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Rethinking Democracy Challenge

INDEX

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INTRODUCTION

As we grappled with the challenge of *Rethinking Democracy,* the most glaring question that guided our thinking was, do "democratic practices" necessarily translate to the "well-being of citizens"? The concept of democracy is beleaguered by many variables that make the understanding of it a continuous evolution (i.e., social democracy, constitutional democracy, politics, and public participation). Elections seem to be a central element in the attainment of democracy. However, as seen in many countries, the period leading up to elections reveal much about the (in)stability of democracy. During these periods, many journalists and media personalities have been jailed or censored, internet coverage has been reduced or cut completely, and propaganda and violence have risen, all of which prevent the full realisation of the benefits of democracy. Consequently, where democracy can be defined as "a system in which the power to control government rests with the people and all citizens are equal in the exercise of that power",[1] we argue that too much power is vested in political leaders while citizens are increasingly being marginalised. This paper acknowledges the structural difficulties that makes attaining of functional democracies a difficult prospect and presents a proposal to investigate.

It is well known that the African continent has a demographic dividend in the youth. In 2015, Africa had 721 million young people (age 25 and younger), a number which will grow to 1.4 billion by 2063 (UN 2017).[2] Unemployed and disempowered youth have contributed to political conflicts across the continent.[3] Thus, their economic precariousness has the potential to destabilise democracy. The future of democracy on the African continent depends on the empowerment of the youth dividend, and as we set a New Agenda for Global Democracy, leaders need to make a concerted effort with their democratic reform agenda. Africans must be able to participate in and control their information ecosystem, find constructive accountability frameworks for leaders, and effectively participate in the institutions of democracy in order to realise this aspirational democracy.

There is an argument that democracy as a governance model is not a system that is indigenous to many African countries, but rather asserted by the global community of economic and political leaders. Unfortunately, due to the capital-driven nature of "democracy", countries are obliged to adopt this system if they wish to participate in global affairs. As part of the process of rethinking democracy, we propose a critical assessment of the origins and applicability of democracy in Africa.

[1] Rethinking Democracy Brief. 2021 Annual Social Dialogue, Club De Madrid.
[2]UN. (2017). United Nations 2017 world population prospects. *United Nations.* Available at: un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2017_world_population_prospects-2017_revision_databooklet.pdf
[3] Weny, K., Snow, R., and Zhang, S. (2017). The demographic dividend atlas for Africa: Tracking the potential for a demographic dividend. UNFPA. Available at: https://www.unfpa.org/resources/demographic-dividend-atlas-africa-tracking-potential-demographic-dividend

THE NEW INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM: HOW TO RECONCILE THE ISSUES OF TRUTH, TRUST, AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION?

The stability of democracy is dependent on a number of factors related to aspects of people's daily lives, starting with access to information. The advances in the speed and accuracy of information recent decades have affected the development of global democracy in both positive and negative ways. For instance, in recent years the same progress has led to the global phenomenon of "fake news". Historically, the limited number of journalistic outlets meant that control of information and media journalism was easier, which resulted in well-founded suspicion and scepticism of the mainstream media. As forms of media, journalism, and technology increase (and improve), the content, reach, and impact of information are changing the landscape of democracy.

Today, traditional government-owned print and radio media are in strong competition with privately-owned media and emerging social media hubs. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter offer strong alternatives to traditional media, which are aligned with the emergence of what has been termed "citizen journalism". This broadening of available sources of information can be to the advantage of citizens as they now have access to different views and opinions which inform their understanding of various issues. Where government-owned media has controlled the narrative for many decades, the rise of alternative media can be strongly linked to people's diminishing trust in mainstream media, government, and leaders. Consequently, in regions like this, alternative media has given people a platform to freely express their views on socio-political issues. When those views constructively contribute to society, standards of democracy are upheld. However, the same alternative media has also given rise fake news, the use of divisive language as a tool for polarisation, and violent uprisings in different regions across the globe. Hence, when the views and information shared on alternative media continue unchecked and without accountability, they can lead to devastating consequences that put democracy and citizens at risk.

Although technological transformation and increased internet connectivity in the 21st Century have increased access to information for more people globally, this transformation has yet to fully materialise in certain regions. The International Finance Corporation estimates that the whole of Africa has 22% internet coverage, despite 60% of its population being youth[4]. Movements such as "data must fall" in South Africa have brought into sharp focus how the high cost of data is another factor contributing to the exclusion of individuals. The lack of connectivity is worrying as the danger of an uninformed or misinformed population is one of the greatest risks for democracy. Furthermore, a shared vision amongst young African people is the desire to be more connected and participate in the development of democracy across the continent. Rethinking democracy means ensuring that the information ecosystem is aligned to the preferences of the current generation and in a manner that attains the best outcomes. We propose that amongst all efforts needed for democratic sustainability on the African continent, the priority should be to rapidly increase internet coverage and data availability.

The role of the media in promoting democratic stability is linked to economic participation. As discussions around the fourth industrial revolution, artificial intelligence, and rarefied economic sectors become more prevalent globally, on the African continent, much more needs to be done to bring young people into mainstream economies. Rwanda currently has the ambition to become a major regional

[4] https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/cm-stories/cm-connecting-africa

technological hub by producing the first "Made in Africa" smartphones.[5] Therefore, we propose that large-scale production of electronic devices and software development should be prioritised across all regions. Not only does this strategy serve economic development goals and democratic participation in industry, but it is also beneficial from an information ecosystem perspective because it will give countries a narrative about the positive contributions of democracy.

Arguments about the importance of an independent media typically focus on the independence of the media from state influence but not necessarily non-state actors. Media establishments, both traditional and social, have actively participated in the narrative and direction of democratic practices in countries around the world, both in emerging and established democracies. Therefore, as part of the new global agenda for democracy, we propose that the professionalisation of the media industry should be explored. We propose the development of a real-time, fact-check functionality. Standard adherence to by all digital and print media houses will afford them legitimacy through a rating index.

The basis of a free press in any given country should be a regulatory framework that guarantees and protects the rights to freedom of expression and access to information. Safeguarding freedom of expression through the constitution ensures that an accountability mechanism is in place. To hold the government accountable to its people, there needs to be "a free and vibrant media able to investigate freely and without fear, report, question, and denounce" (Callamard 2010, 1214).[6] Credible information from government institutions will only strengthen the resilience of democracies and provide a level of legitimacy to leaders.

RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP IN DEMOCRACY: VALUES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Responsible leadership is at the heart of the current challenges brought on by both the new information ecosystem and the weakening of democratic institutions. There seems to be a mutually reinforcing relationship between effective and efficient public leadership, and good governance in democratic states – which is inclusive of such principles as accountability, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, openness, and honesty (Botchway 2001, IFAC 2001).[7,8] For instance, much of what has been exposed by the current COVID-19 pandemic about the core contributors to resilience and effective management of the crisis is the interaction between leadership and governance (Buckingham 2020, Schwartz & Pines 2021).[9,10]

The observation that Africa is wealthy in resources but not thriving is a long-standing conundrum of the continent that requires serious examination, but yet corruption continues to beleaguer the progress of the continent. Transparency International revealed that in Africa "the poorest people are twice as likely to pay a bribe – and more likely to be victims of corrupt behaviour by bureaucrats – than the richest". While one can claim that this rise in inequality is more a result of the capitalist economic system, led by

[5] https://www.reuters.com/article/us-rwanda-telecoms-idUSKBN1WM1TN [30/08/2021].
[6] Callamard, A. (2010). Accountability, transparency, and freedom of expression in Africa. *Social Research*, 77(4):1211-1240
[7] Botchway, F. (2001). Good governance: The old, the new, the principle, and the elements. *Florida Journal of International Law.*
[8] IFAC. (2001). Achieving a new vision 2001 annual report. Available at: https://www.ifac.org/system/files/publications/files/IFAC_2001_Annual.pdf
[9] Buckingham, M. (2020). The sources of resilience: Findings from the largest global study of resilience and engagement from the ADP Research Institute. Available at: https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-sources-of-resilience/ accessed: [04-04-2021]
[10] Schwartz, T., & Pines, E. (2021). To lead better under stress, understand your three selves. Available at: https://hbr.org/2021/03/to-lead-better-under-stress-understand-your-three-selves accessed: [15-06-2021]

the rise of the role of finance (Mazzucato 2018, 2019)[11,12] – no one can deny that this capitalist system and rise of finance have been operating and growing under an even bigger and more important political system, contributing to poor governance practices.

For the majority of people in the world, maintaining the current form of liberal democracy requires a complex combination of resources that many states do not have. For many people in these countries, the dream of living a "good life" has become unattainable. It is more expensive because, under a democratic state, people's expectations are higher than in systems seen as less effective and efficient than democracy. How can leadership be responsible in democratic systems then, given the above? How can democratic leadership create platforms of development that benefit everyone, thereby living up to the principles of public life envisioned under liberal democracy?

An improved version of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) instrument is one of the strengths that can be used by Africa. However, while "The APRM was conceived as a voluntary mechanism and, in the absence of 'hard pressure' for compliance, incentives – rather than sanctions – could be the way to strengthen governance on the continent[13]" – it is not fully and effectively utilised. This must be based on the simplified understanding that each country's path is dependent on its current circumstances and strengths, not on a prescribed framework. This is the key to improving the APRM and building trust on it as a continental tool. The leaders of each state should aspire to uphold this tool as evidence of Africa's self-governance abilities.

Ultimately, however, the driving force of democracy is people. The constitutions, institutions, elections, and rule of law are just the wheels – the mechanisms that facilitate democracy. In Africa, more participation by young people in formal institutions is needed; without it, Africa's democracies face great risk. "The African median age of public paid employees (38.4) is nearly 6.0 years lower than the averages for Europe & Central Asia and North America (44.0 and 43.5, respectively). It is also twice the median age of Africa's population (19.4)" (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2018).[14] With Africa having the largest population of people under age 35 in the world, it is important we start seeing reforms that reflect the demographic dividend in the youth, both at the administrative and political level. However, the non-state sectors should not be exempt. We propose that a universal mentorship programme be introduced for all senior state officials, both political and administrative. As part of their performance agreements with their principals, they should agree to mentor young people for a period of six months through a well-developed mentorship programme which young people can apply to join and that is monitored and evaluated independently.

In envisioning functional and progressive democracies, there is a need for electoral reform and a radical depoliticization of youth participation in the public sector. This is particularly in countries that do not recognise independent candidacy as an option for representation and participation in political processes. To realise this, we propose the development of a holistic and comprehensive "Youth Responsive Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Auditing Framework" that would establish targets for mainstreaming youth leadership and creating meaningful youth engagement and involvement at all levels of public service. This would involve the establishment of gender-inclusive youth quotas to create

[11] Mazzucato, M. (2018). *The entrepreneurial state: Debunking public vs private sector myths.* Penguin Random House: UK
[12] Mazzucato, M. (2019). *The value of everything: Making and taking in the global economy.* Penguin Random House: UK
[13] https://saiia.org.za/research/african-solutions-best-practices-from-the-african-peer-review-mechanism/
[14] Mo Ibrahim Foundation. (2018). 2018 Ibrahim Forum report: Public service in Africa. *Mo Ibrahim Foundation.* Available at: https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2021-06/2018-forum-report.pdf

a conducive environment for young professionals to create more resilient institutions as appointed bureaucrats in strategic leadership positions, supporting elected public officials. The aim of such programme is to ensure young people are informed, empowered, and no longer just beneficiaries of, but rather participants in, resilient democracies and institutions.

