Understandings of Democracy

New Norms and Participation in Changing Democracies

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Abstract: The understanding of what democracy means has never been the same for all people and nations. However, contemporary developments suggest a fundamental shift. Preferences for a- and anti-democratic political parties and authoritarian(-like) relationships between politics and civil society are gaining support. Remarkably, these developments originate and thrive in the midst of exactly those democratic structures rejected. We therefore ask if there is a new understanding of democracy, and we empirically identify a discernible category of people who support *illiberal* understandings of democracy. These citizens with disparaging views of democracy reject democratic processes and actors, and weakly support common norms of citizenship. Yet, they are active in politics. Because we find that it is actual participation which stimulates the understandings of democracy, our results suggest that instead of attempting to exclude citizens with illiberal understandings of democracy from political arenas, meeting them there can offer the opportunity to nurture more liberal democratic orientations.

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Introduction

The wish for democratic governance and the view of democracy as a continuously expanding superior form of government were long held as universally endorsed truths. Yet in recent years, democratic values and egalitarian principles are being challenged around the world. Distrust in democratic institutions and the rejection of democratic norms appear to be spreading and increasingly defy democratic stability and social cohesion worldwide (Freedom House 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019; but see Mor 2019; Thomassen 2015).

The understanding of what democracy means and what a citizen's role in democratic society constitutes, has never been the same for all people and nations (Almond and Verba 1980; see also Ferrín and Kriesi 2016). However, current developments seem to differ from the conventional depiction of democracy as an “essentially contested concept” (Gallie 1956) and suggest a fundamental shift in citizens' views of democracy. Preferences for a-democratic and anti-democratic political arrangements, for parties that openly question democratic principles, and for authoritarian (or authoritarian-like) relationships between politics and civil society seem to be gaining support and popularity (cf. Mounk 2018a, 2018b). Remarkably, both the origins of these developments and the sources for their thrive seem to lie in the presence of exactly those democratic structures which are rejected (Svolik 2017). In other words, a new ‘type of democrats’ with differentiated views on and understandings of democracy appears to come to the fore. Because many people still support conventional ideas of democracy, the rise of these new understandings results in a further fragmentation of the democratic political culture.

Against this backdrop, we explore the existence of distinct understandings of democracy and investigate which ‘types of democrats’ can be found. Further, we study from both attitudinal and behavioural perspectives in what ways those different ‘types of democrats’ differ. For the attitudinal characterisation we mainly look at ‘norms of citizenship’, which refer to a citizen's perceptions of what characterises a ‘good citizen’. These orientations relate to essential duties and responsibilities of each citizen that are considered to be required for the functioning of democracy. Participation – the behavioural perspective – is the *life elixir* of democracy because it allows citizens to express their demands and wishes and to contribute to shared goals and collective goods. Together, norms and participation build fundamental pillars for the functioning of any democracy. We argue that they both, norms *and* participation, depend on distinct understandings of democracy among citizens.

To examine the relationships between norms, participation and understandings of democracy empirically, we use data from a representative survey among the citizens of the German

federal state Baden-Württemberg in 2016/17. This *Demokratie Monitor* covers an original set of items assessing people's views of democracy which permits us to tap into prevalent understandings of democracy stretching beyond classic liberal conceptions. This way, we can discern different groups of citizens with distinct views of democracy and study similarities and differences in norms and participation among those groups. As we show, there is a noticeable category of people who support illiberal understandings of democracy. These citizens clearly distinguish themselves from other citizens both in terms of the norms of citizenship they endorse and in the ways they participate: They are more exclusionist, less egalitarian and they participate less. Especially the spread of such an understanding of democracy can have dramatic repercussions for democratic stability, as the acceptance of democratic norms as well as participation of the people are crucial for any democracy.

We start our expedition with a brief review of common perspectives of democracy, norms of citizenship and participation. We then look at recent shifts and delineate our theory of the new types of democrats supporting an illiberal understanding of democracy. In the second half of the paper we present empirical evidence for our expectations: Understandings of democracy are in a process of modification, and this process is accompanied by the rise of a-democratic and anti-democratic norms of citizenship.

Empirical perspectives on democracy and norms of citizenship

Participation of citizens in decision-making processes and the ability to reflect their roles as citizens are essential features for a fruitful and functioning democratic society. Participation ensures that individuals' preferences are expressed and communicated to those in power in order to advance required political decisions. Moreover, performing the role of a citizen makes people familiar with the duties, responsibilities and rights that are attached to democratic decision-making. Realizing these two aspects, in turn, can be crucial components for individuals to accept the outcomes of political processes and ensure the maintenance of democratic stability. Democratic participation, therefore, fulfils expressive and instrumental goals and strengthens the legitimacy of decision-making processes.

However, citizens have different understandings of democracy, political participation and norms of citizenship. Decades of research have highlighted the variation in views that exist among individuals and across countries on what the roles of the state, civil society, the private sector, and of individual citizens themselves are considered to be in a democratic society (Almond and Verba 1996; Hooghe and Oser 2018; Kim *et al.* 2013; North 1990; Pickel and Pickel 2006; Webb 2013). These attitudes concern the distribution of power among the various

actors in society as well as the dissemination of duties and responsibilities between them. Focusing on the procedural aspects of government and normative ideals of democracy, Ferrín and colleagues (2014, 2016) reiterate these observations in a study across Europe. Stemming on normative models of liberal, social, and direct democracy, they combine different conventionally used items to assess “the models of democracy the citizens have in mind” (Ferrín and Kriesi 2016, p. 19). Four types of democrats with different predominance across countries are identified, thus showing that people place different demands on ‘democracy’ (Kriesi, Saris, and Moncagatta 2016). In essence, however, there seems to be a common stem in form of a shared basic model of liberal democracy that citizens have in mind when thinking about democracy.¹

One of the most prominent studies highlighting such cross-national and inter-individual variations and similarities is the seminal ‘civic culture’ study by Almond and Verba (1963). Based on the comparative study of five countries, Almond and Verba identify singular “patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of a nation” (1963, pp. 14-15), which consist of the individuals’ “attitudes toward the political system and its various parts” and their “attitudes toward the role of the self in the system” (1963, p. 13). Thereby, Almond and Verba emphasise two important facets. First, the notion of what is or what it takes to be a citizen is defined through two relationships: (i) between an individual and the institutions of her government, and (ii) through the relationships of a person with her co-citizens (Denters *et al.* 2007, p. 90). Second, those orientations vary across countries and differ between individuals within a country, though they appear to establish some common pattern – a “political culture” – among the citizens of a single country.

