1. Beyond deliberative democracy

As Graham Smith rightfully observed: "deliberative democracy has established an almost hegemonic hold on democratic theory and the analysis of participatory governance." Continuing on a critical note, he formulated a number of urgent questions: "does the dominance of deliberative democracy skew the way we conceptualize and analyze democratic innovations, and the democratic system more generally? Whatever happened to theories of participatory democracy and society? In what ways do other theoretical perspectives provide important insights into democratic institutions and systems that are overlooked or underplayed by deliberative democrats? Or can these other perspectives be adequately incorporated within deliberative democratic theory?"¹

Against this backdrop, the present paper will attempt to look beyond what can be called deliberative-turn theory, exploring the implications of alternative ways of conceptualizing democratic innovation. After a brief discussion of deliberative democracy and its central notions and protagonists, I will focus on the paper’s first aim: extending the theoretical perspective, so as to include democratic innovations beyond randomized deliberation, which has become almost synonymous to democratic innovation in some parts. (E.g. the influential book ‘Innovating Democracy’, Goodin, 2010, exclusively deals with deliberative mini-publics, while also this ECPR-panel on ‘Democratic Innovations’ strongly focuses on randomized-deliberative versions of democratic innovation.) This will result in a wider framework of democratic options, and values to be considered when moving towards such options (summarized in Table 3).

The second aim of the paper is to take a closer empirical look at democratic innovations that have received less than due attention in the deliberative-turn dominated literature on democratic innovation. In a paper of this limited size I will confine myself to only three examples of

¹ Graham Smith, in his call for papers for a panel titled “beyond deliberative hegemony” at the ECPR general conference, Prague, 2016.
salient alternatives to randomized deliberation, which in my reasoning deserve separate and additional treatment: the return of plebiscitary democracy through the (quasi-)referendum, the democratic reinvention of collaborative governance, and the advent of do-it-ourselves democracy. I think a more in-depth and contextualized treatment is necessary to appreciate the contrasts with randomized deliberative democracy.

While the first aim of the paper makes me widen the theoretical scope (in Section 3), the second aim urges me to write more in-depth on empirical realities (in Section 4). My reasoning, however, starts with deliberative-turn theory (in Section 2), and ultimately also revisits it (in Section 5).

2. Deliberative-turn theory – focus points and blind spots

“Largely under the influence of Jürgen Habermas, the idea that democracy revolves around the transformation rather than simply the aggregation of preferences has become one of the major positions in democratic theory.” This is how Jon Elster (1998: 1) herded what later would be framed as the ‘deliberative turn’ in democratic theory. In line with an essentially non-aggregative philosophy, Elster aptly defined deliberative democracy as “decision making by discussion among free and equal citizens” (1998:1).

The Deliberative Democracy Consortium, a web-based offspring of the influential Deliberative Democracy Handbook, edited by Gastil & Levine (2005) proclaims: “deliberative democracy strengthens citizen voices in governance by including people of all races, classes, ages and geographies in deliberations that directly affect public decisions.” Elsewhere, Gastil (2014) underscores the privileging of “reason, argument, respect, and dialogue” in deliberative democracy, which would reject not only thin forms of aggregation in representative democracy’s but also non-reflective modes of mass mobilization in participatory democracy (cf. Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Mutz, 2006; Atlee, 2012: 58). Mansbridge et al. (2010: 55) define deliberation as “communication that induces reflection on preferences, values and interests in a non-coercive way.”

As Elster pointed out, the most influential theory inspiring the deliberative turn is the theory of communicative action, initially developed by Habermas (1981). Such action is ideally (Hendriks, 2010: 116):
- Inclusive, hearing all voices, in an unbiased way;
- Open, in the sense of genuinely communicative, non-manipulative;
- Powerfree, accepting the ‘unforced force of the better argument’,

2.
abstaining from powerplay;
- *Argumentative*, based on an extensive exchange of views, rather than a mere addition or barter of preferences and interests;
- *Transformative*, changing initial ‘raw opinions’ into a more refined, enriched collective understanding.

Even though the Habermassian ‘ideal speech situation’ fitting deliberative democracy is open to anyone, it is virtually impossible to meet the conditions for communicative action for anyone who does not endorse egalitarian rules and relations.

Conventional wisdom has it that the deliberative turn in democratic theory has gained momentum in the 1990s (Elster, 1998: 1; Dryzek, 2000: 1), continuing to dominate thinking about post-representative democracy up to the present (Goodin, 2010: 1-3). A great many authors, especially in the Anglo-American world, have indeed massively turned their attention to a deliberative understanding of democracy in the previous 20-25 years. The explosive growth of peer-reviewed scholarship on deliberative democracy has been aptly documented by Gastils (2014, Figure 3 therein).

While many democratic theorists aspire to influence democratic practice, deliberative democrats, according to Goodin (2010: 3), have been far more assiduous in joining up their theory with practice than most. And indeed, a substantial amount of real-life democratic innovations that are more or less deliberatively-democratic have been documented. A number of cases is repeatedly mentioned – the Citizen’s Assembly in British Columbia, Listening to the town in New York, Deliberative Polling in Texas and the Chinese township Zegua -, but there is certainly more under the top of the iceberg (Smith, 2009; Chwalisz, 2015). Of the 548 cases presently described and analysed on the website www.participedia.net no less than 496 are using the noun ‘deliberation’, and 173 the more specific adjective ‘deliberative’ to explain what is being done. This is not to say that all of them would pass the strictest tests of deliberative quality, but it does prove how central the language of deliberation has become in the framing, explaining and legitimation of innovation.

