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Nexus Politics: Conceptualising Everyday Political Engagement

Existing research on alternative forms of political participation does not adequately account for why those forms of participation at an 'everyday' level should be defined as political. In this article we aim to contribute new conceptual and theoretical depth to this research agenda by drawing on sociological theory to posit a framework for determining whether non-traditional forms of political engagement can be defined as genuinely distinctive from traditional participation. Existing 'everyday politics' frameworks are analytically under-developed, and the article argues instead for drawing upon Michel Maffesoli's theory of 'neo-tribal' politics. Applying Maffesoli's insights, we provide two rules for operationally defining 'everyday' political participation, as expressing autonomy from formal political institutions, and building new political organisations from the bottom up. This creates a substantive research agenda of not only operationally defining political participation, but examining how traditional governmental institutions and social movements respond to a growth in everyday political participation.

In recent years it has become common to lament declining public participation in 'formal' democratic institutions like elections and political parties (Pharr et al, 2000; Stoker, 2006). There is, however, a more nuanced account interpreting recent changes in political participation in a more evolutionary manner. It suggests that political participation is not necessarily eroding or stagnating but rather mutating, evolving and taking new forms (Norris, 2002; Dalton, 2008). Norris typifies this latter viewpoint, arguing that 'like a swollen river flowing through different tributaries, democratic engagement may have adapted and evolved in accordance with the new structure of opportunities, rather than simply atrophying' (Norris, 2002: 216). Alternative forms of participation (boycotting, buy-cotting, squatting, pinging, hacking, flash mobs, twitter-led mobilisations, etc.) are examples of this adaptation, signifying that 'rather than disengagement, the repertoire of political action is broadening' (Dalton, 2008: 93). As such, it is generally agreed that: 'the ways in which citizens express themselves in the political realm have changed dramatically' (Marien et al., 2010: 187). The implications of these 'alternative' forms of participation are, however, deeply contested. Some view them positively as renewing democracy through different types of allegiances, while others lament they lead to an 'individualized world', in which 'we lose the capacity of our collective agency' (Bang, 2003; Stoker, 2006: 203).

This debate on the *value* of researching alternative forms of participation often relies on unacknowledged theoretical assumptions about the *relationship between* 'alternative' and 'traditional' forms of engagement, how alter. Research on this relationship, however, remains lacking. Vromen et al. (2016: 16) recently argued that 'we need to look more towards *interdependence and sometimes contradiction* between dutiful and engaged citizenship norms' (italics added). 'The contemporary body of scholarship', Norris argues, 'has generally proved stronger at analysing the causes rather than the consequences of participation … How far newer modes of activism are either supplementing or replacing older ones, and what consequences follow for representative democracy, remains one of the central challenges facing future comparative research' (Norris, 2007: 650). In this context, the focus of this article is conceptual – it aims to present a clear conceptual statement of the relationship *between* 'new' and 'old' forms of political engagement, as a guide to future empirical research. The crux of this challenge, we argue, rests with *exactly when specific activities or decisions should be defined as 'political'*.

Existing research on 'everyday politics' has recently gained traction in the field of political science (Band and Sørensen, 1999; Li and Marsh, 2008; Vromen et al., 2016). Yet, the concept of 'everyday politics' also has a distinguished history in sociology, capturing the political motivations of otherwise 'mundane' social action, that we argue has much to offer the debate regarding - 'how would you recognise a mode of political participation if you see one?' (Van Deth, 2014: 349). The work of Michel Maffesoli (1996) is

especially relevant due to his systematic theorisation of 'everyday politics' by interpreting emergent forms of participation as what he terms 'neo-tribes'. The tribal metaphor of 'new-tribes' or 'post-tribal politics' resonates with the broader literature on partisan de-alignment and the emergence of a liquid modernity in which once stable social anchorage points are waning but for the purposes of this article Maffesoli's focus on 'neo-tribes' provides a fresh and innovative focus on the shift he observes in forms of *political power* (what he terms '*puissance*' or 'intrinsic' power) and *political legitimacy* (what he terms 'underground centrality' or 'bottom-up' legitimacy). We argue that a combination of Maffesoli's theory and Van Deth's recent conceptual mapping of political participation in political science delivers a significant advance in relation to identifying the everyday political motivations behind alternative forms of participation and their impact on traditional forms of participation. While we do not necessarily agree normatively with Maffesoli and Van Deth's work, we argue that combining their conceptual insights provides a framework from which normative assessments can be drawn.

In order to substantiate this argument and demonstrate its originality, significance and implications this article is divided into five sections. The first part outlines the challenge of identifying 'what counts' as political participation and highlights the value of Van Deth's framework as a starting point for this discussion. The limitation, however, of this approach rests with its failure to fully account for the motivations of participants. To begin resolving this situation, the second part explores the literature in 'everyday politics'. It is at this point (Part II) that Maffesoli's sociological theory is deployed in order to expose two novel motivational assumptions. The third section then deploys these two assumptions in order to help develop a fuller account of political participation with motivation at the core. The value of this approach in terms of both micro-political strategies and macro-political understandings is the manner in which it responds to Norris' (2007) 'core challenge for political science' in the sense of focusing on the *relationships between* rather than the simple *existence of* 'new' and 'old' forms of participation. For this reason, the fifth part of this article elaborates the concept of '*nexus politics*', which connect/bridge alternative forms of political participation with conventional politics.

I. 'ALTERNATIVE' FORMS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: THE PROBLEM OF INTENTION

For several generations scholars have documented 'alternative' forms of participation, originating in Barnes et al. and their study of unconventional political behaviour in the Political Action Survey (Barnes et al., 1979). These movements cut across ideological lines promoting 'post-materialist' ideological values (Kuechler and Dalton, 1990; Inglehart, 1977). Aside from New Social Movements (NSMs), Kaase makes the broader argument that there has been an increase in 'non-traditional' participation forms since the 1960s (Kaase, 1999). More recent literature, however, has argued that engagement is changing again in response to the emergence of digital communication technologies, deepening processes of globalisation and shifting centres of political power (Oates, 2006; Della Porta and Tarrow, 2005; Barnes et al., 2007). In light of these shifts, Van Deth (2014) has proposed a systematic map for defining different forms of political participation. This section argues that while his conceptualisation of participation is useful for defining traditional forms of participation, it highlights, but does not fully address, the motivational basis of political action that characterises these alternative forms of participation *as political*.