According to the ‘cultural approach’ (cf. Inglehart 1988, 2007) the chances for democracy to persist depend highly on the existence of a specific pattern called a “civic culture” in which “political activity, involvement, and rationality exist but are balanced by passivity, traditionality, and commitment to parochial values” (Almond and Verba 1963). This “balanced political culture” can appear in different concrete forms in different historical situations. Dalton and Shin (2006), for example, prove comparable patterns in public attitudes towards democracy in Asia. Thus, worldwide some common but not universally similar perceptions of what ‘democ-

¹ But for some people, this core model comes with ‘add-ons’, i.e., further requirements they attach to the concept of democracy and what it stands for (Ferrín and Kriesi 2014; Kriesi, Saris, and Moncagatta 2016). One of the four categories identified is an ‘uncommitted democrat’, which does not regard any of the offered answer alternatives for necessary requirements of democracy as important. While this type is supported by, on average, a noticeable two in ten people, the further discussion of types of democrats centres on the other three categories, which essentially represent different degrees of liberal democracy.

racy' stands for seem to exist. Furthermore, these perceptions come along with specific assumptions of what and on how political institutions should deliver (Dalton and Ong 2005), and of what distinguishes a 'good' citizen. However, what it takes of oneself and of others to be 'good' citizens so that a political community may function well is not the same for all people (Blais and Rubenson 2013; Conover *et al.* 1991; Dalton and Ong 2005; Dalton and Shin, 2006; Petersson *et al.* 1997; Petersson *et al.* 1989; Thorson 2012).

In a comparative analysis of citizens within twelve European countries, Denters *et al.* (2007, pp. 90-92) developed a categorisation of four types of views of democracy: traditional-elitist, liberal, communitarian, and participatory understandings. As the authors further describe, various 'types' of democrats endorse different norms of citizenship. While support for single norms of citizenship is not mutually exclusive, some – in particular the duty to vote at elections and the norm to always obey laws and regulations – are common among people with different views of democracy. Other norms are supported only by single types; this regards especially the norms relating to modes of political participation other than voting. Hence, depending on what citizenship norms a person supports, she will attribute different relevance to the available forms of political participation.

Theiss-Morse (1993) echoes this differentiation. Based on qualitative interviews conducted with 49 U.S.-Americans, she distinguishes between four perspectives on citizenship and participatory responsibilities of a citizen. The four perspectives differ in what the endorsers assume to be appropriate types of involvement and degrees of activities for a 'good citizen' in a democratic polity (Theiss-Morse 1993, pp. 364–5). There are the optimist, self-efficacious "representative democrats", who strongly endorse the view that it is the citizens' duty to being informed and, on this basis, be able to and to be actively involved in electoral politics. From their perspective, the main obligation of a citizen is to cast a vote in elections. The "political enthusiasts", in turn, are focused on political engagement through a wider set of activities that go beyond voting. This appears to assume that other forms of political participation may be more effective at influencing political decisions than voting (Theiss-Morse 1993, p. 362). Third, citizens with a "pursued interest" perspective argue that a citizen does not need to be interested or involved in politics (this includes the perception that there is no obligation to vote), but they must be informed. In other words, the decision to abstain from politics has to be an *informed* decision, and not one of pure ignorance. Finally, a fourth "indifferent" perspective assumes that citizens shall vote and be informed about politics, whilst any other form of political participation is rejected (Theiss-Morse 1993, p. 364).

A wealth of literature approaches the issue from the other side. Using primarily quantitative data from survey studies, many researchers start to identify single behaviours at which norms are directed (e.g. casting a vote, paying taxes, giving to charity). In a second step, these specific norms are subsumed within a confined number of subset (or dimensions). Most prominently, Dalton (2008a, 2008b) distinguishes four *categories of principles* on which citizens can form expectations concerning what it takes to be a ‘good citizen’ (2008a, p. 78ff): norms of participation, of autonomy, of social order, and of solidarity. The corresponding items for norms included within each category can be shown (factor analysis) to cover two *dimensions of citizenship*: engaged and dutiful citizenship (Dalton 2008a, p. 81; see also Roßteutscher 2004; Zmerli 2010; van Deth 2007).

Although with sometimes different labels, other studies come to similar conclusions using similar concepts and categorial distinctions. These concepts generally revolve around two to five categories of *principles* on which citizens can form expectations (such as law-abidingness, participation, deliberation, autonomy, solidarity), while each category consists of various forms of behaviour that a citizen may assume in a political community. By measuring the importance attributed to each of the behaviours for being a ‘good citizen’, the subsequent look at the global pattern of answers is viewed as reflecting different conceptions of citizenship.² A narrow understanding may associate ‘good citizenship’ with obeying rules and regulations, while broader conceptions may see the ‘good citizen’ as politically engaged, socially involved, solidarity seeking, critical, and/or autonomy seeking (Petersson *et al.* 1997; Denters *et al.* 2007; Zmerli 2010; Bödeker 2012; Hooghe *et al.* 2016; van Deth 2017a, 2017b). Based on what modes of behaviour a person regards as important for being a ‘good citizen’, one can extrapolate their peculiar understanding of what rights and duties citizens (should) have in a democracy. Hence, this gives an impression of the views of democracy that a citizen at hand characterizes.

In spite of the abundant literature especially considering citizens’ roles and norms, recent socio-political dynamics and discussions point to a shift in democratic conceptions (Mounk 2018a; Müller 2016; Wilke *et al.* 2017) which prevailing approaches cover insatisfactorily. Increasingly citizens seem to be supportive of a different version of democracy, which is not liberal but neither explicitly authoritarian. To tap into this idea, we can formulate a few hypotheses as analytical guidance. To begin with, along with the existing literature we expect

² Nevertheless, Coffé and van der Lippe (2010) as well as Dalton and Shin (2006) point out that the geographic dispersion and dominance of certain norms vary. Therefore, drawing conclusions based on observational data, one must always take into account the country and cultural origin of the data.

that (1) *citizens hold different understandings of democracy*; yet crucially, we further expect that (2) *a visible fraction of citizens supports illiberal understandings of democracy*. Furthermore, considering the observation that views of democracy and notions of what is a ‘good’ citizen are linked, we expect that (3a) *citizens with different views of democracy regard the various norms of citizenship as differently important*.