*Democratic turns beyond the deliberative turn*

In this paper, I do not question the occurrence of a deliberative turn in democratic theory and parts of democratic practice. I will, however, propagate empirical investigation and theory building well beyond the so-
called deliberative turn, which has drawn attention away from some other developments, more salient in the practice of democratic innovation than in the theory of it: the return or rebound of plebiscitary democracy of an aggregative rather than transformative type; and the turn to cooperative democracy of an action-oriented and purposefully-selective rather than reflection-oriented and randomly-selective type. These two are distinctive developments, which can be subdivided in various subcurrents, as I will argue below, but they are also united in one particular way.

What these developments have in common, and what distinguishes them from the deliberative turn, is a move away from a predominantly cerebral and cognitive definition of democratic innovation, in which the quantity and quality of political conversation, and as a result the achieved transformation of public opinion, have become standard for the accomplishments of democracy (Mutz, 2006). Plebiscitary democracy is the theoretical opposite of deliberative democracy. In essence, it is a majoritarian, vote-counting type of democracy, without highly communicative or transformative ambitions. Cooperative democracy comes with more cross-cutting communication, but other than in deliberative democracy this is not a goal in and of itself; it is a means applied when instrumental for what is deemed more important: getting things done, in productive and creative ways.

I should stress that the generic types of plebiscitary and cooperative democracy are not really new (which can also be said of deliberative democracy). Nonetheless, they have become empirically more prominent as a result of techno-cultural developments in recent decades, which supported particular expressions of the generic types. The 1990s saw not only the growth of the deliberative turn in academic writing, it was also the period in which the internet and web-based technology took off. This facilitated a massive expansion of online, quasi-referendums and electronic votations with a markedly plebiscitary logic. It also facilitated new forms of cooperative democracy, which Noveck (2009) has tried to capture with the image of ‘wiki governance’, highlighting the co-production of dispersed, but emphatically non-random, actors who closely cooperate to pool the diverse resources that they have. I will further break down and illustrate these developments, comparing them to expressions of the deliberative turn, both theoretically (in the next section), and empirically (in the section thereafter).

3. Beyond the deliberative turn – refining our looking glass
When it comes to putting deliberative democracy in a wider theoretical perspective, one of the best starting points is Fishkin's seminal study 'When the people speak' (2009). Although eventually advocating the specific subtype of the Deliberative Poll, Fishkin does a lot to carefully contextualize it within the realm of deliberative democracy, which in turn is compared to other expressions of democracy.

A main organizing principle in Fishkin's work is the trilemma of democratic values - political equality, participation and deliberation -, which are all deemed equally crucial to democracy, but very difficult to acquire at the same time. Attempts to achieve any two of these values will undermine the realization of the third. The forte of mass democracy, for instance, is mass participation (large numbers turn out at election day) combined with political equality (one man one vote); but meaningful deliberation among all these voters is very hard to achieve (see the pluses and minuses, derived from Fishkin, in Table 1).

The mirror-image of mass democracy is provided by the third option that Fishkin distinguishes: microscopic deliberation, based on random sampling, as operationalized in citizen juries, deliberative panels, consensus conferences and the like. They invest strongly in deliberation through various communicative methods, as well as in political equality through randomization, which equalizes the odds of getting included in a sample that is expected to be (statistically) representative of the wider population. The big trade-off, however, is with participation. Numbers of participants are per definition small, even 'microscopic', in relation to the wider population. This also applies to Fishkin's preferred variant of Deliberative Polling, which implies somewhat larger numbers to be surveyed, before and after deliberation, but still only a relatively small sample of those 'represented'.

Between mass democracy and microscopic deliberation, Fishkin distinguishes a deliberative-democratic option that relies on targeted mobilization: actively inviting people to participate in deliberative events, for instance the National Issues Forums in the US. Such events invest in participation combined with deliberation, although some authors would argue that the increased focus on participation leads to a decreased quality of deliberation (Atlee, 2012). The crucial trade-off, however, is with the value of political equality. Only the ones who can be mobilized participate, which would often be the ones that get together because of like-mindedness. The result would be 'enclave deliberation' (Sunstein,

Table 1: Fishkin’s trilemma

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>equality</th>
<th>participation</th>
<th>deliberation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. mass democracy</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(all-included)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. mobilized deliberation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(selectively-invited)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. microscopic deliberation</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(random-sample)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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This framework will serve as the stepping stone to a reorganized framework, which can help to highlight some of the blind spots that come with the hegemonic position of the deliberative-turn paradigm in the study of democratic innovation. Homing-in on an often particular version of microscopic deliberation – category 3 in Table 1 – has led to a weakened attentiveness to important transformations and bifurcations within especially the other two categories. Even Fishkin’s work, which is sensitive to the comparative merits of options other than the preferred subcategory of Deliberative Polling, displays a bias that can be found in deliberative-democracy discourse in general – mostly in a more pronounced way.

Adding a missing dimension – concretization

The central bias, from which other selective-attention phenomena arise, has to do with the focus on democracy as a reflective process that should ultimately lead to a more refined public opinion – a better public view on public matters. Fishkin’s Deliberative Polling is explicitly designed to transform ‘raw public opinion’, which would arise from standard opinion polling, to a more ‘refined public opinion’, through deliberative discussions that should do their transformative work in the period between pre-deliberation and post-deliberation polling.
Small-scale deliberative minipublics – like citizen juries, consensus conferences, planning cells, citizen deliberative councils – also attempt to enrich public opinion, which in some cases is presented as a people’s verdict, and in other cases as an advice, request, viewpoint or proposition. Larger-scale general assemblies based on random sampling – e.g. 21st Century Town Meetings in the US, local G1000 meetings in Dutch towns, the national G1000-assembly for Belgium – are equally focused on the enrichment of public opinion, usually finding closure in memoranda of ‘enriched’ national priorities or local desirabilities.

