

Doing Democratic Theory Democratically

International Journal of Qualitative Methods

Volume 21: 1–12

© The Author(s) 2022

DOI: 10.1177/16094069221105072

journals.sagepub.com/home/ijqHans Asenbaum¹ 

Abstract

Over centuries, democratic theory has developed emancipatory ideals of inclusion, agency and transparency. These ideals, however, have scarcely been applied to the process of theorizing itself. Democratic theory is a product of the academic ivory tower. This article sets out to confront this problem and formulates *democratic theorizing* as an alternative to established approaches to theorizing democracy. It does so by conceptualizing democratic theory production as a democratic innovation. Democratic theorizing needs to include affected people, empower those on the margins and facilitate transparency. The proposed approach attempts to realize these ideals by bringing together three methodological traditions: grounded theory (in its critical indigenous version), participatory research and assemblage theory. The resulting approach of democratic theorizing draws on an ongoing engagement with the Black Lives Matter movement. The article discusses nine guiding principles of democratic theorizing and presents concrete building blocks to shape a democratic theorizing project.

Keywords

democratic theory, grounded theory, participatory research, assemblage theory, normative theorizing

Introduction

Over centuries, normative democratic theory has developed sophisticated accounts of how democracy ought to be. It has elaborated values of freedom, equality and pluralism (Dean et al., 2019). Moreover, many democratic theorists claim that democracy is not restricted to state institutions but extends to every sphere of human (Pateman, 1970) and even non-human interaction (Javier & Dryzek, 2020), so that democratic values ought to be practiced in every sphere of life (Campbell Rawlings & Catlaw, 2011). Yet, democratic theory proves surprisingly reluctant to apply these principles to itself; to date, it remains a product of the academic ivory tower. It is produced by people who have undergone years of training in educative institutions that shape the way we as democratic theorists think, speak, and act. This process not only produces a certain kind of thinking but is also only accessible to a few equipped with the necessary educational and economic resources. Democratic theory, then, is the product of a highly selective process and is rooted in the life world of a selective, socio-economically rather homogenous group.

Of course, this problem is rooted in the capitalist logic of systemic inequality and division of labor. The (post)colonial and hetero-patriarchal structures of current academia, in which research often functions as an extractive process, have a long

history and deep roots (Rodríguez, 2018). Hence, it cannot be the purpose of this paper to completely step out of this cycle and turn the production of democratic theory upside down. A more moderate and feasible goal is to propose an approach to producing democratic theory that is itself oriented toward democratic values. In contrast to established approaches to theorizing democracy, I propose *democratic theorizing* as an alternative, in which ‘democratic’ functions as an adjective describing the theorizing process itself rather than only its output. Understanding the theorizing process itself as an exercise in democratic engagement, I draw on the study of democratic innovations (Smith, 2009) and build a theorizing approach around the values of agency, inclusion, and transparency. I develop this approach through an ongoing engagement with the global Black Lives Matter movement.

¹Research Fellow, Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, University of Canberra, Vienna, Austria

Corresponding Author:

Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, University of Canberra, 11 Kirinari St, Bruce ACT 2617, Australia.

Email: hans.asenbaum@canberra.edu.au



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE

and Open Access pages (<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage>).

The idea that academic theorizing needs to include marginalized knowledges is not new. It emerged in decolonial and Indigenous studies and feminist research methodologies (Mignolo, 2021; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Bhambra, 2007). These approaches responded to “a call from members of Native communities to decolonize research methodologies by focusing on respectful collaboration, dynamic storytelling, and reciprocity throughout the research process” (Rogers Stanton, 2014, p. 573). This impetus has also been picked up and further developed by social movement scholarship that pays attention to the theories social movements themselves produce and to the role of activist researchers (Choudry, 2015).

The contribution I aim to make to this debate is threefold. First, it locates the potential contribution that democratic theory can make to the endeavor of democratizing academic theorizing. The democratic ideals developed in this field promise to provide a fruitful ground for participatory research practices. Second, this article explicitly focuses on the participatory creation of *normative theory*, thus disentangling normative theorizing from the creation of analytical theory (Ackerly et al., 2021; Fuji Johnson, 2022 in press). Third, beyond articulating abstract ideals and fervent calls to action, I aim to provide a concrete methodology outlining particular steps a democratic theorizing project may entail.

The point of departure for building such an approach needs to be rooted in a method that allows theorists to leave the ivory tower and engage directly with the life experiences of others. Grounded theory offers a valuable starting point. Here, theory emerges out of an immersion in the field and a deep engagement with others’ life experiences (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017). The democratic qualities of this approach can further be deepened by drawing on participatory research, a recently evolving approach distinct from action research, that advocates the active engagement of research participants in the research process (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). A third resource for democratic theorizing can be found in vital materialist assemblage theory. This allows for the inclusion of non-humans, objects, events and natural forces into democratic theorizing (Fox & Alldred, 2015). The sensitivity to non-human agency resonates with Indigenous scholarship aspiring to decolonize the production of democratic theory (Rosiek et al., 2020) which provides a fruitful foundation for democratic theorizing.

The goal of democratic theorizing is to enhance agency, inclusion and transparency in the process of generating democratic theory. The resulting theory is not necessarily ‘better’ than theory produced in the established manner. However, we can expect such theory to be closer to the life worlds of diverse people and hence emerge from more pluralistic and worldly grounds (Hendriks et al., 2020).

In what follows, I first ask the question of how democratic theory is commonly produced. The methodological guidance offered by the field proves rather scant and neglects to apply democratic values to the theorizing process itself. The next

section lays the groundwork for democratic theorizing by reviewing grounded theory, participatory research, assemblage theory and decolonial methods. Following this, the paper introduces the core principles of democratic theorizing and provides practical guidance to this approach based on my ongoing engagement with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Doing democratic theory democratically?

Democratic theory, and the field of political normative theory more generally, offers little guidance on how to theorize. While textbooks on empirical research abound, normative theory is mostly produced in a black box. It is a mixture of intuition and a tight corset of established assumptions and academic protocols that structure theory production.

