Master's Thesis

Ideal or not ideal? That is the question.

Meta-theory in democratic thought

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Abstract

This thesis aims to show that the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory used in justice theory can not only be applied to democratic theory – it is beneficial as well. Through an extensive framework, the theory is applied to the debate, to show that it fits, and later the debate is applied to the theory, to show the benefits it gives in terms of pointing out flaws in theory as well as pointing out room for improvement. The results from the thesis show that democratic theories can be criticized and improved with the help of the ideal and non-ideal theory debate but it also argues that it will help with the development of future theories.

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Chapter 1

It has been debated if everyone has equal access to democracy and though democratic theorists have tried to answer that question, the debate is still going strong. This thesis argues that some of the answer might lie in another field; Justice theory!

There have been many disagreements of what theories to produce, what a helpful theory is and how theories ought to be produced in the future. Those disagreements have been discussed by many philosophers in the debate about ideal and non-ideal theory. Should theories be produced with ideals in mind – or should they capture more of the real world?

The debate of ideal and non-ideal theory started in justice theory, where John Rawls introduced the two concepts in his book A Theory of Justice from 1971, a famous and influential piece in political theory. Though growing since the introduction of the concept, the debate stays in the field of justice theory and has not really transgressed into other fields of political theory.

The absence of the debate in the other fields in political theory serves as the basis for this thesis; why are philosophers not discussing it in the field of democratic theory, and what implications does that have for the field? Though the first question will not be answered in this thesis, it is the question that sparked my curiosity and motivated me to dive into the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory and its absence in democratic theory.

This thesis will dive deeper into the ideal and non-ideal debate through the lens of democratic theory, and more precisely through the lens of representation theory in democracy. Representation theory has been chosen, as it exists in the intersection between justice theory and democratic theory, often using justifications from justice theory to justify different systems and institutions. A case in the intersection between those two will be useful, when it comes to transferring it from one field to another.

Some would argue that representation theory in many cases depends on theory produced in another field. Because of that dependency, the debate of theories is also very relevant in the field of democratic theories. If a whole field of philosophy is being revised – should that not also count for fields using that philosophy?

The purpose of this study will be to see what the debate of ideals and non-ideals can add to the further development of democratic theories and to the field of democratic theory in general. This will hopefully lead to an extension of the ideal and non-ideal debate, as it will transgress into another field, and at the same time add to the theory developing in the field of democratic theory, making it more fit for future critique. As the study will be conducting original research, applying a debate to a new untested field, it will also be a test of the possibility of even doing such a thing– and later an evaluation if doing that is useful for democratic theory.

1.1 Research question

The thesis will look at the application of the debate of ideal and non-ideal theories to theories of democracy. This will be done through one research question with two sub-questions to help answer the main question.

The main research question for the thesis is *"What can the addition of the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory add to the understandings and development of democratic theories?"* concerning the sub-questions are: *"Is it possible to add democratic theories to the framework of the ideal and non-ideal debate on theories?"* and *"How can theories of representation be understood through the lens of ideal and non-ideal theories?"*

The main research question will be answered in chapter five, while the first sub-question will be answered in chapter three, and the second in chapter four.

1.2 Methodology

The thesis will be meta-methodological, as it will discuss the methods used for creating theories, and not the theories themselves. This means that the thesis will not take a stand in the ideal and non-ideal debate, but rather see what the debate can add to another field of political theory, namely democratic representation theory.

A meta-methodological study can be done in different ways, this thesis will do as follows: First it will clarify the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory, developing a common understanding of how it can be understood and how it affects justice theory. Then it will show that the debate can be applied to democratic theories by applying three different theories to the framework. Lastly it will apply a

chosen case to those theories, showing that the debate will provide improvements to those theories and the production of them.

The three theories chosen for this thesis are by philosophers Hanna Pitkin, Jane Mansbridge and Iris Marion Young. They have been chosen, because they all lie in the intersection between justice theory and democratic theory, making the application of the debate more manageable. At the same time their works have had a great impact on representation theory and are all well-known names in their field. Lastly, they all represent different levels of idealism, and therefore cover most of the spectrum, which helps to show that the debate can be applied widely, and not only on some theories.

As this thesis focuses on theory production, it would not be right to not point out the elephant in the room; from a non-ideal standpoint, the three women are very alike. They are all roughly the same age and have the same nationality and the same ethnicity. This can affect the external validity, as the theories stem from the same type of person. On the other hand, all three of them have produced notable works in the field of representation theory and leaving them out of this thesis because of their ethnicity or gender would leave a gap in the literature used.
Though justified in the section above, it is something to note if one wishes to further these studies.

Unlike traditional case studies focusing on discovering empirical data, there will only be some empirical data from the application of the case to the theories, as this thesis is normative and meta-methodological. The case will be a tool to understand how the theories work. But a case study can still offer valuable insights in judging theories, as using a concrete example can help with understanding abstract principles and theories. When using a real-world example, one can test how the theory works, and where there might be room for improvement. Keeping that in mind, not all normative theories are to be applied directly on real life cases, as shown later in this thesis.

But when not provided with empirical data, it is up to me to apply arrangements, and eventually evaluate how they fit in the debate. Taking a traditional normative approach, I search to constantly reassess my judgements and try to make that fit with the theory. This means working closely with my theoretical framework when judging theories, while still doing individual evaluations of the theory according to my own intuitions (List & Valentini, 2016).

When reading theory, I am not only interpreting what the philosopher implies, but also what their ideas mean, taking the step up from a conceptual reading to a more philosophical reading of the text (Blau, 2017). When something is written vaguely, I will be judging based on the idea and not the formulation of that idea. To avoid applying myself into those interpretations of the ideas, I will triangulate between a contextual, philosophical and motivational readings of the text (Blau, 2017), to see if the results from those three support each other.

Lastly, the thesis will take inspiration from Habermas method of rational reconstruction (Gauss, 2019) in order to judge the normative theories. Here I will first analyze them through adding them to the framework of the debate, to see how they fit in – then I will add the debate to the theories to find out any flaws in the theories.

1.3 Thesis outline

This thesis will be structured a bit differently, having two literature reviews at the start of chapter two and three, as two are needed to introduce the reader to not only the debate – but also to the connections between the debate and democratic theory, or rather the apparent lack of connections.

The thesis starts with an explanation of the debate in chapter two, having emphasis on its impact on justice theory and how it can be understood through different divisions of the debate and through different ideal- and non-ideal philosophers, evaluating what the main conflicts in the debate are. Chapter three will provide a short literature review of the debate in democratic theory. Through the literature review, the absence of the debate will be clear, helping justify the application of the debate to democratic theory. Later that justification will be shown when applying the terms from the debate to three different theories from the intersection between democratic and justice theory, showing that the debate is applicable and relevant for democratic representation theories.

In Chapter four, there will be a case study, where a chosen case will be applied to the three theories from the chapter above, to point out missing points that knowledge of the debate will be able to fill, either helping to strengthen the theories or eventually change them to accommodate those flaws. Chapter five will discuss the results from the case-study and ultimately discuss what adding the debate will give to democratic theory.

The thesis concludes that the addition of the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory will benefit democratic theory greatly. Not only is the application possible, as both justice theory and democratic theory have much in common, the application is also very useful in analyzing and understanding standing theories. Shown through a real life case, the results from the testing of the theories show that the debate not only shows the strategies behind the theories, but also helps find fallacies and improve the theories, so they can withstand both harder critiques and be used in the a better way.

