysed with data from long in-depth interviews and participatory observation of participatory meetings at the regional (Flemish) level.

The results of the role expectation analysis are presented in table 3. These numbers reflect our interpretations of the answers of the participations on the question how they expected in the beginning to participate and how they evaluate the eventual participation level. Farmer union 'Boerenbond' had low expectations, and as it turned out, they could do little more then they expected. This negative role that tension played was not problematic because their initial role definition was fed by pragmatics. In their 'perfect world', they would wish to self-govern on this issue. Their pragmatic expectation resulted in a positive experience. The positive role tension of 1.5 of the other farmer union (ABS) is more serious, because it means that the actor expected to be involved more than he was effectively allowed to do. Positive role tensions often trigger disappointment. The longer the disappointment continues, the more the legitimacy of the decision-making process is endangered. Land owners were strongly disappointed in the role they could play. This result is remarkable in the sense that these stakeholders were new in the participatory process. It was the first time that they could participate in an internal participation process. They had high expectations, and did not have the pragmatic sense of the big farmer union Boerenbond. Hunting and forestry had balanced expectations because they defined their interests as small and subordinate to those from others, especially farmers. Natuurpunt, finally, had realistic expectations and were not surprised.

Table **3**. Role tension in Flemish network governance model

Dutch name	Category	aRT
Boerenbond 1	Farmer Union	-0.25
Boerenbond 2	Farmer Union	-1
ABS	Farmer Union	1.5
Jachtsector	Hunting	0
Bossector	Forestry	0
Landelijk Vlaanderen 1	Land owners	3
Landelijk Vlaanderen 2	Land owners	2
Natuurpunt	Nature conservation	0
Visserij	Fisheries	1

Generally speaking, distrust was present at a low level and there were some improvements in the relations. The prospect of a successful cooperation created a cautious optimism. A stakeholder let slip a remark that "if the civil servants would not abuse our goodwill, thrust could be restored over time." But distrust was reciprocal. Civil servants feared potential abuse of the openness by some stakeholders. Therefore, it happened that civil servants were reluctant to provide information in full transparency. The stakeholders for their part felt that information was withhold. This created the impression that they were only involved in the process for strategic reasons. The result of mutual distrust is a risk of end in a vicious circle of suspicion. As we will see below, role converging activities in this case are obligatory to escape this circle.

Finally, the thickness of the network was relatively limited. The actors met each other one or two times in a year in the NDP-structure, but they met each other more frequently in other consultation boards of the Flemish government. This resulted in richer social capital, but the risk of bringing along conflicts or problems from other policy process in the process of NDP was apparent. This actually happened.

Three observations can be drawn from the Tuscan data: an observation related to role expectations, an observation regarding the legitimacy of participation, and a final observation regarding the thickness of the network, expressed with frequency and quality of contacts.

First, the actual role satisfaction of actors involved in the Green Tables at different levels was high. Based on a combination of survey data,

observations and in-depth interview data, the role tension value diminishes to zero. Simply put: these respondents felt comfortable with the performance of the Green Tables. The deviating value is the farmers' role tension of -2 (respondent number 6). This value reflects his dissatisfaction about the abominable relations between individual farmers and the farmer unions. The next chapter elaborates on this observation. Finally, additional information derived from the interviews ensures that a -1 deviation at a low level on the participatory ladder is too small to speak about significant role dissatisfaction. To conclude, the expectations of the participants to the Green Tables are harmonious.

Table **4**. Perceived power to influence in Tuscan round table system 0 = no power; 1 = little power; 2 = moderate power; 3 = strong power. ? = biased values. / = no answer given

Resp. N°	Category of respondent	Experiences	Expectations	Role tensions
1	Environment	2	3	-1
2	Union	1.5	4	-0.5
4	Union	2.5	2.5	0
6	Farmer	0	2	-2
9	Regional government	2	2	0
10	Comunità Montana	2.5	2.5	0
12	Cooperative farm	2	3	-1
13	Environment	2.5	2.5	0

Besides this data on role expectations, the Tuscan fieldwork revealed data that legitimated our choice for Tuscany as a most similar case. Contrary for Flanders, the tradition and experiences with internal participation were well established. We asked for the opinions about the right of other stakeholders to attend the round table meetings. In other words, is the involvement of the other stakeholders legitimate? We present this data in table 5. The respondents representing farmers (n° 2, 4 and 12) accept the membership of environmentalists (value 2, 3 and 12). Environmentalists ascribe the same legitimacy to farming organisations. In general, all categories are perceived as legitimate, except for hunters (not officially represented in the Tuscan participatory system). The analysis of averages also provides the same picture of consensus about each other's legitimacy. In contradiction to this unanimity, one farmer ascribes 'little right' to attend stakeholder meetings to environmentalists. This impression from the interviews was confirmed in elite interviews with Italian social scientists.

