

Deweyan Democracy: Participation under Modern Conditions

Torjus Midtgarden

Introduction

Dewey's mature conception of democracy may be seen to employ resources from several traditions, and not only from academic sources. His emphasis on democratic participation may thus be viewed in the light of an American political tradition and the civic republicanism of Thomas Jefferson in particular.¹ Indeed, as Dewey himself suggests in his later work *Freedom and Culture* (1939),² Jefferson's preference for a local, communicatively based polity accords with traits of Dewey's own conception of a democratic *public* as originally presented in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927). As both works suggest, and *Freedom and Culture* shows explicitly, Dewey's mature notion of democratic participation rearticulates Jeffersonian ideals and Jefferson's concern for freedom in particular. Such rearticulation requires, however, a sociological and empirical sensitivity to conditions for participation in modern, complex societies, and in this paper I will consider two ways in which Dewey analyses social conditions for democratic participation, and briefly compare these analyses to similar efforts made by members of the Chicago school in sociology in the 1920s. Firstly, in works such as *Democracy and Education* (1916), *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920) and *Lectures in China, 1919–1920* (1973) Dewey points out that political participation is enabled not only through the more inclusive and unified state institutions that have been developed in Western societies, but through membership in voluntary associations in civil society. He more particularly suggests a model of participation in terms of membership in social movements, and in terms of cooperative, social inquiry conducted through such membership. Secondly, however, Dewey further problematizes participation by the notion of various forms of “cultural lag” that characterize industrial societies, and that may be related to conditions for participation at a subjective, as well as at a structural level. I will end by briefly discussing Dewey's attempt to address such problematization through his proposal of a cognitive division of labour between lay agents and social scientific experts.

I. Democratic participation under modern conditions: the case of social movements

In *Freedom and Culture* (1939) Dewey discusses the continuing relevance of the ideas of the Founding Fathers and Thomas Jefferson in particular. Dewey points out that, in reinterpreting Jefferson's democratic ideas, the transformation of America from an agrarian society of Jefferson's days to an urban industrial society gains significance not only as an historical background of interpretation, but becomes all the more important since Jefferson saw freedom in the political domain as depending on freedom in the cultural and economic domain.³ Jefferson's model of a local, town hall polity, and his preference for participation in terms of direct communication, must thus be reinterpreted and assessed in view of modern conditions and agencies that either enable or prohibit a communicatively based polity to become organized. Yet, not only in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) and his political writings from

¹ See Carreira da Silva 2009.

² See LW13: 175–7.

³ LW13: 68–9; 177–8.

the 1930s, but in several works and lectures from the years before his book on the public, Dewey considers social conditions for democratic participation in modern societies, without, however, explicitly referring to the Jeffersonian tradition.

In works such as *Democracy and Education* (1916), *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1919) and *Lectures in China, 1919–1920* (1973), Dewey points out that democratic participation is not based only in local values and interests but is in fact more extensively conditioned and enabled through non-traditional practices and voluntary associations that have arisen from the complex division of labour in modern societies. In *Reconstruction in Philosophy* he thus points out that:

‘Along with the development of the larger, more inclusive and more unified organization of the state has gone the emancipation of individuals from restrictions and servitudes previously imposed by custom and class status. But the individuals freed from external and coercive bonds have not remained isolated. Social molecules have at once recombined in new associations and organizations. Compulsory associations have been replaced by voluntary ones; rigid organizations by those more amenable to human choice and purposes—more directly changeable at will. What upon one side looks like a movement toward individualism, turns out to be really a movement toward multiplying all kinds and varieties of associations: Political parties, industrial corporations, scientific and artistic organizations, trade unions, churches, schools, clubs and societies without number, for the cultivation of every conceivable interest that men have in common’ (MW12: 196).