Chapter 2: Ideal and non-ideal theory

A theory can be many things – and how it is made can have great implications on the application of the theory. In the last 20 years a new methodological debate has emerged in the field of justice theory, questioning the application of theories produced in the field, and how theories should be analyzed and used. That is the debate on ideal and non-ideal theory, and becoming more precise and intricate every year, it is widely disagreed upon and quite vague in its common definitions, which leads to a lot of debate.

In this first part of my thesis, I will outline the debate on ideal and non-ideal theory, and explain why that debate is important. By reviewing the literature on ideal and non-ideal theory, this chapter will explain how the debate is to be understood, looking at it from different angles and eventually commenting on how it can be used.
I will use the theoretical framework to later look at its current usage in democratic theory, and more specific; representation theory, and try to map out the literature gap in that field, that I eventually will (try to) fill.

This thesis will not be adding to the debate of justice, nor will I be discussing theories of justice. But given that the debate started in the field of justice theory, it will be relevant to go through certain theories and views on justice, as they often overlap into democratic theory. The theory behind the debate will be analyzed and through that, will explain how it can be divided into different understandings and how those understandings can be understood in a methodological setting, carving out some common understandings that can later be applied to democratic theory.

2.1 Definitions and introduction to the debate

Before diving into the debate, I need to define ideal and non-ideal theory, and (perhaps more importantly) what they are not (in this thesis). There are no agreed upon definitions, but there are some common understanding several philosophers agree upon, that I will sum up in the following section.

The most common understanding of ideal theory derives from John Rawls, who used the definition in his work "A Theory of Justice" from 1971, where he defines it as a theory that "assumes strict compliance and works out the principles that characterize a well- ordered society under favorable circumstances" (Rawls, 1971, p. 245).

Though commonly said, ideal theory does not equal full compliance, as one can have full compliance in a theory of justice without it leading to a more just society.

So when defining ideal theory, Ingrid Robeyns argues that "it should therefore be stressed that it is not about full compliance with any kind of principles of justice, but full compliance with those principles of justice that are morally required in order for society to be completely just" (Robeyns, 2008, p. 344). Ideal theory can focus on one domain or more, but it can help us determine whether we have reached the goal and justice is achieved either fully or partially (Robeyns, 2008, p. 345), and as the word tells us, it is ideal – something we wish to achieve.

By assuming an ideal society, where for example everyone is treated equally, or has the same opportunities, the idea is that one can find the essence of justice, or what we should strive for, when making decisions in the name of justice.

As the definition of ideal theory derived from Rawls still contains some thoughts on a realistic society (at least some people would argue), or as he describes it, as a realistic utopia (Rawls, 1999, s. 7), I find it important to exclude idealized theory from the definition when it comes to the debate of ideal- and non-ideal theory in this thesis.

This is because idealized theory discusses unrealistic scenarios or future scenarios, we have no reason (or even hope) to believe will come to be. Idealized theories can also start in a world too far away from ours, completely removing itself from anything to do with the world as it is.

That, I believe, does not match with what I eventually want to use the theory for, namely to apply it to the field of democracy. The object of ideal theory, as argued by Simmons, is to "make only realistic assumptions in our ideal theory, in order to avoid idle utopianism" (Simmons, 2010, p. 8). The exclusion also includes bad idealizations, where certain important aspects that need to be theorized are ignored (Robeyns, 2008, p. 358), for example if we assume that people considered all possible options before making even the smallest decision, something that is simply not realistic in this world.

Valentini divides ideal theory and idealized theory into the categories fact-sensitive and fact-insensitive theories (Valentini, 2009, p. 3), where the ideal used in my theoretical framework falls under the first category.

Excluding the idealized theory does not mean that ideal-theory is assumed less ideal. Idealized theory develops theories of justice on another level where a pure free form is assumed, while ideal theory includes some forms of facts from the current world or political situation (Valentini, 2009, p. 4).

Rawls shortly defined non-ideal theory as a theory asking "(…) how this long-term goal might be achieved, or worked toward, usually in gradual steps. It looks for courses of action that are morally permissible and politically possible as well as likely to be effective" (Rawls, 1999, p. 89). Rawls defines ideal theory as fundamental and non-ideal theory as secondary (Simmons, 2010, p. 10), clearly assuming the order when using ideal and non-ideal theory.

But instead of using that definition, I am using a short definition by Stemplowska and elaborating with the help of other philosophers, as Rawls has received a lot of criticism by non-idealists of being insufficient in explaining the definition and by prioritizing one theory over the other. To really compare the two, I need definitions that both sides are happy with, before diving into the actual debate of the two.

Stemplowska defines non-ideal theory as: "Non-ideal theory (…) assumes that the answers it gives must take account of non-ideal circumstances including, for example, the fact that only some people are likely to comply with what is in fact required of them" (Stemplowska, 2017).

This changes the purpose of the theory as it enables "(…) us to make comparisons between different social states and evaluate which one is more just than the other (…)and second, to guide our actions in order to move closer towards the ideals of society" (Robeyns, 2008, p. 347).

By not just focusing on an ideal, just society, it allows us to figure out what we need to do in order to move closer to that society (Robeyns, 2008, p. 347), but it stands more alone than how Rawls describes it in his book. Other philosophers, like Mills, claim that non-ideal theory helps with including marginalized groups, and therefore contributes to a more just society (Mills, 2005, p. 174), which is also a big motivation for many non-ideal philosophers.

Summarizing the definition explained above, ideal and non-ideal theory are produced on two different levels, and though they are both arguing for a just society, they might not agree on the way to one, or the level of detail that should be included in the theory. Both have advantages and limitations which I will look into in the next part of the text.

One of the most cited articles about the ideal and non-ideal theory is by Laura Valentini in 2012, where she walks through the different questions in the debate and places them in a conceptual map. As that map is one of the most used in explaining the theories, I will also include it in my theoretical framework. Though there are more ways to distinguish ideal and non-ideal theory, this thesis will use Valentinis map, and then supplying with points and critiques from other philosophers to encompass the debate more thoroughly and to see where it has progressed since the publication of Valentinis' article, and how the different sides are defended.

Valentini divides the debate into three interpretations; (i) full compliance vs. partial compliance theory; (ii) utopian vs. realistic theory and (iii) end-state vs. transitional theory (Valentini, 2012, p. 654). And although they all overlap in some way, it can be useful to separate them for the sake of understanding the debate and how each interpretation relates to the theory.

2.2 Full compliance vs. partial compliance theory

The classic division, mentioned in Rawls definition as well, is the divide between full compliance and partial compliance theory. Ideal theory assumes full compliance, which means that we assume that people will do what the theory demands of them, while partial compliance means that we assume that not everyone, or even a bigger minority, will follow the theory (depending on the strength of the theory). The argument (in short) is that when we assume full compliance, we will be able to identify both justice and injustice, while non-ideal theory assumes partial compliance, in order to respond to injustice (Valentini, 2012, p. 655). There are of course differences in assuming (partial) compliance with a concept or with an institution, which will have to be considered when analyzing a theory.

The debate between idealists and non-idealists is on the level of compliance, and how much one can assume when developing theories. Though I will not be diving into the justice debate, I will try to outline the main points from each side of the debate.

While ideal theories have been dominant in many of the big (or more famous) theories produced, for example from Rawls or Dworkin, the critique against ideal theory has grown in the last 30 years or so.