Lately, however, some democratic theorists have stepped onto the meta level and investigated the black box of theorizing. Simone Chambers (2022 in press), for example, outlines five approaches to producing normative democratic theory which each result in a different type of theory: theories of the ideal, critical reflective theory, constructive reflective theory, critical applied theory and constructive applied theory. Chambers discusses which questions each set of theory engages with and reflects on how theory can draw on empirical insight. However, the question of who is doing the theorizing is not addressed. The theorist is implicitly constructed as an academic professional. Similarly, Mark Warren highlights the questions that can drive theorizing democracy. He advises that “we democratic theorists... should take a step back and ask two kinds of questions” (Warren, 2017, p. 39) and, in so doing, assigns the authority of theorizing democracy to academic professionals.

John Dryzek and Jeffrey Berejikian (1993), in contrast, directly address the problem of the exclusion of the demos from academic theorizing. They employ Q methodology to survey people’s understandings of democracy and thus construct four models of democracy: “We intend to develop a truly reconstructive approach that lets subjects speak for themselves about their interactive competences, and the categories (in our case, democratic theories) that these competences help construct” (p. 49). In a similar vein, I have interviewed activists of the Russian informal movement about their visions of democracy during the Perestroika period. The results are vivid accounts of liberal, anarchist, socialist, and green theories of democracy (Asenbaum, 2012). This empirical approach to theorizing democracy makes important steps toward including the demos, but it treats respondents as research subjects rather than as agentic participants.

This argument is at the core of a third set of democratic theorists who articulate an empathic appeal for a more active role of research participants in the construction of democratic theories. James Bohman (1999) criticizes critical theory which, despite its emancipatory ethos, understands the theorist as an enlightened intellectual, as a “critic with a superior status over and above the limits of the participants’ perspectives” (p. 460). The hierarchical organization of science, with the

researcher manipulating and measuring the reactions of the research subjects, is also reflected in normative theorizing. In contrast, critical normative theory needs to embrace a democratic ethos of cooperation: “critical social inquiry... addresses the subjects of inquiry as equal reflective participants, as knowledgeable social agents. In this way, the asymmetries of the context of technical control are suspended” (p. 474). Building on Bohman, (Marit Hammond 2018) argues that democratic theory must “democratise its own practice towards more self-reflective and open forms of theory development... this presupposes a more dialogical... *democratic* form of theorising” (pp. 789 and 796). In the same vein, Albert Dzur (2019) urges us “to practice democratic theory as catalytic rather than a traditionally academic discipline – meaning that research is done with and for the people being studied... Democratic theory should not legislate for us, or merely interpret what we already know, but rather, invite us into the common project” (pp. 146–147).

Most recently, this call to action has been articulated by Dannica Fleuß, who argues that we must “systematically include actual exchanges and conversations with democratic citizens in theorizing about democratic legitimacy and in (re-) designing democratic institutions. We must, very briefly put, democratize theorizing about democracy” (Fleuß, 2021, p. 165). Interestingly, Fleuß’ suggestion as to how democratic theory may be produced more democratically is by pointing to existing democratic innovations such as citizens’ assemblies. When such participatory processes produce state constitutions or proposals for democratic reform, they produce democratic theory. (Hammond 2018), however, warns against turning to democratic innovations as they perpetuate the functionalist logic of scientific testing, manipulation and control. If not in democratic innovations, democratic ways of theorizing may be found in social movements. This is suggested by social movements scholarship that advocates for the acknowledgement of the normative theories that social movements produce through their thinking and acting. In *Democratic Theorizing from the Margins* Marla Brettschneider (2007) argues that academic theorists need to “articulat[e] an alternative democratic theory from the views, contributions, and experiences of those historically on the margins of society as well as those with whom they stand in solidarity” (p. 10).

By calling for including participants into the project of theorizing democracy, this emphatic call points the way toward new directions. However, there is a lack of practical guidance as to how this can be accomplished. How can academic theorists collaborate with people outside academia to produce democratic theory?

Democratic theorizing as democratic innovation

To respond to the call for democratizing democratic theory, I will start developing a novel approach built on the core values of democracy. As noted above, Fleuß (2021)

conceptualizes state-led democratic innovations as participatory spaces with the potential to produce democratic theory. I propose going the other way and conceptualize academic theorizing processes as democratic innovation. Although it is a valuable and important observation that democratic innovations and social movements already produce democratic theory, I am here more interested in how academic theorists can engage with those outside academia to produce democratic theory in a collaborative process guided by democratic principles. This is what Jen Gobby (2019) refers to as “collaborative theorizing,” which she realizes by “thinking with movements.” Along these lines, Nicole Curato (2012) and Kei Nishiyama (2022 in press) develop interview techniques that build on deliberative democratic principles. In doing so, they recast the academic research process according to democratic values. The question then is: Which values should democratic theorizing focus on? The literature on democratic innovations has answers (Geissel, 2013; Smith, 2009).

What are democratic innovations? “Democratic innovations are processes or institutions that are... developed to reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes by increasing opportunities for participation, deliberation and influence” (Elstub & Escobar, 2019, p. 11). Some practical examples include participatory budgets, citizens’ assemblies, open popular forums, referendums, co-governance processes, and online deliberation. While the study of democratic innovations particularly focuses on state institutions, more recently its focus has shifted to include social movement formations (Della Porta, 2020) and workplace participation (Landemore & Ferreras, 2016). I understand democratic innovations as participatory processes which interrupt established power formations and generate openings for systemic transformation towards democratic futures (Asenbaum, 2021). Hence, there is no evident reason why academic spaces, research processes, and, in particular, academic theorizing, should not be understood in terms of democratic innovation. Indeed, this approach resonates with Bohman’s call to infuse science with democratic values (Bohman, 1999).

Elsewhere, with Frederic Hanusch I have reviewed the literature on democratic innovations and identified three core values (Asenbaum & Hanusch, 2021). First, democratic innovations aspire to realize *inclusion* by inviting all those affected into a common deliberative space. They particularly aim to include disadvantaged and marginalized people and amplify their voices. Second, through concepts such as popular control, influence and meaningful participation, democratic innovations enhance the *agency* of participants. Participants need to express themselves freely and contribute to the outcome of participatory processes in a meaningful way. Finally, democratic innovations realize *transparency* by making their procedures and findings accessible to the wider public. In doing so, they extend the circle of those included beyond those physically present.

Democratic theorizing, then, needs to fulfil the democratic values of inclusion, agency and transparency. I will pursue this agenda by bringing together three established research approaches.