RESILIENT DEMOCRACIES, RESILIENT INSTITUTIONS

Merkel and Lührmann (2021:874)[15] contend that "democratic resilience is the ability of a democratic system, its institutions, political actors, and citizens to prevent or react to external and internal challenges, stresses, and assaults through one or more of the three potential reactions, (i) to withstand without changes, (ii) to adapt through internal changes, and (iii) to recover without losing the democratic character of its regime and its constitutive core institutions, organizations, and processes. The more resilient democracies are on all four levels of the political system (political community, institutions, actors, citizens) the less vulnerable they turn out to be in the present and future". Globally, democracy has always been lauded for its institutions, hence, the resilience of democracies is directly linked to its resilient institutions.

Defining resilience in relation to democracy, Sisk (2017:50)[16] states that "a democracy's economic, social, and politico-institutional preventive capacity is causal to its overall resilience. It is not only about institutions and actors but also about the regime's policy performance, which either strengthens or weakens the legitimacy of a (democratic) regime. Knowing that, the erosion of democracy can be seen as the mirror image of consolidating resilience". The African reality is the opposite of this experience and has been characterised by hollow democratic institutions that fail to deliver policy outcomes to the ordinary citizenry.

Over the years, many have reduced the ideals of democracy to a singular practice: "free and fair" elections. This has largely resulted in a very skewed perspective of the true value of what democracy is for most citizens in each country. From the dawn of colonization, through to subsequent "independence", African countries have been through significant changes, some forced and others out of their own agency. Through it all, the journey to democracy for most has not been one of prosperity. For many, the structure of government institutions affords elected political representatives an incredible amount of access to power, resources, and networks. The consequence of a system where a select few individuals ascend to the highest levels of power through various means such as 'cadre deployment', nepotism, and patronage, is the alienation of citizens, both those who actively participate in the voting process and those who did not.

As we attempt to rethink democracy, we need to accept that there are certain democratic structures that, despite the ongoing challenges faced by democracy, need to be strengthened. Resilient democratic institutions are key to the sustainability of any democracy and the well-being of citizens. The political-administrative interface is a challenge faced by numerous countries, however, there seems to be an over-emphasis on the professionalisation of administrators in public services, and less so on politicians. It appears acceptable that a head of a department must have certain minimum qualifications and

[15] Merkel, W., and Lührmann, A. (2021). Resilience of democracies: responses to illiberal and authoritarian challenges. *Democratization, 28*(5), 869-884.
16 Sisk, T.D. (2017). Democracy and resilience: Conceptual approaches and considerations. *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*.

experience, however, no such expectations for political office bearers. This is critical because politicians are the "custodians" of a resilient democracy. Yet, in many countries there are no criteria to qualify to be a politician other than joining a political party. If such a gap exists in a crucial component of democratic resilience, how will the institutions designed to protect democracy prevail? We propose that as part of the agenda for rethinking democracy, consideration should be made for the professionalisation of the political landscape. Members of the executive arm of government at the national and sub-national levels, members of parliament, and all other political positions should be subjected to minimum qualification criteria.

This juncture in our democratic evolution brings us to a position to propose a new agenda that places the participation of citizens beyond elections as a new democratic principle of resilience. The inclusion of citizens in the selection of the leaders of their democratic institutions (e.g., public protector, auditor general) is a proposal that will strengthen the resilience of democracies on the African continent. It is observed that many young people in Africa do not complete formal primary or secondary education and that those who do often end up with limited career options. Therefore, we propose the introduction of democratic education in the schooling curriculum for all Africans. This will create a greater consciousness amongst citizens about effectively participating in, contributing to, and criticising the processes of democracy in whichever form it is presented as a means of governance. The aim of this inclusive approach is to prevent many more young people from being disfranchised, and to empower them to join politics with the conviction to contribute to societal good.

CONCLUSION

In keeping with the belief that "democracy is best shaped by the citizens and leaders of each country"[17] our proposals are conscious of the trap of suggesting a universally accepted standard that is informed by predatory capitalistic motives at the expense of many countries and their attempts to rethink their governance systems. We strongly advocate for far more radical dialogue and action to bring all countries to a similar standard. The notion of "developed" and "developing" countries is not something that should be allowed to continue. The status-quo is suitable for those countries that directly benefit from the underdevelopment of many African states. Yet, the inequality amongst countries that all claim to be democratic fosters power differences, reaffirms poverty, and delays development as those who need it will forever remain at the mercy of those who have. Still, the shared prosperity, quality of life, and wellbeing of all citizens of the globe should not be seen as an ideal too far to reach.

Rethinking Democracy should not be an idealistic process, but rather a pragmatic process. The recommendations made in this paper are practical and they aim to directly empower ordinary citizens. The overemphasis on free and fair elections as the yardstick of democracy neglects the complexities of lived democracy in many countries. This process of elections as the ultimate ideal of democracy only seems to foster a certain class inequality as it creates a narrow class of elite and well-connected families. Climate change, global health pandemics, and global economic crises are just a few examples that reinforce the need for collaboration instead of competition. Furthermore, the participation of young people should be central to all discussions and interventions. Without the participation of the younger generation, democracy in African states is at risk of stagnation. And so, one of the most crucial questions

[17] Rethinking Democracy Brief. (2021). 2021 Annual Social Dialogue, Club De Madrid. Available at: http://www.clubmadrid.org/policy-dialogue-2021-rethinking-democracy/

becomes, how can the ordinary citizen be empowered to be actively involved in the process of democracy beyond elections?

Participatory public governance is a fundamental requirement if Africa is going to achieve any sense of progressive development that will be felt, seen, and enjoyed by the majority of citizens. However, economic systems and models of capital management must be fundamentally reimagined if there is a chance for democracy to be stable in Africa. The vast wealth of natural resources affords Africa an opportunity to rethink democracy in a manner that suits the majority of Africans. A more active and accurately informed citizenry, leaders who are accountable to their people, and institutions that are positioned to protect and promote democracy will lead to better stewardship of the resources of the wealthy continent of Africa. Furthermore, meaningful participation of young people should be central to all discussions and interventions as without the participation of the younger generation, democracy in African states is at risk of stagnation if not risk of complete collapse.

Climate change, global health pandemics, and global economic crises are just a few examples that reinforce the need to rethink democracy. COVID-19 has fundamentally disrupted the traditional understanding and practices of “free and fair elections”. Postponement of South African local government elections is seen as a solution instead of innovating to conduct elections. The participation of citizens (especially youth), and the embracing of the new information ecosystem to strengthen accountability and resilience is imperative.

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INTRODUCTION

Concerns regarding the toppling of democracy have been around for decades. However, most of the conversations that attempt to remedy the alleged deteriorating political system have been limited and restricted to conventional platforms. On the one hand, it has been kept within the academic circle, which undoubtedly provides the in-depth and sharp analysis that is crucial in beginning a much-needed thorough conversation on the topic. Or, it has been kept among high-ranking politicians, figures who, more often than not, are older and, consequently, have a difficult time identifying with the vast majority of the global population. As important as the former two conversations are with its ability to provide accurate and technical analysis and capability to convey the analysis into tangible policy items, it is just as important to widen the conversation and get a wider range of voices involved in the conversation: those who are able to provide a refreshing and different perspective. The diverse perspectives will enrich the dialogue, bringing up agenda items that have often gone unnoticed by the same pair of eyes.

We believe that this lack of intersectionality in the various groups of the society involved in the aforementioned conversation holds the key to redefining democracy, responding to the current challenges. So far, the conversation has been overtly limited to criticizing the faults of democracy to polarization. Democracy has especially been lamented for its inability to provide a mutual meeting ground for liberals and conservative. We believe that this is an oversimplification in the various groups present that are unable to hold a constructive and productive conversation to remedy democracy. We hope to improve the conversation and bring the gap between diverse groups closer by further analysing where and when divisions happen.

Along with liberals and conservatives, we see that two groups are especially in opposition: the older and the younger generation. While the older generation, as mentioned above, are participating in the conversation through conventional channels such as political or scholarly dialogue, the younger generation and their contributions are going unnoticed because they diverge from the expected conventional channels of communication. However, this is not because of an intrinsic problem of democracy but what you value more between the individual and the public interest. What one weighs more depends on the experiences each generation has, which results in different ways of defining democracy. Because these different ways of participation in democracy come from the different point of views, means of engagement and understanding of purpose regarding democracy that the two groups hold, we identify ways to reconcile the two groups with this in mind. We argue that the key to beginning a conversation about redefining democracy begins by reconciling the two generations that are unable to reach a mutual standing ground. Throughout the rest of the paper, we will look at how the older and younger generations define democracy in different ways and how they can be reconciled. Of course this is not an exhaustive list of groups that create problems of compromise in the realm of democracy, but nevertheless, we hope that this will start the conversation on how to bring the various groups in opposition together.

NO ANTI-DEMOCRACY GENERATION, TWO DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

The past year, the world has been a witness to a number of incidents around the globe, all of which have been evident symptoms of the alleged deteriorating and dying democracy. The year began with the rioting and storming of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C., instigated by the former President of the United States, Donald Trump, who refused to accept the transfer of power of the US presidential election. More recently, the president of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse, was assassinated at the presidential residence by a group of 28 foreign mercenaries. These two events do not capture all the small events and incidents that demonstrate the toppling of democracy. But, it is a place to begin to talk about the diagnosis: what is undermining democracy?

Club de Madrid has identified three aspects which warrant a more in-depth focus: the information ecosystem, the leadership and the social institutions that uphold the structure. These so-called "working groups" aim to provide specific areas by which leaders and citizens alike can begin to redefine and "fix" democracy. Examining the three working groups in depth, the diagnosis put forth in order to fix democracy is as follows. The influx of incredible information and the overwhelming freedom that exists in the information arena has threatened the honest and integral communication within the society. Leaders have been elected to lead a society and represent their constituents, but, more often than not, sought out their own interests. The social institutions have been neglected and pushed to the side as the engagement between leaders and information deteriorated.

However, we argue that this is an overly simplistic and reductionist diagnosis of the issue. And, as we have stated in the beginning, it is clear that there is a lack of alignment between the older and newer generations in order to remedy the hurting democracy. It is not just that the problems are present in the three previously identified working groups. A holistic perspective is necessary to gain a more insightful perspective to begin a proper and more accurate diagnosis of the problem.