When arguing for ideal theory and in the defense of full compliance, it is argued that only through strict compliance, we will be able to figure out what a just world is (Jubb, 2012, p. 231). When assuming full compliance, one does not have to count in variables of individuals, and therefore the focus will be on the essence of the question; defining the thing itself.
Ideal theory, as Robeyns argues, does not equal full compliance, as "full compliance may also hold for principles of justice that do not lead to a just society" (Robeyns, 2008, p. 344). So, it is not all principles, but only those that are morally required for a just society.

There has of course been critique of the method, with the main point being that it is simply not realistic, and that the ideal world will never be reached. Keeping with my exclusion of idealistic theory, the assumption of full compliance can be defended as follows: Even though we might judge a situation as unlikely, it does not mean that it cannot happen (Erman & Möller, 2013, p. 39). "If we have a principle that is valid given a set of assumptions that are not likely but possible, why must we prefer another principle that is less demanding but assumes something more likely?" (Erman & Möller, 2013, p. 40). One could still argue that there might be a middle ground between the two points presented by Erman and Möller, where one balances the decision, but working theoretically this can defend a decision to assume full compliance.

As I have excluded idealized theory from my thesis, it seems only fair to assume that full compliance in the ideal theory discussed here, will be full in the sense that most people would comply in normal situations. This also excludes the hardest critique against the notion of full compliance.

Rawls does the same, with only assuming full compliance when we have good reason to believe people would have good reason to comply (Moen, 2022, p. 6). This has to do with his model of fairness, and how we can decide what institutions can demand from individuals, what a fair share of contribution is to maintain a just society (Moen, 2022, p. 8). "Assuming full compliance is necessary for imagining society as a "cooperative venture for mutual advantage" (Moen, 2022, p.

8), as people will be treated most fairly, and thus get a more just society, by complying with the theory. That is not the same, Moen argues, with non-ideal theory, where only partial compliance is assumed, as some individuals will have to contribute more to reach the same level of public goods as under ideal theory. That in itself is unfair, as we cannot expect people to comply when that might not be in every citizen's best interest (Moen, 2022) – and one might expect some free rider problems, drastically removing the motivation from the people that have to comply.

So when developing a theory of justice, Rawls saw it necessary to start at an ideal level, to figure out what a just society consists in – and what we should demand of institutions and people.

When discussing non-ideal theory and partial compliance, the main argument is that full compliance is not possible to realize in the real world, a world that is way more diverse than philosophers give it credit for. Assuming strict compliance therefore comes off as ignorant, and as a product of the same group of people making the theory (Mills, 2005, p. 180), a group that cannot manifest the ideals we need. If we move towards the non-ideal version of a concept or a theory, one big takeaway is that we need to rethink our ideals.

Though Rawls did not believe his theory of justice could be applied to the current world, it is still a point beyond his own theories. It questions what is reasonable to assume – and what we automatically assume based on our background.

Mills questions the intuition of doing ethics this way by saying that we are doing normative theory wrong by looking at factors like full compliance or ideal states (Mills, 2005, p. 169) – that it does not intuitively make sense to start from that approach. And he points out the overrepresentation of a small, but powerful, minority doing philosophy.

Philosophers like Farrelly claims that Rawls and Dworkin are actually considerably more ideal than what they say themselves, and argues that assuming full compliance is dangerous as it simplifies the assumptions, we have about society in theories one eventually would like to apply or inspire with (Farrelly, 2007, p. 850). When assuming full compliance, Farrelly argues, that one also presumes that rights are costless. But in the real world not all people are in a position, where it is even possible to comply with the principles made, he says, pointing out that people come from very different positions.

Then comes the question of which variables are left behind when theorizing. When making a theory, it is normal to leave out some variables that may not have a big influence when re-introduced. The problem is the variables that might change the whole theory once reintroduced (Schmidtz, 2011, p. 777), for example assuming everyone votes with the same goal in mind, when in reality, there are many reasons why people vote (or choose not to). By leaving out crucial variables, we might weaken the theory, as it becomes way less applicable to the society we live in now. Then again, it might also be a problem with too many variables. Partial compliance then seems like a good solution for non-idealists.

In his review of Amyara Sens book "Idea of Justice", Schmidtz point out that "To Sen, by contrast, the trouble with ideas about what is fair in worlds without compliance problems is that (in my words) they are ideas about an ideal problem, not a real one" (Schmidtz, 2011, p. 778). This again comes back to the application of the theory. When choosing a theory, we are at the same time choosing a compliance problem. And we have to evaluate if the theory can handle the application of that too (Schmidtz, 2011)

One danger to non-compliant theories is that they can appear defeatist (Stemplowska, 2017, p. 288). This does not necessarily make the theory bad or useless, but the focus and the purpose change a bit, when assuming partial-compliance: "All non-ideal theories that consider the problems described above are defeatist in a clear sense: they do not aim to come up with requirements that would be optimal (even if demanding) if everyone followed them" (Stemplowska, 2017, p. 289). But if used in a strategic way, those considerations can become useful when making a theory. This can provide help with finding a "second best" alternative,[1] when the ideal is too far away, or when we do not expect full compliance.

But are full compliance and partial compliance competitors? Yes and no I would argue. Through the overview given above, they seem very different. And they are – but they also work together. When making a theory, a philosopher must weigh the consequences of her choices and the purpose of the theory – and I would argue that considering both would strengthen the theory against some critique. By using each side to review one's view, there might be things to either change, or consider before any criticism.

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[1] Not to be confused with the theory of second best by RE. Goodin

"Rawls thus suggests that while ideal theory informs how we ought to do non-ideal theory, discoveries in non-ideal theory also informs how we ought to do ideal theory" (Moen, 2022, p. 7). This makes the transition between the two sides a bit smoother, though there still seems to be conflict in the two extreme ends of the spectrum.

The overview above does not give a clear answer to where the boundary between ideal and non-ideal theory is, making it vague in its definition of the two. Though there is no clear boundary, and though it is still very much discussed, one boundary could be between a hopeful vs. a hopeless theory as described in Estlunds book "Democratic Authority", where a theory is hopeless when we have no reason to believe people would comply with the principles, and hopeful if we do not find any reason for them to not comply with the principles (Estlund, 2008, p. 263-70). "This distinction tracks whether the recommendations of a theory are adjusted for the purpose of increasing the likelihood of compliance" (Hamlin & Stemplowska, 2012, p. 49). This helps to understand why theories are sometimes rejected on the basis of compliance, instead of them just being ideal. But then again, that is subjective, and one philosopher might put the boundary elsewhere than another.

The distinction between full compliance and partial compliance is important when understanding how much the philosopher is expecting from the average person, to make the theory work. This comes down to the purpose of the theory, and what the philosopher is trying to do with her theory. One can choose the level of compliance expected and adjust the theory to the world – or focus on a specific problem in the world by isolating a variable. This is important for democratic theories that deal with real life institutions and the inclusion of the average person in those. If one assumes full compliance, one can look for an essence, while on the other hand, if one is assuming partial compliance, one can improve or criticize institutions that do not live up to an (unrealistic) ideal.

2.3 Utopian vs. realistic theory

Not mentioned in the original distinction by Rawls, the debate can also be divided into a debate between utopian and realistic theory. This concerns feasibility constraints; if we accept them or not when designing normative principles (Valentini, 2012, p. 657). Feasibility constraints are limitations that can stop people from doing what they want or what they ought to do. This can for

example be that one needs to drive several hours to vote, that one does not have the money for a bus ticket to go to school or if one happens to see the last chocolate ice-cream being sold to the person before them in the line. Feasibility constraints can have different degrees, as one can miss out on voting, or if one has to pick another ice-cream that might not be as tasty.