The changing nature of political engagement is usefully captured by Norris (2002: 215-216), who argues that 'rather than eroding, political activism has been reinvented in recent decades by a diversification of

the *agencies* (the collective organisations structuring political activity), the *repertoires* (the actions commonly used for political expression) and the *targets* (the political actors that participants seek to influence)'. The changing 'agencies' here include a shift from organised political parties to relatively diffuse single issue campaign groups like 'Fathers for Justice', broad social movements like 38 Degrees or MoveOn, or participation in ostensibly non-political groups which cater for particular interests or subgroups, like Mumsnet. Secondly, the new political 'repertoires' include, for example, campaigning on social media and the internet through 'clicktivism' or e-petitions, occupying politically significant public spaces (as the Occupy movement did), making consumer choices based on ethical/political considerations, or even rioting. Lastly, the new 'targets' of participation include, for example, multi-national corporations like Shell or Microsoft, global governing bodies like the World Bank, or non-governmental organisations like Oxfam.

The alternative agencies, repertoires and targets have led some commentators to suggest that, far from disenchanted, citizens, particularly young people, are very much engaged in politics, it is merely that the nature of that 'political' engagement has quite fundamentally changed. As Sloam (2013: 850) argues, 'Young Europeans have become increasingly alienated from parties and politicians, but are active in 'politics' in a broader sense.' Similarly, Dalton (2008: 88) argues that citizenship has shifted away from 'duty' based feelings of association with a common body politic, and towards 'norms of engaged citizenship'; citizens are enthusiastic about activism on a continual, but non-institutionalised, basis. Amnå and Ekman (2014: 262) capture this form of citizenship and how it interacts with formal participation in their notion of 'stand-by citizens', who 'stay alert, keep themselves informed about politics *by bringing up political issues in everyday life contexts*, and are willing and able to participate (in formal party/parliamentary politics) if needed'. Put simply, non-participation in 'conventional' political institutions may not indicate 'passive apathy' but rather a range of alternative activities that can and should be understood as 'political' in nature – albeit in an 'everyday', rather than 'institutionalised' sense.

While this argument may have significant implications for our understanding of the dynamics of political participation, the salience of these implications depends crucially upon an issue of definition. As Van Deth (2014: 350) puts it, 'actual conclusions about important changes in democratic societies depend on the participation concept used'. In other words, what is 'included' and 'excluded' from a definition of *political* participation (that is, how it is operationalised) is critical for understanding the implications we draw from empirical analysis of participation dynamics. Van Deth (2014: 353) goes on to provide a significant effort at establishing operational rules for delimiting what is, and is not, a form of political participation, asking '*how would you recognise a mode of participation if you see one?*' (italics in original). His criteria are summarised in Figure 1 below:

>>>>INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE <<<

Figure 1: Van Deth's rules for determining minimalist, targeted and motivational definitions of political participation

For Van Deth, having defined participation at a 'minimal' level as being a form of *voluntary behaviour enacted by citizens* (stages 1-4) a 'targeted' definition may be reached by determining principally the *locus* and *target* of participation (stages 5-6). If the 'locus' of the action is in 'politics/government/state' - most obviously voting, submitting a petition or forms of participatory budgeting – then a minimal definition is attained. These are forms of participation *in the functions of the state*. If not participating directly 'in' the state, the emphasis shifts to where it is *targeted* – either at the state (in a 'extra-parliamentary' protest) or solving collective problems more broadly (in a citizens forum for example). These initial decisions over the definition to be used are complicated, however, by the question of *motivation*. Indeed, Van Deth (2014:

360) suggests that minimal and targeted definitions may also be subject to the 'Downs question' (Anthony Downs seminally argued that participating in politics for 'non-political' reasons is irrational). Put simply, *is the activity used to express the political aims and intentions of participants?*

Therefore, the question of motivation or intention is important in understanding whether a form of participation should be defined as political or not is contentious. Some scholars, such as Hooghe (2014): 340) argue that 'intention simply is not relevant … it does not really matter what the motivation is of the participants, even if we could determine what these intentions are'. In our view, however, intention *is a critical problem* because it informs interpretations of the meaning and importance of the emergence of 'alternative' forms of participation outlined in this section. If we want to know, for example, whether choosing a particular brand of cereal is important for us as analysts of political participation, then in lieu of us not being able to resort to traditional definitions of 'the political' as associated with 'politics/government/state', nor to easily identifiable 'civic' forms of engagement, we *need* to focus more on the intended effects or motivations behind the action itself. Existing studies in political science tend to justify the value of 'everyday' forms of participation on the basis that they impact upon wider social processes. It has been claimed, for example that ethical consumerism is important because it 'can be an effective way of changing both corporate and governmental policy and behaviour' (Stolle et al., 2005: 249). This effectively reconciles an alternative form of participation within a 'targeted' definition (see Figure 1), the consumerist activity is counted as a form of political participation because the intent (or 'target') is to express a political preference in the hope of exerting some political influence.

The problem here is that the intention is judged in much the same way as in more 'traditional' forms of participation. By contrast, it has been argued that the *importance* of alternative forms of participation lies in 'having sovereignty over one's own existence' (Riley et al., 2010: 349). The argument being that citizens are increasingly disconnected from collective decision making in 'late modern' capitalism, and respond by finding ways within their 'everyday lives' to assert some form of autonomy or expression of their alienation (Bang, 2009; Bang and Sørensen, 1999; Riley et al., 2010). The significance of this for democracy is that if such motivations can be uncovered, they pose far greater problems because they suggest citizens (whether *en masse* or in particular disadvantaged groups) are beginning to choose escapism or 'exit', from the liberal democratic system, which in turn poses questions about its continued long term legitimacy (Hirschman, 1970).

Existing approaches and frameworks such as Van Deth's (2014) tend to *re-state* the problem of intention as key to determining the importance of alternative or 'everyday' forms of participation. In this article we aim to tackle this problem conceptually, by considering how we identify an *intention* as (non-trivially) political, via a detailed specification of the concept of *everyday politics*. In doing so we turn to sociological literature whose distinctive purpose is to unearth the specific political character of motivations or intentions behind mundane or everyday social action that at first appear non-political. The question we ask is therefore, *how can analysts of participation distinguish between the political or non-political intentions of participants?* To answer it, we turn to sociology.