Like many others in deliberative-democracy theory, Fishking explicitly models processes and outcomes of deliberation on social science methodology. Randomization, also used in survey research, should be instrumental in producing a proper sample of citizens – the minipublic –, which is expected to be statistically-representative of the wider population, for which it could 'therefore' speak (cf. Fishkin, 2009; Goodin, 2010; Grönlund et. al, 2014). Whereas social-science surveys attempt to formulate valid statements on populations' views by taking random samples of these populations and approaching them with validated means of inquiry, deliberative-democracy innovations try to tease out what a statistically-representative sample of citizens would think about public issues, after they have been properly allowed to think-through and deliberate on the issues. The result would be better, more validated, public views on public matters.

Democracy, however, cannot be reduced to a procedure for instilling 'better views' among the public – as a social-science project designed to teach lay people to think more 'properly'. As a form of governing, democracy is ultimately also about getting things done for and to some extent with the people concerned. As Elster (1998: 9) aptly noted on the essence of democratic process: "A better analogy might be engineering rather than science: the aim is to find an approximation that works rather than the truth" (cf. Ankersmit, 1996: 107). Following this line of reasoning, we should recognize and add another core dimension of democratic quality, which is missing in Table 1 as it is in much of deliberative-democracy discourse, namely: concretization. The Oxford Dictionary meaning of concretization is 'make (an idea or concept) real', ‘give specific or definite form to’, in this case operational answers to actual problems. Or indeed, in Elster’s words, ‘finding an approximation that works’ in real-life circumstances.

2 “The People’s Verdict” was actually the way in which the Maclean’s Forum, an experiment with deliberative democracy in Canada, was named and framed.
This addition is all the more justified, considering the claim that output legitimacy, democracy as problem solving for the people, has become ever more important (Scharpf, 1999; Mansbridge, 2012; Helms, 2015). While concretization is more of an output-value, participation and deliberation are better understood as input-, respectively throughput-, values. Political equality is less easy to pin down on the input-throughput-output sequence; as a core value it steers critical attention back and forth, between start and finish of the democratic process.

Table 2: Bringing concretization back in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>equality</th>
<th>participation</th>
<th>deliberation</th>
<th>concretization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. mass democracy</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(all-included)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. mobilized deliberation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>(selectively-invited)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. microscopic deliberation</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>(random-sample)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To acknowledge the value of concretization, I have added a fourth column to the framework of democratic values and options. At first, in Table 2, this produces a rather bleak add-on, as none of the three democratic options seems to be particularly strong on concretization. In mass democracy, this is supposedly something that comes after election day, when ‘politics’ is followed by ‘administration’. Both the mobilized and randomized versions of deliberation seem to be more interested in political conversation then in concrete action.

The picture is more nuanced, however, when we further refine the options that are theoretically open to a demos, as is being done in Table 3. Taking a more refined view of within-category options can help us (re)discover options that are potentially stronger on concretization than the bleak overview of Table 2 would suggest.

Randomized deliberation and appointment – Proceeding this way we can, amongst other things, rediscover the classic option of the randomized appointment of magistrates (Category 3d in Table 3). Lottery appointments were widely utilized in ancient Athens, where everyday about 3,200 citizens
selected by lot would handle practical matters in many fields of public life (Hornblower, 1992). Compared to randomized deliberation in small-scale citizen panels (3a), larger-scale assemblies (3b) and through deliberative polling (3c) – already introduced above –, randomized appointment of magistrates is stronger on concretization. This, however, also comes at a cost – less attention to deliberative conversation. In ancient Athens, randomly selected magistrates mostly just performed a public function, without a lot of fuss: controlling garbage disposal out of town, maintenance of temples, wharfs, grane shelters, et cetera.

Although the Athenian practice of randomly-rotating offices may not match well with modern culture, it is at least remarkable that more modest versions of it – say: rotating the monitoring of road maintenance or non-specialized care for the elderly amongst randomized groups of citizens – have hardly been considered in the literature. Especially when there is research showing that many citizens would rather do something together on a practical level than deliberate with randomly assembled others on a more abstract and potentially sensitive level (Hendriks & Tops, 2005; Mutz, 2006). Weaker versions, from a standpoint of concretization, such as the random appointment of citizens to representative bodies or to advisory boards, have received somewhat more attention in deliberative democracy discourse (Chwalisz, 2015). Bringing randomized appointment back-into view requires renaming the third category in a more inclusive way: randomized deliberation and appointment.

**Mobilized deliberation ánd cooperation** – The second category is also extended and renamed. Mobilization is not only what happens in large-scale meetings that prioritize invited participation over equalization of entry chances (as in National Issues Forums, Occupy-type general assemblies, examples of category 2a). The other three options in category 2a also mobilize participants on particular characteristics, albeit not in the same way as enclave deliberation does, which is why all three fare better in terms of concretization.

As defined by Fung (2004), empowered participation (2b) mobilizes citizens affected by and interested in particular fields of public service – in Fung’s research: policing and education in Chicago – to deliberate and cooperate with the professional policymakers. Surely, there is deliberation involved in empowered participation, but this deliberation stays relatively close to concrete action and steers clear from enclave deliberation of those-who-already-agree. In comparison with enclave
deliberation, numbers of participants tend to be smaller in case of empowered participation.