As I mentioned earlier, I have chosen to exclude fully idealistic theories, which naturally also excludes some of the utopian theories, such as theories designed for all possible worlds, when one tries to understand the concept universally (Valentini, 2012, p. 658)

This does not make the distinction any less important, as the theories I am working with can also be placed on the utopian/realistic spectrum, as some of the more ideal theories still contain utopian aspects – a realistic utopia, as mentioned earlier; ideal theories designed for worlds similar to ours. Though I am expecting some acceptance of feasibility constraints from both ideal- and non-ideal theory, they still vary in how many they accept, with ideal theory accepting less than non-ideal theory.

With that said, some people might start placing ideal theorists in the non-ideal camp, as they do make theories to worlds closer to ours. But this would be a mistake, as the aim of the ideal theory produced is not to directly apply it to our current situation, but rather to set an ideal or define something for the future. Ideal theorists are well aware that their theory cannot be applied directly, and they usually take the argument that the theory should inspire or guide when designing institutions or laws.

Erman and Möller argue that much idealistic theory is actually applied in real life politics, even though the ideal might not be realistically obtained in the near future (Erman & Möller, 2013, p. 33). By having a goal to follow, the motivation might increase for actually pursuing change.

We, for example, have a goal of emitting no greenhouse gasses in the future. That is definitely not realistic now – but by having a goal we are making people aware of the problem, and we are normatively deciding how an ideal world would look like.

Another argument for ideal theory is that by not looking at the current state of the world, definitions of things that are not real, can be made – to benefit and inspire a world that should be. This means that ideal theory has the advantage, that it can imagine ideal worlds without basing it in something that already exists. Ideal theory is often criticized for not including the real world in its principles, but through the explanation that something might still be just or true, even though it does not exist

in the real world it "calls into question the idea that a theory dependent on this contingent condition at all" (Erman & Möller, 2013, p. 42). An ideal can still say that this is how a fair world should be, without having to prove the definition's existence in the real world.

Ideal theory can also be evaluative, and therefore not be concerned with the action guiding aspects and critique mentioned above (Valentini, 2020). This means that they can help evaluate if something is good or bad. By having an idea of what "good" (or "bad") is we can evaluate situations. This also helps us identify if things are unfair or unjust. can of course also be applied to the two other branches.

Though ideal theory leaves out a lot of feasibility constraints, limitations we see in the real world, when developing theory, it does not mean that they cannot be added later. As with non-ideal theory, there is still a step from theory to praxis, and ideal theory will also have to be fitted for a specific situation. By leaving out many of the factors, it allows the theory to point out its own flaws, and therefore show where extra focus needs to be put (Valentini, 2009).

For those arguing that ideal theory comes before non-ideal theory, the establishment of what things ought to be, will be important before counting in feasibility constraints. Non-ideal theory will therefore be considered a step two, after the normative principles are developed. This means including the principles in working out how the theory should be applied to the real world, and to see how one can come around the constraints when applying the theory. How will one know where to aim, if there are no ideals?

When looking at much of the non-ideal critique against ideal theory on this part of the debate, it is mostly about things forgotten or left out by ideal theorists when making justice theories. The points may be valid, but it is not the approach I wish to analyze in this thesis.

Though most non-ideal philosophers do not have a problem with ideals themselves, the problem seems with the level of priority ideals are given (Farrelly, 2007, p. 850). By spending a lot of time "armchair theorizing" valuable time and resources are wasted on solving problems for a society we don't have. Farrelly points out the dangers of assuming that you know what to do in "the best possible scenarios" – as those judgments rely on assumptions as well (Farrelly, 2007, p. 856).

He puts forward the example of deliberative democracy, to show that instead of just trusting philosophers to have the best solutions and know what to do, the act of debate will improve or change theories for the better, as they will include thoughts on feasibility constraints from different people or institutions (Farrelly, 2007, p. 860)

Mills points out how much is assumed when doing ideal theory and asks the question: "Wouldn't your spontaneous reaction be: How in God's name could anybody think that this is the appropriate way to do ethics?" (Mills, 2005, p. 169) and argues that by doing ideal theory, we are guaranteeing that the ideal will never be realized, because we are never exploring how different our ideals are from the real world.

Mills argues that by doing ideal theory, you are rather making an ideology than a theory. He questions if historically marginalized groups would ever do ideal theory, if that means ignoring problems they are currently dealing with; "Can it possibly serve the interests of women to ignore female subordination, represent the family as ideal, and pretend that women have been treated as equal persons?" (Mills, 2005, p. 172). By contrast, it means that the people from the dominating group have the smallest difference between ideals and the real world, and therefore have no reason to explore it. So when marginalized groups are included in the ideals under the terms "equality", they really are not, as the understanding of the term equality is made by someone having never felt systematic inequality (Mills, 2005, p. 180)

The distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory is different from the distinction set in the section above. Valentini suggests that the debate on utopian vs realistic theory is wrong, as the two sides are not discussing the same question (Valentini, 2012, p. 660). While the ideal side is trying to find principles that can be applied to a world similar to ours or trying to find an ideal, we can work towards in the future, non-ideal theories are looking to apply principles to the current world or situation. This does not make the debate any less important, as knowing the aim of a theory is important in its application – and how we should judge it.

This conclusion by Valentini can also be applied to democratic theory to again judge a theory and what the purpose of that theory is. Having different purposes and goals, there is a clear division between utopian theories and realistic theories. When being aware of those differences, that division

can be an important tool for placing the theories in the framework of other theories, to later ensure proper critique and development. The distinction between realistic and utopian theories proves useful to understand the purpose of a theory, but it also shows how much of the real world is included in a theory, thereby helping explain the intended area of usage. Feasibility constraints might show up differently in democratic theories, as they include institutions to a greater extent. This provides an opportunity to judge if the ideals are purely theoretical or institutional, and how those two work together.

2.4 End-state vs. transitional theory

The last interpretation of the debate is that between end-state and transitional theory. This interpretation, like the other two, has implications on how a theory is interpreted and can yield other results than the two others, as well as being similar to the two in many ways.
When discussing end state theory vs transitional theory, the main difference is what goals one sets when making theory. Ideal theory usually has an end goal, and ideal state, that one should strive for when making decisions. Non-ideal theory usually does not operate with an end goal, but a lot of "smaller" goals to make our current world better one step at a time.

A common misunderstanding is that non-ideal theory does not consider an ideal end state. Some non-idealists do, and some do not. But they do not prioritize it (in the same way) when making decisions, as they are looking at current reliefs, or looking at the situation in a step-by-step way. "Justice is less a property than an absence of properties that make for injustice" Schmidtz argues when defending a more non-ideal approach to reaching justice (Schmidtz, 2011, p. 774). When one does theory, one does not need to know everything in order to say something. While a theory can be guiding, it does not yield all the answers – some you have to interpret to the specific situation, Schmidtz argues in his review of Sen (Schmidtz, 2011, s. 780). At the same time "admitting that various things matter without always pointing in the same direction is not a mistake" (Schmidtz, 2011, p. 783), and that making a decision usually does not come from one single rationale, but several considerations. Theory can be used to help when those considerations are clashing, but theory should not fully decide. While theory can help with solving or understanding many problems, there is no shame in not knowing everything – that can just mean that those are answers to be answered at another time (Schmidtz, 2011, p. 783). When deciding to

pursue a more just society, one does not need to know what justice is in order to determine what is good and bad.