Grounding democratic theory

Grounded theory method (GTM) provides a suitable point of departure for democratic theorizing. Instead of understanding theory as the product of an enlightened thinker, grounded theorists immerse themselves in the field. Theory is not the product of individual reasoning drawing on the intellectual engagement with other academically certified work, but rather, it emerges from the bottom upwards, through an engagement with data. The result is theory in which not only the perspective of the theorist, but also those of participants, are reflected: “By starting with the data from the lived experience of the research participants, the researcher can, from the beginning, attend to how they construct their worlds” (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1162). Despite this democratic impetus inherent to GTM, to my knowledge there is no democratic theory produced through GTM. Furthermore, although GTM is the most used methodological approach in the social sciences, it has rarely been applied in political science (Becker, 2012).

There are various approaches to GTM (Timonen et al., 2018). However, there are a few basic steps common to all of them, which can be seen as the practical core of GTM. Grounded theorists approach the field with an open mind. While the original version of GTM urged theorists to postpone an engagement with the existing academic literature until after fieldwork (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), today, a more flexible approach is advocated that allows for—and even encourages—an abductive back-and-forth between fieldwork and literature engagement (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010; Thornberg, 2012). The core of conducting GTM consists of a constant movement between data collection and analysis. Data collection often draws on established qualitative methods such as text analysis, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observations, but may also employ mixed methods. Data analysis starts with open coding. Through constant comparison, core categories and patterns emerge, and both data gathering and coding become more selective. Through the continuous abductive process of data gathering, data analysis and literature engagement, basic categories merge into categories of higher abstraction. Thus, from a concrete case, a theory emerges that may serve the analysis of other cases (Reichert, 2007). Consequently, the result of GTM is analytical (not normative) theory.

These basic principles of GTM have great potential for democratic theorizing. Starting the theorizing process not from abstract concepts or philosophical debates, but from lived experience, promises to enhance the inclusion of various viewpoints (O’Neil Green et al., 2007). However, democratic

theorizing needs to be more ambitious in fulfilling democratic values and facilitating active participation.

Participating in democratic theory

Over the past years, participatory research (PR) has built considerable expertise in fulfilling the agentic potential of research participants (Bussu et al., 2020). “Participatory research methods are geared towards planning and conducting the research process with those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study” (Bergold & Thomas, 2012, p. 192). In contrast to GTM, PR is not formulated as an approach to theorizing, but as an approach to empirical analysis. Where GTM has concrete steps, PR describes a wide spectrum of techniques and methods that may be assembled in various ways.

Growing out of participatory action research with its aim of collectively building the capacity for real-world interventions, PR focuses on realizing a democratic ethos in the research process. The realization of democratic ideals within a research project to a large extent depends on the democratic commitments of the academic researchers who lead the project. They need to realign their roles from neutral investigators, who analyze the empirical world from a position of detached objectivity, to facilitators who provide participatory infrastructures (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Researchers need to engage with participants with genuine curiosity and the humble attitude of a learner. In a sense, this turns the established academic hierarchies around: researchers do not know better because of the number of books they read and have written; rather, participants are the experts when it comes to their personal life experiences.

PR offers a variety of participatory techniques that enable research participants to fulfil their agentic potential. “The aim of participatory or emancipatory research is to confer control over the ‘telling’ and ownership of the data on to participants, and to give them opportunities to present something of themselves as participants, narrators and researchers (and thus to avoid the risk of misinterpretation or misrepresentation)” (Aldridge, 2017, p. 28). Whether to apply PR methods, however, is not a yes-or-no choice, but rather, a matter of degree (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Aldridge (2017), for example, divides PR into four models ranging from tokenistic participation, to recognition of participants, their active inclusion and participant-led emancipation. It needs to be kept in mind that the degree of the fulfilment of democratic values within a research project does not only depend on academic researchers’ attitudes and ambitions, but also on the resources, energies and motivations of participants.

PR has a lot in common with democratic innovations, since it aims to enhance inclusion, agency and transparency. Inclusion in PR is realized by inviting those under study into a common project. Beyond this, PR projects often amplify the voices of marginalized groups “whose views are seldom sought, and whose voices are rarely heard... the aim is the

reconstruction of their knowledge and ability in a process of understanding and empowerment” (Bergold & Thomas, 2012, p. 197). The agency of participants is further enhanced through transparency. Established research methods often depend on the naivety of research subjects who are subjected to manipulation, measuring and testing, which raises ethical concerns. In PR, participants are informed about not only the purpose and background of the research project, but also the personal perspectives the academic researchers are taking. Instead of one-sided disclosure, where participants share personal views while researchers remain aloof, researchers need to make their views accessible: “In order to reach mutual understanding in collaborative research action, individuals must, to some extent at least, disclose to their fellow researchers the background to their epistemological perspective” (Bergold & Thomas, 2012, p. 204).

PR, then, promises to enhance the democratic values of inclusion, agency and transparency in the research process and functions as a valuable addition to GTM’s bottom-up approach. The democratic reach of democratic theorizing can be further extended by enhancing the sensitivity of theorists to non-human participants.

Assembling democratic theory

Recently, democratic theory has shifted its attention to non-human actors. With increasing awareness of the devastating ecological condition of planet Earth, democratic theorists ponder about how non-human animals, plants and natural events can be included into a democratic polity (Meijer, 2019; Javier & Dryzek, 2020). This resonates with a strand of political theory emerging over the past two decades associated with the term ‘vital materialism’, which also echoes in methodological debates of post-qualitative research (Carlson et al., 2021; St. Pierre, 2021). Vital materialism introduces a “democratic, ‘flat’ ontology” (Versteegen, 2015, p. 173) by understanding the world as made of vibrant matter. Humans, non-humans, events, objects, emotions, discursive concepts and performative expressions are all affective components that interact in assemblages. The spectrum of vital materialism is broad and diverse, ranging from those advocating for a complete abandonment of the division between objects and subjects (Bryant, 2011) to those who assign different levels of agency to different elements (Connolly, 2013). I have my own reservations regarding this approach (Asenbaum, 2021c, p. 376), but I think it can make a useful contribution to democratic theorizing. It draws attention to the anthropocentrism that is inherent in established approaches to theorizing democracy. Jane Bennet (2010, p. 107) aptly suggests: “It is, of course, quite normal for democratic theory to be anthropocentric and quite reasonable to tie political participation to some degree of linguistic or deliberative competence... But what if we loosened the tie between participation and human language use, encountering the world as a swarm of vibrant materials entering and leaving agentic assemblages?”