Do-it-ourselves democracy (2c) and collaborative governance (2d) deserve special attention, largely overlooked as they are in deliberative-turn dominated discourse; I will take a closer, case-based look at them in the next section. Do-it-ourselves democracy involves concrete action of groups of people who agree that something needs to be done – not discussed again, but simply done – about something. This may involve a recognized problem ('let's keep this community center open'), or an emerging opportunity ('let's use our WhatsApp-group to mobilize for safety-enhancing walks through the neighborhood'). The groups involved operate as if inspired by the Elvis Presley song “A little less conversation, a little more action” (Van de Wijdeven & Hendriks, 2009). Cross-cutting deliberation is not their forte, and participating communities tend to be smaller than those who turn-up for enclave deliberations of the Occupy-Wallstreet type. But this may be compensated by concrete action in the real world.

In the sphere of collaborative governance (2d) many transformations are unfolding, often under the radar of democratic innovation research. Fishkin (2009) captures some of the underlying spirit when writing about elite deliberation in the tradition of the American Federalists. In a continental-European context, elite deliberation thrived in the context of consociationalism and corporatism – systems of cross-cutting deliberation in social and economic governance (Lijphart, 2002; Steiner & Ertman, 2002). Such institutional patterns are best understood as a bedrock on which new types of collaborative governance evolve. In the next section, I will discuss the case of Brainport-Eindhoven, a metropolitan cooperative that brings together elites that represent various governments, companies and higher-education providers in the region on a highly practical agenda – keeping the metropolitan economy moving through concerted, tripartite action. Collaborative-governance practices like these have one thing in common: a firm choice for a highly practical type of deliberation – the preferred terms are 'co-production' and 'co-creation' – often at the expense of wide and equal participation (Noveck, 2009: 170-2)

**General elections and votations** – Finally, we need to take a fresh look at the ‘weapons’ of mass democracy. Although Fishkin acknowledges the relevant

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3 In an overview article, Ansell & Gash (2008) display the breadth of collaborative governance. It is remarkable, and illustrative of the separation of research fields, that they hardly make explicit reference to democracy (searching on ‘democra’ gets only one hit in the main text), even though collaborative governance is clearly relevant to it.
differences between general elections and directly-democratic votations such as referendums, he lumps them together when it comes to discussing the trade-offs between democratic core values (see earlier discussion, and Table 1). In a sense this is correct – they give electoral masses equal opportunities to participate in large-scale votations. (Even so-called 'low turn-outs' in some general elections and votations attract much larger numbers of participants than all of the other options that are discussed here.) In Table 3, however, I have emphatically highlighted the differences between general elections, formal referendums and other types of generalized votations.

General elections (1a) hardly need introduction. As central to representative democracy, they legitimate the parties and candidates that win executive offices or seats in representative bodies that are expected to do the political work for the people, based on an electoral mandate by the people. General assembly voting (1b), essentially a local phenomenon, prevails when the entire citizenry is invited to participate in votations that practically concern the same citizenry. The Swiss Landesgemeinde is a case in point, as is the classic New England Town Meeting (Mansbridge, 1980; Zimmerman, 1999). These meetings are focused on voting, and time per voting item is often scarce. Yet there is, to some extent, room for cross-cutting deliberation, giving different sides in the discussion opportunities to speak up before the votes are aggregated and an often straight majority decision is being taken. The small-scale character brings a level of sensitivity to concrete action, albeit weaker than what we saw in category 2.

Recent developments in the techno-cultural context of democracy require a fresh look at referendums and initiatives (1c), as well as the burgeoning, but ill-understood, range of quasi-referendums and new forms of polling (1d). These two tend to be increasingly entangled, as one of the cases in the next section exemplifies. Scholarly attention to the entanglement of the two in the real world is, however, lagging behind the vast and still growing literature on the deliberative turn. In general, deliberative-turn theory has been notably aversive to plebiscitary democracy, in any guise (Green, 2010). The fact that sensitivity to current, 'hot topics' is combined with little attention to deliberation, participation and equality,

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‘Pioneering research into aggregative and plebiscitary democracy by Cain et al. (2003) has not been updated, nor has it been widened to include the new quasi-referendums of the internet age. The institutionalization of formal referendums (and related mechanisms of direct democracy) is monitored in specialized literature (Altman, 2010; Qvortrup, 2014), easily overshadowed by the sheer size of deliberative-democracy literature.'
fuels the aversion. Yet, as a mushrooming new practice of 'public hearing',
students of democratic innovation can and must not shy away from analysing
the subject.

Table 3: The wider framework of democratic options and values
(+ and – indicating comparatively higher and lower emphasis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EQUALITY</th>
<th>PARTICIPATION</th>
<th>DELIBERATION</th>
<th>CONCRETIZATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 GENERAL ELECTIONS &amp; PLEBISCITES</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a. general elections</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. general assembly voting</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>-/+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c. referendums/initiatives</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>1d. quasi-referendums/polls</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. MOBILIZED DELIBERATION &amp; COOPERATION</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2a. enclave deliberation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>2b. empowered participation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c. do-it ourselves democracy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>2d. collaborative governance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. RANDOMIZED DELIBERATION &amp; APPOINTMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3a. random citizen panels (#10-25)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>3b. random general assemblies (#100-1000)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>3c. deliberative polls (#500-1000+)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d. lottery appointments</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. Democratic variation beyond the deliberative turn – taking a closer look

To recapitulate the reasoning thus far: a) the deliberative turn is real, at least in democratic theory, and to some extent also in democratic practice; b) deliberative-turn discourse comes, however, with a notable bias, modeling democratic innovation on social-sciences methodology, foregrounding democracy as a procedure for getting to more validated public views; c) concretization, finding an approximation that works in practice, has been undervalued and needs to be added to the received value-trinity of equality, participation and deliberation; d) beyond versions of randomized deliberation, a wider and more refined range of democratic, and potentially innovative, methods needs to taken seriously; e) this needs to be done so that the turn in democratic practice to new forms of plebiscitary and cooperative democracy – no less salient than the turn to deliberation, though less appreciated in deliberative-turn dominated discourse – is better recognized and understood.