On the other hand, ideal theory defines a clear end goal for what is to be reached. Compared to a mythical paradise island, Robeyns argues that an end goal has complete guiding potential (Robeyns, 2008, p. 345). Though having received quite a bit of critique for not showing the route to the endpoint, ideal theory shows to be versatile, as one route does not necessarily work for all – and sometimes one needs to not take the direct route in order to reach the peak safely. This makes the theory timeless, as it will accommodate different times and situations. But by having a goal, one knows where to aim and thereby knows what needs to be done (by analyzing the specific situation and comparing the current situation with the ideal). If not having an end goal, one risks ending up further away from the ideal situation (Schmidtz, 2011, p. 774), as one risks going in all sorts of directions before reaching the peak.

The decisions made on each level again differ from each other, but the consequences can be seen in what is done in society and how they affect the future. A decision might be very different from another, if one thinks of an end goal, compared to a decision to better the current situation. If one has a clear end goal, justice might be reached by restricting justice for a bit, in order to secure more justice in the future. But if one does not have an end goal or does not believe we know what the end goal is yet, a decision will be based on the kind of injustice we see today.

Schmidtz uses map-making as an example of making theories, where he describes it as a tool for a specific purpose (Schmidtz, 2011, p. 779). A map shows an area, but it does not show everything. It shows what the mapmaker wants you to see – and it can be more or less specific. It should, according to Schmidtz, illuminate its subject matter (Schmidtz, 2011, p. 778).
Maps are never entirely complete, as that would be impossible. By making a map, you are highlighting certain aspects while leaving others out. At the same time, the terrain you are mapping out is also changing all the time. It is what you intend with the map that should matter. Some people prefer a simple map, where they can easily spot their end goal, while others use the map to understand the terrain.

The division between end state theory and transitional theory can help the reader understand where a theory is aiming, and where the focus of the theory lies. One could work with the goal of complete gender equality in parliament, only implementing rules that follow that principle, or one could do stuff that intuitively seems unequal or unjust, like demanding quotas, as a means to get to a point where one can make gender equal rules. The big question is if the focus should be on the goal – or on the road getting there. Depending on the answer, one will understand if the theory is to solve contemporary problems or intends to be timeless.

As democratic theories often have to include institutions, the transitions can be different or the focus can be different, as they often have to include the opinions of normal people (e.g. through voting). This will impact how a theory is made, and how contemporary the solutions are to a democratic problem. At the same time, it can help with understanding cost and benefits, as limitations in democracy might be justified through an end-goal.

2.5 Overlap and different understandings

Following a detailed exploration of the categories, one will notice an overlap between all three. Though the categories are good at pointing out different ways ideal and non-ideal theory can be explained, it is also important to note that many of the points can be used in all three explanations of the debate, some, like understanding the purpose of a theory, can be used in all categories, while others apply to various degrees of the explanations. A whole thesis could be written about clarifying the categories, and finding out to what degree they overlap, but I find the framework sufficient to apply to the next part of the thesis.

One question to the framework that I wish to answer here is the difference between compliance and feasibility constraints, as one could ask if compliance is not just another type of feasibility constraint. In this thesis it is not, as compliance can be viewed as an ideal or an essence, while feasibility constraints are more non-ideal. This can be more easily understood if one thinks that there can be feasibility constraints to comply – but the compliance exists no matter if the feasibility constraints do or do not.

The framework predominately discusses justice theory and more theoretical ideas of justice. To lean into the next chapter, I find it important to discuss the inclusion of institutional designs as well, and

how they can also be ideal and non-ideal. When discussing ideals one can view them purely theoretical, such as the concept of equality or autonomy. But it is also possible to understand it as an ideal institution – such as electoral institutions and how they should ideally work.

I bring up this point, as it will serve relevant working with democratic theories, helping to understand if their ideals are theoretical or institutional – or maybe both?

2.6 Importance of the ideal vs. non-ideal debate

As described above, the debate on ideal and non-ideal theory is complex and can be understood from different perspectives. But sometimes the debate is more from different angles, than from the same standpoint, and that can create misunderstanding. Most ideal and non-ideal philosophers do not want to get rid of each other's theories but are simply arguing why theirs should be prioritized when making or developing institutions.

Even though some philosophers deny the usefulness of the other theories, it is certain that the debate is there – and that it is challenging both types of theories.

Having walked through the theoretical framework and summed up the current positions in the debate, one can ask oneself if the discussion really matters? I will in the following part be arguing for the importance of the debate and how it has contributed to the development of justice theories.

Ideal theory has been a "golden standard" for normative political theory and the use of it has not been justified, but rather assumed, when creating new theories.

By questioning the use of ideal theory, it helps us explain why we do it, and why some philosophers think that it is necessary. Sometimes it is justified to keep the theory simple and universal, removing it from a specific time or situation. By removing certain parameters, we make it easier for us to find an "essence" and thereby an "ideal state", making it easier to understand such a complex theory (Robeyns, 2008, p. 353-54).

Using ideal theory when dealing with ideals is also justified, as none of those "real life problems" would take place in an ideal state. Using ideal theory gives the philosopher an advantage, as they do not have to deal with current problems or situations specific to time or region (they can, but they choose how specific they want to be). But by making them justify the use of ideal theory, one can hope that it helps with biases and assumptions that they could avoid by questioning where they

come from, when approaching a theory in a specific way, thereby strengthening their own ideal theory.

The rise of non-ideal theory also gives advantages, as it provides an alternative approach to theory making or/ developing. When non-ideal theory is working with ideal theory, it can help make theories more approachable in the current world, adding some (or several) parameters that were left behind. This can help us apply ideal theories to specific situations and to tweak them in the direction we need it to.
But even when working "against" ideal theory, non-ideal theory provides some methodological advantages, as it is not working with a set goal, but working to improve smaller and more specific problems, like for example current discriminatory politics. This makes it easier to swiftly apply to current politics and to demand specific improvements. When working from the current world, instead of from the standpoint of an ideal, one can save quite a lot of time in addressing injustices.

When aware of non-ideal theoretic approaches to theory, one can understand the resistance to idea theory from some groups – usually the groups ignored in ideal theory (Mills, 2005). This gives the reader of philosophy an analytical tool to understand where a specific theory is coming from, and why their own intuition might not agree with the premises of the theory. This perspective can help marginalized groups obtain a voice in theory – maybe even ideal theory. And by awareness of biases in theory, universities, or other science-producing institutions, can create a more diverse work environment to help grasp all aspects of theory.

Though the debate has many advantages and points out biases in theory making, many points are still assumed. The justifications mentioned above can also be used to justify bad theories.
But it can help us understand what is assumed (and maybe weed out some bad theories?) – though we do not always have an answer on what is to be done with that knowledge.

Much of the debate shows what the other side is missing, and how that affects its usefulness. This makes the debate fruitful, both methodological, as well as for improving each theory. By challenging a theory, or by knowing that your theory will be judged from another perspective, you can guard yourself against that by arguing – or you can change your theory to encompass that critique.

The debate also has its vices, as it creates two boxes, one for ideal theory and one for non-ideal theory. Many theories have qualities of both sides, and by placing them in a box, can be judged unfairly or assumed useless because of a label.

The debate should therefore be a methodological tool and not something to judge theories on, depending on the box they are placed in, as different people might place them in different boxes. Instead of two boxes, one should see it as a spectrum where a theory can be ideal or non-ideal, or be placed in the middle, having components from both sides.

Some philosophers deny the existence of one of the sides, and therefore the debate in itself. This also provides a problem for the debate, though I will not consider that here.