Table **5**. The right to attend agricultural meetings. 0 = no right; 1 = little right; 2 = moderate right; 3 = strong rights

Resp n° =>	1	2	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	Average
Small scale farmers	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Large scale farmers	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.9
Environmentalist	3	2	3	2	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.5
Hunters	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	1	0	0	3	1.7
Civil Servants	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	2.8
Cooperatives	/	/	/	3	/	0	3	3	/	/	/	3

We also checked the frequency and quality of the mutual contacts of the actors. Do they meet often or just once in a year? And what is the quality of these contacts? Table**s** 6 and 7 presents data on these issues.

Table **6**. Frequency of contacts. 0 = never; 1 = once in a year; 2 = monthly; 3= weekly.

Resp n° =>	1	2	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	Average
Small scale farmers	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	1,5	3	2,5	2.5
Large scale farmers	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	1,5	2	2	2.8
Environmentalist	2	3	2	2	1	1	2	1,5	1,5	1	2,5	1.8
Hunters	1	1	1	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	1
Civil Servants	2	3	2	3	2	3	1	2	2	2	2,5	2.2
Cooperatives	/	/	/	3	/	/	0	2	/	/	/	1.6

Table 7. Quality of contact. 0 = No Quality; 1 = little quality; 2 = moderate quality; 3 = good quality

Resp n° =>	1	2	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	Average
Small scale farmers	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2.9
Large scale farmers	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	/	1	2.7
Environmentalist	3	3	3	2	1	2	3	1	3	2	2	2.3
Hunters	2	2	2	3	1	2	/	0	/	1	2	1.5
Civil Servants	3	1	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	2.5	2.6
Cooperatives	/	/	/	3	/	/	1	3	/	/	/	2.3

The participants of the round table meet with each other frequently. Farmers' unions and governmental actors meet each other almost weekly. Environmentalists also have monthly to weekly meetings with farming unions. The contact with hunters shows variation. They are not deeply involved in the green table system. The individual farmer has only limited contacts with environmentalists. With regard to the quality of contacts, there is a correlation between the frequency of the contacts and the quality of the contacts. The exception is one respondent of the Communità Montana who has good contacts with farmers and environmentalists, but only a few times in a year.

A system of mutual role expectations: Dynamics of Role Expectation Theory

Actors in a participatory process do not share the same role expectations. The theoretical framework leads one to expect that the evolution of role expectations confines the success of the process. Role supply and demand can converge, diverge, or remain stable

Role convergence is a factor to success. Role convergence means that expectations are readjusted in a direction that brings them closer. If the initiator programmed an informatory role (level 1), and a participant expected consultation (level 2), role expectations are converging if the initiator accepts the consultation supply, the participant accepts the information demand or a position in between.

Role convergence does not say anything about the content of the discussion and the degree of debate and conflict. It is limited to structural and institutional settings. Indeed, it is reasonable to observe a situation of more or less balanced expectations but harsh debate with regard to content. In reality, we expect that many discussions in participatory processes are dealing implicitly with roles (and thus power) and are neglecting the content, ideological differences and so on.

Thus, role convergence may occur even when an actor's interest is outvoted. This is the case in an accepted majority setting. If consensus or unanimity is the promised decision mode, it is impossible to outvote a participant without damaging the convergence process. This implies that 'co-decision' as level of participation must be considered as two sublevels with different power implications: co-decision without unanimity is subordinated to unanimous co-decision.

Role divergence on the other hand is inversely proportional to policy success in terms of effectiveness and public support. It is a process of successive redefinitions fed by disappointments. Participants are disappointed because their expectations do not meet reality. This is expected to result in distrust and ultimately, at some critical point, the participant chooses to step out of the internal participation process and to join some mode of external participation: demonstration, blocking implementation, voting against policy makers, etc.

Public support is fading at this stage, and democratic quality can only be achieved by majority voting, a logic where policy makers are prepared to outvote or deny a minority of stakeholders.

A Flemish example of role divergence and deep distrust is the above-mentioned delineation of green areas in Flanders that culminated in an vicioous demonstration (2003) with slogans like 'stop the green whore', referring to the green minister for environmental affairs. The origin for this negative atmosphere is likely to be a process of divergent role expectations. When we collected our data in 2006, many references were made by stakeholders (agriculture, hunters, and land owners amongst others) by pointing to a restoring but still very fragile form of trust. Through this increasing trust, actors formulated circumspect expectations for the participatory process of 2006. It was obvious that new process disappointment would have tremendous negative effects for further development of planning policy in Flanders.