In this section, I set out to take a closer look at three subcurrents, often overlooked in democratic-innovation studies, while salient in the real world of democratic innovation: the rebound of plebiscitary democracy through the (quasi-)referendum, the advent of collaborative governance, and of do-it-ourselves democracy.5 For developing sensitivity to the characteristics and the implications of such expressions, a closer look at empirical manifestations is needed. I will derive and discuss three salient cases from democratic practice in the Netherlands:

- Aggregative campaigning against the Ukrai%EU Treaty
- Tripartite concerted action in Brainport-Eindhoven
- Hands-on residence cooperation in Biest-Houtakker

A within-one-country-case analysis has advantages in terms of research design (Lijphart, 1975; George & Bennett, 2005: 165). Where context is crucial to the reception and perception of trends, it is beneficial to select cases that share general-context characteristics, even though specific-context characteristics cannot be neglected – and will not be neglected here.

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5 Lottery appointments, 3d in Table 3, are also overlooked, but empirically not salient enough to warrant separate treatment in a paper pressed for space. The other subcategories have received variable attention in the literature. While some may be deemed overexposed in theory relative to their position in reality, others have received due attention.
Another, though secondary, advantage follows from the observation that the Netherlands is often viewed as a fertile breeding ground for deliberative democracy of the highly egalitarian kind. It may be regarded as significant that democratic innovations diverging from these characteristics should also blossom on this breeding ground. I could paraphrase Frank Sinatra – ‘if they can make it there, then they can make it anywhere’ – to invoke the logic of a so-called ‘least-likely case study’ (Peters, 2013: 68), but I do not want to emphasize this line of reasoning too much. The within-case exploration of characteristics and implications is more important than a generalized statement on the occurrence of the phenomena. (Even though it is fairly easy to show, as I will do in passing, that the illustrations are no exceptions and stem from well-populated categories.)

**Reinventing the (quasi)referendum: aggregative campaigning against the Ukrain-EU Treaty**

Stock-taking exercises clearly demonstrate that the Dutch referendum on the Ukrain-EU Treaty, held on April 6, 2016, joins a growing category within plebiscitary democracy. Using data from the Centre for Direct Democracy, The Economist (2016) signals a rise in Europe of an average three (national) referendums in the 1970s to eight in present years. This is not including Switzerland and Liechtenstein; nor the growing number of local and regional referendums in various European countries (Qvortrup, 2014; Holtkamp, 2016); nor the explosive growth of quasi-referendums that bring the aggregative logic to the public domain with new means and mechanisms – often electronic, such as the count of Facebook-likes, Google-hits, or e-signatures on e-polls and e-petitions.

Formal referendums and quasi-referendums can develop independently, but tend to gain traction when developing in the same issue space and time frame. The referendum logic and language is easily taken over in quasi-plebiscites that appear in the old and new media (‘a majority of the people prefer...’), which in turn can support the build-up to a formal referendum. The Dutch referendum on the EU-trade agreement with the Ukrain presents a case in point. (As does the Brexit-referendum, and the quasi-referendums surrounding it, also in 2016; analyzing this highly decisive, ‘seismic’ case, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.)

The final vote in the ‘Ukrain referendum’ – 61% of the Dutch voters turned down the trade agreement – was the culminating point of an aggregative process that included multiple steps. A crucial and innovative role in the
aggregative process was played by the website GeenPeil.nl (translation: NoLevel.nl), a spin-off from the feared shock-blog GeenStijl.nl (translation: NoStyle.nl). A tipping point in the aggregative process was reached when GeenStijl sent out the following message: “Hurray. We have done it. It is now possible to sign the GeenPeil referendum online.”

The wording ‘GeenPeil referendum’ in the previous message was remarkable. Officially, there was not yet an actual referendum planned when this message was sent out – August 19, 2015. Formally speaking, the process was at the stage in which a large amount of signatures (300.000) still needed to be collected. Helped by volunteer developers, who designed a purpose-built app, the effort was turned into a massive open online petition with the flavor of a plebiscite. Sympathizers could sign the e-petition-for-referendum on their PC, tablet or smartphone, and the app would then help to do the rest: fold a PDF, print it and hand it over to the Kiesraad. (This formal body, overseeing electoral processes in the Netherlands, had accepted the online bypass after some hesitation.) When one week before the official deadline still one third of the necessary signatures was lacking, an e-mail was sent out to all persons in the GeenPeil database, asking them to each find one other person that would also sign for the referendum. The 300.000 mark was then reached – just in time –, which meant that the official referendum on the EU-Ukrain treaty came into view, and other polling agencies became increasingly active. The question on which they focused was not only ‘will the nay-sayers outnumber the yes-voters?’, it was also ‘will the turn-out reach the necessary 30 percent of the eligible voters?’