II. EVERYDAY POLITICS

Sociological scholarship on 'everyday politics' forms a sub-field of what Sztompka calls the 'third sociology', a disciplinary turn concerned with 'the level of the everyday life of people amongst other

people', which 'fasten upon the simplest and most typical of human experiences, bent on unravelling their subtle collective or interpersonal dimensions and internal mechanisms' (Sztompka, 2008: 24). This approach, founded by the work of Erving Goffman, Harold Garfinkel and Alfred Schutz, marked 'a subjectivist turn toward the study of *intentions, motivations, and reasons behind social actions*' (italics added) (Sztompka, 2008: 28). The sociological literature on 'everyday politics' originating in Lefebvre's famous 'critique of everyday life' focuses on the *political* intentions, motivations and reasons behind social actions, building on post-Marxist work in the 1960s (Lefebvre, 1961). The terminological usage and analytical focus of the concept of 'everyday' (and indeed the notion of 'politics' to which it is linked) is diverse and often vague (Crook, 1998). Related concepts include Habermas' 'lifeworld', Giddens' 'life politics', Smith's 'everyday problematic' and de Certeau's sphere of 'everyday resistance' (For a review see Sztompka, 2008; Crook, 1998). The concept therefore draws upon (and interacts with) a range of arguments that suggest the 'everyday' or 'mundane' actions of individuals have 'political meaning' (Tria Kerkvliet, 2009; Boyte, 2011).

Among this literature the most advanced and sophisticated conceptualisation of everyday politics can be found in Michel Maffesoli's (1996) theory of 'neo-tribes'. Maffesoli is a French sociologist whose work has been highly influential in sociological analyses of, *inter alia*, sports associations, ravers, football supporters and consumers *as political groups* (Wheaton, 2007; Riley et al., 2010; Hughson, 1999). His seminal book *The Time of the Tribes* (originally published in French in 1989) develops the concept of 'neo-tribalism' as a way of understanding emergent forms of participation has been described as 'a sorely needed tonic for academic social sciences that find themselves more and more marginal to contemporary social and political change' (Shields, 1991: 1). The key to Maffesoli's work, and its relevance here, is that he sought to go beyond 'the tendency in modern sociology and social theory which puts an emphasis upon the emergence of a highly 'individualistic' society' (Evans, 1997: 239). Maffesoli (1996: 89) expresses discontent with the widespread social scientific focus on 'neoliberal individualism', lamenting 'the gregarious solitude we have rambled on about so much'. He aims instead to theorise what he calls the "will to live'…which, despite or perhaps because of its many impositions, continues to nourish the social body' (Maffesoli, 1996: 31). While Shields (1991: 3) argued Maffesoli presented 'a challenge to established sociologies' and 'the thesis of growing privatism', this article argues his work is of even greater relevance thirty years after its first publication, and especially for political science, given the persistence of alternative forms of participation. The purpose of this section is to show how an analytical framework based on Maffesoli's concept of 'neo-tribalism' can provide firm conceptual grounding for an analysis of the motivations behind 'everyday politics' as a *challenge* to traditional political systems.

Neo-Tribalism and Everyday Politics

Maffesoli's vision of contemporary society, described succinctly by Riley et al. (2010: 348), is that it 'has developed into a 'neo-tribal' culture in which people move between small and potentially temporary groups distinguished by shared lifestyles, values and understandings of what is appropriate behaviour'. These small groups 'aim … not to change the world, but to survive in it – a politics of survival … through the creation of sites in which to experience communal hedonism and pleasure' (Riley et al., 2010: 348). Neo-tribalism 'is characterized by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal' (Maffesoli, 1996: 76). Examples of neo-tribes include 'youth subcultures … hobbyists; sports enthusiasts; and more important – environmental movements, user groups of state services and consumer lobbies' (Maffesoli, 1996: xi). While similar to what Bang and Sorensen (1999) call 'everyday makers' –self-empowered individuals who engage in politics autonomously, in a fluid way, and for 'fun' - Maffesoli's work goes further in highlighting how 'neo-tribes' engage in a substantively different form of politics, in which 'people employ a kind of power by being aloof … turning their back on modernist institutions and instead focusing on

the local' (Maffesoli, 1996: 348). Shields highlights how this argument provokes methodological challenges:

> We are habituated to think in terms of polarities (subject/object, culture/nature) and to analyse sociological distinctions (classes, socio-professional categories) … whereas socio-cultural change is taking place across categories and along fluctuating and short-lived networks of affinity (Shields, 1991: 4).

Maffesoli's concept of neo-tribalism is therefore particularly pertinent in developing a conceptualisation of the contemporary 'collective spirit', capturing what is genuinely particular about it as a challenge to traditional political systems. In developing neo-tribalism, Maffesoli introduces two concepts - *puissance* and *underground centrality* - that offer significant analytical traction in terms of sharpening motivational understandings *vis-à-vis* forms of political participation. In the context of 'everyday politics' these concepts form valuable tools for answering questions such as 'how is participation political?' and 'how is participation "everyday"?'

What's political about everyday politics? Puissance

Puissance (there is no direct English translation), refers to 'the various manifestations of sociality: cunning, aloofness, scepticism, irony and the tragic amusements which persist in the midst of a world supposedly in crisis' (Maffesoli, 1996: 32). This is juxtaposed with *pouvair*, or power of an 'overarching and abstract nature', which neo-tribes are positioned against (Maffesoli, 1996: 32). In 'neo-tribal' societies participants adopt a particular stance towards traditional democratic institutions, which creates and reinforces a *gap* between their practices and traditional arenas of politics. Everyday politics therefore refers to 'sovereignty over one's existence. Neo-tribes create temporary spaces in which to participate in a set of shared practices, creating a common bond' (Maffesoli, 1996: 349). In one sense, this is similar to the standard conceptual distinction between 'power over' and 'power to' – the difference between power being a 'relation among people' when one actor exercises power to get another actor to behave in a way they otherwise wouldn't, and where power is about group and individual self-determination (Lukes, 2005 [1974]). The notion of *puissance*, however, has a distinctive aspect focused on the use of power to assert group autonomy:

> When it is not expressing itself in one of the effervescent forms such as revolts, festivals, uprisings and other heated moments of history, it is hyper-concentrated in the secretive world of sects and the *avant-garde* … in the smallest details of everyday life which are *lived for their own sake and not as a function of any sort of finality* (italics added) (Maffesoli, 1996: 32).