Norms of citizenship and political participation

Democratic orientations can have consequences for behaviour – just as being involved in specific actions can have consequences for these orientations (Quintelier and van Deth 2014). This strong interdependence of attitudinal and behavioural perspectives has been used to focus on differences between participants rather than between different norms. By looking at citizens’ political participation patterns, Oser (2017), for example, distinguishes four types of political participants who do not only differ in the overall degrees to which they participate, but also in the combination of political participation forms they use in order to express and advance their political demands: “all-around activists”, “high-voting engaged participants”, “mainstream participants”, and “disengaged” citizens (Oser 2017, pp. 245–46). These types with their peculiar participation repertoires are practically identical to the four types of perspectives on citizenship which Theiss-Morse (1993) discerned (see also Amnå and Ekman 2014; Martín and van Deth 2007). Equally, Oser (2017, pp. 248–49) observes some fundamental differences in the norms of citizenship that the distinct types of political participants endorse. Thus, people have different views of what the roles of citizens in a democracy should be, *and these views are related to the ways and degrees to which they engage in politics* (see also Bengtsson and Christensen 2014; Gherghina and Geissel 2017; Webb 2013).

Studying crossnational differences, Bolzendahl and Coffé (2013) point to differences in the link between citizenship norms and political participation in various countries. They conclude that citizenship norms are cultural factors influencing participation. Accordingly, the relationship between single norms and participation differs across countries. Yet the general conclusion remains that, depending on what norms of citizenship people support, they tend to be involved in politics differently. In reverse, those making use of specific forms of political participation tend to support specific norms of citizenship.

Existing studies tend to look at rather confined set of norms of citizenship and political participation repertoires. More importantly, they give little consideration to more general understandings of democracy – although it is the latter which might actually inspire both norms and forms of participation embraced in the first place. Reviewing definitions of democracy

offered by “ordinary people” in large-scale surveys, Dalton, Shin and Jou note that “[i]t appears that most citizens do not think of democracy primarily in procedural or institutional terms, as the literature on democratic theory would suggest” (2007, p. 5). Instead, they “think of democracy in terms of the freedoms, liberties and rights that it conveys” (2007, p. 6), whereas “equating democracy with social benefits emerges as a minor theme” (2007, p. 15). This emphasis of “freedoms, liberties and rights” will have direct consequences for the specific norms of citizenship supported as well as for the specific forms of participation preferred. The relationships between citizenship norms and participation established in the literature, therefore, could also be conceptualized as (i) a spurious correlation with the understanding of democracy as the common explanatory factor, or (ii) a mediated correlation with norms of citizenship linking the understanding of democracy to participation.

From these various arguments we can derive another set of analytical guidances. Analogous to hypothesis 3a, different views of democracy probably have different notions of what it *takes* to be a citizen on a behavioural dimension. Consequently, we can expect that *(3b) citizens with different views of democracy select different forms of participation*. Although participation is the decisive element and ultimate expression of democracy, there is piling evidence of the spreading rejection of political participation as a sensible way to making a difference (Coleman, Morrison, and Svennevig 2008; Hay 2007; Stoker 2006). So, it is probably those people who reject democracy which are also not involved in it. In other words, we expect that *(3c) people with illiberal views of democracy tend to participate little to not at all in politics*. Finally, we have three main concepts which can be related in different ways. To refine our analysis of their relationships, we have two possible presumptions which will guide our empirical analysis: *(4a) the correlation between understandings of democracy and norms of citizenship is mediated by participation* or *(4b) the correlation between understandings of democracy and participation is mediated by norms and citizenship*.

Data collection and research strategy

To test our hypotheses, empirical data covering extensive instruments for (i) understandings of democracy, (ii) norms of citizenship, and (iii) forms of political participation is required. The Baden-Württemberg *Demokratie Monitor 2016/2017* comprises a questionnaire with three corresponding sets of questions, answered by a representative sample of citizens of the German

federal state Baden-Württemberg in 2016/17.³ Interviewing (CATI) took place from November 1, 2016 to January 14, 2017 among a random sample of 2,001 German-speaking inhabitants from the age of 15 on and living in private households in Baden-Württemberg.

The *Demokratie Monitor* covers the population of Baden-Württemberg, one of the largest and most wealthy states of Germany located in the South-West. Traditionally, support for liberal and progressive political ideas is relatively strong (since 2011, the state is governed by the first prime minister from the Green Party in Germany). Support for populist parties and views is a rather new phenomenon there, but a continuously expanding one. Schmitt-Beck *et al.* (2017) show on the example of Baden-Württemberg that explaining support for populist ideas by socio-economic precariousness falls short. Instead, the rise of populist ideas seems to be driven to a large extent by negative orientations to the political system and by doubts on the legitimacy of democracy as a whole. Taken together, this makes Baden-Württemberg a very good case to study the rise of new understandings of democracy and their expected impacts on norms and participation.

Our research strategy for the analyses of the *Demokratie Monitor* consists of two steps. Since the actual relationships between the three core concepts – understandings of democracy, norms of citizenship, political participation – are unclear, we will start, firstly, by measuring each concept separately. The main result will be the depiction of three major views of democracy. In the second step, we will test the hypotheses presented in the previous section.