Adding that ‘[p]luralism is well ordained in present political practice’ (MW12: 196), Dewey sees the need for a modification of political theory, and as Filipe Carreira da Silva (2009) has pointed out, Dewey’s conceptualization of democratic participation in terms of membership in voluntary associations not only draws on Jeffersonian sources, but shows affinity to the civic republicanism expressed through Harold Laski’s theory of political pluralism that became popular in the USA in the 1920s and 30s.⁴ Using the terminology of *The public and Its Problems*, such sociological concretization at least suggests that *publics* can be empirically and historically conceived of in the plural, and that they arise under distinctively modern conditions and need not be understood simply on the model of local communities.⁵

Yet, this conceptualization does not tell us more specifically how voluntary associations become organized as publics to effectively enable political participation, or how a public interacts with existing institutional structures such that sometimes, as Dewey points out in the *The Public and Its Problems*, ‘to form itself, the public has to break existing political forms’ (LW2: 255). It is in his *Lectures in China* that he exemplifies social and historical processes through which publics develop and instigate institutional and legal reform. Taking the fresh example of how suffrage for women was achieved (in the USA in 1919) through the efforts of the women’s rights movement, Dewey instructively shows how democratic participation defines the end, and to some extent even the means, through which a modern public is organised and become politically significant (LC: 76–8). Extending the exemplification to include the labour movement (LC: 78–9) Dewey’s account strongly suggests that the organisation of publics is rooted in economic and industrial conditions. Both women, ‘as wage-earning participants in an expanding industrial milieu’ (LC: 77), and workers generally, developing ‘concepts of the dignity of labour, and of equality of treatment, and of opportunity’ (LC: 78), see themselves in the light of their contributions to the welfare of the whole society. Increasing moral awareness of injustice done to them motivates the organisation of social movements that make demands of right effective.

The case of modern social movements suggests how Dewey’s thought on democratic participation, like that of Jefferson, is motivated by an overarching normative concern:

⁴ See also Westbrook 1991: 245.

⁵ In *The Public and Its Problems* Dewey concludes by favouring the local community as a model for how a public is to be integrated (see LW2: 369–72). See also James Bohman’s recent criticism of Dewey’s notion of a ‘unitary public’ as the solution of the problem of integration (Bohman 2010: 63).

freedom from domination.⁶ While the more immediate historical and political context of Jefferson's civic republicanism is of course the resistance to British colonial domination,⁷ Dewey makes generalizations largely on the basis of European, as well as American history to the effect of showing that Western democracies have developed through resistance to institutionalised forms of legitimization, and to political, economic, and cultural domination inherent in such legitimization.⁸ Through what we may see as a distinctively Left-Hegelian approach Dewey here adopts Hegel's notion of *recognition* to analyse how social movements have emerged through the struggle for public recognition of demands made on behalf of suppressed groups, and how they finally have achieved recognition, such as in the cases of women's suffrage and legislation for improved work conditions in industry.⁹ This Left-Hegelian approach helps us to appreciate the relation between democratic participation and freedom in Dewey's social and political thought. While the mature Dewey often explicates the concept freedom in terms of a notion of "growth" or self-realisation,¹⁰ the case of social movements shows that the value of the kind of social and political participation that such movements involve is not only the self-realisation of individuals; it further suggests that such participation contributes to resisting forms of domination that would otherwise undermine one's possibility to engage in changing the political practices and institutions to which one belong,¹¹ such as was the situation for women through centuries of European and American history.

Besides serving the task of articulating a conceptual relation between participation and freedom, the case of social movements sheds light on the relation between *participation* and *inquiry*. Even here the Hegelian notion of recognition is helpful to the task at hand: Dewey requests members, and particularly leaders, of social movements to 'adopt an attitude of inquiry' to determine what members of society have needs that 'are not being reasonably met' and 'are not being afforded opportunity to develop themselves so as to contribute to enrichment of the total society' (LC: 80). In other words: the task is to find out what individuals and groups are not publicly recognised as to their legitimate needs, as well as to their actual or potential contributions to society. Yet, Dewey further suggests that inquiry through inclusion of representatives of relevant groups in society, the dominating, as well as the dominated ones, may increase the possibility for a peaceful, non-violent resolution of social conflicts. 'If the people on one side of the issue adopt an attitude of calm inquiry', he thinks, 'it becomes less difficult for those who hold opposing views also to adopt a rational approach to the problems' (LC: 80). Dewey's ideal notion of participation as cooperative inquiry no doubt reflects his hopes for the situation in China during his visit where he met leaders of Chinese reform movements. Yet, it is tempting to extend the application of the notion of participation as cooperative inquiry to his contemporary America, with its multiethnic composition and mass immigration. In fact, around the same time, shortly after World War I, prominent American sociologists develop a similar, and in some respects more articulated, notion of participation in terms of inquiry, and among these are Dewey's former student at the University of Michigan, Robert E. Park (1864–1944), and Dewey's former