Understanding the process of role expectations is a necessary condition for facilitating participatory processes, what we call role converging action. There are four categories of role converging action based on two dimensions: a first dimension is manipulation of supply side versus demand side. The second dimension reflects the type of role tension, i.e. positive and negative role tension. The role tension formula is supply minus demand. A positive role tension arises if demand is smaller than supply. Here, role converging manipulation means a decrease of supply side (manipulation a), or an increase of the demand side (manipulation b). A negative role tension arises if demand exceeds supply. Here, role converging manipulation means an increase of supply (manipulation c) or a decrease of demand (manipulation b).

Table 8. Overview of role converging manipulation

	Positive role tension	Negative role tension
Supply side	↓ [Manipulation a.]	↑ [Manipulation c.]
Demand side	↑ [Manipulation b.]	↓ [Manipulation d.]

An appropriate question of the attentive reader would be "where does this manipulation take place in the design process presented in chapter 3?" As we pointed out there, a key feature of the role expectations theory is the continuous iterative character of the definition of role expectation. Actors tend to evaluate their experiences and position continuously in interaction with their context and other actors. This frame of reference, against which role expectations are defined, should be the target of role-converging manipulations. For each type of manipulation, some practical examples will now be given.

Manipulation (a) is a decrease of supply in a situation of positive role tensions. It happens when initiators like governors opt for citizen participation to increase the chance of uncontested implementation. In the case of a sensitive issue, for instance, some actors avoid being identified too much with the decision making. Then, supply side manipulation from the initiator is recognizing this strategic position and trying to create good and legitimate policy. It is also possible that a participant is not capable of participating at a certain level, for instance because of a lack of staff. Again, supply side manipulation means that the initiator is not able to increase the capacities of the participant (this is manipulation b) and has to recognize the limits of reality.

Manipulation (b) is an increase of demand in a situation of positive role tensions. Its basis is similar to manipulation (a), but here the initiator doesn't want to reconcile oneself to the situation and wants to adjust the demand by negotiation (persuading the reluctant participant of the utility to participate on a higher participation level) or by giving incentives to increase demand, like a financial injection to increase the means of the organization.

Manipulation (c) is an increase of supply in a situation of negative role tensions. Here, the main manipulation of supply by an initiator is to convince oneself of the utility of a higher participative role of the participant. Utility could be accepting the specific knowledge of participants, the particular influence of participants, the long term

perspectives, building social capital as an investment with positive externalities in other policy areas and policy networks. It is obvious that a participant has the same convincing potential towards the reluctant initiator.

Manipulation (d) is a decrease of demand in a situation of negative role tensions. It often happens that participants bear some idealized images of participation and expect to be functional at a high level of the participation ladder. However, the opposite is often the reality, for instance when legal requirements limit participation and decision (level 5) has to be taken by elected representatives. Time limits participation (high level participation requires more time, especially if one works with volunteers at the side of participants), or strategic consideration limits participation (it is not appropriate towards other interest groups to allow a particular interest group to participate too strongly).

It is obvious that the supply side manipulation is far more approachable for initiators. It is just easier to convince oneself than another. Does this also apply on the demand side? We are hesitating to confirm this question, since the demand side is often fragmented. If there is one actor on the demand side, then it holds. However, fragmentation is more often the rule rather than exception, so manipulating the demand side means for all actors the manipulation of other actors.

Consequences for democratic state building and democratisation

Our claims apply on two modes of democratization. The first is the transformation of undemocratic states to democracies, often through liberalization. These societies generally come out of a situation of dictatorship or civil war. There are no democratic institutions, either left or never having had been (Paris, 2004). The second are democratic political entities that need to anticipate new circumstances (Hirst, 2000), for instance the tendency in Western Europe to devolution and public participation both on the level of the nation state and the European Union (Kohler-Koch, 2003). Both modes of democratization share the norm of the importance of the involvement of civil society to achieve sustainable democracies (European Commission, 2001).

Participatory policy (and deliberative democracy in particular,) is often presented as a (or even 'the') tool to achieve a better democratic quality. The European Commissions discourse on new governance acts as a

salient example (European Commission, 2001). This discourse on public participation, translated as civil society involvement, resounds also in the catacombs of democratisation programmes of states in democratic transition (Paris, 2004). This is no surprise for several reasons.

First, the references of democratic engineers to democratization are grafted onto the experiences of Western state building. These societies were urged to decentralise in order to deal with the people's detachment towards politics and the emerging complexity of the risk society (Hirst, 2000). The era of bureaucratic state management has slipped away and is replaced by the need to involve more people (Smisman, 2006). Second, post-authoritarian regimes are weak. There institutions are not yet rooted in a long standing tradition of democratic action; hence dispersal of political power is necessary to guarantee democratic sustainability. Third, policy processes need public support (what Scharpf (1999) called input-legitimacy). If this is lacking, embryonic democracies are an easy prey for authoritarian, populist candidates. Fourth, public deliberation is often a de facto necessity, especially in remote areas like mountainous communities where local support and the input of local knowledge is a conditio sine qua non for successful problem solving.