Measuring understandings, norms and participation

Understandings of democracy

Common analyses of understandings of democracy approach the task by surveying what meaning and essential features citizens associate with the concept of democracy (e.g. see Ferrin and Kriesi 2014, pp. 3-5). The items used tend to ground on principles developed in normative theories of liberal democracy, such as the importance of free and fair elections, free opposition, rule of law, or checks and balances. Our intention here is to look beyond the boundaries which

³ The project “Citizens and Democracy in Baden-Württemberg” is part of the Democracy-Monitoring Baden-Württemberg Program of the Baden-Württemberg Foundation, Stuttgart. The data analyzed here are from the second wave of this survey (2016/17) which was designed and directed by J. W. van Deth, R. Schmitt-Beck and S. Perry (Mannheim Center for European Social Research, Mannheim). Data were collected by Ipsos GmbH (Hamburg). The corrected sample comprised 13,599 telephone numbers resulting in 2,501 completed full interviews (utilization of 18.4%) including 500 oversampled cases. All analyses presented here are based on data excluding the oversampled cases. A redressment procedure has been implied to align the sample structure computationally with the official statistics. Reference variables used are age, gender, place of residence, size of the place and education.

are typically drawn around the model of liberal democracy. Therefore, we combine the conventional approach with a practice-oriented perspective echoing populist rhetoric, which revolves around ways in which issues in democracy are handled. Specifically, the *Demokratie Monitor* includes a newly developed extensive list with aspects of democracy and democratic decision-making processes which can be executed more or less in accordance with classic liberal democratic principles. Respondents are invited to score their agreement on a ten-point scale ranging from “do not agree at all” (0) to “agree strongly” (10) for each of those aspects. The wording of these items is:⁴

1. The conflicts between the various interest groups in our society and their demands to the government harm the common good.
2. Every citizen has the right to go, if necessary, on the streets for her convictions.
3. In the national interest, a dictatorship is under certain circumstances the better form of government.
4. The task of the political opposition is not to criticize the government, but to support it in its work.
5. The leadership of the government should be entrusted to someone who stands above the party bickering.
6. Many problems are unnecessarily complicated by politics.
7. It would be better for the country if the politicians stopped talking and instead simply acted and solved the problems.
8. Democratic politics requires the collective organization of society by all citizens, not by the parties.
9. The politicians have no idea. Even I could do that better than them.
10. Our government would work better if decision-making was left to experts.
11. No matter what you vote for, it makes no difference to what happens in politics.

Applying a data reduction approach (PCA) on these items results in a set of clearly distinct democratic understandings. Table 1 shows the results for these analyses with a satisfying three-dimensional solution with orthogonal components.

⁴ The original version of the items in their German wording can be obtained from the first author.

Table 1. Discerning three views of democracy

	Views of democracy		
	<i>Efficiency-oriented</i>	<i>Disparaging</i>	<i>Participatory</i>
The task of the political opposition is not to criticize the government, but to support it in its work.	.880		
The leadership of the government should be entrusted to someone who stands above the party bickering.	.670		
Our government would work better if decision-making was left to experts.	.612		
It would be better for the country if the politicians stopped talking and instead simply acted and solved the problems.	.532		
The conflicts between the various interest groups in our society and their demands to the government harm the common good.	.463		
The politicians have no idea. Even I could do that better than them.		.779	
In the national interest, a dictatorship is under certain circumstances the better form of government.		.713	
No matter what you vote for, it makes no difference to what happens in politics.		.515	
Many problems are unnecessarily complicated by politics.		.473	
Every citizen has the right to go, if necessary, on the streets for her convictions.			.833
Democratic politics requires the collective organization of society by all citizens, not by the parties.			.652

Principal Component Analysis. Promax with Kaiser Normalization. Only loadings >.400 are depicted. KMO: 0.860, Chi-sq.: 3422,949. Explained Variance: 51.06 %, Cronbach's Alpha: 0.679 for component 1; 0.583 for component 2; 0.350 for component 3. The three components are moderately correlated (C1&C2: 0.487; C1&C3: 0.178; C2&C3: 0.056).

Consistent support for items loading on each of these three components can be seen as indications of distinct understandings of democracy. We construct three indexes,⁵ each measuring the degree to which a respondent agrees with the views of democracy in question. For all three indexes, the minimum scores are 0, the highest 10. Table 2 gives an overview of the descriptive statistics.

Consequently, we have a first type of view with relative high levels (scoring above 5.00) of agreement for the items oriented on efficiency and effectiveness (items 1, 4, 5, 7 and 10). This type will be labelled '*efficiency-oriented view of democracy*'. A total of 69.4 per cent of the respondents score high on this type. A second component consists of items referring to a

⁵ Several different indicators with the items loading for each of the three components were created (loadings, unweighted and weighted sum scores). Scales based on the unweighted mean additive scores reveal indicators with the weakest correlation and are used here. These mean additive scores cover the sum of all values attached to the single items that load strongly on a factor, divided by the total number of items per factor. For missing values, the single item is excluded. If two or more values are missing for a respondent, the entire case is excluded.

non-democratic perspective (items 3, 6, 9 and 11). No less than 23.7 per cent of respondents score high on this understanding of democracy, which we label as ‘*disparaging view of democracy*’.⁶ Third, by far the largest fraction of respondents – 86.8 per cent – have high scores on the political participation focused items (items 2 and 8). Accordingly, we label this the ‘*participatory view of democracy*’.

Table 2. Descriptive information for indexes of views of democracy

	<i>Views of democracy</i>		
	<i>Efficiency oriented</i>	<i>Disparaging</i>	<i>Participatory</i>
Mean score	6.00	3.73	7.71
St. dev.	1.93	1.93	1.87
Valid n	1,995	1,994	1,932
% Low scores	30.6	76.3	13.2
% High scores	69.4	23.7	86.8

The three groups are based on indexes which measure the extent to which the respondents agree with the understandings of democracy for the relevant items as shown in Table 1. Low/high scores refer to those who, on the index ranging from 0 to 10 score below and above 5.00, respectively. The descriptive statistics are calculated using transformation and redressment weights aligning the sample structure with official statistics. Reference variables: age, gender, place of residence, size of the place, education.

Norms of citizenship

The set of items to measure support for norms of citizenship in the *Demokratie Monitor* consists of the standard items developed by Dalton (2006), expanded by a few additional items that seem to be more appropriate for the European context. In total, the respondents are confronted with seven statements and invited to assess if these aspects for being a ‘good citizen’ are, on a ten-point scale, “not important at all” (0) to “very important” (10). The wording of these items is:

1. Support people who are worse off than oneself is
2. Vote in elections
3. Always obey laws and regulations
4. Form own opinion, independently of others
5. Be active in voluntary organizations
6. Be active in politics
7. Actively contribute to shaping Baden-Wuerttemberg

⁶ Arguably, this category does not cover a truly ‘democratic’ view. It reflects a disillusionment and despise of democratic processes. However, as such it relates to a type of understanding of democracy. Because we are dealing with different understandings of democracy, this general label is then used consistently for all of them.