2.7 Summary

As shown in the previous sections, the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory is broad and can be approached from different angles and with different goals in mind. To help sum up the most important parts from each category, this table emphasizes the key aspects that will be used in the next section of the thesis.

	Full compliance vs. partial compliance Theory	Utopian vs. realistic theory	End-state vs. transitional theory
Ideal aspects	• *Finding an essence* • *Full compliance = a majority of people will comply in a situation that is reasonable*	• *Acceptance of non to a few feasibility constraints* • *Defining the ideal future, inspire* • *To evaluate if something is good or bad*	• *Defining a clear goal* • *Focus on the goal, not the road to the goal* • *Timeless*

	• *Helps to identify justice and in-justice*	• *Seen as a first step*	
Non-ideal aspects	• *Basing on the real world* • *Choosing compliance-problems to work with* • *Second best?* • *Critique of the theorist themselves*	• *Including many feasibility constraints* • *Questioning assumptions* • *Exploring the distance between ideals and the real world*	• *Not as much focus on the goal, focus on the road* • *Contemporary* • *Smaller goals on the way*
Democratic thoughts	• *Discovering expectations to the theory* • *The position of the philosopher* • *Prioritization and cost and benefits*	• *Understanding the purpose of a theory* • *Evaluating a theory*	• *Defining a goal* • *How to solve a democratic problem* • *Cost and benefits*

The table will be updated throughout the thesis, adding new information and results from each chapter, and thereby providing an overview of the debate on ideal and non-ideal theory in this thesis.

Chapter 3: Ideal and non-ideal democratic theory

The debate of ideal vs non-ideal theory predominantly covers justice theory and has not reached democratic theory yet. In the pursuit of academic articles, I have yet to encounter one where the theories are being discussed in light of the ideal/non-ideal debate. Looking through notable works, like those by Dahl or Estlund, or through various handbooks on democratic theory, there seems to be no mention of the debate.[2] Though democracy is sometimes mentioned in the debate, it is more on the justice aspect of democratic theory, as with Farrelly mentioned in the chapter above, rather than the design or the justifications behind democratic theories.

The absence of ideal and non-ideal theory in democratic theory, makes one question where and why democratic and justice theory parted ways, assuming that the two have many shared characteristics. Though this thesis is not answering these questions directly, it is still relevant to shortly discuss the differences between the two and to ponder over why they have come to be.

Although democratic theory and justice theory rest on many of the same ideals, with focus on for example equality, autonomy or fairness, the two have gone in very different directions, and what is being discussed when making or applying theories is very different.

One could argue that democratic theory is more practical than justice theory, as it deals with designing systems to a greater extent. This makes the theory seem more tangible, as it deals with applicability of the theories produced. When applying democratic theory, one always has to include the people – and it might be harder to assume full compliance, as it is often observed that people do not behave that way in the real world. This adds a level of reality to the theory, or rather, it might leave out room for more idealistic theories, as they might be deemed unnecessary or unrealistic. Though one could also argue that justice theories also need to be approved democratically (in the democracy at least), that layer of voters' approval is usually not included when making theories.

When discussing ideals, one might argue that justice theory preconditions democratic theory, as the ideals democratic theorists are trying to implement into democracy are usually found in justice theory. This could have implications on the amount of time or weight democratic theorists actually

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[2] Of course, this could be proven through a massive genealogy, but that is not the purpose of this thesis.

place on the ideals used, as they are already discussed in another field. This is both good and bad – as using existing ideals saves time when designing systems, but the consequences can also be considerable, when limited thought is put into the ideals used, or when the ideals are not discussed thoroughly.

What consequences does it have for democratic theory, that the ideals used are not discussed the same way as in justice theory? And why is it that democratic and justice philosophers deal with ideals in such different ways?

One could investigate the backgrounds of different democratic and justice philosophers and their priorities when choosing a field, where a hypothesis could be that one type of personality might pursue a specific discipline; If one wants to use more practical theories, and produce theories (somewhat) ready to apply, one might go for a career in democratic theory rather than justice.[3]

Though many priorities in common, the two have gone in two separate directions. This would necessarily not be a problem, if they did not both use the same philosophical justifications for many of their theories. But as they do, it is peculiar that only one of them discuss the theoretical underpinnings behind those concepts.

This points out a substantial portion of knowledge missing from the theory behind democratic theory. A hole the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory might be able to fill. By applying the debate to democratic theory, I believe it has the potential to help us understand the theory behind democratic theories, how the choices in the theory can be understood, and ultimately help strengthen the development of those theories by bringing awareness to fallacies. I will in this chapter of the thesis demonstrate that democratic theories can fit into the debate, by showing that they can be applied to Valentinis conceptual map.

When adding a theoretical debate to a new field, one also has to judge if it is worth it. Is the extra work worth the results – and should the debate be prioritized in democratic theory? This will be discussed in the final chapter, based partly on the results from this chapter.

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[3] That would also be an interesting thesis, if one where to look at the psychology behind philosophers

3.1 An overlap from justice to democracy?

Applying democratic theory to the debate is a big undertaking, and I will therefore focus on representation theory, and more precisely, descriptive representation. Here, different perspectives on the matter will be represented through theory from Hanna Pitkin, Jane Mansbridge, and Iris Marion Young.

I have chosen the specific philosophers, as I believe their work is at the intersection between justice theory and democratic theory, as representation is often justified through thoughts on equality and fairness, which are similar ideals to those found in justice theory, both as abstract ideals and ideals for institutions.

Democratic theory is often discussed with assumptions based in justice theory, and the two fields have several commonalities. Many philosophers try to justify why certain people or groups need to be (or to not be) represented in a certain way, while still discussing typical democratic terms like application and design of systems, moving theories of justice to an application platform.

By looking at the intersection between democratic theory and justice theory, one can assume the application of the debate will be more manageable as many of the same themes are discussed. At the same time I wish to apply the debate to the democratic aspects and not only the justice-aspects of the theories, therefore also focusing on design and implementation, as I am curious of what the debate will add to the theory. As the two have much in common, as mentioned earlier, I expect that the addition of the debate will be fruitful for democratic theory.

The first step will be to see if democratic theory is actually applicable within the debate. This section of the thesis will investigate that as a pre-step to adding the debate to democratic thought.

As mentioned earlier, I will be focusing on the works from Pitkin, Mansbridge and Young. They each capture descriptive representation from three different perspectives, with three different priorities in mind. As the philosophers do not write with the ideal/non-ideal debate in mind, it will therefore be an interpretation of their works into the framework made in the chapter above, to judge how they fit each category.

Pitkins work "The Concept of Representation" from 1967 is a major piece in democratic theory and is still used and quoted in different texts on democratic representation today. Pitkin defines four different concepts of representation, where I will be focusing on the concept of descriptive representation. Pitkin, compared to the two other philosophers, is not as positive about descriptive representation, so the interpretation of her work will be different, as she is explaining why the concept is not working, rather than exploring the opportunities descriptive representation will give a democracy. Though Pitkin is different from the two others, she also does normative evolutions and therefore fits within my framework.

Mansbridge is also a well-known democratic theorist, and her theories are often used to challenge the views of Pitkin and to widen the concept of descriptive representation. Unlike Pitkin, she values descriptive representation as a tool for helping marginalized groups to join democracy on equal terms with more dominant groups in society. I will mainly be referring to her article "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes"" from 1999, where she lists the benefits and limitations of descriptive representation, as well as defining her four conditions for descriptive representation: "when (1) communication is impaired, often by distrust, (2) interests are relatively uncrystallized, (3) a group has once been considered unfit to rule, (4) de facto legitimacy is low within the group" (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 652). To understand the tool better I will also be referring to the article "Quota problems: combating the dangers of essentialism" from 2005, where she discussed implementation of the concept of quotas.