The question at hand is not what a vital materialist democratic theory would look like (Felicetti, 2021), but what vital materialism has to offer to the methodological approach of democratic theorizing. To this end, the conception of assemblage is key. An assemblage exists by the interaction of its various parts and forces. Anything can be thought of in terms of an assemblage. A dinner date might consist of two people, a restaurant, waiters, food, conversation, social conventions, emotions, physical attraction, body chemistry, etc. The food within this assemblage constitutes its own assemblage including ingredients, a recipe, chefs, cooking utensils, health regulations, etc. In this way, every assemblage is part of a bigger assemblage and is constituted by smaller assemblages (DeLanda, 2016).

The flat ontology of assemblage theory harbors potential for democratic theorizing. It proposes a new analytical lens on the research process itself, which makes it more inclusive and egalitarian (Andersson, Korp & Reinertsen, 2020; McLeod, 2014). This is achieved, among other ways, by understanding data as research participants. Deborah Lupton (2018) conceptualizes personal data generated through digital devices as a lively companion species. They are born through human and machine interaction, and they are continuously interpreted differently. They affect various people in various situations. In a similar vein, Robert Schmidt (2019) understands matter as participant in social practices. He claims that “things and non-humans appear as participants: each collaborates in its specific materiality and is involved in its practice-specific manner; they are not merely passive ‘carriers of meaning’” (p. 148).

Building on the understanding of the agential nature of data, Ellingson and Sotirin (2020) conceptualize research as a process of entanglement. Researchers are not situated in a position of mastery over data. Rather, they are part of a co-constitutive data assemblage in which researchers produce data as much as data produces researchers. In this process, “data weaves its lively way in the world in and through and alongside us” (p. 822) so that “[t]he line between researcher and data dissolves” (p. 821). Expanding assemblage thinking further, Fox and Alldred (2015) propose the concept of the ‘research assemblage’. The research process assembles researchers with their personal histories, intentions and interests, research methodologies, theories, literature, data, software, hardware, laboratories, (home) offices, libraries and political, historical, societal and geographic contexts. This view has crucial consequences for how research output is understood. Research findings are not discovered by a shrewd observer, who controls the research process. Rather, findings emerge organically from the interaction of various forces in a particular, context-dependent constellation. This research assemblage builds a hybrid by interacting with the event assemblage under study. Rather than only focusing on the event assemblage and leaving the research assemblage in the dark, we need to pay attention to how the various parts of both assemblages interact and affect each other.

Vital materialist assemblage thinking contributes to democratic theorizing by enhancing the sensitivity to non-humans and materiality in the research process. It raises the questions of how researchers are affected by data and what such affectivity does to the theorizing process. Similar to PR, it profoundly alters research relationships and establishes a humble, sensitive and inclusive research stance.

Decolonizing democratic theory

Current debates confront the colonial legacies of political thought in an attempt to decolonize democratic theory (Banerjee, 2021; Singh, 2019). Rather than decolonizing existing theory, what is of interest to this paper is how the practice of theorizing can be decolonized. Recent methodological developments in GTM are particularly conducive to this undertaking. Decolonial and Indigenous scholars have put forward critical, transformative and Indigenous grounded theory, which harbors particular potential for democratic theorizing (for overviews, see Lo, 2014; Timonen et al., 2018). These approaches combine the vital materialist ontology and PR methods discussed above with Indigenous and decolonial thinking (Redman-MacLaren & Mills, 2015). Indeed, vital materialism resonates with Indigenous scholarship, as both shift the focus to non-human agency and confuse the strict role division between researchers and research subjects (Rosiek et al., 2020).

In contrast to the original, positivist GTM's aim to reveal an objective reality, critical Indigenous grounded theory aims at disrupting the (post-)colonial order. It takes Indigenous knowledge as a starting point and, in so doing, destabilizes Western knowledge systems. In this way, "critical Indigenous grounded theory inquiry necessarily becomes disruptive... and radically democratic" (Denzin, 2007, p. 460). Rather than being only accessible to Indigenous scholars, "[g]rounded theory, because of its commitment to critical, open-ended inquiry, can be a decolonizing tool for Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars alike" (Denzin, 2007, p. 456). To decolonize the research process, "Western scholars will reach out in democratic and liberatory ways that effect research collaboration" (Lincoln & González y González, 2008, p. 784). However, critical grounded theorists who see themselves as allies of marginalized groups need to make a special effort to reflect on their positionality, their assumptions and preconceptions, and learn as much as possible about the life world of their participants (O'Neil Green et al., 2007).

This new rendition of GTM lends itself to democratic theorizing because of its explicit normative mission of societal transformation. Critical Indigenous grounded theory builds on the emancipatory ambitions of critical theory: "In CGT [Critical Grounded Theory], the choice of research problem is explicitly driven by moral and/or social concerns in an ambition to produce critical knowledge to enable social emancipation" (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017, p. 9). At the end of this process stands "theory that can be used to challenge excluding

and oppressive structures and systems for positive change" (Redman-MacLaren & Mills, 2015, p. 4). The result of such a theorizing process, then, may not primarily serve analytical purposes, but function as normative theory that guides or inspires social and political action.

In this vein, Ackerly and colleagues develop an account of grounded normative theory, which aims at theorizing with those who struggle. Drawing on decolonial and feminist scholarship, they outline a broad agenda for an emancipatory way of producing normative theory. Their ecumenical approach detects the democratic ethos that is already practiced by many democratic theorists. They argue that "most empirically engaged political theory can be understood and assessed as 'grounded normative theory' (GNT)... we seek to 'unearth' and frame an approach that has been in practice for some time" (Ackerly et al., 2021, pp. 3–4). Grounded normative theory provides a fruitful foundation for democratic theorizing. It stresses a democratic ethos in the theorizing process and illustrates that normative theory can be the product of a collaborative engagement with marginalized groups. Yet, what is still missing is concrete guidance on what steps such a theorizing endeavor may entail.