In line with the conventional findings, electoral participation, obeying laws and regulations, forming own opinions independent from others, and supporting others who are worse off than oneself is, are almost universally considered as key attributes of a ‘good citizen’ (cf. Dalton 2006; Denters *et al.* 2007; van Deth 2007). To each of these items, less than ten per cent provide answers below 6 on the scale. In contrast, views on being active in politics, in civic organisations, and on ‘actively contributing to shaping Baden-Wuerttemberg’ are more diverse. Especially the importance attributed to the first of the three is, with a mean of 5.72, comparatively low. A high 45 per cent of respondents do not consider it as an important feature of a ‘good citizen’ to being active in politics. These distributions too are in line with a number of other publications (cf. van Deth 2007).

Applying a data reduction approach (PCA) on all seven items in our data results in two sets reflecting distinct conceptions of citizenship.⁷ One dimension comprises the first four items, i.e. the usual key attributes of a ‘good citizen’. A second one unites the three last items relating to active participation in politics and civic life. This result mirrors Daltons’ typology, which differentiates between dutiful and engaged citizenship norms, respectively. Accordingly, we construct again two indexes using the means of additive scales. This leads to two indexes with scores ranging between 0 and 10, of which the first we label ‘*dutiful citizenship*’, and the second ‘*engaged citizenship*’. No less than 98.6 per cent of the respondents score high (above 5.00) on dutiful citizenship, whereas 73.7 per cent score high on engaged citizenship.

Political participation

The *Demokratie Monitor* includes a list of distinct forms of participation the respondent “has done in the last twelve months”: contacted a politician, written a letter to newspaper editors, signed a petition, participated in a demonstration, or joined another form of organised citizen participation. Moreover, the list includes two questions on online participation, asking whether the respondent had published or shared political contents or comments online, and whether she had invited other people via e-mail, Twitter or Facebook to get active in political or social causes.

Almost thirty per cent of the respondents stated to have signed a petition, about twenty per cent had contacted a politician and 18 per cent were involved in another form of organized civic participation. In contrast, only five and seven per cent had, respectively, written a letter

⁷ Because the analysis clearly confirms available findings the exact results are not presented here. The explained variance of the two-dimensional solution is 50.77 per cent, KMO is 0.756, Chi-sq. 1838,548, and Cronbach's Alpha 0.643 for the first and 0.502 for the second set of items.

to a newspaper editor or participated in a demonstration. Roughly ten per cent of the population seems to be engaged in political activities online, i.e., adding own contents or making use of the web to invite others to participate politically.

Applying a data reduction technique (PCA) on this set of items reveals two components.⁸ The first component unites four common forms of participation: joined a form of organized civic participation, contacted a politician, signed a petition, and demonstrated. The second component comprises the two online forms of involvement and writing to a newspaper editor. Hence, the first component covers forms of participation which are typically targeted at political actors and taking place within traditional political arenas. The second unites forms addressing actors outside politics through some sort of individually generated political content. We assigned a value of 1 for each form of participation used and computed the means of additive scales for each component. In this way, two indexes each ranging from 0 to 1 are created. The former we call '*event-based participation*' and the latter '*content generating participation*'. Seven per cent of the respondents score high (above .50) on event-based participation. In contrast, with about 17 per cent, the fraction scoring high on content generating participation is notably larger.

Empirical results

Our first hypothesis states that *(H1) citizens hold different understandings of democracy*. The factor analysis provides three clearly distinct views of democracy (see Table 1). There is a group of respondents scoring high on the first dimension which perceives democracy from the perspective of how democratic decision-making is made, and how it is functioning. For the people endorsing this view, democracy appears to be something defined by dysfunctionalities and slow-moving processes, while they strive for effectiveness and efficiency. Then, there is a category scoring high on the third dimension conceiving democracy as government by and with the people. For supporters of this view, the constitutive feature is that citizens partake in politics and, whenever necessary, go on the streets to express their demands. A most interesting dimension is the second one, which reveals an illiberal understanding of how political processes should look. This view rejects the role of political opposition as a stabilising force in democracy which may challenge the governing parties. Likewise, it exhibits a deeply dismissive tone towards politicians, as reflected in their consent to the statement that "the politicians have no

⁸ Using Varimax rotation, the explained variance is 44.12 per cent, KMO is 0.729, Chi-sq. is 1068,493, and Cronbach's Alpha is 0.518 for the first and 0.424 for the second set of items.

idea. Even I could do that better than them”. Yet, most obviously illustrated is the anti-democratic understanding through the sympathising with the idea that “in the national interest, a dictatorship is under certain circumstances the better form of government”. With this derogatory tone, it can be said to exhibit a ‘disparaging’ understanding of democracy.

In sum, we observe an ‘efficiency-oriented’, a ‘participatory’ and a ‘disparaging’ understanding of democracy. The existence of these three types supports our first hypothesis: People hold discernibly distinct understandings of democracy.⁹

Second, we expect that (*H2*) *a visible fraction of citizens supports illiberal understandings of democracy*. The three indexes developed measure the extent to which respondents agree with the respective views of democracy. High scores indicate high agreement. Comparing the percentages of respondents who score high on the indexes shows that the efficiency-oriented and participatory types of views constitute a clear majority (Table 2). Nevertheless, a noticeable 23.7 per cent of the respondents support the disparaging understanding of democracy; that is, support anti-democratic views. Furthermore, while roughly ninety per cent of respondents rejects the option of replacing democracy “under certain circumstances” by a dictatorship (item 3), twenty-five per cent of those scoring high on the disparaging understanding back that idea. Similarly, sixty per cent of them agrees that the opposition should not criticise the government but support its work (item 4), and about 77 per cent of them hold the view that the government should be led by someone who stands above party politics (item 5). These aspects reflect a dismissal of the sometimes conflictive and cumbersome character of party politics – which is an integral and inseparable feature of any democracy. Supporting these items comes with a non-ignorable illiberal, authoritarian undertone (see e.g. Svolik 2017). Taken as whole, these results give good reason to also accept the second hypothesis.