The threats to democracy stem from a generational gap. The inability to agree on the most basic aspects of democracy between the two generations has led to a widening of the gap in the understanding. This generation gap does not solely exist in the realm of carrying out the political system. The gap is evident in every-day interactions in society. For example, in South Korea, the word "kkondae" has become synonymous among people in their 20s and 30s with criticizing the older generation. It is loosely similar to calling someone a "boomer" in a western society. The two condescending words are used to bicker at how the older generation fails to understand the very basics of social interaction when engaging with the younger generation. Although this term does not directly relate to the misunderstanding in democracy, the fact that these terms have been so common in other mundane aspects in life is evident that generational gaps have become so exacerbated that it shows up almost everywhere and anywhere across cultures.

In the introduction, we identified that there are three main aspects in which the newer and older generations differ: perceiving democracy, engaging with democracy and understanding the purpose of democracy. We see that one of the many pieces of evidence of this is the discrepancy in voting turnout between ages. It is a common trend across most democratic countries around the globe that the voting turnout for elections have been relatively low for people below the age of 24 while voting turnout has been the highest for those above the age of 65. The different values placed on elections and polls demonstrate that the older generation may be more end-driven and results-focused, which naturally

leads to being more reliant on turning up to polls and casting their vote in order to make what they desire happen. Furthermore, the older generation have been more focused on the voice of the majority, which makes polls the natural favoured channel of opinion. On the other hand, the younger generation have placed more emphasis on the process, rejecting the ends-meets-the-means notion. Furthermore, the younger generation have been craving for a way to interject with voices and opinions of their own. As a result, the younger generation have often neglected the efficiency of the voting process, resorting to online platforms to share their opinions and point of view. The younger generation also have clear experience of feeling betrayed by voting polls. Regardless of whether they show up to cast their votes, the effects of lobbying and older influential figures seem to sway politics in the opposite way.

This lack of participation perpetuated by the internalized belief that their voices are not heard within the conventional democracy voting process creates a vicious cycle of feeling betrayed, not turning out to polls, being criticized by the older generation for carelessness. This example of the voting poll is just one example that demonstrates a challenge to democracy manifesting in a tangible and concrete way. However, one thing is clear: this does not mean that there is a fundamental issue with the democratic system, rather there is a problem with how different generational groups within society interpret democracy and engage with it. And this means that democracy itself is not in jeopardy. If we begin to work together to put these two groups in communication, manifestation of the problems should be remedied.

Look at One Another, Democracy is Between Us

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the current challenges to democracy did not emerge because of the inherent bad nature of democracy. Rather, they are rooted in the generational gap, more specifically in the difference of concept of democracy between the older and younger generations. Democracy, like any other abstract concept, is defined heavily by the historical context in which it operates. Disconnection between two different generations who don't know that there can be various definitions of democracy and stick to their own concept based on their own experience makes democracy seem like a crisis itself. In other words, because the two generations do not understand each other's historical context, they are at a roadblock in terms of understanding each other's differences.

The two generations are unable to effectively communicate their different point of views, resulting in a divergent way of engaging with the purposes of democracy. In order to harmonize these two groups, they need to understand that democracy can be defined in a variety of ways. And to continue efforts to define and practice the harmonious democracy that all generations can agree on, there has to be a mutual compromise: the older and the younger generation both have to be willing to give and take.
The solution can be divided into three aspects: perspective, engagement and purpose. First of all, in terms of perspective, because older generations tend to limit the criteria of democracy to the public good, and younger generations tend to expand the horizon of democracy to include interests related to every walk of life, there is often conflict when it comes to defining democracy. While the older generation sees democracy as serving and practicing community's harmony, the younger generation regards it as a means to demonstrate individual rationality. It should be recognized that it is not just traditional political areas such as economy and security that can be on the agenda in a democracy. Culture, life and information issues, such as what movies people watch and what abbreviations people use in daily life, have almost the same importance as traditional political areas these days. And the

younger generation should pay more attention to the interests of the nation and the world, as well as to the problems directly related to the interests of the individual.

n terms of engagement, democratic participation of the younger generation tends to be invisible to the older generation, which makes it easy to misunderstand that the young generation is engaging less and less with democracy. For the younger generation, like any other aspect of their lives, engaging with the democratic process is moving online. Unlike the past when people went to the streets with pickets, people now express their thoughts and concerns on various social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube in the online space. For the majority of the older generation, who are often unfamiliar with this aspect of political engagement on SNS, they are quick to criticize the younger generation as being complacent. This generational gap has to be solved on both aspects: there has to be a space, a platform, created for the two generations to interact and communicate their point of views. The state can actively support digital literacy education to promote online political participation of older generations.

In terms of purpose, the older generation must understand the objectives of the younger generation, which are focused on the experience and the process. Older generations value fragmented, intuitive, and outcome-oriented political participation, such as voting, and think that the purpose of democracy is to achieve their preferred results through direct and indirect participation. However, the younger generation considers the core of the democracy as sharing their own feelings and experiences, exposing themselves, engaging in or interacting with groups of their preferred political intentions. This development among younger democratic citizens is not only seen in large overt structural changes. Recently the development of SNS strengthened such tendencies.

When using the word “citizens” or “civic duty,” we tend not to recognize the difference between generations. It groups people together into a large lump, failing to recognize the issues that divide and halt the effective execution of democracy. This is particularly important as the fundamental way the two groups understand, act and want democracy are discordant. Political leaders should identify how the civic community perceives, behaves and wishes differently or similarly in democracy and begin solving smaller details specific problems by making a bridge to close the generational gap. When the concessions that each generation gives to one another becomes more, the problems of democracy can begin to be mitigated.

CONCLUSION

Democracy has undergone several crises through the times, but it has adapted its form and continues to this day. As it has done so far, democracy will firmly maintain its status as a revered and respected political system in the future. And the fact that we encounter several obstacles along the way does not undermine the fundamental essence of democracy. In this paper, we pointed out that the current obstacle to democracy is a lack of understanding between generations. This is especially serious because the majority of the people who identify with the younger generation have no experience of fighting for democracy in the face of an authoritarian regime. In other words, the older generation saw democracy as a goal to be achieved, but the current generation sees it as being maintained.

The older and younger generations do not have a sense of unity for democracy in terms of perspective, engagement, and purpose. First, in terms of perspective, the older generation sees democracy as limited to politics related to national interest, while the current generation expands its scope to various aspects of life other than politics. Furthermore, in terms of engagement, the older generation preferred direct and physical methods such as street demonstrations, while the current generation extends the scope of activities beyond the offline to online. In particular, the widespread reality of lack of face-to-face interaction brought about by COVID-19 and the advent of the digital era makes this difference even more stark. Lastly, in terms of purpose, while older generations felt that their purpose was achieved through direct political participation such as voting, the current generation puts more emphasis on the means rather than the end, appreciating the process of voicing one's opinions, even though the voting polls may not be entirely indicative of their desires.

To summarize, we diagnosed the biggest obstacle to democracy as the lack of understanding of each other, which comes from the difference in the way the two generations define democracy. As the title of this paper-同床異夢(dong-sang-e-mong)- suggests, the two generations are going on two different paths towards one destination: democracy. It is not that the political system of democracy itself is in jeopardy, but that the difference in perspectives of each generation makes the road to democracy difficult. Therefore, the most fundamental solution is to redefine democracy and understand the modified but broad definition. In general, the older generation has capital, honour and status. They have a lot to protect. On the other hand, the younger generation has time, creativity and innovation. They seek change. Historically, in the face of various crises, the two generations have agonized and practiced the change and continuation of the political system. Now, the crisis is a global economic downturn caused by the pandemic, and the political system is democratic. In light of the repetition of history, it seems like the time to change the political system once again. However, can we solve the problem only by revolution? This is also possible by finding a harmonious definition of a political system between generations. History is often said to be rewritten over and over again by the victors - specifically the younger generation who won the revolution. But a democratic citizen does not speak for only one generation who is the subject of transformation. Democracy continues to be rewritten by all generations. Efforts at the national level as well as interpersonal efforts are desperately needed to bring together the two groups in a mutual meeting ground. We envision a future where older and younger generations meet at the same time and space to freely exchange opinions.

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EDUCATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, REGULATION: SUGGESTIONS FOR DEMOCRACIES LIVING WITH MEDIA DISINFORMATION

ABSTRACT

The ubiquitous ease with which the media can be used to spread and access disinformation and "fake news" has reconfigured the media into powerful force multipliers and/or amplifiers of disinformation, turning the media into a core lynchpin in the development of the modern "disinformation order". The level of disinformation in circulation today has significantly disrupted the ability of governments to effectively govern, as their populaces have become embroiled in conflicts over interpretations of reality and what constitutes as the "truth". Given the corrosive impact of media-borne disinformation on stable democratic governance, and as democracies are increasingly hampered from administering to their citizens' reflected interests and shared preferences, this essay suggests three policy guidelines through which online disinformation -- and the challenges they create for democracies -- may be proactively and reactively curtailed. These threefold suggestions entail education programs for citizens that improve their critical thinking skills and reinvigorate their expectations for an ethical online domain; non-governmental task forces to enhance media accountability; and the use of government regulation, reserved only for the most specific cases or in cases where its use is permitted by the aforementioned accountability task force. These suggestions are intended to work synergistically as part of a unified effort to counter disinformation, and constitute the writers' shared vision for democracy, moving into the future.

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation and intrusion of malicious "disinformation" content on online media platforms has become one of the most pressing challenges faced by democratic societies -- both established and developing -- today. Unlike "Fake News" and misinformation, whose publication, though certainly damaging, is relatively fleeting, isolated or intended without malicious incentives; disinformation is purposefully created to systematically spread false, inaccurate and misleading information in order to cause harm to the public or generate personal profit for their creators, be it financially, politically or otherwise. The increasingly ubiquitous level of disinformation circulating today's online information outlets has significantly disrupted the ability of governments to effectively govern, as their populaces (and an alarming number of political representatives themselves) have become embroiled in conflicts over interpretations of reality and what constitutes as the "truth," thereby hampering democratic governments from administering to their citizens' reflected interests and shared preferences.

The result of online disinformation's encompassing reach has already been witnessed throughout democratic societies, including some of their more mature ones, highlighting its indiscriminate targeting. During the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, Russia utilized low-tech efforts to flood social media platforms, including 126 million Americans through Facebook alone, to disseminate false stories and messages intended to further politically polarize the country and weaken the Democratic

Presidential Candidate Hillary Clinton. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, to use a more recent example, has also depicted the dangers posed by disinformation to democratic institutions, as a vast array of conflicting accounts on the virus, including the labelling of COVID-19 as a hoax or conspiracy theories that vaccination against it would alter the structure of human DNA, prevented governments from enacting swift and effective measures within their populations. According to one report, 6000 people across the globe were hospitalized in the first 3 months of 2020 alone due to false information. Over a year into the pandemic and at a casualty rate of almost 5 million, global public sentiment towards vaccination, however, remains ambivalent, with some estimates finding that only 63% of respondents will vaccinate; a figure below the 75% minimum estimate that global health experts point to as necessary for "herd immunity." Therefore, the spread of distorted information presents a serious problem for democratic societies and their governments, with disinformation catalysing current public uncertainties and fears to further its polarization and even contribute to the loss of human life.