⁶ In *Freedom and Culture* Dewey emphasises Jefferson's concern for freedom from domination, and he even thinks that it would not be against Jeffersonian principles to hold that economically conditioned domination in civil society would legitimate interference on part of the state: "[i]t is sheer perversion to hold that there is anything in Jeffersonian democracy that forbids political action to bring about equalization of economic conditions in order that the equal right of all to free choice and free action be maintained' (LW13: 178).

⁷ See LW13: 175.

⁸ See LC: 65–70, 73–4.

⁹ See Midtgarden 2011.

¹⁰ See for instance MW12: 186, 198; LW7: 306.

¹¹ Melvin Rogers make a similar claim based on different textual material; 2009: 220–1.

colleague at the University of Chicago, William I. Thomas (1863–1947).¹² By appealing to the ‘Founding Fathers’ for legitimating their concern for participation,¹³ Park and Thomas suggest a model of inquiry for grappling peacefully with conflicts that may arise in times of mass immigration, rapid industrialization and urbanization, and that demand ‘a new definition of the situation’ (Park and Burgess 1921: 766). Like Dewey, these sociologists are driven by a concern for inclusive social participation beyond the sphere of institutionalised politics,¹⁴ but clearer than Dewey they outline a notion of cooperative inquiry in *action theoretical* terms. While stressing language as a medium of participation and coordination of action, and that new immigrants would need a sufficient mastery of the language in their new home country, they emphasise the cultural resources members of new immigrant groups would bring to the task of reaching a coordination of action through “constant redefinitions of the situation”.

‘The ability to participate productively implies ... a diversity of attitudes and values in the participants, but a diversity not so great as to lower the morals of the community and to prevent effective co-operation. It is important to have ready definitions for all immediate situations, but progress is dependent on the constant redefinitions for all immediate situations, and the ideal condition for this is the presence of individuals with divergent definitions, who contribute, in part consciously and in part unconsciously, through their individualism and labors to a common task and a common end’ (Park and Burgess 1921: 767).

Like Dewey, they emphasise the open ended, *experimental* character of such cooperative efforts, and that ‘it is only through their consequences that words get their meanings or that situations become defined’ (Park and Burgess 1921: 768). Nevertheless, like Dewey’s proposal, they provide no account of how such cooperative inquiry may become institutionalized, or how it may interact with institutions of the state.

II. Obstacles to democratic participation through forms of cultural lag

Dewey’s ideal notion of inquiry in terms of membership in social movements must be seen in the light of the social transformations of industrialization that had taken place in Western societies and America in particular by the early 20th century. In his *Lectures in China* Dewey admits that the emergence of the women’s rights movement was largely due to economic factors: ‘[e]conomic factors were primarily responsible for the change in women’s status; political action served chiefly to ratify what economics had already accomplished’ (LC: 109). This suggests that, in addition to suggesting a model of inquiry based on the case of social movements, a realistic assessment of the social conditions for democratic participation must take further account of the socially transformative character of economic and industrial processes. In *The Public and Its Problems* Dewey famously adopts Graham Wallas’s term “The Great Society”¹⁵ to stress more generally the extent to which economic activities,

¹² The context of this suggestion is a sociological discussion of the assimilation of new immigrants in America to which Thomas and Park contributed through the volume *Old World Traits Transplanted* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1921). Although Thomas was its main author, Robert E. Park and Herbert A. Miller were in fact officially recognized as the authors of the first edition of this work. For the intriguing circumstances behind this recognition of authorship, see Rauschenbusch 1979: 92–3. Yet, in Park’s and Ernest W. Burgess’s classical sociological textbook, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (1921), there is an edited version of the same discussion to which I refer below.