What is distinctive about many contemporary forms of political mobilization is that they are *not* aimed at establishing the sort of 'finality', be it an 'authoritative allocation of values' or 'who gets what, when and how', anticipated within traditional forms of politics. Rather, 'what makes neo-tribal social formations political is the emphasis on having sovereignty over one's own existence, which can be understood as the power … to create spaces defined by one's own aesthetic ethic' (Riley et al., 2010). This notion of an aesthetic ethic is critical: if politics refers to the exercise of power then what makes neo-tribes distinctive is that they exercise power not to influence policy networks, governmental agendas or societal discourse, but to carve out a space for their own autonomy to express their particular ethical values, in a way that is self-consciously *opposed* to the overarching power (*pouvair*) of the state. Politics here is not about influencing government, but exercising autonomy at a local level to express particular cultural identities and values. This notion of politics as *puissance*, the use of power to express one's own 'aesthetic ethic' has

resonance with the notion of, for example, art as an alternative form of political expression in which modern capitalism is critiqued from a self-consciously alienated, distant and abstract standpoint (Bishop, 2012: 276). Similar arguments have been made for contemporary forms of 'carnivalesque' political comedy and 'self-referential' political music (Weinstock, 2008; Street, 2012). Viewed through the lens of *puissance* it can be argued that while these actions might be seen as 'marginal', their growth problematizes the traditional political system as actors who may previously have sought to influence societal agendas are turning 'inwards' to express their political views, rather than 'outwards'. They are *resisting* the formal political sphere and, when they do make reference to it, this is done so mainly to mock, deride, show ambivalence to, or actively reject traditional forms of politics.

What's 'Everyday' about Everyday Politics: Underground Centrality

The second concept Maffesoli introduces is 'underground centrality' (also termed 'proxemics'). This concept, put simply, refers to 'the idea that in sharing a space or activity we gain a sense of being together and an emotional attachment to the group' (Riley et al., 2010: 348). By participating in alternative political movements individuals gain an attachment, akin to familial or even patriotic ties making them feel affinity with, and (at least temporary) loyalty to, the group:

> We can see the rise of what might be called 'villages within the city', that is, the face-to-face relationships that characterize the basic cells; it may be the result of basic solidarities, everyday life, religious practices or even small professional associations … in each of these domains we need only refer to the varied experiences, decentralizations and miniscule autonomies, in order to appreciate the pertinence of the *tribal paradigm* (Maffesoli, 1996: 97).

'Underground centrality' highlights a shift in allegiance from what Maffesoli (1996: 97) calls the 'megolopolises and metropolises' – the nation state and its democratic institutions - to the 'villages' at a micro-scale. This is not merely to highlight the 'hollowing out' of the state, but rather a shift in *legitimacy* upwards, sideways and downwards to groups identified according to a 'warmth of being together' (Maffesoli, 1996: 98). In this sense, everyday politics is *everyday* in nature because it involves a shift in *political allegiance* towards organisations of individuals acting in a 'face-to-face', interpersonal or (on social media) immediate way. This has potentially radical implications for commitments to democratic authority, as Maffesoli further elaborates:

> These tribal mass rites … are perceptible in the various sporting gatherings which, through the influence of the media, take on a familiar significance. We can see them at work in the consumer … frenzy of department stores, supermarkets and shopping centres which of course sell products but secrete even more symbolism, that is, the impression of participating in a common species (1996: 98).

In essence Maffesoli is arguing that the various forms of social organization emerging in the twenty-first century take on or appropriate forms of symbolic allegiance or communal solidarity that democratic institutions traditionally possessed. How, though, does this represent a distinctive challenge to traditional institutions? As argued in the previous section, alternative participation can potentially accumulate into a wellspring of 'social capital' that supports governmental authorities. The argument here is that the 'socio-cultural changes' associated with everyday politics present a challenge because they create competing sites of democratic legitimacy, which, if left unconnected with parliamentary institutions, may create a 'democratic vacuum' in which the 'inputs' of public support and demand into the political system become disconnected from the 'outputs' (Steyvers et al., 2006: 430). If state institutions no longer receive the 'inputs' in the form of active demands and support, and those are instead directed elsewhere then they face a radical 'decentring' that weakens their capacity and credibility (Bohman, 2005). Everyday politics is hence particularly challenging not merely because individuals are disengaged with traditional spheres, but *because it replaces the central locus of legitimate political authority.*

The value of Maffesoli's contribution in the context of debates concerning political participation is that it adds analytical weight and value to the concept of 'everyday politics', indeed to understand the deeper motivations of the 'everyday makers' discussed in the previous section. 'Everyday politics' is 'political' because it involves '*puissance*', power used to generate a space of autonomy for a group to express its own 'aesthetic ethic' rather than influence a societal agenda. Secondly, everyday politics is 'everyday' because it develops 'underground centrality', participants support and place demands upon their immediate social groupings rather than state institutions. Taken together these points facilitate a definition of 'everyday politics' as 'voluntary behaviour by citizens aimed at asserting their individual autonomy from powerful societal institutions, ideas and norms, or affirming the legitimacy of their actions as 'bottom-up' modes of social organisation'. The value of this definition is that it facilitates the development of a new analytical framework that responds to the thorny issue of motivation.

III. EVERYDAY POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: TOWARDS AN ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

The aim of this section is to draw-upon Maffesoli's scholarship (Section II, above) in order to bolster the analytical capacity of the concept of 'everyday politics' (Section I, above). This is achieved by drawing-upon his concepts of *puissance* and 'underground centrality' in order to extend Figure 1 (above) with two questions that emphasise intentionality. Did the individual *intend* (assert) their actions to be expressions of autonomy against governing institutions, rules and norms (*puissance* - Q8a)? Where they are *motivated* by (or affirm) a 'bottom-up' conception of political legitimacy (*underground centrality* - Q8b)? If both rules are satisfied, then we may define the form of social action as a 'strong' form of everyday political participation, while if only one of the two are satisfied then we may term it a 'weak' form of everyday political participation (see Figure 2, below). The remainder of this section explores each of these questions, and their relevance and application, in more detail.