The ubiquitous ease with which the media can be used to spread and access such information has reconfigured digital mediums into powerful force multipliers and/or amplifiers for disinformation, making the media into a core lynchpin in the development of the modern "disinformation order". Yet given the importance that democratic societies bestow to the existence of a free press, any efforts to undermine or restrict its freedom to report and publish are met with fervent hostility. Where a government may install an apparatus designed to better dismantle disinformation content, many will understandably view such policies, however genuine, as an attempt to undermine the very openness afforded to a free press and uphold a positive image of government. Of course, excessive and indiscriminate means of regulation would set a dangerous precedent that, over time, would likely undermine the very journalistic freedoms that democracies have sought to protect. Authoritarian regimes, as a result, would likely use such moves to continue and/or expand their own efforts of censorship. Yet democratic debates are only functional when they are based on a mutually shared understanding of their 'realities', untampered by contrived disinformation. Thus, whilst the containment and eradication of disinformation within media outlets remains vital to the security of democracies, such policies must be carefully articulated within democratic parameters and do not undermine the very openness afforded to them.

In order to ensure the continuation of democracies' healthy and thriving openness in the wake of these disinformation-borne challenges, the authors suggest three policy guidelines for democracies to adopt. Democracies should implement a program of countering disinformation that 1) pursues education programs to citizens that improves their critical thinking skills and reinvigorates their expectations for an ethical online domain; 2) establishes non-governmental task forces to enhance media accountability; and 3) reserves the use of government regulation to only the most specific cases, or in cases where its use is permitted by the aforementioned accountability task force. Taken together, these synergistic measures are intended to serve as a foundation for curtailing -- both proactively and reactively -- online disinformation and its deteriorative effects on democratic governance and public trust.

I. REINVIGORATE ETHICS- AND CRITICAL THINKING-BASED EDUCATION

Countering media disinformation begins with initiating and strengthening existing education programs tailored towards online users that improve their critical thinking and analysis skills of digital information, so as to make them more aware of disinformation when they encounter it and, in turn, be less inclined to believe it at face value. Moreover, building an anti-disinformation strategy upon the foundations of

individual-level education programs in ethics and critical reasoning among the general population will support democratic societies in developing a citizenry whose more informed and widespread participation can overcome the malicious distortion of media disinformation, and better ensure a more accurate reflection to decision-making processes of the political, economic and social interests of every constituency within democratic society.

Given the mass extent of disinformation content circulating today's media platforms, education efforts are crucial to their eradication, as it will remain difficult for governments or relevant third-party organizations to effectively oversee and monitor the spread of disinformation. Even if such organizations and their digital apparatus were readily available to solely tackle the emerging online disinformation order, their powers would not reach many of the digital avenues that disinformation content has proliferated within. Many popular online communication platforms, including WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, are encrypted, preventing their creators from monitoring and intervening when disinformation content appears. Thus, given these practical constraints, the necessity for individual-level educational efforts that improve democratic citizens' awareness and recognition of disinformation contents will be crucial for a systematic and wide-reaching effort to remove it in digital spaces where conventional government reach does not currently extend.

Because the digital community is not composed of a homogeneous set of users, education programs on disinformation should, initially and primarily, be targeted towards digital users of the ages of 18-34. The age set currently makes up half the total number of users online, thereby making such users more likely to encounter disinformation than other digital users. For example, Millennial online users (those currently between the ages of 25-40) consume 43% of their daily news from social media platforms where an ease of publication makes disinformation more prevalent. If education strategies at raising awareness on disinformation were aimed at this group, it would significantly reduce its consumption and spread. Moreover, younger digital users are more likely to be more open-minded and tolerant of opposing or alternative political views than older users. According to one report, young adult users tend to be relatively more fluid to new social and political ideas, their views and belief systems still in alteration to their surrounding information environments. In democratic societies, the protection and nurturing of such qualities will be of particular importance, as their open and participatory nature depends on a populace that is accepting of differences and welcomes new experiences, as opposed to rigid ethnocentric conceptions of viewing the world through one's own perspective. Whilst it is true that disinformation has capitalized on this intellectual flexibility -- particularly in the context of growing economic inequality, heightened political polarization, and the COVID-19 pandemic -- the age group's relative openness and critical analysis potential makes them, nevertheless, a vital source for efforts at countering online disinformation. For the health of democratic societies, it is important that focused efforts towards the burgeoning voter populace are given sufficient attention, as the potential inclusion of political perspectives unintentionally constructed by the manipulating disinformation order will severely hamper informed democratic debate and the efficiency of decision-making processes.

The particularities of disinformation education efforts will, ultimately, depend on the national education systems and preferences of individual democratic countries. However, all should attempt to construct these programs of developing digital users' critical-thinking and analysis skills within ethically-orientated parameters. By placing sufficient focus on reinvigorating the ethical underpinnings in digital users, their growing awareness and support for a well-informed, transparent and professional standard of journalism will further press online media outlets to produce content in-keeping with such principles

and values. Efforts at achieving this could include regular mandatory critical-reasoning courses at college, so as to develop their skills in identifying and flagging misinformation or tampered media content, thereby heightening citizen-level demand for higher quality and professional journalism from online media outlets. Industries and other employment sectors that heavily rely on digital mediums can also continue these efforts beyond the university classroom by having digital analysis training, so as to continuously reinvigorate such skills across the population. Furthermore, education programs towards the general public should also be accompanied by education programs in media ethics towards media outlets. By targeting the distributors of disinformation contents, education programs can further push media organizations to produce high-quality content that is in accordance with ethical codes of conduct. By pursuing a dual-targeting education initiative that seeks to develop the ethical groundings and critical reasoning of both readers and producers, disinformation will find itself in an online environment significantly harder to disseminate itself in.

II. ESTABLISH NON-GOVERNMENTAL TASK FORCES FOR MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY

Media accountability, in the simplest sense, entails pressuring the media to actively counter disinformation by ensuring that they face consequences for permitting malicious contents to circulate on their platforms. Enhancing such media accountability can kill two birds with one stone – managing the overall disinformation environment and indirectly holding the fake news initiators accountable by limiting their online activities. Media outlets should be guided to responsibly and promptly mediate the spread of disinformation before the harmful contents achieve their intended outcomes. Assertive action of the media is particularly vital when it comes to foreign entities, of whom direct penalization is complicated by the issues regarding sovereignty and jurisdiction. Thus, the online platforms not only connect the senders and receivers of disinformation, but it also acts as the buffer zone between sovereign states.

Media accountability begins by establishing a non-governmental and centralized task force for media guidance. First, democratic values will be best protected under a non-governmental task force. External intervention to the media often evokes serious concerns regarding the freedom of speech, more so when done by government institutions. This is manifested in the criticism against Korean government for trying to bulldoze its fake news law. To protect the watchdog journalism and anti-government channels, the defining features of democracy, a third-party mediator to bridge the gap between the government and the media is necessary. In this sense, the task force must include government officials and media representatives as well as relevant stakeholders from academia and the civil society to enhance democratic process and expertise. Second, a centralized body can convey a more consistent message to social platforms. The core intricacy regarding online platforms arises from their hybrid identity as profit-seeking businesses also functioning as major information channels. In Korea, the Fair Trade Commission (KFTC) and the Korea Communications Commission (KCC) are going through an extensive conflict over regulating Google. The KFTC views Google as an e-commerce platform while KCC considers it as a communication company, thereby each organization arguing for authority to regulate Google. To overcome such “pulling and hauling” of government institutions as well as minimizing redundancy among fragmented efforts by diverse civic groups, a central task force should be granted the authority to design the overall structure of countermeasures against disinformation.

The foremost mission of this proposed "media guidance task force" is to develop unambiguous guidelines by which both the government and the media are encouraged to abide. In relation to the government, the task force should stipulate when, and to what degree, the government is permitted to limit free speech and free press. To this end, the task force should refer to the "clawback" clause found in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a clause which legitimizes the restriction of free speech on the basis of protecting "national security, public order, public health, or morals". Subsequently, the proposed task force would modify this clause to accommodate domestic contexts and dynamics, all while transparently defining any cases where the clause may apply and stipulating any applicable sanctions in advance.

On the media side, the decision to disable certain accounts or eliminate contents should not be left to the sole discretion of individual platforms. Leaving this decision to media platforms will lead to irregular, and thus unfair, outcomes, all of which ultimately erodes public faith in the media's ability to be impartial and truthful. Consider, for example, how former President Donald Trump's Twitter account was disabled while Taliban contents remain largely unbanned on Twitter; this is the same Taliban whose contents are banned on Facebook. At the very least, media content of a similarly inflammatory nature should be treated in the same fashion, regardless of the platform it was posted on. Moreover, the promptness of response by online platforms must be included as a major criterion in the guideline set forth by the proposed task force. As the Internet has boosted the speed of information sharing, swift response becomes critical in countering disinformation, so as to prevent it from triggering social confusion. Although Facebook eventually disabled Donald Trump's account, it only did so after the storming of the US Capitol. Therefore, just as Germany's Network Enforcement Act sets a 24-hour time limit in blocking the unlawful contents, similar criteria should also be included in the evaluation.

In realistic terms, however, the central task force will lack legally binding measures to enforce the guidelines. Instead, the task force should indirectly foster compliance by standardizing the credibility rating of the media. Currently various rating systems are in place, namely Ranking Digital Rights Corporate Accountability Index and Simmons News Media Trust Index, but the fragmentation in the scope and method of evaluation hamper sending out meaningful signals to the media. Unsurprisingly, the rise or fall in these rankings hardly affect the behaviours of platform companies. The credit ratings by Moody's, Fitch and S&P have such a significant impact on businesses because investors base their future investment decisions upon those ratings. Likewise, if credibility ratings of media can influence the public decision to continue their subscription, future advertisement allocation, and even serve as the basis for ESG evaluation, the changes in the ratings will shepherd the media toward more responsible decisions. In particular, as the call for responsible investment is on the rise, financial institutions are increasingly taking ESG index into consideration for loans and investments. Just as S&P removed Facebook from its ESG index in 2019, if the standardized credibility rating of the media by the task force can induce such decisions, it will have a more substantial impact on the media behaviours.

III. UTILIZE GOVERNMENT REGULATION AS A TOOL OF LAST RESORT

In an ideal world, challenges to democratic governance would be best addressed by democratic solutions. In other words, ideal solutions to democratic challenges should abide by and support liberal democratic norms, rather than undermining the very democratic ideals and systems they were meant to defend. If, for example, the answer to profuse media misinformation was as simple as tightening government regulations over the media, we need look no further than countries with strict media

censorship laws to serve as our models -- such as those commonly seen in authoritarian, nondemocratic regimes. Obviously, government regulations might effectively deal with the immediate problem, but they may come at the cost of the freedoms of the press and speech. Proposed solutions should thus be mindful and responsible, in the sense that they should maximize effectiveness without being unnecessarily undemocratic.