¹³ Park and Burgess 1921: 767.

¹⁴ “The founders of America defined the situation in terms of participation, but this has actually taken too exclusively the form of ‘political participation.’ The present tendency is to define the situation in terms of social participation, including demand for the improvement of social conditions to a degree which will enable all to participate” (Park and Burgess 1921: 767).

¹⁵ See Graham Wallas (1914), *The Great Society: A Psychological Analysis*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

involving the implementation and use of new technology, have transformed social conditions for politics and political participation.¹⁶ Here, however, his analysis is more pessimistic, pointing out how economic activity and new transportation and communication technology undermine established political institutions and practices, without giving rise to new ones.

New technology undercuts the authority of political and legal institutions on a national level since, Dewey says, '[g]reen and red lines, marking out political boundaries, are on the maps and affect legislation and jurisdiction of courts, but railways, mails and telegraph-wires disregard them. The consequences of the latter influence more profoundly those living within the legal local units than do boundary lines' (LW2: 301–2).¹⁷ As his former student, Robert Park, Dewey is concerned about the poor conditions and capacities at hand for responding politically and legally to social and moral issues arising in the wake of modern industrial activities. In so doing, they both occasionally refer to “the cultural lag thesis” of another Chicago sociologist, William F. Ogburn (1922), who accounts for social change in terms of a distinction between material or technological culture, the driving force of social change, and immaterial culture, such as morality and politics, which typically lags behind, failing to adapt swiftly and adequately to the new situation established through modern technology.¹⁸

Dewey is particularly concerned that the new situation deeply affects the conditions and capacities for ordinary citizens, both collectively and individually, to participate in politics in a reasoned way. The impact of a cultural lag may be seen on several levels: on a *subjective* level a certain inconsistency or “insincerity” arises when agents are forced to adapt to technological and economical conditions through their professional and everyday habits, but fail to adjust their deeper moral commitments and to rearticulate these as publicly acceptable reasons for action.

‘Insincerities of this sort are much more frequent than deliberate hypocrisies and more injurious. They exist on a wide scale when there has been a period of rapid change in environment accompanied by change in what men do in response and by a change in overt habits, but without corresponding readjustment of the basic emotional and moral attitudes formed in the period prior to change of environment. This “cultural lag” is everywhere in evidence at the present time ... Not merely individuals here and there but large numbers of people habitually respond to conditions about them by means of actions having no connection with their familiar verbal responses. And yet the latter express dispositions saturated with emotions that find an outlet in words but not in acts. No estimate of the effects of culture upon the elements that now make up freedom begins to be adequate that does not take into account the moral and religious splits that are found in our very make-up as persons’ (LW13: 97–8).

One concrete example of such inconsistency or “insincerity” is when American citizens in the 1920s, and particularly in the Southern states, appeal to traditional democratic ideals, such as the Jeffersonian principle of local self-government, but immediately face the incapacity of local governments to deal with illegally imported liquor enabled by new means of transportation, and are forced to recognize, against their principles, the practical need for amendments on a national level.¹⁹

¹⁶ See LW2: 295–6; 301–2.

¹⁷ Dewey’s observations interestingly parallel the efforts of prominent Chicago sociologists to conceptualise the social consequences of the implementation and use of modern technology. In particular, in their outlines of a Human Ecology, Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess and Roderick D. McKenzie emphasize how modern transportation and communication technology enable an ever more extensive physical and economic integration, not only of the North American continent, but of territories and continents across the globe, without a corresponding moral integration. See in particular McKenzie 1924; 1927, and Park and Burgess 1921: 162, 556; and Park 1936.

¹⁸ For Dewey’s direct reference to William F. Ogburn’s book, *Social Change* (1922), see MW15: 259; and for Park’s reference, see Park 1926: 6.

