

Special issue of *Democratic Theory* 10(2) 2023

## The Multiple Self and Democracy: Identity, Performance and the Politics of Becoming

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Established conceptions of democracy are driven by an understanding of identities as stable. The operationalization of democratic ideals through liberal democratic institutions takes the form of representation, which tends to freeze gender, race, socioeconomic status or regional affiliation. Even radical democratic politics, such as participatory innovations or protests, often emulate this logic of representation: Minipublics invite participants according to strict identity quotas and social movements pursue identity politics.

This special issue of *Democratic Theory* explores the freedom of the democratic subject to change. It understands our selves as characterized by inner multiplicity. Our raced, classed, gendered, and sexed identities are intersectional. Depending on the context and our state of mind, we are parents, employees, dancers, slackers, victims, perpetrators, players, hosts, explorers, altruists or egoists. We are all these things at once and consecutively. Further, we also change and grow. Our identities are never permanent, but always in motion, being transformed. *We are constantly becoming.*

We ask how the reconceptualization of the self as multiple and becoming challenges existing democratic theory. Acknowledging freedom as a core ideal of democracy, we ask how participants in democratic politics can actively engage in identity performances that stretch their freedom as agentic subjects. Considering equality as another core ideal of democracy, we reflect on the challenges the multiple self poses to the feminist *politics of presence* which argues that marginalized groups need to embrace their elsewhere devalued identities in their political action. How can the politics of presence be further developed through the lens of performativity? How can radical democratic engagement do justice to our intersectional identities and multiple selves? In answering these questions, we seek to open perspectives toward a *politics of becoming* – a radical democratic strategy that allows for living our inner multiplicity while simultaneously advancing equality and inclusion of marginalized identities.

The digital age affords new means of self-expression and self-creation. Articulating identities via social media allows for more freedom in curating, exploring and constructing the self. Identities emerge as digital assemblages of images, selfies, avatars, hashtags, pseudonyms, GIFs, and emojis. Anonymity plays a crucial role in these modes of self-expression as the act of going online always necessitates a re-articulation of the self on screen. Digital communication harbours the potential for disidentification – for distancing our selves from our everyday identities and temporarily being otherwise. Our online and offline selves, however, are not separate. Rather, they form hybrid assemblages. Online expression extends our performative repertoire. Hence, this special issue explores democratic opportunities, challenges, and hazards of self-expression in the digital age both online, offline, and in hybrid modes of communication.

We seek innovative, creative, unconventional, imaginative, utopian, and exploratory contributions of 4.000 to 5.000 words addressing one or several of the following issues:

- Re-reading the politics of presence through lenses of performativity, queer theory, or gender studies
- Digital and hybrid identity constructions as part of radical democratic politics
- Anonymity and disidentification as democratic performance
- Democratic identity expressions of marginalized groups drawing on feminist, decolonial, indigenous, critical race, queer, trans, disability, and mental health studies
- New conceptions of representation and alternative modes of representation
- The multiple self and identity change as part of a politics of becoming

### Schedule:

The special issue is to be published in [Democratic Theory](#) (10)2 in 2023. The submission process includes first an editorial review, followed by an external peer-review, with the following deadlines:

- Full paper submission to the editors by 30 June 2022.
- Editorial review and feedback to authors by 30 August 2022.
- Deadline for revised version 30 October 2022.
- Peer review until 28 February 2023.
- Revisions until 30 May 2023.
- Submission of the special issue to publisher 15 July 2023.
- Publication of the special issue November 2023.

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