The last philosopher, Young, is known for her works on inclusion, not only in the realm of democratic theory, but in the intersection of several theoretic disciplines. Her book "Justice and the politics of difference" from 1990 is widely quoted in several fields of philosophy, as well as justice and democracy. I will, as for the two others, focus on her account of descriptive representation in democracy. Young's book also focuses on how theory is produced, and has a lot of critique of traditional theories, which adds an interesting aspect to how she justifies descriptive representation. Though very detailed, she does not define conditions like Mansbridge, which makes her theory hard to apply to cases.

3.2 Democracy and representation

As the literature on representation is quite extensive and covers many aspects and groups, I will focus on descriptive representation of marginalized groups, meaning groups that have been historically disadvantaged because of characteristics beyond their control.

Though this thesis started with the plan of looking at the representation of women in parliament, it changed, both because of the current political climate of identity politics, but also because two of the philosophers, Mansbridge and Young comment on the representation of afro Americans. But the case of representation of women could also be a very relevant case for further studies.

In this chapter I will first define descriptive representation and argue why it is important to discuss. Then I will apply the works of the three philosophers to my theoretical framework from the first chapter in the categories: Full compliance vs. partial compliance; Utopian vs. realistic theory and end-state vs transitional theory, to show that they fit into the theoretical framework defined in the chapter above. Lastly, I will defend the application of democratic theory into the debate, on the grounds of the discoveries, showing that democratic theory can be applied to the debate and to lead into the next chapter, where I will investigate further.

Through the book "The Concept of Representation" Pitkin popularized the debate on representation and included descriptive representation in her four views of representation (Pitkin, 1967). She describes the concept as trying to make a representative body reflect the represented without any distortion (Pitkin, 1967, p. 60).
This means that when a member of a parliament is chosen, what they are and where they come from, should resemble the general public, like a mini map of the whole country or region. This can be compared to the little metal models of cities, often placed in the city center, to give tourists an overview of the layout of that city.

The representative is typical from "the larger class of persons whom they represent" (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 629). This means that a black person represents black people as a larger group, or that a lesbian represents lesbians - that is at least the general aim.

Descriptive representation is not a foreign concept, as we already see some forms of descriptive representation today, when people are chosen from specific parts of a country or region, to ensure that those parts are represented as well – or when the ones to be elected are required to have citizenship from the country they want to be elected in.

When Pitkin described the term in 1967, I doubt she could have imagined its impact and relevance in 2023, where identity and representation have a whole other importance in the political climate. She even later writes that she took the relationship between democracy and representation for granted; "I more or less equated democracy with representation, or at least with representative government" (Pitkin, 2004, p. 336). The 1967 book is of course a work of its time, but will be judged according to modern standards, as an ideal theory (as I will later argue it is) should be able to stand the test of time.

The works from Mansbridge and Young reflect more contemporary situations, prioritizing identity and contemporary solutions to democratic discussions. In the following analysis, it will also be clearer that they have a more non-ideal approach to representation, as they base their theories in current struggles seen in democracy.

Descriptive representation has received a lot of critique throughout the years. Pitkin points out that this view on representation differs a lot from other views, as it depends on characteristics rather than authorization and accountability (Pitkin, 1967, p. 61).

She argues for another type of representation, namely substantive representation, where the opinions of the representative are the same as the people they represent (or at least ideally) (Pitkin, 1967).

Mansbridge and Young defend descriptive representation in different ways, where Mansbridge uses it as a contemporary solution, while Young uses it as a continuous solution, changing the goal of representation and justice completely and argues for a non-ideal ideal:

Mansbridge uses it as a tool to help marginalized groups gaining their democratic rights and to get them to the same starting point as the privileged groups. This implies that she does not see descriptive representation as a permanent solution, but rather a tool to get somewhere and eventually stop the use of descriptive representation, when both the level of representation is

satisfactory, and the minds of people are changed, so gender or ethnicity will not be a limitation. (Mansbridge, 2005).

Young, on the other hand, completely denies the old ideals and thoughts on representation, and rather focuses on a diverse world where descriptive representation is a necessary tool to a just democratic system. Though not completely static, it is a tool that will continue to be used to different degrees (Young, 1990).

While applying the views of Mansbridge and Young will (hopefully) be straightforward, there might be some problems with applying Pitkin, as she does not agree with the concept, and mainly describes descriptive representation through a critique and a defense of substantive representation. I will therefore apply her argumentation against descriptive representation to my theoretical framework, showing where she stands and how she argues.

3.3 Full compliance vs. partial compliance

On this score, a typical ideal theory will assume full compliance to look at the essence of a concept, while a non-ideal theory will assume partial compliance, as it usually bases the theory in the real world, where full compliance in many cases is not realistic.
When working with democratic theory, one has to assume some forms of compliance, otherwise the design of the democratic system would not work. If no one shows up to vote, or if the system is corrupt, it does not make sense to use it. On the other hand, it might also be difficult to assume full compliance when dealing with democratic theory, as the theory is often meant to be applied to (or improve) a current system in the real world.

When describing the current system, Young does not assume full compliance, as she believes it is necessary to have descriptive representation to some degree, at least for some marginalized groups, as the current system or ideals do not consider the voices of minority groups or groups that cannot afford to vote ideally. If one were to assume full compliance in this society, she argues that many groups would be left out of decisions and policies regarding them, as they would not be properly represented.

Instead of following an ideal, where rights are universally applied, and where liberation equals the transcendence of group difference, she looks at recent social movements of oppressed groups and finds that ideal unrealistic (Young, 1990, p. 157). If the case were that we were all equal, and that individual group culture did not exist, one could assume full compliance. But as that is not the case, as she believes, it is naïve to assume full compliance.

When one assimilates different cultures, some philosophers assume that people will start behaving the same or understand the world the same way. Young fears that this behavior will mirror the dominant groups, meaning that if one were to assume full compliance, it would be on the terms of one group, as they create the agenda. This puts marginalized groups in a dilemma, as they can participate on the terms of others or be left out (Young, 1990, p. 165). None of those choices will lead to fair representation, as the voices of marginalized groups will be left out no matter what, therefore arguing that descriptive representation will be the best arrangement, in a world that wants to embrace those differences, rather than erase them.

Even in a world where people are aware of all those differences (like the world we live in now), the voting patterns are still very different. We cannot assume that the dominant group will (or assume that they are able to) take the needs of marginalized groups into consideration, when voting for a politician. Therefore, one needs quotas or other ways to ensure that all are represented adequately.

The argument of Young mirrors those of Mills and Farrelly, as it questions the dominant view of assimilation of culture and values. As with the two, Young believes that it is ignorant to assume, or even hope, for a homogenous world, and that the creation of that world will only help the ones who created it, making their own beliefs the norm. Both the people in the dominant groups and the people in the marginalized groups do not have the ability to act purely theoretically and logical all the time, therefore making full compliance impossible if one wishes to represent every group.

As Farrelly argues, assuming full compliance simplifies assumptions we have about society (Farrelly, 2007, p. 850). Young approaches this critique by completely rejecting the ideal of a homogenized voter group, the ideal that one day our differences will not matter, and rather uses the differences as a way to show why representation of different groups is important to ensure fair representation.