¹⁹ See LW2: 317–8.

Yet, besides such inconsistency on a subjective level, the cultural lag concerns certain *structural conditions* affecting the possibility of organizing and participating through what Dewey calls a “public”.²⁰ Let us first briefly recall Dewey’s definition in *The Public and Its Problems*: the public ‘consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for’ (LW2: 245–6). Dewey stresses ‘the far-reaching character of consequences, whether in space or time; their settled, uniform and recurrent nature, and their irreparableness’ (LW2: 275). In the modern “Great Society” such far-reaching and recurrent consequences arise on certain structural conditions of action: powerful economical agents come into being as industrial corporations through national legislation;²¹ and new technological infrastructure enables their range of action to extend vastly in space and time. Such structural conditions suggest a cultural lag that motivates the conceptual strategy of introducing the notion of the public: the economic activities that are enabled both legally and technologically have social consequences that were foreseen neither by law givers and industrial entrepreneurs, nor by scientists and engineers; and politics and legislation lag behind in dealing with these consequences. At the same time, structural conditions that enable powerful economic agents to act undermine the ability of those who are affected by and suffer the consequences of their acts, the potential members of a public, to organize themselves and make their claims effective.²² Yet, as the case of social movements above suggests, at certain points in recent Western history, those affected by unforeseen consequences of modern economical action have managed to organize themselves and instigate legal and social reforms.

However, potential members of a public would not only be those who in their professional capacity of taking part in the industrial production of material goods have suffered the consequences of unhealthy work conditions, low payments, and unemployment, but individuals who in their role as *consumers* are becoming increasingly economically dependent on available and affordable goods in a ever expanding, international market. Particularly in his lectures on social philosophy from 1923 Dewey focuses on a lag in the economic cycle of production and consumption: whereas individuals and groups participating in industrial production, transportation and exchange of material goods are organised through powerful economic and technological agencies and through social organisations, consumers are ‘an undefined mass’, being ‘remote in space and time’, having ‘no mechanism for making their requirements effective’ (MW15: 262), and they are thus ‘not organized so as to make their wants economically effective’ (MW15: 269). In other words, consumers *qua* consumers lack social and technological means of *communication* for organizing themselves. Such cultural lag is further characterized by a legislation that *de facto* favours the economic interests behind industrial mass production, but that does not handle long term and irreparable consequences of industrial production for current and future users; in particular, ‘[t]he time phase is seen in ruthless exploitation of natural resources without reference to conservation

²⁰ See chapter 7 (“Publics as Products”) in Hickman 1990.

²¹ See MW15: 254, 259, 261; LW2: 354. See also Dewey’s comment in *Freedom and Culture*: ‘Modern industry could not have reached its present development without legalization of the corporation. The corporation is a creature of the state: that is, of political action. It has no existence save by the action of legislatures and courts’ (LW13: 112).

²² Note here how Dewey ascribes a cultural lag thesis to Marx: ‘[M]arx did go back of property relations to the working of the forces of production as no one before him had done. He also discriminated between the state of the forces of productivity and the actual state of production existing at a given time, pointing out the lag often found in the latter. He showed in considerable detail that the cause of the lag is subordination of productive forces to legal and political conditions holding over from a previous regime of production. Marx’s criticism of the present state of affairs from this last point of view was penetrating and possessed of enduring value’ (LW13: 119).

for future users' (MW15: 262).²³ Hence, both in their state of being socially unorganized,²⁴ and in their present or future state of suffering under market conditions unfavourable to their health, interests or developmental potentials, consumers, or rather subsets of consumers, would form a paradigm case of a *public*.