The next set of hypotheses concerns the question in what ways the types differ from each other in their views on norms of citizenship and in their political participation. Firstly, we expect that (*H3a*) *citizens with different views of democracy regard the various norms of citizenship as differently important*. Table 3 shows the mean levels of support for each of our indexes of norms of citizenship among people with different understandings of democracy. Two main patterns are observable. First, while support of the dutiful form of citizenship is generally very high, engaged citizenship is less broadly endorsed. This is in line with many research findings (cf. Dalton 2008b). Second, people scoring high on the efficiency-oriented

⁹ The orthogonal definition of the space derived and the relatively weak correlations between the components (see Table 1) justify the conclusion that we are dealing with three *distinct* understandings of democracy.

and especially on the participatory views of democracy score higher on support for norms of citizenship than people scoring low on these two dimensions. For citizens with a disparaging understanding of democracy this is reversed: They show comparatively low levels of support of both dutiful and participative rights and duties. In other words, *this type of democrats rejects all those rights and duties that are commonly seen as the basic tasks coming attached with the role of a citizen in a democracy*. This pattern is strongly supported by the results obtained for those respondents scoring low on the dimension for a disparaging understanding of democracy: With the highest average level of support for dutiful citizenship (8.74) and almost the highest level for engaged citizenship (6.36), *rejecting* illiberal understandings of democracy clearly is accompanied by strong support for all norms of citizenship. In summary, the comparison of support for citizenship norms among the three types reveals very clear differences. This is in line with hypothesis *H3a*. Especially the evident lack of support for these norms by people with a disparaging understanding of democracy strengthen our confidence in the presumption that these ideas establish a consistent set of illiberal orientations.

Table 3. Comparing norms of citizenship among respondents with different views of democracy

	<i>Views of democracy</i>						
	<i>Efficiency-oriented</i>			<i>Disparaging</i>		<i>Participatory</i>	
	Total	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Dutiful norms	8.68 (1.17)	8.59 (1.31)*	8.72 (1.09)*	8.74 (1.15)***	8.47 (1.19)***	8.13 (1.77)***	8.77 (0.99)***
Valid n	1,988	604	1,378	1,509	472	254	1,666
Engaged norms	6.28 (2.02)	6.08 (2.15)**	6.38 (1.95)**	6.36 (2.02)**	6.06 (1.96)**	5.54 (2.45)***	6.43 (1.90)***
Valid n	1,982	604	1,377	1,508	471	254	1,665

ANOVA comparison of group means with t-statistic in brackets, levels of significance: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Low/high scores refer to those who, on the index ranging from 0 to 10 score below and above 5.00, respectively. Calculated using descriptive weights aligning the sample structure with official statistics. Reference variables: age, gender, place and size of residence, education. Figures shown are calculated controlling for gender, age and levels of education.

The ultimate expression of support for citizenship norms is the actual participation in politics and civic life by the individual citizen. Our first hypothesis for this is: (*H3b*) *citizens with different views of democracy select different forms of participation*. Table 4 shows the means of indexes of political participation among citizens with different views of democracy. While participatory views reveal higher means both for system-directed and generating

participation, the other two types show reverse patterns. Besides, they are involved to remarkably lower degrees than the population average. Table 5 concretises that: As can be seen in the lower half of the table, the percentages of respondents who score high on the different understandings of democracy, also differ considerably in the use of specific forms of participation. Compared to the the percentage of active citizens in each category when looking at the total sample (last row), for people scoring high on the efficiency-oriented understanding, the percentages of active citizens are lower than among the total population across all forms of participation. Signing petitions and contacting politicians are the most prevalent forms of participation among them. In contrast, those scoring high on a participatory understanding of democracy reveal higher percentages of politically involved citizens than it is on average. Moreover, they exhibit a slightly wider repertoire of forms of political participation: Next to having signed petitions and contacted politicians, about one fifth has also participated in organised forms of civic participation.

Table 4. Comparing participation rates among respondents with different views of democracy

	<i>Views of democracy</i>						
		<i>Efficiency-oriented</i>		<i>Disparaging</i>		<i>Participatory</i>	
	Total	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Event-based participation	0.08 (0.18)	0.12 (0.22)***	0.07 (0.15)***	0.09 (0.18)*	0.07 (0.16)*	0.04 (0.12)***	0.09 (0.18)***
Valid n	1,988	604	1,378	1,509	472	254	1,666
Content generating participation	0.22 (0.28)	0.30 (0.32)***	0.18 (0.25)***	0.24 (0.29)***	0.15 (0.23)***	0.17 (0.25)**	0.23 (0.29)**
Valid n	1,988	604	1,378	1,509	472	254	1,666

ANOVA comparison of group means with t-statistic in brackets, levels of significance: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Low/high scores refer to those who, on the index ranging from 0 to 10 score below and above 5.00, respectively. Calculated using descriptive weights aligning the sample structure with official statistics. Reference variables: age, gender, place and size of residence, education. Figures shown are calculated controlling for gender, age and levels of education.

Those who support disparaging understandings of democracy show the lowest percentages of involvement across all forms of participation but one: Almost 13 percent of them has published ideas or commentaries online, which is above the twelve per cent in the population and close to the 13.2 per cent of the participatory types. In sum, while the citizens with a participatory understanding of democracy focus on direct democratic acts, the efficiency-oriented types engage in similar yet more ‘selected’ forms. That is, they rely on forms which require little organisation among the contributors and allow for impacting politics relatively

directly. Lastly, the disparaging type focuses on forms of political participation that allow for expressing (their) disparagement. These findings clearly corroborate hypothesis 3b: *citizens with different views of democracy select different forms of participation*.

Citizens' views on norms of citizenship tend to be related to the ways in and degrees to which they engage in politics. Thus, people who reject democracy are expected not to be involved in it. Consequently, our next hypothesis states that (*H3c*) *people with illiberal views of democracy tend to participate little to not at all in politics*. However, a look at the disparaging type in Table 5 reveals a mixed picture. Compared to the participatory type – which in accordance with their views are broadly involved in politics, both online and offline – the disparaging types are somewhat less engaged. Yet, they are not remarkably passive or apathic. On the contrary. Although for almost all modes and forms of participation their participation rates are consistently lower than for the total population (Table 4 and 5, respectively), they clearly reach substantial levels of engagement.