>>>>INSERT FIGURE 2 <<<

> *Rule 8a: Does the action assert the autonomy of the individual or his/her group in opposition to governing institutions, rules and norms? [Theme – Puissance]*

This first rule corresponds to Maffesoli's concept of *puissance*, and captures how everyday action can be political in the sense of an oppositional critique of dominant institutions, rules and norms. Rule #8a defines political action in *opposition to* institutions and processes defined in the 'a. Here, social action is defined as political where it can be shown that the intention behind this action is to express *autonomy from* formal political institutions, and from other powerful societal norms and rules. This is assessed by determining whether the action itself *asserts* this autonomy. The key to this rule is to determine the extent to which social actions are asserted as a critique or subversion of dominant institutions, rules and norms within society. Three examples help illustrate this participation *as assertion*.

The first example involves action by individual women to challenge prevalent gender norms. During their research Martin et al. identified a woman entrepreneur who owned a diner in Worcester, Massachusetts and happened to see men abusing women on a daily basis, so 'she made it clear to the men that she would not tolerate such behaviour' (Martin et al., 2007: 85). As a result of her actions, Martin et al. (2007:85) show she created a 'safe space' for women and reduced the levels of harassment in her diner. While not attempting any broader form of political change, this woman did challenge and establish her own autonomy *from*, and enact a challenge *against*, gendered norms. A second example also shifts the lens of analysis on-line and into the sphere of blogging and social networking where young women have created new platforms in order to assert both individual and collective autonomy against the prevalent consumerist culture.

> These creative uses of new technologies demonstrate how [young women] play with, negotiate and sometimes resist the encroachment of the consumer imperative on their everyday lives. The idea of talking back to youth consumer culture is an explicit political agenda of many [blogging] websites, but even the engagement with the products of this culture, as evident in the profiles and conversations on social network sites, often reveals a critical agency rather than passive consumption (Harris, 2008: 491).

In both cases here we see individuals or loosely connected communities in 'mundane' work environments or online sites assertively challenging, or asserting autonomy *from*, dominant norms within society. Boycotting a corporate product can also be seen as political to the extent that the individual or group seek in doing so to express a statement about their independence, or how their action is a subversion or critical statement about the dominance of a corporation and, for example, ideas concerning consumerism. Where a decision to buy from an independent shop relates purely, for example, to the quality of the product, it is not defined as a form of *political* participation, because the decision is not driven primarily by opposition to a corporate structure or market values. These actions may have political consequences so far as they involve reallocations of resources and power, or be interpreted as political acts by others, but to qualify as *political participation* the actor/participant must in some way acknowledge its political nature, through asserting a detached subversion or aloofness towards dominant institutions, rules and norms.

Other relevant actions include the expression of an inner aesthetic concept (through a banner or poster, a piece of expressive art, a poem, song, or theatrical performance for example) or an ethical sentiment (like eating organic or vegan food or using 'upcycled' furniture). The key is that the action itself is not organised primarily with the purpose of influencing an external body or policy process, but rather the embodiment of the ethical statement in 'pure' form as subversive critique. Using the example of the early twentieth century 'anti-art' movement (typified by Duchamp's urinal and other purportedly 'redundant' forms of subversive art), Bonnett notes that 'for many Western intellectuals the political upheavals of the early years of this century, culminating in the outbreak of the First World War, made the position of the artist as politically aloof cultural specialist both fraudulent and irrelevant' (Bonnett, 1992: 71). However, Bonnett then argues 'anti-art can be seen as both a subversive gesture against the capitalist commodification of art as a distinct area of life and a conservative affirmation of the existing specialized context of creative production' (Bonnett, 1992: 73). Utilising culturally established norms to conserve the 'specialised context' of the artist is key to everyday politics. Power is used to *prevent* external influence from diluting the autonomy of the group, rather than attempting to exert influence over other individuals or groups.

The above examples each satisfy Q#8a in the sense that they are not positioned within, or directed towards formal institutions, but instead actively work 'at a distance' in order to achieve change on a micro-scale, or to signal disaffection in what Bauman calls 'liquid late modern' society where large-scale state organisations have been 'decentred' (Bauman, 2012 [2000]). For Maffesoli, this was the essence of *puissance*, the use of power at a micro, mundane scale, to critique dominant institutions, rules and norms,

without trying to influence or 'change' them at a macro-scale through petitions, party membership or campaign advocacy. But the notion of 'underground centrality' also offers fertile intellectual potential in terms of understanding participatory assumptions.

Rule 8b: Does the action affirm the legitimacy of 'bottom up' modes of social organisation? [Theme – Underground centrality]

If Q#8a focuses on (negative) antagonism or counter-positioning as motivational drivers then Q#8b is focused on (positive) creation and innovation, which in turn does resonate with a surge in both scholarly and public attention in the notions of 'flatpack', 'pop up' and 'DIY' democracy (Macfadyen, 2014). Maffesoli's concept of 'underground centrality' captures how everyday action can be considered political in the sense of being aimed at establishing new forms of political organisation from the 'bottom-up'. This question examines whether actors are motivated by the desire to build *new* arenas for decision making, in place of old ones. It does so by determining whether, in their everyday actions, actors affirm the legitimacy of bottom-up social organisation as more legitimate than formal institutions of government.

Where they believe in bottom-up legitimacy, actors do not believe that formal institutions of the state, nor local councils or civil society groups, should be seen as the primary arenas in which policies should be developed and implemented. This may be because those institutions are run by unrepresentative and out of touch elites, or because they are slow and unresponsive to societal demands ('output legitimacy') (Farrell and Scully, 2007; Scharpf, 1997). Instead, they view the organisations they interact with at an everyday level as more responsive, directly accountable and participatory, and hence more 'legitimate' as centres of authority for making and implementing rules (Barber, 2003). Legitimacy is related to the presence of substantive inclusion in decision-making: 'Legitimacy in complex democratic societies must be thought to result from the free and unconstrained deliberation of all about matters of common concern' (Benhabib, 1996: 68). This speaks to a more 'radical' notion of democratic organisation, found, for example, in the work of some theorists of deliberative or agonistic democracy, who see democratic legitimacy arising from the everyday interactions of citizens (Honig, 1993). Three examples from the spheres of social media movements, community gardens and participatory theatre help illustrate the meaning and significance of this focus on new democratic arenas.