So, there are strong arguments to involve the people in the process of democratization. This involvement potentially goes far beyond external participation like elections. However, internal participation is not unproblematic as we saw in the previous chapters. As long as local projects are concerned, scale does not form a problem. But in projects of large scale democratisation, e.g. on the country level, it is impossible to involve 'the people'. Hence, democratic engineers fall back on organised civil society from which they expect to represent their grassroots.

This representation cannot be taken for granted. Successful representation is an assumption which carries the risk of alienating participants from their grassroots. Organised civil society mandates their representatives to participate in a policy process (Cohen & Rogers, 1993), thus creating a policy network (Kassim, 1994). These civil society representatives start participating, and if the process of role convergence is successful, mutual alliances between the various participants are likely to appear. Indeed, successful action builds mutual respect, recognition and even friendship. Consequently, this shared positive experience becomes the engine for creating other achievements. The problem is that civil society representatives are likely to end up in a kind

of two-level game where loyalty to the participation process conflicts with loyalty to their grassroots. This was observed in Tuscany were individual farmers complained that the official representatives were no longer representing the interests of the farmers but were rather detached from them. The Flemish case revealed the inverse situation where the absence of cohesion (due to the 2003 crisis of the consultation model) guarantees a strong representation of grassroots interests. Other explanations for the alienation are increasing knowledge and ownership of the process.

All these elements make it more likely that the claims of representatives become more moderate and that they build understanding and sympathy for the arguments of their counterparts. The grassroots however, have remained outside the process. They lack this understanding and sympathy. Their claims continue to be as radical as they were before. This is why it is so difficult for participants of participatory processes to keep in touch with their grassroots, and to balance between loyalty to round table colleagues and grassroots. If this balance is absent, internal representation becomes problematic. The gap between the citizens and the public sphere shifts to a gap between the grassroots and their representatives. This affects the participatory process on the long term since internal conflicts concerning mandates alter the demand side of role expectations.

As a final remark, we would like to point out that our conclusions are not revolutionary. Putnam (2000) came to a similar conclusion when he argued that the US faced a paradox of a proliferation of groups and the decline of meaningful citizen involvement. They fail in enhancing social cohesiveness and social integration, and a majority of their members limit their involvement to "signing a cheque, hardly attend group meetings and there is no face-to-face interaction." (Jordan & Maloney, 2007). In a research project in the UK, Fevre et al. (Fevre, Williams, & Betts, 2004) found: "Most grass roots members were much less interested in their organization's new role in the political process than the managers of these NGOs. Less than 1 in 5 thought that the assembly had made a difference to their organization."

To construe a successful participatory process, role converging management should be applied to all levels of the policy network, thus also inside the civil society organisation.

Conclusion

The title of this paper promised to explore the limits of participatory democracy. Participation was delineated as internal participation, from informing, over consultation and advice to co-decision and self-government. External participation, like demonstrations and elections, are not subjected to reflection in this work. Exploring the limits of participation means searching for an abstract point were participatory activities start to infect instead of stimulate democracy or the process of democratization. The location of this point is determined by the management of role expectations and the extent to which role demand and role supply are reconciled.

This reveals two limits of participatory policies. First, a participatory process becomes problematic when disappointments gain the upper hand over successful experiences. Stakeholders adjust their role expectations to oppositional external participation. Policy loses legitimacy. Post-conflict peace building settings, with unfinished disarming programmes, are vulnerable to a flaring up of armed conflict. More peaceful societies are vulnerable to distrust and public cynicism towards the political system. The first limit is the point where the process starts to fail.

The second limit is determined by stakeholders that embody many individuals (grassroots) who mandate some people to represent them in a participatory process. This process will be successful in terms of contributing to democracy instead of impeding democracy as long as the internal balance of the stakeholder organisation is kept. The moment where representatives become isolated from their grassroots, the gap between citizens and a classic governmental governance system shifts to a gap between the representatives and their grassroots.

The theoretical model holds the remedies for these diseases in it. The iterative character of role definition both creates the limits and offers possibilities to restore stability. Things can be redone, mistakes can be redeemed. Converging role management is the tool, and in particular a realistic tool because the initiator of the participation process has four theoretical methods to his disposal to remedy diverging role expectation, which translates to the real world in an endless variety of combinations.

To conclude, participatory policy is a good option for democratization. But it is (1) a multi-dimensional and (2) a dynamic concept as a result of which the initiator must (1) chose the applicable variant and (2) adapt his strategy to the changing conditions. So, the often propagated participatory (and in particular deliberative) processes are not necessarily good options for supporting democratization. And the simple act of informing citizens instead of trying to get them on board for consultation, advising or co-decision procedures can increase democratic legitimacy.

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