Democratic theorizing

Combined, GTM, PR, assemblage thinking and the decolonial methods provide a promising outlook for democratic theorizing. I will first present this approach along nine principles and then provide practical guidance in the next section. In contrast to the established approaches to theorizing democracy, democratic theorizing is oriented towards the principles of *voice, dialogue, recursiveness, pluralization, openness, immersion, humility, reflection and change*.

Voice. Democratic theorizing shifts the focus to underrepresented voices and topics in public discourse. Both the choice of research topic and participant invitation are oriented towards inclusion. Beyond including the oppressed, discriminated and marginalized in academic spaces, democratic theorizing entails a sensitivity to phenomena and actors at the periphery or outside of mainstream discourses. This includes a receptiveness to non-human animals, events, nature, objects and affect.

Dialogue. Democratic theorizing does not focus on academic literature but develops theory in an ongoing conversation with participants who take on the role of co-theorists. The lead theorist or team of theorists engages in conversations with co-theorists, which may take the form of individual or group interviews. Instead of replicating the hierarchical and extractivist interview formats of established research methodologies, lead theorists may share their own views, which increases transparency and decreases power asymmetries. To listen to non-human voices (Javier & Dryzek, 2020; Meijer, 2019), a wide range of methods may be employed, such as observations or material ethnography (Hickey-Moody, 2020).

Recursiveness. Each conversation builds the foundation for the following conversation. Interview questions are adjusted, added or replaced. In each conversation, co-theorists may be invited to interpret insights from previous conversations or other methods of data gathering. Lead theorists recursively check their interpretations against the interpretations of co-theorists. Academic literature may be consulted at various stages and inform the theorizing process.

Pluralization. Democratic theorizing benefits from the diversification of tools and data sources. It champions data, theory, and method triangulation and mixed methods (see Ercan et al., 2022 in press). A pluralization of data sources allows for deep immersion and ‘thick’ theorization. A pluralization of methodological approaches, research tools and materialities (software, pen and paper), and theories enables the assumption of various perspectives (Asenbaum, 2021b, 2022). Democratic theorizing also lends itself to inter- and transdisciplinary thinking and is open to new, innovative and unconventional methods.

Openness. Throughout the process, insights and preliminarily emerging concepts are shared with co-theorists and with a wider public. Sharing regular updates with co-theorists makes the process transparent, provides them with opportunities to intervene and thus strengthens their agency in the process. Inviting a large public into the conversation, for example, via public websites, social media or open meetings, multiplies the opportunity for input, which enriches the emerging theory. It also allows the academic theorist to step out of the ivory tower and provide public accountability.

Immersion. Acknowledging the limitations and particularity of their own perspective, lead theorists immerse themselves in the life worlds of co-theorists. Highlighting the experiences and realities of the underrepresented, lead theorists may engage in ethnographic methods and live with participants. They may also familiarize themselves with cultural backgrounds, particular milieus and perspectives through various, often non-academic channels, including social media, blogs, TV shows, movies, journalistic and activist texts, etc.

Humility. Lead theorists assume a position of humility. Acknowledging their particular positionality and limited understanding, they recognize the expertise of co-theorists and are open to learn. Reflecting on their privilege, they offer their academic resources for common theorizing. They assume the role of enablers and facilitators who provide and manage a theorizing infrastructure (Fleuß, 2021, pp. 170–172). Humility is also reflected in research outputs, in which academic researchers fully acknowledge participants’ contributions and potential co-authorship (Sarna-Wojcicki et al., 2017).

Reflection. Lead theorists constantly check their own positionality. This includes an assessment at the outset of the

project reflecting on biographical connections, personal motivations and interests in the research topic (Mao et al., 2016). Keeping personal journals or diaries helps to reflect on ongoing engagements with co-theorists and data. Emotional and affective responses are carefully observed and documented as part of the theorizing process.

Change. Democratic theorizing is impact-oriented and takes a transformative outlook. It asks which benefits the theorizing project can have for society and how it connects to concrete transformative practices. Whether as contribution to public discourse, or as guide to concrete action on the ground, democratic theorizing is committed to more just and democratic futures.

Democratic theorizing with the Black Lives Matter movement

Here, I will introduce several building blocks that help to shape a democratic theorizing project. In doing so, I am guided by my own experience in conducting a democratic theorizing project together with Black Lives Matter activists. Each democratic theorizing project will look different. Building blocks can be assembled in many ways. Hence, the steps outlined below are not meant to limit or prescribe a certain process, but to provide orientation and guidance.

Forming the research assemblage. In contrast to established approaches of starting an empirical research project with a research design thought of as linear plan (Wahyuni, 2012), democratic theorizing starts with ideation, which allows for an organic formation of the research assemblage (Fox & Alldred, 2015). A democratic theorizing project needs to be developed in conversation with those it concerns. Reaching out to marginalized actors and striking up conversations about the project brings together people and ideas. This may include ways of listening to non-humans, however they may express themselves. As the research assemblage takes shape, including a theorizing team and/or a wider consultative network, many tasks need to be fulfilled. These include the formulation of research questions, the choice of methods of data gathering, the coordination of multiple methods, decisions regarding theoretical and ontological underpinnings, participant invitation, a division of roles within the project, potential financial compensation and funding opportunities. This first phase is also an important time for self-reflection, which can be done individually in a personal journal and/or collectively in conversation with participants.

For my democratic theorizing project with Black Lives Matter, I launched a public website with an open call for participation (Asenbaum, 2021a), which I shared via several personal social media channels. The response was resounding. I conducted conversations with activists, scholars and practitioners, which helped me shape and conduct the project.

Entering into conversation. At this point, a conventional research undertaking would conduct a literature review. Democratic theorizing, in contrast, engages with literature more fluidly, abductively (Thornberg, 2012) or inductively. For my project, I opted for a purely inductive approach and postponed the literature review to after data gathering and analysis.

Engagement with empirical data in democratic theorizing can take many forms, such as interviews, surveys, document analysis or deliberative group conversations (Nishiyama, 2018). Guided by the assemblage theory discussed above and recent developments in democratic theory focusing on non-verbal forms of expression and embodied performances (Asenbaum & Hanusch, 2021; Mendonça et al., 2020), the choice of methods may include photo elicitation, social media analysis, network mapping, and artistic prototyping. For my project, I engaged in social media analysis, conversational interviews, a group conversation and participatory analysis.