Firstly, social media movements and internet-based activism can both satisfy Q#8a and Q#8b. For Bennett and Segerberg (2013) 'electronic' activist movements exhibit a 'logic of connective action'. This 'logic' includes 'peer production and sharing based on personalized expression' and occurs when 'taking public action or contributing to a common good becomes an act of personal expression and recognition or self-validation achieved by sharing ideas and actions in trusted relationships' (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013: 35-36). Groups like the Internet hacktivist group Anonymous, for example, take on the form of a loose social network that is perceived as legitimate by its members because they are avoiding 'official' institutional channels of participation. These groups may act to *influence* such channels – for example alerting police authorities of criminal activity - but even when they don't, Q#8b suggests that they can still be called 'political' to the extent that their members affirm the importance of membership through its 'bottom-up' organic 'membership'. In other words, where the internal (or 'underground' in Maffesoli's words) structure of an 'everyday' form of social organisation includes debates about the organisation's own democratic make-up, its self-organising principles, then those taking part in that debate can be seen as enacting a form of everyday political participation.

Similarly, bottom-up forms of social organisation at a micro level can also be seen as 'everyday political participation' to the extent that they can be observed as affirmations of legitimate forms of political organisation, expressing democratic values of subsidiarity and deliberation. Following Mansbridge et al. (2010: 65), we can define this 'micro' deliberation as 'communication that induces reflection on preferences, values and interests in a non-coercive fashion'. Firth et al. provide a useful example of 'community gardens', which 'include small wildlife gardens, fruit and vegetable plots on housing estates, community polytunnels or large city-based community gardens' (Firth et al., 2011: 556). These are important because they are 'a source of social capital … they create a meeting place, which enables people to interact and contribute to *the creation of community*' (Firth et al., 2011: 565). Studies of community gardens and allotments in Melbourne, Toronto and San Francisco have shown that participants get involved in building community gardens either as an affirmation of bottom-up local democratic values, or for building movements in favour of changes in environmental policy (Guitart et al., 2012). To capture these differences in motivation, Firth et al. distinguish term the former 'place-based' (driven mainly by local individuals) and 'interest-based' community gardens (connected to wider policy networks) (Firth et al., 2011). From our perspective, the former 'place-based' forms of organising would constitute everyday political participation using Q#8b. Organising is used to develop values of democratic self-organisation without (primarily) engaging with existing centres of public authority (whether state-based or existing citizens' groups). 'Interest-based' community gardens, on the other hand, would appear to be covered by Van Deth's (2014) 'targeted' definition.

Other similar forms of 'everyday' participation, which also build democratic values from the bottom-up can be seen in participatory theatre, which Neelands (2009: 173) argues 'provides young people with a model of democratic living'. Boal (2000) also suggests theatre can be used in a quite literally 'legislative' way in which participants initiate their own 'legislative' practices in a creative and expressive environment aimed at affirming political values and principles. The 'Theatre of the Oppressed', which Boal (2000) established in 1960s Brazil, aimed through the physical enactment of a legislative process to affirm political equality and opposition to poverty. The key here is Boal's (2000) Theatre *affirms* a set of political values and beliefs for 'local' individuals and groups who are interested in being involved. It does not aim to influence existing state-based or community-based organisations, but instead is avowedly 'bottom-up' or 'organic'. Elsewhere, scholars in Canada and Afghanistan have shown how participatory theatre affirms and develops dialogue around foundational democratic values of tolerance and empowerment (Quinlan, 2009; Saeed, 2015).

The above examples are forms of political participation that, under the framework in Figure 1, remain ambiguous as to whether they are political or not. In some forms (such as the 'interest based' community gardens) these can be reconciled as 'political' under a 'targeted' criterion, but in most cases despite having an intuitively 'political' character, the actions do not fit well with merely 'targeted' or arena-based criteria for defining their *political* nature. Our two further questions help to clarify matters in this regard, by subjecting these forms of alleged 'political participation' to further rigorous tests about the 'intention' and 'motivation' behind them, drawing on sociological literature that does precisely this. We might, for example, clarify that some ambiguous forms of political engagement satisfy one of the rules, but not the other. Movements based on 'clicktivism', for example, can be seen as satisfying Q#8a, but not Q#8b, to the extent that 'clicking' in support of a political cause is a marker of self-expression, and assertively 'small', but not primarily a way of legitimating – those who click 'like' on a Tweet for example often aim to push widespread political change because of the global visibility of social media (Halupka, 2014). Moreover, voluntary organisations created by a small number of participants can be seen as satisfying Q#8b, but not Q#8a (Rowe, 2015). Rowe's work examines a private community group based in Australia ('MamaBake', a collective of women who meet regularly to cook) that are self-assertively 'political' in their activities – satisfying Q#8b – but do not assert their own autonomy from 'top down' political structures –

not satisfying Q#8a. Empirically, we hope, scholars using Van Deth's map will assess cases that do not satisfy Van Deth's rules against our additional questions (showing they satisfy either one or both) in order to account for 'everyday politics' as an important phenomenon in studies of political participation.

V. 'NEXUS' POLITICS

The central argument of this article is that any analysis of political participation must explore the motivational assumptions of participants in order to prevent conceptual stretching. The main contribution of this article has been to engage in 'conceptual travelling' whereby insights from sociological theory were used to sharpen our conceptual understanding of political participation in political science, by conceptualising 'everyday' political engagement. The work of Maffesoli was used to deepen and develop Van Deth's conceptual map and provide an explicit emphasis on motivation. Our intention here is not to overlook subsequent methodological and epistemological challenges, but to tease out the broader significance of this contribution. As such, here we introduce the concept of 'nexus politics' that starts to expose and chart the dilemmas, tensions and opportunities that stem from a clearly conceptualised relationship between 'traditional' and 'alternative' forms of political participation. This in turn enables future empirical analysis to make a 'macro-political' contribution by identifying the extent to which traditional political institutions respond to everyday political participation, developing an assessment of their ability to 'link up' traditional institutions with alternative forms of political engagement.