Table 5. Comparing modes of participation among respondents with different views of democracy

(Percentages scoring high on indexes for understandings of democracy, who used the specific form of participation)

	<i>Form of participation used:</i>						
	Con- tacted politician	Written letter to news- paper	Signed a petition	Demon- strated	Partici- pated in a form of civic par- ticipation	Published ideas or commen- taries online	Encour- aged others online to become active
<i>View of democracy:</i>							
<i>Efficiency-oriented</i>	16.2%	3.8%	24.4%	6.0%	14.3%	10.3%	7.4%
Valid n	1,384	1,381	1,379	1,384	1,384	1,378	1,379
<i>Disparaging</i>	15.6%	3.2%	19.6%	5.3%	10.6%	12.9%	6.2%
Valid n	473	472	468	473	472	472	468
<i>Participatory</i>	20.8%	4.7%	28.7%	7.5%	19.1%	13.2%	10.5%
Valid n	1,676	1,674	1,663	1,677	1,677	1,672	1,674
Total sample	19.8%	4.5%	26.8%	7.4%	18.4%	12.0%	9.3%
Valid n	2,000	1,998	1,985	2,001	1,993	1,988	1,992

Valid n referring to the number of citizens scoring high on the type of understanding of democracy. Low/high scores refer to those who, on the index ranging from 0 to 10 score below and above 5.00, respectively. Calculated using descriptive weights adjusting the sample structure in accordance with official statistics. Reference variables: age, gender, place and size of residence, education.

As Figure 1 illustrates, 42 per cent of those scoring high on the disparaging understanding of democracy are engaged in at least one form of political participation, 18 per cent in two or more. Thus, 58 per cent of them are not involved in any activity and thus can be said to be politically apathic. In comparison, the fraction of apathics among those scoring high on the efficiency-oriented and participatory understandings of democracy are, respectively, 52 and 45 per cent. These figures are lower, but not extremely. Accordingly, while hypothesis 3b is confirmed, 3c has to be modified: people with illiberal views of democracy tend to participate less than other citizens, but they certainly cannot be depicted as politically passive or apathic. Despite their rejection of democratic principles and citizen roles, the disparaging democrats do not turn away from politics – rather than that, they seem to make use of the democratic opportunities they despise for expressing their discontent and promoting their illiberal idea(l)s.

Figure 1: Levels of participation among respondents with different views of democracy

Finally, we turn to the relationships between the three main main concepts of our study. Two interpretations are thinkable. Either we expect that (4a) *the correlation between understandings of democracy and norms of citizenship is mediated by participation* or (4b) *the correlation between understandings of democracy and participation is mediated by norms and citizenship*. To test these interpretations, we designed several regression models to predict norms of citizenship and participation using the understandings of democracy as the main independent variable. In a second step, the alternative dependent variable is added as an

independent variable; that is, we include participation in the model explaining norms of citizenship, and norms of citizenship in the model explaining participation. Table 6 shows the estimates for the eight models created (all four a-models present relationships with understandings of democracy only, and all b-models show the extended configurations).

Table 6. Predicting norms of citizenship and participation

	Norms of Citizenship				Political Participation			
	Engaged norms		Dutiful norms		Event-based participation		Content generating participation	
	Model 1a-E	Model 1b-E	Model 1a-D	Model 1b-D	Model 2a-E	Model 2b-E	Model 2a-C	Model 2b-C
<i>Efficiency-oriented view</i>	.072** (.027)	.124*** (.026)	.100*** (.015)	.109*** (.015)	-.012*** (.002)	-.013*** (.002)	-.025*** (.004)	-.027** (.004)
<i>Disparaging view</i>	-.146*** (.027)	-.117*** (.026)	-.142*** (.015)	-.136*** (.015)	-.001 (.002)	.000 (.020)	-.017*** (.004)	-.011** (.004)
<i>Participatory view</i>	.164*** (.024)	.119*** (.024)	.142*** (.014)	.134*** (.014)	.014*** (.002)	.012*** (.002)	.019*** (.004)	.012*** (.004)
Event-based participation		.915*** (.259)		.073 (.150)				
Content generating participation		1.691*** (.160)		.340*** (.092)				
Engaged norms of citizenship						.015*** (.002)		.041* (.004)
Dutiful norms of citizenship						-.004 (.004)		-.003 (.006)
Constant	5.111*** (.310)	4.473** * (.301)	7.260*** (.173)	7.144*** (.174)	.114*** (.028)	.062 (.039)	.315*** (.046)	.125* (.061)
<i>R</i> ²	.053	.130	.120	.128	.045	.070	.079	.148
N	1,867	1,867	1,867	1,867	1,867	1,867	1,867	1,867

Hierarchical linear regression, unweighted coefficients, t-statistics in brackets, levels of significance: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Regressions calculated using a design weight correcting for different selection probabilities of persons living in differently sized households. The coefficients and their levels of significance are not notably different when applying the weight to when it is not applied. All figures shown are calculated controlling for gender, age and levels of education.

Models 1a and 2a mirror the above presented relationships of single understandings of democracy with two variants for norms of citizenship (1a-E and 1a-D) and with two modes of political participation (2a-E and 2a-C). As shown in models 1a-E and 1a-D, the various understandings of democracy are all significant predictors of citizenship norms (corroborating the first part of hypothesis 4a). Yet, while citizens with efficiency-oriented and participatory understanding of democracy show consistent support for both citizenship norms, citizens with a disparaging understanding do not so. Adding the two participation variables to the regression

(models 1b-E and 1b-D), the coefficients for the three groups with different views of democracy change, but all remain statistically significant and retain their direction. For those with an efficiency-oriented view, the effect increases. On the opposite, for people with a disparaging and participatory view of democracy, including the participation variables leads to modest reductions of the coefficients. Accordingly, especially support for engaged citizenship norms seems to depend on *both* political participation *and* views of democracy. Moreover, the influence of understandings of democracy on the degree of support for norms of engaged citizenship appears to be stronger (efficiency-oriented) or weaker (disparaging and participatory) depending on the political participation of a person. Considering support for dutiful norms, the coefficients for the three groups with different views of democracy barely change upon inclusion of the political participation variables. Besides, only content-generating participation seems to explain greater support for dutiful norms. Hence, the active generation of political content can have a positive impact on the support for dutiful norms, whereas the mere partaking at events does not appear to have so. Hypothesis 4a, then, has to be rejected because the correlations between understandings of democracy and norms of citizenship do not disappear when participation is added. Instead, especially support for engaged norms depends on both the understanding of democracy and the level of participation.