First, I collected 323 social media posts with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. The modular contrast between the textuality of Twitter and the visuality of Instagram played an important role in diversifying data. Images and text conveyed content differently. I coded each post with the help of qualitative research software, before collecting the next. Rather than gathering a big pile of data and then coding them all at once, the recursive back-and-forth between collecting and analyzing allows an understanding to emerge gradually and organically (Reichert, 2007). I think of this process not so much in terms of data gathering and analysis, but more as a conversation with data. I approached the field with particular questions. Listening to the answers I found, new questions emerged. I observed my emotional reactions to data and kept a journal about how data affected me. I also started writing memos, which served as an important source for writing up the theory later.

Then, I entered into conversations with 12 Black Lives Matter activists in online interviews. To invite participants as widely as possible, I posted open invitations on social media and called for participation on the project website. I also contacted various groups in the movement directly. To facilitate an open conversation, I published first findings and current insights on the website and shared them on social media. Sharing data and insights before the publication stage is unconventional in current academia and might appear as risky (Miedema, 2021). From my personal experiences I can say that this not only enhanced the democratic value of transparency but also enriched the theorizing process.

The online conversations with activists were video recorded, so that not only their words, but also their body language and tone of voice could inform the interpretation. Rather than traditional interviews, I conducted open conversations that asked about normative concepts, philosophical ideas and political convictions. To break up the established mode of extractive interviewing, I also shared my own opinions and insights from previous conversations. This flattened the hierarchies between my co-theorists and myself,

as they felt less ‘put on the spot’ and gained a better understanding of the project. Moreover, I started each conversation with what can be called a “positionality statement.” I explained how I related to the Black Lives Matter movement and shared my own biographical experiences of marginalization. Showing my own vulnerability generated further equal ground between us. I transcribed and coded each conversation before conducting the next, constantly revising my interview guide.

The process provided several opportunities for participant feedback. During the conversations, I summarized my interpretations of what participants had said, to give them an opportunity to correct me. After each conversation, I sent the complete transcript to participants along with a one-page document, in which I summarized my interpretation in clear and accessible terms. I then asked for corrections and additions.

I also conducted one-on-one participatory analysis sessions. I prepared a distinct set of social media posts for each session, which participants then interpreted in conversation with me. Knowing the movement from the inside, they often highlighted things I had not paid attention to. I then fed their interpretations into the coding process and revised my original interpretations.

Immersing oneself. An important element of democratic theorizing is to immerse oneself in the given topic. This may entail actively participating in a movement, or ethnographic approaches to living with communities (Curato, 2019). Democratic theorizing, then, may not only entail acknowledging research participants as co-theorists, but also assuming the role of a participant in their life worlds. Outlining her approach to grounded normative theory (GNT), Fuji Johnson (2022 in press) asserts: “Underlying the solidaristic approach to GNT is a political solidarity – a solidarity that entails actively taking a side in struggles for justice with the oppressed.” Immersion also can take the form of temporarily infusing one’s own personal life with research content. How far one goes in this direction is a personal decision for which one’s own wellbeing and self-care need to be taken into consideration.

Conducting this project under the lockdown regimes of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Hall et al., 2021), I made checking the social media hashtag #BlackLivesMatter a daily habit, which meant waking up and going to bed to Black Lives Matter content. I constantly took screenshots and fed current content into the analysis process. I further enriched the process with non-academic sources regarding the movement, including activist texts, YouTube documentaries and Netflix shows. I spent many hours watching footage of police assaults on racially marginalized people and followed the live broadcasted trial of Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd. I documented personal thoughts and reflected on each of these items in my personal journal. The journal was important for self-reflection about my role in the project, my positionality, and my interactions with participants and data.

The exposition to the contents of these media items as well as the reflections on my positionality were often emotional and painful.

Engaging with academic theory. The engagement with academic literature in democratic theorizing can take several forms. It may inform the theorizing process from the beginning, as called for by post-qualitative approaches (St. Pierre, 2021). Data gathering and analysis, and literature engagement may proceed in a recursive manner allowing for mutual enrichment (Thomberg, 2012). In my own experience, I found it most helpful to situate the literature engagement at the end of the project, which allowed me to approach co-theorists and data with an open mind. After the empirical engagement, I turned to the academic literature on Black Lives Matter. The concepts that had come out of the theorizing process resonated with the literature. The academic accounts of the movement helped me to further deepen and enrich the theory that had emerged.

Putting it on paper. From the inductive grounded theory engagement, core categories emerge that build the core structure of the theory. Memos that are written throughout the entire process are an important source for writing up the theory. I encourage theorists to embrace the material diversity of data and dive into the data assemblage. Understanding data as agentic and their meaning as context-dependent, theorists can take joy in the “mess[y] reality of piles of field notes, transcripts, photos and maps, memos and reflections, computer files, paper files, sticky notes with questions jotted on them, journal article PDFs, books, and all the other vital information and ideas that form cascading piles on our desks and computer desktop folders” (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020, p. 820). It may make sense to lay out categories on papers on the floor, attach them on sticky notes to the wall or visualize them through software graphs, all of which can be done alone or with participants. Out of this ‘data bath’, theory will emerge.

For me, after the social media analysis, conversations, participatory analysis sessions, multimedia input, personal journal, and literature review, things started coming together. I wrote a first paper draft, which I sent to co-theorists and asked for feedback. I then invited them to an online group conversation, where we discussed the core categories of the theory and reflected on the process. I then fed their reflections into the next iteration of the paper.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I faced the problem of the exclusivity of established methods of theorizing democracy. Bringing together GTM, PR, assemblage theory and decolonial methods, I have proposed democratic theorizing as a process that aspires to realize the democratic values of inclusion, agency and transparency. Providing insights from my own engagement with this method, I proposed building blocks that such a theorizing process may entail. This is only a first and modest

step into the direction of a truly democratic way of theorizing democracy. This article is formulated as an invitation to expand and deepen this approach.

Democratic theorizing is not easy. Apart from the substantial empirical effort it requires, it entails asking uncomfortable questions, facing one’s own privileges and engaging in painful reflections. These are the wounds required to break up entrenched forms of oppression. Positioning ourselves as allies may entail discovering our complicity. A painful look at the world is a first step towards rebuilding it.