Strategies of nexus politics are summarised in Table 2 (below). Nexus politics is defined as a set of strategies for dealing practically with the implications of political engagement motivated either by distrust and opposition to traditional politics (Q#8a) combined with a desire to reconstitute political organisation from the 'bottom-up' (Q#8b). It is a paradoxical undertaking wherein political actors both at the level of government and within social movements themselves must understand and respond to the simultaneous rejection of 'traditional' politics, and its re-enactment and re-constitution through other means. Critically, the 'nexus' here is the link or bridge between the moment of rejection or disengagement from the 'old', and the moment of desire for political revitalisation – the 'new'. There is both an attempt to oppose existing structures (conflict) and a desire to recognise new ways of organising politics differently (consensus). So a strategy of 'nexus' politics seeks to manage these impulses or desires from the perspectives of more traditional social movements and governmental institutions. Existing strategies of nexus politics, however, often tend to privilege one or the other dynamic. 'Conflictual' nexus politics strategies involve creating and sustaining an antagonistic relationship between participants in everyday politics, and elite political institutions. By contrast, 'consensual' nexus politics are a set of strategies seeking resolution and mutual cooperation between participants and elite institutions. Table 2 sets out these strategies.

Table 1: Strategies of Nexus Politics

Motivation for participant conforms to…	Strategy of Nexus Politics	
	Social movement	Government
Rule #8a (Conflictual)	**S1** Subversion (e.g. protest, artistic	**S3** Monitory governance

	statement)	(e.g. new forms of policing/monitoring)
Rule #8b (Consensual)	**S2** 'Everyday making' (e.g. voluntarily initiated social project)	**S4** Participatory governance (e.g. citizens' assembly)

Firstly, for social movements (Table 1, Col. 2) a key question is: *in what way does the movement deal with the paradoxical motivations of its members?* Social movements often face a fundamental choice between 'insider' and 'outsider' strategies for action, working with or against existing institutions (Sikkink, 2005). By contrast, the distinction here identifies two different 'outsider' strategies, *subversion* or *everyday making*. Here, 8a (conflictual motivations) suggests the need for an essentially oppositional participatory organisation, essentially conforming to a conception of politics as antagonistic disagreement (i.e. Table 1, S1). By contrast, Q#8b requires a commitment to a 'consensual' form of bottom-up decision making, conforming more closely to an 'agonistic' conception of the political, where difference and (potential) conflict is recognised in a consensual manner (i.e. Table 1, S2).

Responding to these paradoxical motivations often privileges either the former or the latter. In privileging the former, movements take on fully-fledged subversive tactics, rejecting altogether demands for organisational hierarchy and rules. Such coordination can be seen in revolutionary anarchist groups from the Mexican Zapatistas to the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, an outright virulent rejection of institutional authority, coupled with ad hoc organisation. By contrast, privileging a response to the latter requires a commitment to political organisation, which in Table 2 is clarified as the 'everyday making' strategy. Here, social movements choose to privilege the need to address social problems over the desire to express alienation against traditional politics. Existing research has shown such engagement through the creation of food banks (van der Horst, 2014). These have recently developed as ad hoc or quasi-institutional responses to a recent sharp rise in poverty and hunger among unemployed individuals and families. The aim of food banks is not to subvert or attack formal institutions, but rather to supplement them with bottom-up forms of organisation that seek to tackle the social problem of hunger largely involving volunteers and ad hoc organisational practices.

Secondly, for political authorities (Table 2, Col. 3), where everyday political participation exists, or is becoming more prevalent, they face a dilemma of how to respond. This again often happens in either a 'conflictual' or 'consensual' manner. On the one hand, governments can privilege a response to Q#8a by attempting to regulate or discipline alternative forms of participation to prevent criminal activity and remove subversive threats to the state (Table 2, Q3). This form of nexus politics can be seen in the use of stringent regulation or policing of bottom-up political protests. Methods such as the policing technique of 'kettling' can be seen as strategies of nexus politics because they seek to manage or contain the alternative motivations of political participants, anticipating their subversiveness or contentiousness (Q#8a). Davies for example identifies a number of 'strategies' from strict, even coercive policing (such as the recent management), as 'coercive' strategies of governance (Davies, 2014). Other forms of coercive nexus politics include legislation aiming to monitor and regulate the use of social media and the Internet, again in anticipation of criminal or insurgent activity. A number of scholars have mapped these techniques of Internet surveillance, 'snooping', and similar approaches to monitoring citizen activity (For a review see Lyon, 2015). Keane captures this approach to governing with his concept of 'monitory democracy', detailing the rapid growth of many different kinds of extra-parliamentary, power-scrutinizing mechanisms (activist courts, electoral commissions, human rights organizations, and so on), and argues these are replacing traditional forms of accountability typified by democratic elections (Keane, 2009). While governments themselves are one target for this monitory democracy, they increasingly seek to empower

organisations – including private security firms and voluntary actors - that monitor the Internet, telecommunications activity and other 'subterranean' arenas that could become the subject of political uprisings.

Alternatively, governments can attempt a more 'consensual' approach by creating new opportunities for direct participation in the everyday workings of government via participatory mechanisms (Table 1, S4). A range of literature on 'democratic innovations' has mapped these attempts across the world, from participatory budgeting and citizens' assemblies to more mundane attempts such as online feedback forms (Newton, 2012). The rise of populist parties across Western Europe, North America and Australasia suggests attempts to accommodate alternative participation within existing electoral systems with party membership costing less and members having more of a say in party policies. The use of referendums to channel bottom-up pressure for political change into the formal system has also been growing, from Syriza's referendum on the European Central Bank's proposed fiscal austerity programme, to the Scottish National party's referendum on independence from the United Kingdom. Strategies for consensually channelling bottom-up political participation into government decision-making have also been initiated by governments themselves. For example, the European Commission recently launched the 'European Citizens Initiative', which allows European citizens to group together and propose policies that the Commission is obliged to consider. Governments have also been using participatory experiments, such as crowd sourcing policy programmes (Prpić, 2015). These innovations are a way of attempting to channel or harness the insights of alternative forms of participation by *integrating* them within structures of governance, as opposed to regulating them (Table 1, S2).