The right-hand side of Table 6 shows the results for models with the two modes of participation as the dependent variable. In line with their view of democracy as something where citizens should participate in politics, citizens with a participatory understanding tend to be politically engaged. On the opposite, political participation is something the efficiency-oriented citizens rather tend not to do, and among those with a disparaging view, content generating participation is little common, whereas they are neither particularly prone to be engaged nor disengaged from event-based participation. This last result challenges the first part of hypothesis 4b. Adding norms to the models (2b-E and 2b-C) shows that only support for engaged norms has a (modest) impact on participation. More importantly, it is clear that the inclusion of participation hardly changes the predictive power of the various understandings of democracy. Hypothesis 4b apparently does not describe relationships between the three concepts correctly: (i) participation is not explained by every understanding of democracy and (ii) adding citizenship norms does not dissolve available correlations between understandings of democracy and participation.

Comparing the models in the left- and right-hand side of Table 6 shows that the relationships between engaged and dutiful norms with event-based and content-generating participation are substantially weaker when norms shall explain participation, than when participation

shall explain norms. In other words: the political participation of a person can explain their support for norms of citizenship much better than vice-versa. The large coefficient for content generating participation¹⁰ on engaged norms in model 1b-E shows how much of such positive influence the active creation of political contents can have on perception of respective norms (also, the r-squared doubles when adding the respective variables). In sum, rather than ascribing the correlation between understandings of democracy and participation (partly) to norms of citizenship, it seems to be the case that the correlation between understandings of democracy and norms of citizenship is mediated by participation.¹¹

Conclusions and Discussion

A-democratic and anti-democratic ideas are spreading in many countries and people seem to withdraw deliberately from democratic politics. Apparently, this process is accompanied by changing understandings of democracy. The main objective of our analyses was to explore the existence of distinct understandings of democracy and to investigate empirically, which views of democracy can be found in contemporary democracies. Because both support for norms of citizenship and active participation depend on the understanding of democracy, we further examined the relationships between understandings of democracy, norms and participation. Using data from a representative survey among the citizens of the German federal state Baden-Württemberg in 2016/17, three different views could be identified: efficiency-oriented, participatory, and disparaging understandings of democracy.

Thus, next to the first two ‘types of democrats’ which parallel the ones discussed in previous literature, we identify another discernible category of people who support illiberal understandings of democracy. This ‘disparaging view’ is based on a conception of politics that grounds on the rejection of what can be considered typical democratic processes, and on a despising of traditional political actors and their work. Our second set of conclusions deals with the expected consequences of different understandings of democracy. Since views of democracy come with different notions of what is or what it takes to be a citizen, people with different understandings of democracy regard the various norms of citizenship as differently important. Likewise, different views of democracy come with different forms of participation.

¹⁰ The look at the standardized coefficients allows for a better comparison of these effects: They are 0.083 for event-based and 0.252 for content generating participation, vis-à-vis 0.126, -0.116 and 0.113 for efficiency-oriented, disparaging and participatory understandings of democracy, respectively. Thus, the effect of content generating participation is almost twice that of the different understandings of democracy. Nonetheless, these remain influential.

¹¹ The counter-intuitive fact that political opinions are primarily a consequences instead of a cause of participation has been shown empirically by Quintelier and van Deth (2014).

People with disparaging views of democracy in particular show weak support for norms of citizenship and they distinguish themselves from other people with other understandings of democracy as being more exclusionist, less egalitarian and less active in politics. Nonetheless, contrary to our expectations, it is not the disparaging citizens who turn away from politics. Our results show that people with illiberal views of democracy tend to participate almost as much as people characterized by the other understandings of democracy. Rather than withdrawing from politics, these citizens seem to make use of the democratic opportunities they despise to express their discontent and promote their illiberal ideas.

This use of despised political means by people with disparaging views of democracy also fits in with our third conclusion considering the interdependencies between understandings of democracy, norms of citizenship, and political participation. Evidently, the correlation between understandings of democracy and norms is mediated by participation. Thus, participation appears to be more relevant for the development of norms of citizenship than the other way around. This result suggests that, rather than that perceptions of what it takes to be a 'good' citizen inspire certain kinds of participation, it is actual participation that stimulates the understandings of democracy and their associated procedural understandings of democratic practices.

These conclusions provide mixed implications for democrats and the prospects for liberal democracy. The not-so-good news is that a substantial minority supports disparaging understandings of democracy and non-democratic norms of citizenship. However, combining our second and third conclusions results in more optimistic inferences for democracy. If certain kinds of people tend to participate in certain ways in politics, they will be more likely to meet certain people and not encounter others. In such relatively homogenous participatory contexts, norms can be learned and reinforced. The fact that people with disparaging views of democracy do not stay away from politics, therefore, offers the opportunity to challenge their illiberal ideas in actual political arenas. The visible support for illiberal democratic ideas and procedures among a discernible number of people could gradually be accompanied by a shift in the norms of citizenship which those citizens endorse. Correspondingly, instead of attempting to exclude citizens with disparaging understandings of democracy and illiberal norms of democracy from the political arena, our findings suggest exactly the opposite remedy: Meeting these citizens in actual political actions offers a promising avenue to develop more democratic orientations.

From a general research perspective, this optimistic conclusion underlines the need to consider all three main concepts in a dynamic, longitudinal context when dealing with democratic processes. Furthermore, these findings recommend reconsidering norms of

citizenship and to dive deeper into the meaning and contents of citizenship norms today. If people with disparaging views of democracy have developed ‘new’ norms of citizenship, knowing what they look like can help understanding their political behaviour more successfully. This knowledge may be key to effectively counter the ongoing destabilisation of democracies, democratic political cultures and social cohesion worldwide.

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