In acknowledgement of this, this essay has thus far supplied citizen-based, non-governmental suggestions to tackle the problem of media disinformation. However, an argument can be made for more direct government involvement in media regulation -- especially if government action synergizes with the non-governmental "media guidance task forces" suggested in the preceding section of this essay.

Though we could wait for the benefits of education to take root or for the deliberations of a media guidance task force to be officialised, the swift rate at which disinformation can poison public trust and the information ecosystem may necessitate more immediate remedial action. This is especially true in issue areas where there is simultaneously extreme need for such action and where governments run minimal risk of overstepping their bounds and abusing democratic freedoms.

Media transparency is one such issue area where immediate government regulation might be appropriate. The call for greater transparency in the news and on media platforms is buttressed by waning public trust in mass media; and the rising volume of false information in the modern information ecosystem. In the United States, for example, almost 93% of Americans in 2017 obtained their news online while nearly one in five American adults in 2019 received their political news from social media. Meanwhile, more people increasingly believe that news outlets should present a wider range of impartial views. The Reuters Institute Digital Report 2021 finds that there is broad consensus across populations around the world in the belief that people should be able to form their own opinions, free from the influence of editorialized interpretations. In sum, there is not only an urgent need for greater media transparency, there is also increasing demand for it.

No entity is more suited to such decisive regulatory action than law-making bodies; in other words, governments. However, the potential risk of governments abusing their roles means that government intervention should be restricted to a minimum. If stronger intervention is required, then such intervention must closely follow the recommendations set forth by their "media guidance task forces" (as described in the preceding section of this essay). Government regulation without the benefit of a media guidance task force should not be too exacting or coercive for fear of stepping into the territory of outright media censorship. Immediate government regulation bent on improving media transparency could involve steps such as: ensuring that information sources used by media platforms are made transparent and open to the public; requiring media platforms to publicize their policies on what sort of content is permissible on their platforms, and how said content is moderated and ranked; and encouraging media platforms to publicize the methods they use to vet, moderate, and rank their content. By instituting these regulations, governments may ensure that the veracity of information sources are, at the very least, open to public perusal and judgment. In doing so, these regulations can help reverse flagging public trust in the media and facilitate the honest disclosure and vetting of online information, which in turn could complement the proposed media guidance task force's ability to arrive at meaningful recommendations.

In other issue areas -- especially where governments might be tempted to implement stronger regulations -- governments should follow the recommendations set forth by their media guidance task forces. There is room for synergy here; the task force stands as an accountable agent through which the problems of disinformation, and the solutions to them, are authoritatively clarified. Meanwhile, the government acts as the enforcer of these proposed solutions and recommendations. This avoids the trap of unilateral government regulation; as long as governments do not overstep their bounds (i.e., do not regulate any further or more harshly than what is suggested by their media guidance task forces), then they will reduce the risk of running afoul of malpractice and unduly infringing upon democratic ideals. The task forces in turn depend on governments to consider their recommendations in good faith and legally enforce those recommendations, for the task forces do not possess enforcement capabilities.

In closing, it is important to properly contextualize the role of government regulations from the viewpoint of the writers. By restricting government-backed regulation of the media to minimal areas that pose the least risk of conflicting with democratic values, and by further limiting the government's role to that of enforcing the recommendations produced by a specialist task force, this essay envisions government regulation as a measure of last resort. Given the potential for government malpractice and the undeniable strength of government enforcement capabilities, this essay finds wisdom in restricting government intervention unless it is absolutely warranted, as per outlined above. In this sense, direct government regulation acts as a supplement to, rather than the main driver of, the writers' solution for media disinformation.

CONCLUSION

While fake news and false information are not new developments, the world now sees an unprecedented degree of routinized false information proliferating the information ecosystem. The sheer volume of disinformation not only muddies the waters of objective fact-based truth; it degrades the ability of democracies to govern effectively by lowering public trust in official statements, exacerbating political divides and gridlock, and diverting large segments of the public towards incompatible, or even false, realities.

In particular, modern media platforms serve to amplify and proliferate disinformation to unprecedented levels. Having recognized the integral role that the media plays in shaping the modern "disinformation order", this essay has provided three policy suggestions with which to address the challenge of media disinformation proactively and reactively. This three-tiered strategy ultimately envisions a world where disinformation will find less purchase in a populace bolstered by stronger intellectual and ethical faculties with which to gauge it; where accountable, nongovernmental means are used to guide media regulation; and where governments are responsible enough to practice self-restraint when it comes to intervening or enforcing media regulations. The policy suggestions detailed in this essay thereby constitute the writers' shared vision for democracy in the future, insofar as it attempts to address the corrosive impact of online media disinformation on democratic governance.

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RETHINKING DEMOCRACY: NEW APPROACHES TO ENHANCE LOCAL PARTICIPATION

When confronted with the challenge of Rethinking Democracy, we inevitably recognize that democracy, as it exists today, is facing persistent crises. As students of the largest university in South America, we notice that such a crisis cannot be more evident than in our region. In recent years, we experienced, simultaneously, extreme social convulsion and violence in Colombia, a humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela, large-scale protests and political instability in Chile and Ecuador, economic crises in Argentina, the most turmoiled electoral process in the history of Peru, a series of authoritarian measures in Central American countries, notably Nayib Bukele's El Salvador and Daniel Ortega's Nicaragua, and a dangerous turn to extremism and authoritarianism in Brazil.

In comparable crises in the past, populism and authoritarianism have been embraced as a solution for the region. This may now present itself as a dire possibility once again. Therefore, it is urgent and vital to discuss some of the underlying causes of such crises and propose concrete policies and actions to address them. Our understanding is that the current systems of participation and representation are inadequate to deal with contemporary challenges. The legitimacy of representations and the level and nature of participation both have key and direct impacts on the resilience of democratic institutions, and it is under such a perspective that we envision the following cycle:

- Individuals should be made aware of the impact of politics in their lives. Everything is political and decided through political debate. However, politics feels distant from everyday activities, and democracy is understood as a series of procedural rituals with which citizens engage only during periods of elections. In order to make individuals more aware of the political nature of their existence in society, local political participation is crucial, and should be encouraged and fostered. At large, thus, democracy should be understood as navigating life in society.
- Locally, it is easier for individuals to grasp how political decisions affect their lives, increasing the odds that citizens will develop a collaborative culture within their communities. Additionally, marginalized groups are not commonly heard or reached by standard, nation-wide politics. By expanding local political engagement, one can facilitate and enhance the participation of different and diverse voices, building a collective feeling of belonging and of their importance for the country's future.
- This is an opportunity to increase the sophistication of local public policies by opening doors to different perspectives and interest groups. Local political engagement can work as a driving force to increase individuals' understanding of political concepts and debates. Fostering political consciousness in the local level can improve the overall quality of national political debates, as individuals gain a greater awareness of how democratic negotiation and decision-making works.

- This, in turn, helps cultivate stronger and more resilient institutions, with more robust accountability measures that can prevent the ascension of populist and autocratic governments.
- Considering this positive self-feeding cycle, we do not ignore the essential role of the media in changing the current political environment and culture. It is both an element that helps to explain the current critical situation of democracies and an agent with the potential to transform it. Media coverage should move away from "infotainment", towards a more educational and responsible approach, reporting controversial news as symptoms of larger, underlying social phenomena rather than as isolated, exceptional cases, as we further discuss throughout this paper.

BEYOND CONSENSUS: HARVESTING DEMOCRATIC CONFLICT AND NEGOTIATION

In order to understand where democracy in South America – and in the world – may be falling short, it can be useful to think of it not only as a system striving for consensus. According to political theorist Chantal Mouffe, consensus is an illusion that tends to negate and exclude differing voices rather than include them. As political actors seek consensual decisions, they might be conducive to masking policies as apolitical or purely technical solutions that are universally applicable or fitting. This could not be further from reality, as no decision is fully depleted of ideology. The move away from consensus, thus, is key to fostering a higher-quality political debate among citizens focused on understanding each other's political position and, from that, on negotiating issues. It is an opportunity to embrace conflict as a foundational nature of the democratic process, establishing fruitful dialogue between opposing and pluralistic ideas to properly harvest and strengthen de facto democracy. What is up for debate, then, is the interpretation of differing political positions, not their existence, which should not be neglected, denied or underestimated.

The difference between seeking consensus at all costs and fostering respectful political negotiation is made clear when we scrutinize the positions of far-right populist figures, such as Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro or former United States president Donald Trump. Bolsonaro, for instance, managed to be elected in 2018 without participating in a single televised debate with his opponents. The world also witnessed Trump gaslighting Hillary Clinton on several occasions during 2016 and obnoxiously interrupting Joe Biden during presidential debates in 2020. Their discourse gravely violates the principle of mutual tolerance, denying the legitimacy and the bare existence of his political rivals, and also cutting off any opportunity for negotiation. Their message is clear: you either fully consent to their ideals, or you can be a target of political violence – symbolically or even physically – and expelled from the so-called national community.

The extreme polarization experienced by many of our countries recently is also a result of our collective incapacity to manage democratic conflict and fruitful negotiation. When actors in society depend on the particular group in power to be considered politically legitimate, the social contract of democratic representation becomes fragile and unstable, as consensus is offered as a necessary outcome, following almost a totalitarian regime of truth. Hence, contrasting projects of society are not properly institutionalized and dealt with politically, further jeopardizing institutional resilience. The current growing judicialization of political disputes, for instance, is evidence that the political process is failing to resolve political conflicts by itself.

Liberal democracy, thus, is being questioned and put to test all over the world, by many opposing forces. However, although the legitimacy of "liberal democracy" is suffering, democratic systems should not be simply disregarded as ineffective -- and replaced by more centralized, authoritarian, and "efficient" systems, as many actors have been demanding recently. We need to find better ways to enact democracy, to activate greater political participation, to counter what Boaventura de Sousa Santos has called the "double pathology". According to Sousa Santos, society today is experiencing both a "participation pathology", reflected in large political abstentionism, and a "representation pathology", in which citizens feel ever less represented by their elected political leaders.

This may also be identified by looking into the limitations imposed by the current representative democratic model. Based on historical Eurocentric values and experiences, "participation" is usually executed through representation. In regions such as South America, however, this may not be enough. Many countries have not had stable democratic governments and political processes throughout their post-colonial history. In fact, it has barely been three decades since many South American countries transitioned from military dictatorships to democracies. Although elections have been held frequently, the association between representivity and legitimacy is not at all automatic; instead, it is possible that key democratic processes and procedures are considered hollow, almost ceremonial. Hence, we encounter the current lack of correspondence in many Latin American countries between institutions and social practices, policy and culture, legality and legitimacy.