VI. CONCLUSION

In sum, this article has used the conceptual tools provided by Michel Maffesoli's *Time of the Tribes* and integrated them within Van Deth's schema for assessing different forms of political engagement. The core contribution has been to identify four potential strategies of *nexus politics*. Nexus politics can be engaged in by politicians or activists, and refers to a set of approaches to navigating the tensions provided by either conflictual or consensual forms of "new" political engagement (as identified through deploying Maffesoli's concepts in Van Deth's framework). The strategies identified above suggest how the specific (micro-level) analytical contributions of this article in defining operational rules for identifying 'everyday politics' can be translated into a (meso-level) analysis of how everyday forms of political participation are responded to by institutional actors, and the (macro-level) implications for the organisation of liberal democratic institutions. What therefore started as a precise argument regarding the need to take-forward Van Deth's work on political participation by utilising the insights offered by sociological theory, in general, and Maffesoli's work on neo-tribalism and everyday politics, in particular, has evolved into a related but quite different focus on the notion of 'nexus politics' (i.e. the dialectical interplay between the 'new' and 'old' politics). Although not using the specific term, Norris identified this focus as 'one of the central challenges' facing the political and social sciences and it is one this article has attempted to focus attention upon at the conceptual and theoretical level (Norris, 2007). As such, empirical analysis may proceed from this in three stages. At the micro-political level when a potentially salient movement is identified as an 'intuitive' case study of everyday politics analysts might determine whether the actors within the movement are practising everyday politics by asking the two questions developed in this article (George and Bennett, 2005: 5). Sociological methodological tools, in particular ethnographic research and

loosely structured interviews with participants, researchers can then gain a detailed, contextual sense of the individuals' motivations and intentions, and whether those fit the criteria for everyday politics.

This fine-grained analysis might then be usefully located within an empirical analysis of accommodation in the sense of how both governments and social movements cope or manage a sudden and possibly unexpected surge in activity. How, for example, do social movements adapt their membership practices to respond to a growth in ethical consumerism? Do they decentralise their membership structures to encourage 'everyday making' through ethical modes of consumption (i.e. S2, Table 1) or do they encourage 'subversion' through protests against companies with unethical business practices (S1, Table 1)? Is there a mix between the two? Moreover, do governments and political parties respond to a growth in ethical consumerism by creating innovative ways of engaging with citizens' opinions around the ethical practices of companies (S4, Table 1), and in what ways do they seek to police or monitor protests against unethical company practices that bypass traditional routes of representative democracy (S3, Table 1)? Critically, how might empirical research critique and develop those strategies of 'nexus politics' set out in Table 1 through new strategies or sub-types? Finally, analysts might shift the analytical focus to the macro-political level by exploring the degree of institutional responsiveness offered by traditional 'old' politics, the influence of variables in terms of facilitating or blocking change, whether a shift in the quality of government or policy effectiveness is detectable or whether institutional responsiveness nurtures political trust in activists (and therefore engagement with more traditional forms of participation).

These are significant and inter-related research agendas that reveal how the contribution of this article in terms of analysing the motivational basis of political participation can be developed into an empirical research agenda that moves beyond definitional debates towards accumulating empirical and theoretical knowledge. It is this agenda that will allow scholars to engage with Norris' 'core challenge' and, in so doing, reveal the democratic complexities and opportunities offered by a focus on 'nexus politics'.

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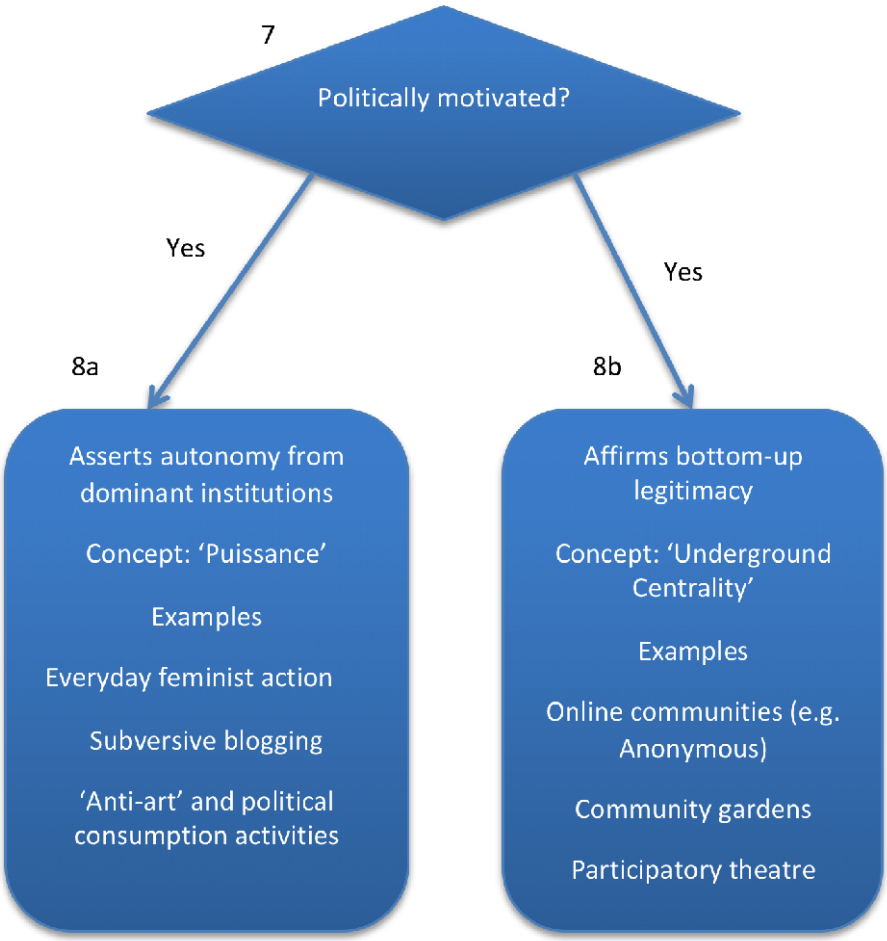
Figure 1: Van Deth's rules for determining minimalist, targeted and motivational definitions of political participation

Source: Adapted by authors from Van Deth, 2014.

Figure 2: Disaggregating van Deth's 'motivational' definition of political participation to include two forms of 'everyday politics'



Source: Constructed by authors.