On Dewey's analysis, capitalist societies thus reproduce conditions disabling potential members of a public – such as consumers – to organize themselves and make their requirements bear on politics and legislation. Such social reproduction concerns subjective dispositions and attitudes: as Dewey learns from Thorstein Veblen, consumer habits and subjective preferences are heavily conditioned by class structure and by the market: '[t]he market and business determine wants, not the reverse' (MW15: 264).²⁵ Hence, in so far as the process of forming wants is mediated through socialization, as well as through advertising in the mass media, the capacities of individuals' for articulating common interests and plans for collective action, are further undermined. Not unlike Veblen, Dewey analyzes such incapacity in terms of 'the economic-industrial activities that affect the distribution of power, and of abilities, capacities' (MW15: 247), and in terms of 'the capitalistic system' that has 'restricted and deflected the direction of progress on the basis of the wants and powers of the class having the surplus' (MW15: 266). Given such recognition on Dewey's part of the asymmetric and structurally embedded distribution of power, one may be surprised to find that what Dewey has to offer in terms of a solution in *The Public and Its Problems* is caught in terms of a general requirement of perfecting 'the means and ways of communication of meanings so that genuinely shared interest in the consequences of interdependent activities may inform desire and effort and thereby direct action' (LW2: 332). Yet, since on Dewey's account potential members of a public typically lack effective social and technological means for organising themselves through communication, this ideal requirement of communication does not seem to take us very far. Nevertheless, by being connected to other, related suggestions in *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey's hopes for a communicatively organized public may be developed in ways that may appear more realistic in the internet age than in his own days; and I will end my presentation by some reflections on his proposal of a cognitive division of labour between lay agents and experts, and on the technological infrastructure that may support such division of labour.

III. Cooperative inquiry through cognitive division of labour

Dewey's proposal of a cognitive division of labour is motivated by a consideration on the asymmetric distribution of cognitive resources among citizens. To some extent, Dewey argues, the economically conditioned asymmetric distribution of *power* can be correlated with an asymmetric distribution of *knowledge* and *information*: whereas the majority of the members of society lack knowledge that could have put them in a better position to understand how the market affects their lives, including knowledge of processes through which wants and preferences are formed, economic elites not only have financial means but 'occupy strategic positions which give them advance information of forces that affect the market' (LW2: 338–9), and by which they may in turn influence economic processes to their own benefit.²⁶ Such asymmetric distribution of knowledge, Dewey tends to think, can only be

²³ In his *Social Change* William F. Ogburn similarly uses the issue raised by the exploitation of the forests as a natural resource in USA as an example of cultural lag, see Ogburn 1922: 204–5.

²⁴ See how Dewey in *The Public and Its Problems* stresses that '[i]n itself [the public] is unorganized and formless' (LW2: 277).

²⁵ See also LW2: 299–301.

²⁶ See also how Dewey in his lectures on social philosophy (1923) criticizes the assumption that economic life is based on "natural laws" guiding its transactions and processes; in the current state, he thinks, it is more or less

countered through ‘a kind of knowledge and insight which does not yet exist’ (LW2: 339) but which he through his discussion with Walter Lippmann projects in terms of a cognitive division of labour, rather than an ‘intellectual aristocracy’ of experts (LW2: 362).

In *The Public and Its Problems* Dewey proposes that social scientific experts and lay agents should cooperate to develop the kind of knowledge that would capture the conditions under which particular individuals or groups become unfavourably affected by indirect consequences of action, and that would contribute to form a shared perception of things among those affected. Affected lay agents are to enter the process of inquiry to assess proposals developed by the experts.²⁷ James Bohman has emphasised that Dewey’s model challenges and complements the epistemic authority of scientific experts, and that it suggests ways in which affected agents may participate in deliberations with them on relevant issues.²⁸ Bohman, however, focuses primarily on the later stages of a process of inquiry, where lay agents are to “practically verify” expert proposals,²⁹ and not so much on the early stages of inquiry, where issues are detected and problems formulated. In fact, Dewey emphasizes that social scientific experts are to be informed about issues through the agents affected in order to come up with proposals that are relevant to those agents.³⁰ Lay agents would thus participate through offering their various “definitions of the situation”, to borrow Park’s and Thomas’s term. Such definitions would clearly be diverging, and they would contain various implicit values and valuations, given various social and cultural backgrounds involved. The task of the social scientists would be to make such implicit value-orientations explicit and, further, to make the value orientations bear on *alternative* proposals for how issues can be addressed and grappled with. The proposals would thus articulate expected practical and social consequences of the value-orientations when acted on through available institutional and technological means.³¹ As such hypothesized consequences the proposals should be tested when lay agents re-enter the process of inquiry through what Bohman calls a “practical verification”. A practical verification would not only bring the expert proposal to the test, but would force lay agents involved to reflect on their values and cognitive perspectives.