Acknowledgement

The method proposed here emerged out of an engagement with the Black Lives Matter movement and benefitted from many conversations with people in and around the movement, for which I’m deeply grateful. Thank you for inspiring conversations, Genevieve Fuji Johnson, Jen Gobby, Sophia Wathne and Sonia Bussu! I would also like to express my gratitude for opportunities to present and discuss versions of this paper at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance Seminar Series, an ECPR conference panel organized by Lala Muradova and Matt Ryan, a seminar of the Margem research group lead by Ricardo F. Mendonça and a PSA conference panel organized by Dannica Fleuß.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Hans Asenbaum  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9780-9735>

References

- Ackerly, B., Cabrera, L., Forman, F., Johnson, G. F., Tenove, C., & Wiener, A. (2021). Unearthing grounded normative theory: Practices and commitments of empirical research in political theory. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 0(0), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2021.1894020>
- Aldridge, J. (2017). Advancing participatory research. *Relational Social Work*, 1(2), 26–35. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1t8933q.11>
- Andersson, Å., Korp, P., & Reinertsen, A. B. (2020). Thinking with new materialism in qualitative case studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920976437>
- Asenbaum, H. (2012). Imagined alternatives: A history of ideas in Russia’s Perestroika. *Socialist History*, 42, 1–23. http://www.socialist-history-journal.org.uk/SH_42_contents.html

- Asenbaum, H. (2021a). *Democratic theorizing project*. Democratic-Theorizing. Available at: <https://democratic-theorizing.org/>
- Asenbaum, H. (2021b). Rethinking democratic innovations: A look through the kaleidoscope of democratic theory. *Political Studies Review*, 0(0), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14789299211052890>
- Asenbaum, H. (2021c). Rethinking digital democracy: From the disembodied discursive self to new materialist corporealities. *Communication Theory*, 31(3), 360–379. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtz033>
- Asenbaum, H. (2022). Beyond deliberative systems: Pluralizing the debate. *Democratic Theory*, 9(1), 87–98. <https://doi.org/10.3167/dt.2022.090106>
- Asenbaum, H., & Hanusch, F. (2021). (De)Futuring democracy: Labs, ateliers, and playgrounds as democratic innovation. *Futures*, 134, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2021.102836>
- Banerjee, Subhabrata Bobby (2021). Decolonizing deliberative democracy: Perspectives from below. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04971-5>
- Becker, B. (2012). *The grounded theory method and its uses for political science*. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin.
- Belfrage, C., & Hauf, F. (2017). The gentle art of retroduction: Critical realism, cultural political economy and critical grounded theory. *Organization Studies*, 38(2), 251–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840616663239>
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things* (1st ed.). Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Bergold, J., & Thomas, S. (2012). Participatory research methods: A methodological approach in motion. *Historical Social Research*, 37(4), 191–222. <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-13.1.1801>
- Bhambra, G. (2007). *Rethinking modernity: Postcolonialism and the sociological imagination*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bohman, J. (1999). Theories, practices, and pluralism: A pragmatist interpretation of critical social science. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 29(4), 459–480. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004839319902900401>
- Brettschneider, M. (2007). *Democratic theorizing from the margins*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bryant, L. (2011). *The democracy of objects* (1st ed.). Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press.
- Bussu, S., Lalani, M., Pattison, S., & Marshall, M. (2020). Engaging with care: Ethical issues in participatory research. *Qualitative Research*, 21(5), 667–685. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120904883>
- Campbell Rawlings, K., & Catlaw, T. (2011). Democracy as a way of life: Rethinking the place and practices of democratic participation. In C. Simrell King(Ed.), *Government is Us 2.0* (pp. 31–58). LondonNew York: Routledge.
- Carlson, D. L., Wells, T. C., Mark, L., & Sandoval, J. (2021). Introduction: Working the tensions of the post-qualitative movement in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 27(2), 151–157. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800420922271>
- Chambers, S. (2022) (In press). Methods of theorizing. In S. Ercan, et al., (Ed.) *Research methods in deliberative democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (1990). Discovering” chronic illness: Using grounded theory. *Social Science and Medicine*, 30(11), 1161–1172. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(90\)90256-R](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(90)90256-R)
- Choudry, A. (2015). *Learning activism: The intellectual life of contemporary social movements*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Connolly, W. E. (2013). The “new materialism” and the fragility of things. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 41(3), 399–412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829813486849>
- Cornwall, A., & Jewkes, R. (1995). What is participatory research? *Social Science and Medicine*, 41(12), 1667–1676. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(95\)00127-S](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(95)00127-S)
- Curato, N. (2012). Respondents as interlocutors: Translating deliberative democratic principles to qualitative interviewing ethics. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(7), 571–582. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800412450154>
- Curato, N. (2019). *Democracy in a time of misery: From spectacular tragedies to deliberative action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dean, R., Gagnon, J. P., & Asenbaum, H. (2019). What is democratic theory? *Democratic Theory*, 6(2), v–xx. <https://doi.org/10.3167/dt.2019.060201>
- DeLanda, M. (2016). *Assemblage theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Della Porta, D. (2020). *How social movements can save democracy: Democratic innovations from below*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Denzin, N. (2007). Grounded theory and the politics of interpretation. In A. Bryant, & K. Charmaz (Eds), *The sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 472–492). London: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607941.n21>
- Dryzek, J. S., & Berejikian, J. (1993). Reconstructive democratic theory. *American Political Science Association*, 87(1), 48–60. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2938955>
- Dzur, A. (2019). *Democracy inside: Participatory innovation in unlikely places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellingson, L. L., & Sotirin, P. (2020). Data engagement: A critical materialist framework for making data in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26(7), 817–826. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419846639>
- Elstub, S., & Escobar, O. (2019). Defining and typologising democratic innovations. In S. Elstub, & O. Escobar(Eds.), *The handbook of democratic innovation and governance* (pp. 11–31). Cheltenham Glos: Edward Elgar
- Ercan, S., Asenbaum, H., Curato, N., & Mendonça, R. (2022) (In press). ‘Researching deliberative democracy: Methods and approaches. In S. Ercan, et al., (Ed.) *Research methods in deliberative democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Felicetti, A. (2021). Learning from democratic practices: New perspectives in institutional design. *Journal of Politics*, 83(4), 1589–1601. <https://doi.org/10.1086/711623>
- Fleuß, D. (2021). *Radical proceduralism: Democracy from philosophical principles to political institutions*. Bingley: Emerald.
- Fox, N. J., & Alldred, P. (2015). New materialist social inquiry: Designs, methods and the research-assemblage. *international*

