

Making Constituencies: Representation as Mobilization in Mass Democracy

Lisa Jane Disch. Chicago, IL, The University of Chicago Press, 2021. 200 pp. \$32.50.

Making Constituencies is Lisa Disch's latest contribution to the theory of political representation. One of the most recognizable voices of the "constructivist turn," with this book Disch offers an enriched overview of her well-established idea: representation is not a passive reflection of pre-existing social identities, but rather a dynamic process that actively shapes and mobilizes political identifications and preferences.

According to Disch, while social identities are politically relevant, it is representatives who give them actual political meaning and transform them into "a consequential political force" (Chapter 1). This is achieved through campaign messaging and policy design, whether intentional or not. For instance, eligibility rules for state pensions can imbue the demographic group of "seniors" with common economic interests and a shared political identity. Political representation has constituency effects. In support of this perspective, Disch aligns (Chapter 2) with Saward, another leading constructivist, to counter Pitkin and Mansbridge's view that political deliberation merely educates voters—Disch contends that it also moves and persuades them (42).

Disch's most pointed critique is directed towards "democratic realists" who complain about "voter incompetence" (Chapter 3). She contends that focusing on voters' cognitive and emotional traits fails to recognize that mobilization and politicization are outcomes of institutions and parties' political messaging. For example, rural Americans' resentment against urbanites was not preexisting but rather politically constructed. In other words, the responsibility lies with representatives. But it also lies with political institutions, which tend to exhibit "bias" in favor of certain conflicts over others, effectively silencing and depoliticizing real causes of injustice and controversy (Chapter 4). Similarly, Disch argues that the issue lies not only in manipulation through rhetoric and framing, but also—echoing Goodin—in the deceptive exercise of power and the lack of space for counterframing. She further criticizes the problem of sorting, which presents the public as pre-politically divided, as it eliminates the possibility of competing discourses (Chapter 5). In the last two chapters, Disch praises Lefort for recognizing that politics, as a symbolic act of ordering, can lead to both egalitarian and totalitarian outcomes (Chapter 6). She also defends Laclau and Mouffe's concept of plurality, which emphasizes how political conflicts are conditioned by symbolic alliances and oppositions that imbue democratic struggles with diverse political meanings (Chapter 7).

Disch's book is a formidable work that draws on a diverse range of resources, including writings by American and French intellectuals from the 1960s to 80s, as well as the latest empirical research and journalistic columns. Her argument presents an original and unique genealogy of critical representation

scholars, enriched with real-world examples spanning from the French revolution and antislavery debates to the 2004 Iraq War, and the Trump presidency. One admirable aspect of her work is her seamless navigation between different contexts and literatures. Moreover, while her perspective on representation may be familiar, she presents it as a much-needed counterpoint to recent theories that portray voters as ignorant or solely influenced by their social identities.

Disch presents an optimistic view of political representation as a source of endless possibilities. But she is also a realist: political struggles can go awry. Hegemonic articulation helped both the New Right in the 1980s, as it did Trump. Democracy, she seems to suggest, requires acknowledging the possibility of such negative outcomes, a view shared by other radical democrats. Yet, by adopting this radical democratic perspective, Disch also inherits its unmitigated risks. Is any type of “hegemonic articulation” politically and democratically legitimate, even if it is deeply unequal? If yes, wouldn’t that make democracies toothless? Or does the author mean that if we separate political conflict from social identities, prevent the deceptive exercise of power, and enable competitive discourse, democracies will always have bite? From a theoretical perspective, how desirable is a view of democracy as a realm where political agency always takes precedence over social structures, and where experiences of injustice have no inherent value? If the author relies on a specific conception of democracy, it would be beneficial to further articulate and defend it.

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<https://doi.org/10.1093/psqar/qqad016>

Advance access publication 28 April 2023

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Mythologies without End: The US, Israel, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1917–2020

Jerome Slater. New York, Oxford University Press, 2021. 512 pp. \$29.95.

Jerome Slater’s book impressively counters Abba Eban’s profoundly false meme that the Arabs “never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity.” In Israeli parlance, Slater contends that *hahefech hu hanachon* (“the opposite is the case”). Though exploiting only English-language secondary sources, he uses