On the day of the Dutch referendum the answer to both questions turned out to be affirmative – 61% said no, and 32,3% turned-out. At that point, the latter was the most remarkable fact as previous polls had indicated that those inclining to yes were not very likely to win more votes, but could perhaps defeat the other side by staying at home. The no-camp – extra motivated by the added suspension coming from pre-referendum polling -, turned-out in numbers large enough to ultimately win the day. Looking back on their referendum campaign in a splendid piece of research journalism, the driving actors behind GeenPeil clarified that, notwithstanding a growing anti-EU sentiment to work with and a substantial amount of offline campaigning put into it, their campaign would not have survived the necessary signature-collection stage without the aggregative potential of

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6 M. van Dongen, De lessen van GeenPeil, Volkskrant, April 1, 2016 – based on interviews with the organizers behind GeenPeil.
ICT and internet-jockeys capable of unleashing this potential. The purpose-built app is open source and can be used again.

The intertwining of the massively growing quasi-referendum and the moderately growing regular referendum warrants more attention in democratic innovation research. While deliberation is not an in-built property of (quasi-)referendums, their majoritarian logic can indirectly sustain deliberation — probably not the randomized deliberation (Type 3 in Table 3) that Fishkin and others would prefer, but possibly the mobilized deliberation characteristic of collaborative governance (Type 2d). According to Neidhart’s (1970) famous thesis, corroborated in later research, the highly developed referendum culture in Switzerland ultimately supports elite collaboration, transforming “a plebiscitary democracy into a negotiation democracy” (Kriesi & Trechsel, 2008: 115). Research reviewing the American practice suggest a less benign rival hypothesis, stipulating that the referendum aggravates adversarial and polarizing tendencies in the democratic system, (Gerber, 1999; Ellis, 2002; Zakaria, 2010).

**Rediscovering collaborative governance: tripartite concerted action in Brainport-Eindhoven**

In the Dutch city of Eindhoven – breeding ground of the established electronics giant Philips as well as the new microelectronics world leader ASML – a special case of collaborative governance has been developed that brings together, in an adapted way, elements of Rhinelandic corporatism (Oldersma, 1997; Steiner & Ertman, 2002), and elements described in American urban politics literature under the heading of ‘urban regimes’ (Stone, 1989; 2006). In Stone’s classic analysis of the urban regime that governed Atlanta for decades, a black political elite and a white business elite brought together vital resources in a stable long-term coalition which turned Atlanta into a ‘city too busy to hate’, and comparatively good at it (Stone, 1989).

The collaborative-governance system of Brainport-Eindhoven also brings together urban elites on a joint agenda – in this case focused on boosting the metropolitan knowledge-intensive economy –, but does so in a more inclusive and encompassing way (Schaap & Van Ostaaijen, 2015). The basic model is tripartite – as in European-style corporatism adjusted to metropolitan realities –, bringing together top-level representatives of subnational governments (such and the city Eindhoven), major knowledge-intensive businesses (such as Philips) and central knowledge institutions
(such as the universities of Eindhoven and Tilburg). It is said that each of these representatives can easily find and use the mobile number of each of the others in the network.

To be sure, the Brainport-model is not fully open, but it is definitely less closed, concentrated and behind-the-scenes than the Atlanta tandem that Stone revealed. At some moments, the network opens up, and invites a relatively wide circles of spokespersons from various social domains to join in seminars and conferences. At other moments, the network narrows to a subset deemed necessary for the task at hand. Rob van Gijzel, the social-democratic mayor of Eindhoven, recalls how within days after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, he could assemble business leaders in the region to discuss the way to deal with the expected loss of jobs in the Brainport region — “The solidarity, really unbelievable what we achieved together: the knowledge worker arrangement the parttime unemployment benefits; after that we really only had economic growth in the region.”  

In 2011, it was declared ‘smartest regions in the world’ by the Intelligent Community Forum.

There is not a lot of direct involvement of ordinary citizens, but in the Brainport-model this is not seen as undemocratic but rather as democratic in a different way, having municipal representatives of the people deal directly with powerful actors that command other crucial resources that can be turned into public value (Rosanvallon, 2008: 261-3). This is seen as a more productive and realistic alternative to microscopic deliberation of random citizens whose main claim to democratic fame is their statistical representativeness. In theory, the citizens of Eindhoven, Veldhoven and the other municipalities involved can hold their representatives accountable for what they do in the context of Brainport-Eindhoven, but in practice this is rarely an issue in election campaigns or democratic discourse. Proponents of collaborative governance in the metropolitan region see further proof in this that the Brainport-model simply works for the people, without the need for them to get involved beyond the regular electoral cycle.

The average citizen in the Brainport region does not necessarily prefer stealth democracy of invisible experts (cf. Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002), but according to champions of Brainport-Eindhoven they can very well live with well-connected local elites at arm’s length; their connected power

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7 Eindhoven’s mayor, Rob van Gijzel, interviewed in De Volkskrant, June 1, 2016 (‘Deze stad leent zich voor experimenten’, by Peter de Graaf)
would not be ‘power over’ – controlling the demos – but rather ‘power to’ – productive for the region (cf. Stone, 1989; Stoker, 1995).

The democratic legitimacy that the Brainport-model claims is output-legitimacy rather than input-legitimacy, even though the latter is not fully neglected. In addition to the formal electoral control of municipal representatives, it is argued that political and social representatives deal with each other in a fundamentally horizontal way, geared at ideational persuasion towards a common ground. It is deliberation (of sorts) but not as we know it from the Habermassian take on deliberative democracy.