It is also important to stress the need to include marginalized communities into the democratic process. Latin America is a region ethnically, economically and culturally diverse, in which almost half of its population lives in poverty or extreme poverty (30% and 11%, respectively) and with a Gini coefficient of 0.460 -- one of the lowest in the world, with some countries, such as Brazil, reaching 0.538 in 2019. Throughout the continent, we find latent tensions between social movements and traditional politics, as the former do not feel properly represented in the latter. In a consensus-based system, mechanisms to include and embrace the multiplicity of identities and demands have been insufficient, frustrating efforts for greater representation and legitimacy. Therefore, a democratic system that does not foster negotiation -- or that even refuses to have multiple demands negotiated -- is incompatible with a plural society and is constantly putting marginalized communities at risk of having their fundamental rights violated. The higher number of COVID-19 deaths by Black and indigenous communities throughout the Americas is an example of this dangerous trend.

Indigenous communities in the Americas are indeed a clear case of this challenge. The contrast between indigenous social demands and the Westphalian nation-state's interests is a construct of historical colonialism and inherent to the modern formation of our countries. There needs to be greater effort to deconstruct the idea of an apparent incompatibility between these interests through their local participation. Indigenous farmers in South America, for instance, often express dissatisfaction when competing in global predatory markets that obliterate smaller producers, and their voices are rarely heard when discussing alternatives. However, the recently-formed Constituent Assembly in Chile is the biggest present-day case of an attempt to democratically conciliate that contrast: 17 out of 155 of the Assembly's chairs are occupied by indigenous representatives, having a Mapuche indigenous woman as its president. This effort legitimizes their voices and ensures direct participation of marginalized communities and groups in the democratic process, increasing the possibilities for legitimate representation in the future and for the implementation of public policies that consider their realities

within a capitalist market. We emphasize, thus, the importance of quotas and affirmative action in political spaces of negotiation and representation.

In light of this, it is essential to rethink the way we approach representation and political participation as a way for rethinking democracy. For more inclusive and participatory politics in a democratic context it is necessary to move beyond a culture of protest and confrontation and towards a political culture of conflict and negotiation. The change in words is significant, as it always is. Introducing new public policy can only go so far if the practice of political decision-making remains the same. In other words, the manner through which public policies are negotiated and decided must also change, incorporating different voices, perspectives and customs to produce results that go beyond merely "apolitical technical solutions". That being said, to create a political culture of conflict and negotiation, institutions need to be organized in a way that centers on local and diverse participation. This could be possible by performing active listening, which requires institutions to create spaces for hearing different perspectives and backgrounds, and being willing to learn and open themselves for the changes that would emerge from the conflictive environment provided by political debates.

In 2015, girls and boys from public secondary schools in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, mobilized against a government policy for a "rational" reorganization of the state school system, considered by many to be unilateral and antidemocratic. Students, as a result, spontaneously started occupying their schools, demanding to be heard, and organized politically for the first time in their lives. German political activist and intellectual Rosa Luxemburg believed that political training should come from actual practical experience in political action. What the students in occupied schools demonstrated is that practical political experience can be innovative, as they saw no distinction between their objectives and how they organized internally as a movement and social institution. To demand accountability and more diverse participation in public-policy negotiations, the students implemented amongst themselves a social organization and a decision-making process that incorporated these same principles: inclusiveness, gender parity, direct democracy, horizontal negotiation, among other principles. Their way of doing politics, of expressing demands, and of trying to negotiate with authorities embraced policy proposals as well as a new way of behaving and interacting with their peers. The importance of affection, leisure time, shared knowledge, art, collective care of the physical space, etc., were principles understood as essential to their political demands.

Besides practical political experience, it is also possible to include diverse marginalized groups through public interest technologies. By developing technologies that address diversity issues locally, such as accessibility and language differences, it is possible to allow marginalized voices to have greater contact with social, cultural and economic issues that are of interest to them. Consequently, this would stimulate awareness of the importance of political participation, in addition to creating virtual spaces that break the isolation to which these groups are subjected, allowing participation to be more effective. These new technologies can be created by governments as well as by non-profit organizations or enterprises, expanding the possibilities of developing these tools.

To create an environment of negotiation, rather than confrontation and consensus, all actors involved in every political process need to rethink their participation. Additionally, institutions need to develop better means to include interested stakeholders. A culture of listening and respect needs to be fomented. The easiest and most direct way to do this is through local political participation, which can provide the practical experience that Rosa Luxemburg championed. In turn, individuals and institutions

can acquire a greater political understanding of larger social problems, transforming them into active citizens who can contribute to the political debate more substantially. Local political participation also needs to consider the lessons learned in the occupied schools: how we organize, help, and listen to each other -- in all levels of political action -- matter.

BEYOND INFOTAINMENT: NEWS REPORTING AS EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

It is impossible to propose changes in political culture without addressing traditional and social media. News outlets are connectors between governments and citizens, often acting as a form of accountability and a way of expressing demands. Their importance suggests they are a space for the formation -- and dissemination -- of opinion and ideas, directly contributing to the political debate and the political climate of our democracies. In this sense, traditional media vehicles -- newspapers, radio and television -- have been very important in fostering the democratic debate and participation, as they enabled greater access to information, represented resistance in dictatorial contexts, and were the point of reference for most citizens throughout the past century.

However, in recent years, perceptions and trust towards mainstream media have changed and their reporting role has been questioned by leaders all across the political spectrum. In the first half of the 2010s in Brazil, for instance, while the media focused on unearthing massive corruption scandals and portraying the country's 2013 mass demonstrations as superficial and violent, politicians -- claiming to be anti-establishment -- used the opportunity to foster a feeling of anti-politics as democratic institutions came to be perceived as corrupt, fragile and ineffective. Such feelings were crucial in influencing the 2018 presidential elections that elected several politicians supported by radicalized bases, further aggravating the country's institutional crisis. Such politicians rely on manipulated information, conspiracy theories and fake news to justify their actions and behaviours, which further discredits traditional media vehicles, performing a detrimental vicious circle.

Another crucial factor that contributed to the ascension of anti-politics feelings and to a lack of trust in mainstream media has been the emergence and rapid spread of social media. Digital innovation has aggravated the complexity of effects that media in general have in democratic environments, since the public's roles have expanded and mutated. People no longer feel they are passive viewers or listeners, since they are now actively involved in propagating information instead of merely consuming it. Not only do individuals have fast access to information through social media, but it is also much easier to disseminate that information through social networks.

The internet has been helpful as a platform for alternative channels to mainstream media, but it is also a new and unpredictable way of doing politics. Social media has been important to increase political participation and to stimulate political mobilization, as we have seen in movements in the past decade, from the Arab Spring to #MeToo. In the previously mentioned school occupations in São Paulo, for instance, students used social media to explain and gather support for their cause. Thus, the internet is essential to raise issues of public interest, as it provides the average citizen with a platform to speak and unite around other similar struggles. However, we need to learn how to better use social media as a tool for negotiation and participation, rather than a space to negate the existence of dissent. Otherwise, it could represent a threat to democracy when used to disseminate fake news, manipulate public opinion around conspiracy theories, and to promote hate speeches.

In this sense, scholar Trevor Garrison Smith, for instance, has indicated that elections are increasingly more about marketing and branding rather than concrete policy proposals.

Therefore, the internet becomes the perfect political space for electoral propaganda as marketing becomes "news", which contributes to the ascension of anti-traditional politicians and their radicalized base. This contributes to current crises, as leaders challenge the media's veracity, deem all opposition as "wrong", and claim to hold the ultimate and unique truth. As indicated by the Latinobaricentro Database, an annual public opinion survey conducted with urban populations of several Latin American countries, current satisfaction with democracy in the region is among the lowest registered, as is trust in political parties and democratic institutions. This lack of political sentiment makes our continent vulnerable and susceptible to the radicalizing usage of social media.

It is important to notice a recent media phenomenon that is present both in traditional vehicles and on the internet, affecting the political debate: "infotainment". News outlets, competing for the attention of different audiences, have prioritized news coverage as entertainment, rather than as information. Studies have shown that, at the turn of the 21st century, reporting of controversial cases -- of gender-based violence, sexual harassment, racism -- has often been portrayed as exceptional, atypical or particular. Instead, the media has a chance to address these grave forms of symbolic and physical violence against marginalized groups as institutionalized, underlying, and severe problems in today's societies. In this sense, activists have highlighted the usefulness of hashtags in social media. As hashtags are often used alongside phrases and expressions, they can greatly amplify and raise awareness of an issue, showing shared struggles among a specific group or population. Since they are a simple tool and can be easily shared, hashtags end up engaging people by giving visibility to ideas, generating new conversations, creating solidarity among isolated individuals and promoting local and global networks.
Nonetheless, "infotainment" news coverage is also seen in the political debate particularly during elections. Anti-establishment -- and often anti-democratic -- politicians gain constant access to news outlets due to their extravagant and grotesque discourse, often without a proper contextualization. In addition to invalidating the political debate, as discussed previously, they are broadcasted as eccentric and as isolated voices, when in fact they represent deeper societal issues and reflect the current struggles of democracies. In this sense, the media needs to take greater responsibility for their own news reporting, going beyond mere facts and controversial quotes, and presenting contextual, historical and systemic explanations for events. This would allow citizens to have a broader view of the impact of political decisions and behaviours, stimulating their insertion in both local and national political discussions to defend their interests.

Besides, in order to encourage local political participation and enhanced political negotiation, the media should also be an agent promoting active listening. The simpler alternative is to use social media as a creator of spaces for debates that would be impractical otherwise, as it has the potential to embrace and incorporate a variety of individuals from different realities and give them similar participation opportunities. However, traditional media and online newspapers would also be crucial to the success of this proposal, as they still have a broad reach to connect with different audiences and, more importantly, they have the resources needed to embrace richer environments, shifting the focus from powerful individuals to marginalized communities.

CONCLUSION

The broad proposition that we have tried to address in this paper is to create a positive cycle of local political participation through a series of steps that can cultivate diverse engagement, political sentiment, and a negotiation culture.

The first step is to incite a culture of political participation within local communities, neighbourhoods and municipalities. This can be made through various mechanisms, such as neighbourhood assemblies, participatory budgeting, schools open to the community, education on conflict resolution and negotiation techniques, media literacy programs, etc. Most importantly, the media cannot be underestimated and must be included as a stakeholder in all local efforts, being used as a vehicle to inform and educate. The following step aims to nurture diversified political participation at the local level in policy-making, execution, monitoring and evaluation. Not only marginalized communities need to be given opportunities to negotiate their interests, but also local governments need to implement participatory mechanisms, receive training on active listening and non-violent communication, and incorporate the possibility of change. Here is where the culture of confrontation has the potential to switch into a culture of negotiation. The only way to enhance and improve local political participation is to practice it every day. This practice, in turn, has the potential to foster more resilient local institutions, as citizens feel a sense of belonging, care, trust and community. Beyond that, they will be better informed to follow and contribute to national political debates, understanding democratic mechanisms and politics, and gaining discerning knowledge to better judge veracity of news and discourses.