- Journal of social research methodology*. Routledge, 18(4), 399–414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2014.921458>
- Fuji Johnson, G. (2022) (In press). Grounded normative theory. In *Research methods in deliberative democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Geissel, B. (2013). Introduction: On the evaluation of participatory innovations. In B. Geissel, & M. Jaos(Eds.), *Participatory democratic innovations in Europe: Improving the quality of democracy* (pp. 9–32). Opladen: Barbara Budrich.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Gobby, J. (2019). *More powerful together: Collaborative theorizing with social movements about decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada*. Montreal: McGill University.
- Goldkuhl, G., & Cronholm, S. (2010). Adding theoretical grounding to grounded theory: Toward multi-grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 9(2), 187–205. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691000900205>
- Hall, J., Gaved, M., & Sargent, J. (2021). Participatory research approaches in times of covid-19: A narrative literature review. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20(0), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211010087>
- Hammond, Marit (2018). Deliberative democracy as a critical theory. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 22(7), 787–808. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2018.1438333>
- Hendriks, C., Ercan, S., & Boswell, J. (2020). *Mending democracy: Democratic repair in disconnected times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hickey-Moody, A. C. (2020). New materialism, ethnography, and socially engaged practice: Space-time folds and the agency of matter. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26(7), 724–732. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800418810728>
- Javier, R., & Dryzek, J. (2020). *Grounding ecological democracy: Semiotics and the communicative networks of nature*. Environmental Values.
- Landmore, H., & Ferreras, I. (2016). In defense of workplace democracy: Towards a justification of the firm–state analogy. *Political Theory*, 44(1), 53–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591715600035>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & González y González, E. M. (2008). The search for emerging decolonizing methodologies in qualitative research: Further strategies for liberatory and democratic inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 14(5), 784–805. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800408318304>
- Lo, C. S. O. (2014). Enhancing groundedness in realist grounded theory research. *Qualitative Psychology*, 1(1), 61–76. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000001>
- Lupton, D. (2018). How do data come to matter? Living and becoming with personal data. *Big Data and Society*, 5(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951718786314>
- Mao, L., Mian Akram, A., Chovanec, D., & Underwood, M. L. (2016). Embracing the spiral: Researcher reflexivity in diverse critical methodologies. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 15(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406916681005>
- McLeod, K. (2014). Orientating to assembling: Qualitative inquiry for more-than-human worlds. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 13(1), 377–394. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691401300120>
- Meijer, E. (2019). *When animals speak: Toward an interspecies democracy*. New York: New York University Press.
- Mendonça, R. F., Ercan, S. A., & Asenbaum, H. (2020). More than words: A multidimensional approach to deliberative democracy. *Political Studies*, 70(1), 153–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321720950561>
- Miedema, F. (2021). *Open science: The very idea*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Mignolo, W. (2021). *The politics of decolonial investigations*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Nishiyama, K. (2018). Using the community of inquiry for interviewing children: Theory and practice'. *International Journal of social research methodology*. Routledge, 21(5), 553–564. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2018.1448220>
- Nishiyama, K. (2022) (In press). Community of inquiry. In *Research methods in deliberative democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- O'Neil Green, D., Creswell, J. W., Shope, R. J., & Clark, V. L. P. (2007). Grounded theory and racial/ethnic diversity. In A. Bryant, & K. Charmaz(Eds.), *Sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 472–492). London: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607941.n22>
- Pateman, C. (1970). *Participation and democratic theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Redman-MacLaren, M., & Mills, J. (2015). Transformational grounded theory: Theory, voice, and action. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(3), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691501400301>
- Reichertz, J. (2007). Abduction: The logic of discovery of grounded theory. In A. Bryant, & K. Charmaz(Eds.), *The sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 214–228). London: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607941.n10>
- Rodríguez, C. (2018). Decolonizing academia: Poverty, Oppression and pain. *Black point*. Fernwood Publishing
- Rogers Stanton, C. (2014). Crossing methodological borders: Decolonizing community-based participatory research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(5), 573–583. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800413505541>
- Rosiek, J. L., Snyder, J., & Pratt, S. L. (2020). The new materialisms and indigenous theories of non-human agency: Making the case for respectful anti-colonial engagement. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26(3–4), 331–346. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419830135>
- Sarna-Wojcicki, D., Perret, M., Eitzel, M. V., & Fortmann, L. (2017). Where are the missing coauthors? *Authorship Practices in Participatory Research' Rural Sociology*, 82(4), 713–746. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ruso.12156>
- Schmidt, R. (2019). Materiality, meaning, social practice: Remarks on new materialism. In U. Tikvah Kissmann, & J. van Loon(Eds.), *Discussing new materialism: Methodological*

- implications for the study of materialities (pp. 135–149). Wiesbaden: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-22300-7_7
- Singh, Jakeet (2019). Decolonizing radical democracy. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 18(3), 331–356. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-018-0277-5>
- Smith, G. (2009). *Democratic innovations: Designing institutions for citizen participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- St. Pierre, E. A. (2021). Why post qualitative inquiry? *Qualitative Inquiry*, 27(2), 163–166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800420931142>
- Thornberg, R. (2012). Informed grounded theory. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 56(3), 243–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2011.581686>
- Timonen, V., Foley, G., & Conlon, C. (2018). Challenges when using grounded theory: A pragmatic introduction to doing gt research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918758086>
- Tuhiwai Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London/New York/Dunadin: Zed Books/University of Otago Press.
- Verstegen, I. (2015). New materialism and visual studies: A critical realist critique. In R. Rothman, & I. Verstegen(Eds.), *The art of the real: Visual studies and new materialisms* (pp. 172–188). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Available at: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/971247273>
- Wahyuni, D. (2012). The research design maze: Understanding paradigms, cases, methods and methodologies. *Journal of Applied Management Accounting Research*, 10(1), 69–80. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2103082
- Warren, M. E. (2017). A problem-based approach to democratic theory. *American Political Science Review*, 111(1), 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055416000605>