Reviving do-it-ourselves democracy: Residents’ Cooperation Biest-Houtakker

If we home in on Dutch democracy even further we can find many instances of do-it-ourselves democracy, or in Dutch ‘sociaal doe-het-zelven’. Hilhorst and Van der Lans (2013) distinguished no less than four subcurrents of this phenomenon, which they illustrate with numerous examples. Here, we present just one encompassing case to highlight the contrast with both deliberative democracy as usually described, as well as the two alternatives sketched above. In the small village of Biest-Houtakker, Van de Wijdeven (2014) closely followed a citizen’s initiative that at the height of its existence turned into a building society, closely involved in the construction of a new multifunctional accommodation in the village’s center. The Residents’ Cooperation Biest-Houtakker, established in 2012, enabled local residents to shape their meeting space in this venue and to be in charge of its running as of March 2014, when the center opened its doors (Ibidem, p. 94).

For the opening ceremony, the Cooperation’s website published this telling invitation: “did you help with: serving coffee, sweeping floors, hammering, cleaning, congregating, moving out, moving in, choice-making, circulating letters, arranging electrics, purging, et cetera – be warmly invited!” Congregating and choice-making were evidently part of the process, but not in the way that some deliberative theorists prescribe – as developing a more enlightened public opinion that would represent the communities’

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8 Lee (2015) uses the terms DIY, or Do-It-Yourself, Democracy. Although this echoes a popular phrase, the focus on yourself, instead of ourselves, does not quite capture the phenomenon described here, which entails group work rather than individual coping.

opinion if and when it had taken time to deliberate thoroughly. Collective communication was much more action-oriented. At the height of the reconstruction period around 70 to 80 residents would sit on working groups named after themes such as ‘building’, ‘funding’, ‘exploitation’, ‘decoration’, ‘outside area’, ‘care’, ‘name giving’, ‘communication’. The chairs of these working groups would get together once a month for coordination matters, again highly action-oriented and often pressed for time.

At one point, for instance, it transpired that a regional bank was moving to another place and willing to donate its office furniture to the resident’s new meeting place – if only they were able to collect it on very short notice. The Resident’s Association almost automatically thought about Rina, one of the active citizens “very good in assembling people, and in energizing them to contribute” (Van de Wijdeven, 2014: 54-55). Here again, the process diverged from the ideal of microscopic deliberation, which would involve random sampling of active participants, whereas here selective invitation would be the modus operandi. The accompanying conviction, often uttered, was “everyone can do something” – if you are handy in moving stuff with a group of people, you can do this, and if you are well-versed at making minutes of meetings, you can do that.

The logic of do-it-ourselves democracy is closer to the action-oriented version of participatory democracy than to the cerebral version that we have come to know as deliberative democracy. It is, however, not strongly biased towards the concretization of an overriding programme or ideology associated with a new social or political movement (Tormey, 2015: 105-125). Participants get their energy not so much from a social theory, but rather from a social practice – from the other pioneers involved, the joint actions and the emerging results (Van de Wijdeven, 2014: 88-90). Other-regarding and self-regarding orientations come together in a special brand of ‘practical idealism’, which aspires to make a difference in the public domain – albeit not often in a high-flying way.

Do-it-ourselves democracy is distinct from the face-to-face public decisionmaking that Mansbridge (1980) analysed in the context of the New England Town Meeting, yet it also displays small-community problems that deserve further theorizing. Whereas Van de Wijdeven’s case study connects to a European project that collects multiple case studies of do-it-ourselves democracy in six North-European countries, theory development on the issue is still in its infant stage.
Table 4: three cases compared on core values and key elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core values</th>
<th>Ukraín referendum</th>
<th>Brainport-Eindhoven</th>
<th>Biest-Houtakker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-/+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberation</td>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-/+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concretization</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key elements</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mode of concretization</td>
<td>Conclusive answer without implementation strategy</td>
<td>Tripartite collaboration on strategic (economic) agenda</td>
<td>Practical cooperation on concrete ‘real world’ action points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix of deliberation and aggregation</td>
<td>Mainly aggregative process with large impact on public debate</td>
<td>Horizontal communication among pluriform though not all-inclusive elites</td>
<td>Coordination through talking or voting secondary to coordination-in-action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim to democratic fame</td>
<td>Rule by the people; giving the electoral majority a loud and clear voice;</td>
<td>Rule for the people; organic representation as realistic alternative to statistical representativeness</td>
<td>Rule of the people; self-government by those concerned; ‘no-diploma-needed democracy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative strengths</td>
<td>Everyone can choose to vote (or not); Non-fuzzy outcome: bold statement</td>
<td>Inclusion of those with vital resources; Synchronized agenda’s facilitate concerted action</td>
<td>‘Action speaks louder than words’; Non-fuzzy outcome: visible results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative weaknesses</td>
<td>Polarization of the public will; uncertainty after will-formation</td>
<td>Link with economic growth plausible but indirect and unprovable</td>
<td>Small steps per project; Like-minded action groups: not cross-cutting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Discussion and conclusion

One of the two central aims of this paper was to take a closer, empirical look at democratic transformations that have received less than due attention in the deliberative-turn dominated literature of late. The previous section was focused on this aim, zooming in on three recent cases.
that illustrate how one and the same democratic system – I have single out the Netherlands as an encompassing case here – can take more than one democratic turn, each different from the other and from the deliberative turn as it is usually displayed.