This brief and swift account of Dewey’s suggestion of a cognitive division of labour, focussing on the cognitive, problem solving tasks of inquiry, could be complemented by a few words on the role such cooperation could play in organizing otherwise dispersed individuals and in forming collective identities through communication. In the era of modern information and communication technology Dewey’s hopes for a communicatively organized public may seem less utopian than in his own days. Through Internet and computer based networks, scientists may not only effectively reach large numbers of agents and engage in dialogue with them, but the agents themselves have a technologically enabled communicative medium through which they may articulate experiences, exchange descriptions and form identities.

arbitrary who has power and knowledge to influence economic processes, and the situation is rather a ‘[r]eign of accident rather than law; that is, “natural laws” are only statements of mechanical and physical relations which give all the advantage to those who merely *happen* to be in positions of superior power, by birth, inheritance, access to news, chance for training, etc. Property not so much a reward of industry and abstinence as an opportunity to levy toll upon industry, based upon accident, and thus producing social disorganization’ (MW15: 238).

²⁷ ‘It is not necessary that the many should have the knowledge and skill to carry on the needed investigations; what is required is that they have the ability to judge of the bearing of the knowledge supplied by others upon common concerns’ (LW2: 365).

²⁸ See Bohman 1999.

²⁹ See Bohman 1999: 466, 475–77.

³⁰ See LW2: 364–5.

³¹ See how Dewey in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938) more generally and abstractly defines social inquiry in terms of analyzing a problematic situation: ‘any problematic situation, *when it is analyzed*, presents, in connection with the idea of operations to be performed, *alternative* possible ends in the sense of terminating consequences’ (LW12: 495).

Researcher may facilitate such enabled encounters electronically through requisite software; and recent examples show how social scientists have invited citizens and stakeholder to participate in online discussions about the consequences of emerging technologies affecting the lives of an increasing number of people.³² The new possibilities opened up for citizens to engage in exchanges about their experiences and views of new technologies that affect conditions of living across the globe, may perhaps be seen as a partial fulfilment of democratic hopes that Dewey had. In any case, the new historical possibility to conceive of what Bohman has called “Internet Publics”³³ suggests that technological inventions are not, as they seemed in Dewey’s days, only detrimental to democratic participation. In addition, general traits of Dewey’s social ontology may be seen as adaptable to the new era of information and communication technology in so far as he defines the very category of *the social* such as to include technology,³⁴ and in so far as he stresses that *communication* has as a necessary condition mechanical *association* of the sort that technological applications, as well as physiological processes, exemplify.³⁵

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³² I here use the example of the EU funded and now completed *TECHNOLIFE* project coordinated by the University of Bergen: *TECHNOLIFE* designed and used an open-source software to invite citizens and stakeholders to discuss ethical issues of concern related to Biometrics; Geographical Imaging Systems, and Emerging Technologies of Human Enhancement. See the website: www.technolife.no.

³³ See Bohman 2008.

³⁴ See “The Inclusive Philosophical Idea” (1928) and the comment that ‘What would social phenomena be without the tools and machines by which physical energies are utilized?’ (LW3: 47).

³⁵ See *Experience and Nature* (LW1: 138–9), *The Public and Its Problems* (LW2: 250–1, 330), and his elaboration on the distinction between *association* and *communication* (*community*) in *Freedom and Culture*: ‘There is a difference between a society, in the sense of an association, and a community. Electrons, atoms and molecules are in association with one another ... Natural associations are conditions for the existence of a community, but a community adds the function of communication in which emotions and ideas are shared as well as joint undertakings engaged in. Economic forces have immensely widened the scope of associational activities’ (LW13: 176).

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