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EMERGING YOUTH RIGHTS (EYR): AN EMERGING CHARTER FOR THE EMERGENT GENERATION

Engaging the youth in today's political sphere is no easy task. Although every national context bears its own distinctions and particularities, pretty much anywhere we find political, economic and social turmoil, and the workings and members in the institutions in place were mostly set up before the young generation of today could have a say in them. Furthermore, rarely do political leaders appeal to the youth; in some countries, because they make up a small part of the voting population; in others, because many young people can't vote at all; other times, simply because they're less likely to not show up, due to a lack of trust to the institutions and/or representatives themselves.

We believe the first step towards getting young people on board is making them feel that the decisions that are made truly look after their wellbeing, and that they are regarded as full subjects of law, thus not only enjoying as many rights as the rest of the population, but also being granted particular rights and provisions that cater to their particular position in society.

Plain and simple, we believe that a declaration of rights concerning uniquely and exclusively young people, in the creation of which they could participate democratically, would contribute a great deal in showing that the representatives in place not only care about them, but understand their current plights, and are willing to deliver what they are asked for. Thus, we offer an initial draft, aimed at serving as a guide which is up for discussion, debate and fine-tuning according to the particular context, needs and possibilities of each individual signatory country. We believe an institution like the Club of Madrid could pioneer in sponsoring such a project worldwide, so as to offer the youth the same protection and recognition that now only exists for those under 18 years old. The youth are, arguably, the only segment of society that, despite being discriminated against, isn't protected by any particular charters, and is barely recognised as experiencing such discrimination.

Moreover, we believe that ensuring youth's engagement in politics benefits the whole of society. First, because of sheer democratic legitimacy - those subjected to the law must be able to support its drafting -, as well as demographic legitimacy - in some countries, the youth make up for a considerable part, even the majority, of the population. The number of adolescents and youth today is at an all-time high. According to the Report of the UN Expert Group, there has never been a larger percentage of youth population in the world as there is today. Secondly, because an engaged youth is also an engaged adulthood, as having positive experiences early on is likely to promote motivated, participating citizens. And third, because we believe that the first step to ask anyone to be a duty-abiding citizen, is to provide them with positive incentives and experiences with being a right-bearing one. Before asking the youth for responsibility, why not giving them the vote of confidence?

INTRODUCTION

The task endured in this report is born out of the realization that “youth politics' ' lacks an international common ground. For us, youth politics refers to policy activities that are specially targeted to young people. Such activities may exist at any governance level ranging from the local to the global spheres. Ideally they should be policies of the young, made by young people and for young people. We do not look down to the already existing youth policy frameworks in different international organisations like African Youth Charter set up by the African Union, the Iberoamerican Convention on Rights of Youth which Spain is also a signatory, or the European Youth Strategy which is the EU youth policy cooperation framework. While we recognize the necessity of the existence of initiatives like those, we also decide to strive for more and aim to construct a human rights-like framework that is able to operate globally.

One of the reasons why youth politics have not taken the international stage properly is the difficulty to define what youth is. The concentration of what it means to be young varies across countries and regions, and also across time. There is a strong circumstantial inclination when trying to prescribe what young people “ought” to be. The expectations about what a young person ought to be, fluctuate according to different economic, political and social scenarios. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) during the past decades has tried to establish an international standard for statistical purposes. It groups young people as everyone encompassing the ages of 10-24 years. For us, such a definition starts too early and ends too soon. Hence when we talk about young people we have in mind a group age that goes from 16 years old to 30 years old. We believe this age group is large enough to accommodate different regional realities, but also tight enough to keep a sense of global commonality.

At a first glimpse we think of youth as an in-between, a bridge between childhood and adulthood. A place of transit in the life cycle. Such transitory nature rightly captures the brevity of youth and the sense of change every young person has. But at the same time, it might reduce youth to a simple preface to real life, like adulthood. We would like to argue for a more positive conception of youth, in which value is intrinsically found in youth, and not only in the next stage, not only a passage.

Our Proposal: The Universal Declaration of Emerging Youth Rights (EYR)

This Declaration encompasses a wide variety of rights, which together seek to ensure young people’s right to be a political subject, to be given any necessary time and space to stand on their own; all in all, the right to craft their own present and future. This list only represents an initial dive into the needs that we believe are most commonly infringed upon specifically on young people, and which we find to be insufficiently recognised, discussed and taken into account. We believe these rights to be a necessary complement - and never substitute - to the universal social, economic and political rights recognised to all persons in a multitude of charters, legislations and treaties all over the world. While it is growingly acknowledged that these universal rights are more commonly violated in young people than their adult counterparts, we believe the following list will help shed light on the particular struggles that the youth of the world suffer every day, and how addressing said wrongs could help better integrate them into the political community.

1. Right to be Wrong.

Young people shall be entitled to a higher degree of legal forbearance than other groups in society. The possibility of granting higher comparative lenience to the misdeeds of the youth should be strongly considered for a multitude of reasons, ranging from the fact that their actual ability to fully grasp the consequences of their actions and the development of their reasoning skills are still very much in progress, to the fact that they have their whole life before them in which they will have to carry the repercussions of the experiences lived in their most formative years.

Asking that the youth not be mortgaged for life for their mistakes, changes of heart, regretful decisions and wrongdoings doesn't mean discharging young people from holding responsibilities, but advocating for ways to restore justice that integrate the present need for reparation and the possibility of a future that isn't permanently subjected to their past missteps.

a. Practical proposal: The right to be wrong can be applied to a wide set of social environments, especially in the legal and educational environments. Moving towards the decriminalisation of the youth's actions will mean allowing for their misdeeds to not become a life-long weight. The demand for an absolute clean criminal record to postulate for a career in civil service (security, health, education, etc.) goes against this right, and should thus be repealed.

2. Right to be Different.

Young people have to spend a considerable amount of time defending their will to act differently than their adult counterparts or the way they were raised to behave. Under the accusation of being rebellious, insubordinate, ignorant or undisciplined, adults around them, generally in positions of higher power and authority - parents, superiors at work, teachers or professors, government officials - punish their behaviour verbally, physically, economically, emotionally, socially or in any other way available, sometimes to the extent of making it impossible for the youth to act in the way they deem appropriate. The youth are even lumped together as if their behaviour was or ought to be homogeneous, whether praised or criticized.

Thus, young people's right to be different - among their own age group, between generations, between phases of life - needs to be ingrained in the minds of those around them, so they are allowed to make up their own mind about the life they want to lead.

a. Practical proposal. Recognise the right of the youth to self-determination in the matters that most commonly lead to dispute and discomfort, especially in their own homes, as is the case of their diet, habits, friends, political views, career path, sexuality, identity, etc.

3. Right to Doubt.

Society and its institutions must accommodate the need for young people to question, rethink and reconsider their actions and their beliefs as much as they need to. The road to emancipation should not be univocal or linear, but more of a white canvas where the youth can paint, erase, try out new colours and come back to the start as many times as they require.

a. Practical proposal: On every occasion possible, the early stages of life must allow the possibility to leave the standard course of study and/or work and facilitate sabbaticals and periods of exploration in different careers, fields and environments, dignifying second chances and promoting complex, heterogeneous ways to grow.

4. Right to be Anxious.

There is no question that anxiety tends to peak in the early stages of adulthood, where the youth feel their responsibilities piling up and their expectations plummeting, as they realise the promise of a bright future might be further than they expected, whether for economic, political, social, technological, religious or ecological forces happening all around them. Usually, far from trying to ease the overwhelming amount of thoughts, fears and expectations of the youth, adults feed them, even if sometimes inadvertently, only adding to the fire. The youth need avenues to express, battle, reflect and alleviate those feelings, which shouldn't be seen as an impediment, a display of cowardice, or an obstacle or inconvenience, but a perfectly normal and formative part of their life path, and thus should be discussed instead of suppressed and expected to naturally go away.

a. Practical proposal: Each country's health system should put in place a National Mental Health Plan with available professionals to assist their whole young population in such formative years. Furthermore, health and educational institutions should launch mental health awareness campaigns aimed at erasing the taboo still surrounding it, so not only the youth are convinced to ask for help, but also the adults around them facilitate the process, instead of expressing shame, suspicion or rejection towards it.

5. Right to Take It Slow.

Following logically from the previous four rights, we recognise the youth as a group that is pressured, rushed, judged, misunderstood and expected to take on the world without questions, mistakes, or disrupting the existing equilibrium of the system around them, thus assimilating to it. The mounting weight of responsibilities, the wide (or extremely narrow) range of possibilities, the feeling that every step counts, and that one single wrong move could send it all downhill, means that many young people feel hurried, isolated, misunderstood, and pushed in contradicting directions constantly. The glorification of hustle culture, entrepreneurship, and young prodigies, makes many young people think they are always late - to succeed, to excel, to choose a certain path, to find their passion, to start a new project. It needs to be widely recognised that taking it slow is not only natural and necessary, but also good: to know what one wants, to be able to do it better, easier and more enthusiastically.

a. Practical proposal: Combatting the discourse based on the sooner the better messages by giving greater visibility to stories of success that instead emphasize it is never too late messages. Public institutions and the media can strongly influence this skewed and unrealistic view of life, dismantling the expectations that everything needs to be figured out and in place by one's twenties.

6. Right to Disconnection.

Young people are demonised for being online too much. However, nowadays that is not really a choice: any interaction with private or public institutions, any attempt to book a place in a medical centre, a restaurant or the bank, the chance to maintain their relationships from people who aren't physically located where they live, or the access to knowledge pushes them into the online world. Even their job and education happen, at least partially, online, or depend on things they can only learn or do on the Internet. And it's not by mistake: many of the Apps they already find ingrained in their devices have addictive features that make sure they spend as much time as they can on them, and keep coming back, though shiny and noisy pop ups and interactions. The consequences for the mental and physical health of young people, condemned to being perceived and required to pay attention constantly to a multitude of stimuli, especially at such formative years, can be devastating. Therefore, it needs to be widely

recognised that everyone has the right to enjoy their free time without thinking about work, school or everything else happening in the world and in the lives of those around them, constantly.

a. Practical proposal: passing legislation that regulates our everyday interactions with the technology around us, so that it works to the users' benefit instead to the benefit of the company profiting off of it. E.g.: automatic shutoff of work computers and phones an hour after the end of the workday, mandatory limits to time spent in certain Apps and platforms, and regulation of the most addictive features of social media, such as the elimination of pop ups or the fine-tuned ad and content targeting.