The key elements of the three cases described in the Section 4, and their connections to the core values specified in Section 3, are summarized in Table 4. The case of the Ukrain referendum illustrates in a more specific way what can be noted for plebiscitary democracy in general: participation is relatively large, while deliberation is not its forte. However, the case of the Ukrain referendum also prompts us to qualify both points. Participation in the formal referendum may be comparatively wide-ranging and open to all citizens, but the same cannot be said of the quasi-referendums that accompany a referendum like this; they use quasi-randomized or selective samples that are neither wide-ranging nor open to all. Deliberation may not be an in-built property of a referendum, but in the case of the Ukrain referendum it was evidently an external effect. Cross-cutting public debate on EU politics, with different views expressed and discussed on various stages and op-ed pages of national newspapers, had never been as lively before in the Netherlands. It was certainly more intensive than public debate resulting from the last national experiment with randomized deliberation; the Dutch citizen’s forum for electoral reform, organized with great expectations in 2006, stirred almost no public response (Van der Kolk, 2008: 47).

Of the three cases reviewed, Brainport-Eindhoven is most specifically geared at round-table, cross-cutting deliberation – albeit of a highly pragmatic, some would say utilitarian type, which characterizes collaborative governance in general. Participation is pluriform but not all-inclusive. Internal relations, within the collaborative governance regime, are fairly egalitarian, while externally a version of polycentric elitism is being upheld. Whereas deliberative minipublics attempt to improve representation statistically (based on background characteristics), Brainport-Eindhoven aims at furthering representation organically (based on different stakes and perspectives). The claim to democratic fame is to improve rule for the people in this way. Rule of the people is the claim to fame of do-it-ourselves democracy in general, and the Biest-Houtakker case in particular. This philosophy may be shared with deliberative democrats, but do-it-ourselves democrats operationalize it in a rather different way. First of all by prioritizing concrete cooperation, seeking coordination-in-action, rather than joint visioning in words (specified in a public memorandum, pamphlet, note, et cetera). Although deliberation is not a
priority, it may still be a significant side product, the Biest-Houtakker case shows.

All in all, the three cases represent substantially different and viable alternatives to randomized deliberation, but they are not without their specific problems. Democratic innovation of the Biest-Houtakker type tends to be confined to smaller social interventions. While this is no reason for dismissal per se — many small steps may lead to significant changes in time —, sometimes the public good requires bigger interventions in terms of money and other resources to be pooled and spent. Innovation of the Brainport-Eindhoven type claims to be good at doing exactly this, but other than in do-it-ourselves-democracy the connections between actions and results are less direct or visible in the case of collaborative governance regimes. This makes them, paradoxically, vulnerable to the same criticism that deliberative democracy may receive: ‘these people sit together quite cosily, doing a lot of talking, but what have they done for us lately’. The flipside of coming to a seemingly clear conclusion at the end of an aggregative process, like the one leading to the Ukrain referendum, is not only the polarization in two camps of which one remains defeated, but also the difficulty of implementing a unilateral ‘no’ in a fundamentally multilateral context.

I readily admit that the three cases reflect only a portion of democratic transformations taking place in a country like the Netherlands. This does, however, not weaken but strengthen the argument that I have tried to build and illustrate here, namely: that there are more democratic twists and turns to be taken seriously than the one that deliberative democrats tend to home in on. Their preoccupation with microscopic deliberation — category 3 in Table 1 of this paper — has led to a weakened attentiveness to important transformations and bifurcations in the other categories — conceptually unpacked in Table 3, which also adds the dimension of concretization that tends to be overlooked in deliberative-turn discourse. In a condensed way, Table 3 is the answer to the second, more theoretical, aim of this paper — to extend the theoretical perspective, as far as possible and relevant, beyond the turn to deliberative democracy.

**Deliberative, cooperative and plebiscitary democracy in the modern mixed regime**

The subcategories of Table 3 are concisely compared in Section 3. In-depth empirical treatment of all subcategories has not been the objective here;
this would require a prolonged research programme rather than a single paper. The three cases developed in Section 4 make up empirical arrears to some extent, but also remain what they are: substantiations of the general theoretical argument, developed in this paper, that the plebiscitary rebound and the cooperative turn in democratic practice should not be obscured by the almost hegemonic position of deliberative turn-discourse in theories of democratic innovation. Plebiscitary democracy is basically aggregative, and cooperative democracy is basically selective – two things that deliberative democrats might discard on the basis of specific normative reasoning, but this should not stop researchers from investigating the comparative merits of aggregative versus transformative, and selective versus randomized democracy. Not looking to the other side would be against the general philosophy behind deliberative reasoning, especially when we realize that in actual practice many citizens as well as practitioners seem to lean to this other side. They have rediscovered monitory voting in many different ways, and they tend to grant authority to selected, and potentially de-selected, others rather than to random strangers (cf. Noveck, 2009; Green, 2010; Helms, 2015).

Although some might say that randomized deliberative democracy is overexposed in democratic-innovation theory compared to its position in democratic-innovation practice, a contest of this all too familiar type – ‘this current gets further than that one’ – will not necessarily help to better understand democratic innovation. Pure types of democratic innovation might be found in isolated micro-settings, but at the meso- and macro-levels of democratic practice innovations often share the same space (cf. Saward, 2001; Hendriks, 2010). A country like the Netherlands is home to deliberative experiments, but also to the plebiscitary and cooperative (re)turns, as we have seen in Section 3. The same goes for the within-case of the region Eindhoven, where the collaborative-governance experiment of Brainport is surrounded by other experiments: a one-day experiment with a random general assembly (G1000), a previous mayors referendum, various expressions of do-o-cracy, et cetera.

The result is what Rosanvallon (2009: 314) calls a ‘modern mixed regime’, a present-day reinvention of a classic idea that goes back to the Middle Ages. A big challenge for next-generation research into democratic innovation is getting a more encompassing understanding of the democratic hybridization that occurs in the modern mixed regime at both the macro-level and the meso-levels of democratic process.
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