7. Right to Hear and Be Heard.

Young people are, on the one hand, not listened to or taken seriously as sources of knowledge, experience or information, and on the other, not allowed to be and listen in wherever decisions are made, even if they fully regard them, whether specifically or as members of the larger society. As a matter of fact, they are rarely even taken into account neither as subjects nor as objects of decision-making processes, and therefore they are neither consulted, nor addressed.

a. Practical proposal: On the formal front, they should be granted a seat where decisions that regard them are taken: board meetings of the companies where they work, public institutions drafting and executing legislation, the education institutions they attend, and even in the decisions taken by their families and communities. On the more substantive front, their engagement has to be significant, of the same value as that of their peers, and binding, as it is not enough to hear and be heard, but also to be valued, regarded highly and taken into consideration as a source of authority in one's inputs and opinions.

8. Right to be Illusioned.

Perhaps the most abstract and subtle of all, the right to be illusioned by the future is also one of the most holistic ones, conceived to convey its collective drive and outlook. It is commonly agreed that the years of coming into adulthood set one up for the rest of their life, as they delineate one's life path and expectations, and provide the template for their first introduction to the social relations and interactions in the world of adults - hence, some of the most influential experiences will happen in said period. Thus, it is crucial that young people see these inevitable rites of passage as positive, hopeful, exciting and full of opportunities - far from the story they are usually told, which warns them of the boredom, stress, responsibilities and duties that will be expected of them as they grow older.

a. Practical proposal. Educational institutions should go far beyond transmitting academic knowledge to future generations: they should render them well-equipped for the world that expects them beyond the workforce. Therefore, a strong emphasis should be put in giving them orientation and assistance, and preparing them for the life experiences that they might encounter. Nowadays, said advice is given on very few topics, if any (drugs, sex, driving) and through fear instead of enhancing their agency and leading by inspiration and trust. They are treated like kids but asked to be adults, and while the former is understood as a synonym of innocence, joy and ignorance, the latter is used as an analogue of hardship. These preconceptions need to be reconsidered, and young people deserve to be explained the rules of the game before being expected to follow them flawlessly.

9. Right to Emancipation.

No young person shall be forced to inhabit their legal guardian's dwelling because of reasons other than their own will and preference. Having one's own space independently from the home one has grown up in can be key to build one's own avenues for self-expression and exploration, and to come into adulthood in a safe, chosen environment. The family home is usually assumed to be the best fit for young people's coming of age, while in reality it is, for many, the most repressive, stressful and constraining space they know. In those cases, forcing them to stay in it - whether by action or omission - can be one of the biggest threats to their mental, physical and sexual health. Furthermore, being able to financially support is integral for one's self-esteem and sense of accomplishment.

a. Practical proposal: Public institutions should provide assistance with job seeking and subsidies to complement young people's salaries, usually lower than their middle-aged counterparts.

10. Right to Intergenerational Justice.

No decision shall be made that might compromise the future of upcoming generations in the social, economic, political, scientific, technological, ecological or cultural sphere.

Such justice should be understood both between generations that coexist in time and those who don't. Thus, on the one hand, no excessive burden should be placed in a particular segment of society for the actions of the whole, and on the other hand, no actions taken by a generation of the present should burden the generations to come.

a. Practical proposal: drafting legislation and setting up monitoring bodies commissioned to persecute anyone who engages in practices that pollute, diminish, or deteriorate natural resources, thus making them unavailable for the next generations in the quantity or quality that the previous ones were able to enjoy. Human-made artefacts, whether abstract or material, such as markets; economic, political or commercial accords; transnational relations or any other forms of established rules and agreements that bind future generations should also be subject to the ruling of these bodies, as they should not have to inherit, support, maintain or fulfil what they believe to be unfair or excessive debts, gambles, alliances or agreements of the past. Such bodies could be understood as Courts of the Future, working on the basis of the Ethics of the Future.

Preliminary conclusion

The concluding remarks will be provided after an informal discussion that will put to the test the rights and reflections put forward in the lines above. Testing the waters with a couple of outside sources should provide a little perspective into whether we are missing any key parts of the story, how likely our proposal is to succeed, and why it might be that young people seem to still be in a widely unrecognised disadvantageous position. It will include some testimonies that we hope help make sense of the bigger picture, and perhaps take us a step forward into finding the way to bring the Emerging Youth Rights to the forefront of the political agenda.

ANNEX: PUTTING THE EYR TO THE TEST: WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The team exercise with our colleagues yielded a wide variety of results, which we briefly summarize below. The intention is to give this document an open end, so as to hopefully take it up again in the future for further improvement of our EYR proposal. We propose a simple themed categorization for the key takeaways, which we hope could help orient future exploration and problematization of the charter proposed above.

a. The Importance of Cultural Particularities

One of the first topics to come to light was how differently each culture perceives what it recognises to be 'the youth', and how this affects their expected performance, and even what duties their legal guardians have towards them. While in some countries such rite of passage happens when the individual moves out of the family home, in others it is once they start higher education, or are able to financially sustain themselves, or, put simply, stop depending on older adults in the challenges they encounter on the daily, whether emotionally or financially. Some of these steps go together in certain countries, while in others they happen in chronological order, but in each case, the youth are 'allowed' a more or less 'irresponsible' behaviour (understood as differing from that expected from middle aged individuals), and more or less harsh measures are put in place to discipline them to fulfil said requirements.

Some cultures might go as far as to question the mere existence of this declaration with one simple interrogation: why should we listen to the youth? If we seek to find wisdom, it is the elderly we must turn to. On the other hand, others might claim that the existence of quasi-universal access to emerging technologies gives access to knowledge to all sectors of society, regardless of their age.

b. The Effects of One's Unique Circumstances…

Age, economic status and occupation are thus seen to play a huge role in trying to craft a definition, while the importance of these landmarks might be perceived differently by the individuals themselves and those around them. Even the category of 'youth' is questionable: while not many would identify as part of the 'youth', many would indeed call themselves 'young', especially until the beginning and mid-thirties.

Since the point at which one becomes able to sustain oneself in the widest sense (take care of their own social network, their finances, acquire emotional maturity, and are able to carry out their daily tasks without their guardians' assistance) varies enormously from one individual to another, it is hard to point at any particular universal marker. This certainly makes it harder to enact any legislation or regulation pertaining to the rights and duties of young people, but recognising such reality can also help ease the widespread idea that this life stage calls for anything resembling a linear, univocal, unmovable way forward.

c. …And of Outdated and Privileged Expectations

There are also many assumptions behind the expectations that young people stumble into: first, that each generation encounters the same context as the previous, and therefore has to behave accordingly as the last generation's standards, and that one can afford to work in highly demanding, low rewarding positions for their youngest years in the workforce.

The consequences of the former condemn young people to always feeling rushed to act in a manner that sometimes isn't feasible in their circumstances, while the latter benefits those members of society who are most well-off, and can therefore work for free, or more hours than the average person is available to do so.

Furthermore, young people are expected to quickly perform at a similar level as their more experienced peers, on top of being told that their labour isn't worth as much until they're well into their career. The overall pressure to enter the productive stage of one's life as soon as possible robs young people of

enjoying their younger years to the fullest, and ties their identity (being 'an adult', 'respectable', 'grown' or 'remarkable') to the (economic) reward that external forces deem appropriate.

Moreover, the behaviours, ideas or actions blamed on 'inexperience' are sometimes simply different approaches which are equally valid and useful for the problem at hand, but this reality is only recognised in environments that are only populated by young people. Everywhere else, they are seen to have a comparative disadvantage, sometimes simply for the delay that comes with having to learn the others' 'language' and 'approaches', which may be as arbitrary as theirs, but comes significantly less easily to the newcomers.

One of the key responsible features for such disconnect comes with the fact that the generations that are now young are the first to have lived through a socialization period in which media production was done by them, not only for them, and therefore their forms of acquiring knowledge, communicating and behaving are less affected by that devised or wished for by adults.

d. So Is It Discrimination?

If we observe the power structures of our societies, we will always find young people at the very bottom of the power circles. Formal politics is a great example of a power structure in which young people have limited access through the ages of candidacy. Such age requirements express that it is possible to be too young for politics but never too old. Gerontocracy might be too harsh of a term but definitely encapsulates some truth in a world where it is very rare to see young people set the agenda or shape society in their image. Young people must find alternative ways to reach the upper-power circles. Examples can be found from political activism to start-up companies. It is precisely on the latter where young people seem to have found a pool of authority, as we see young entrepreneurs all over the world creating new ways of working, producing or trading.

The discrimination in the case of the young and their lack of formal power in society might be justified by a lack of experience and knowledge. We believe that we should find ways to alleviate such discrimination not only for several moral reasons but also on the basis of utility. The forms of knowledge and intelligence that young people embody differ from the old people. But if we are to create stable and strong democratic institutions, we should find institutional arrangements to integrate such cognitive diversity for the sake of both input but also output legitimacy.

e. Constructive Criticism of the Charter

Charters are always complicated. What we decided to put in the charter is as important as what we decided to leave out of it. Plus, not only what is inside them but also how is placed inside the charter. The body of rights that we conjugated is also problematic in various senses. First of all, its particularity regarding young people. Some of the rights (right to be different and right to emancipation) seem to be also important rights to everyone. How do we separate? Fine tuning is needed to draw a stricter border in order to increase the ownership for the young people. It is about placing the right to be different or the right to emancipate in a setting in which age is discriminatory. This exercise entails great difficulty as we have been struggling throughout the project to exactly define what young means.

Secondly, the relation between some of the rights is a bit problematic in some cases. For example, the relation between the right to be heard and intergenerational justice seem to be too circular. "To be heard" from the other generation is the practical implementation of intergenerational justice. It feels

like the former belongs to a greater right area of intergenerational justice. More fine tuning is needed in this aspect as to avoid concentric circles of rights. If we are to create a solid body of rights, they have to interact with each other in a positive way, to always create synergies between them, not overstepping into each other.

Third, some members of our red team argued that the EYR are valuable in a more ideational sense rather than functional one. The EYR are better in creating interest, sense of belonging, and inclusion amongst the young rather than providing legal protection. Such a thing might not be negative per se but it must be kept in mind when we decide our strategy in relation to the Club of Madrid. If we have crafted a device that gets young people more interested, identified, cared for, feel appealed, included and thought about is already something to be proud of. Like a first step to break the vicious cycle of mutual resentment, ignorance and contempt. The right to be illusioned captures such ideas brilliantly. Maybe it does not work as a political reality, but it can work as a political horizon. Something that allows youth to feel okay as they grow. Because we need some hope as a generation. Almost all of the intergenerational interactions are pretty negative. A right to be illusioned can push back discourses like “it all gets worse from now”, “this are the best years of your life”, etc...

Finally, we also discussed what is the representation of youth that is portrayed in the charter. Some red team members argued that the declaration only represented the more negative, less included and more passive side of youth. Other types of rights were proposed to balance the optimistic/pessimistic spectrum like changing “the right to be heard” for the “right to have an impact”. Something in a more positive direction for when youth feels stronger, more active, more propositional, etc… Even bold people need protection because we all go up and down sometimes. Protect youth when it is also going forward.