At the same time, one could argue that Young also considers full (or at least) fuller compliance, when arguing for descriptive representation. By changing the theory and criticizing the old ideal of formal equality, she is developing a new ideal, just at the other end of the spectrum, namely an ideal of a diverse world.

But compared to a more homogenous ideal theory, her theory cannot be applied universally, as she assumes that some people need more help than others. This makes her ideal rather non-ideal, as each case would have to be fitted to a specific situation, and each group's background would need to be analyzed. The compliance lies within the fact that she considers that doable, as she expects that people will accept and comply with the new diverse system.

Though not creating a new ideal like Young, Mansbridge also argues for descriptive representation and special treatment of some groups to insure fair representation.

Mansbridge argues through the view of deliberation where important topics ought to be discussed before making a decision. When representatives in that forum are not descriptively represented, it might be more difficult to get all perspectives one wishes to include in the deliberation (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 635). This shows that full compliance is not assumed, as that would not be necessary if all were to act the same, or if all had the same prerequisites.

She emphasizes that marginalized groups are not homogenous, and therefore might need more representatives to get their point through in deliberation (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 636), and that that representation sometimes needs to be more than their proportional numbers to avoid essentialism in marginalized groups (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 638).

Agreeing with Mills, she is skeptical of the people who originally designed the democratic system. When that system was created, it was done so for a more homogenous group that did not have marginalization in mind. This means that it on paper might look equal and fair, but that is not the case in real life. When we continue to use an outdated system, we assume compliance in a world where not everyone is able to comply.

By referring to different data, she shows that we cannot assume full compliance, as different groups have very different relationships with lawmakers, and that some groups have difficulties getting heard. Through that, she shows why descriptive representation matters, and that people do not have

the same prerequisites when entering the political sphere (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 641). It therefore does not make sense to assume full compliance when people are not substantially equal.

Pitkin is slightly more difficult to place in the framework, as she is not writing about why descriptive representation matters but outlining it as a concept and explaining why it is problematic or not fulfilling in explaining what representation is or what it should be.

Though not directly writing about compliance, she shows the flaws in the thinking, pointing out that the question of representation becomes more and more difficult and complex, removing the focus from the democratic theory and what the purpose of theory is.

She criticizes the complexity of descriptive representation, saying that very few philosophers keep it on a simplistic level where the theory can be applied to everyone (Pitkin, 1967, p. 76). This can pose a theoretical problem, as it removes focus from representation in its purest form, focusing too much on contemporary problems.

When writing about descriptive representation, Pitkin underlines that it is only one way of seeing representation, and that too much focus on it will remove from the other definitions of representation. This means that even though she acknowledges the arguments of descriptive representation, and that some people might not be represented, she is basing her argument on finding out what representation is as a principle.

If she were to analyze the current situation, her results might be different – but as she is looking at the concept in the form of language and what that can do to us – adding too many obstacles will remove focus from the actual project.

When applying Pitkin to the debate, one should look at the purpose of her book; to find out what representation is – and what representation means. She defines descriptive representation as a part of the definition, but she is trying to solve the whole definition, and that is difficult if she has to consider all real-life dilemmas that might come up.

When figuring out a concept, one has to assume full compliance, or at least fuller compliance, to boil the definition down to a universal concept. She is not doing idealized theory, but assuming that people have a good reason to follow the principles as complying with the theory would improve representation.

Pitkin is showing full compliance assumptions in the way she dismisses the needs of descriptive representation, arguing that; "If representing means presenting a point of view, one spokesman is as good as ten" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 84). If a representative is good, then one must be enough, therefore making the number of representatives irrelevant, or even the background of the representative, if she manages to catch what the voters are expecting from her.

While Pitkin acknowledges the uses of descriptive representation in cases where "the purpose of representation is to supply information about something not actually present" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 81), she also points out that it is only a partial view of representation (Pitkin, 1967, p. 89), and that representation has much more to it than one perspective.

If only looking at her critique of descriptive representation, she is dismissing the ideal of that and points out that it is unattainable (Pitkin, 1967, p. 88). This might at first hand come off as assuming partial compliance – but when looking at the whole purpose of the book, it actually helps explain how too much focus on one perspective can smear the meaning of a concept.
And in a situation where there is full compliance, descriptive representation would only harm democracy, or "true" representation, as people will have no opportunity to hold the representatives accountable. Pitkin points out that choosing one that represents you descriptively might not be the best answer that it is not a given that you would get the best representative talent or knowledge-wise (Pitkin, 1967, p. 84). Instead, she deems it more beneficial that people will comply with the definition of substantive representation, as she argues that the opinions of representatives reflect the opinions of those represented, as compared to the many rules of descriptive representation. Though I will not be discussing if that assumption is wrong in this part of the thesis, there has certainly been some debate about substantive representation among democratic theorists.

Though both Young and Mansbridge, and to some extent Pitkin, comment on the state of the world and the electoral institutions, the application of their theories to the debate is possible, as they reflect on compliance issues and ideals of the world.
When comparing all three philosophers, one has to remember the perspective they are each approaching the concept. While Young and Mansbridge are looking at descriptive representation from a contemporary angle, Pitkin is looking at it in a way to understand the true meaning of representation.

Their focus on compliance issues is therefore different, as they have to be fitted to the specific purpose of each theory. If Young were to find a universal concept, working in all times and spaces, adding so many exceptions would not work. If Pitkin were trying to solve representation problems in the 1960's, looking at a small and universal concept would help very few.

This part of the chapter shows that compliance issues are still considered, though not explicitly mentioned in democratic theories, therefore showing that the debate can be used when discussing full or partial compliance in theories.

3.4 Utopian vs realistic theory

When judging if a theory is ideal or non-ideal through the lens of utopian or realistic theory, one is mainly looking at how many feasibility constraints the theory is accepting, like if they consider historical differences or driving distance to the polling station. An ideal theory will accept none to a few, while a non-ideal theory will accept many.

While none of the theories are strictly utopian, as they all start in the real world (or maybe a world close to ours), they are different in how many feasibility constraints they accept. As I have talked about in the section above, the purpose of each theory is different, and that will be very clear here, looking at feasibility constraints.

While it is a critique from Valentini, that those two sides really cannot be compared, as they are discussing two different points (Valentini, 2012, p. 660), it is interesting placing them in the framework anyways, as it will make the aim of each theory clearer.

Young bases a lot of her theory in a critique of current democratic ideals or justice theories. She questions how objective they really are and points out the dangers of assuming objectivity in theory-making, like in Rawls methodology and the original position (Young, 1990, p. 101).

Young rejects the whole ideal of transcending group differences, or as she calls it, the ideal of assimilation; "The ideal of impartiality expresses in fact an impossibility, a fiction. No one can adopt a point of view that is completely impersonal and dispassionate, completely separated from any particular context and commitments" (Young, 1990, p. 103). Young calls that way of doing moral philosophy utopian, arguing that one can still reflect morals while still adding particularity to the theory (Young, 1990, p. 105).

Instead of trying to reach objectivity, she creates a new and more diverse ideal of multiculturalism. Although she calls it an ideal, it is an ideal that takes differences, and therefore more feasibility constraints, into consideration.

She acknowledges the usage of the assimilation ideal, especially in gaining rights as an equal historically, but she also takes a step back from the formal equality gained through that ideal. While the ideal of assimilation is a nice thought, where the color of your skin matters as little as the color of your eyes, it is simply not realistic (or even desirable) Young argues (Young, 1990, p. 163). "The achievement of formal equality does not eliminate social differences, and rhetorical commitment to the sameness of persons makes it impossible even to name how those differences presently structure privilege and oppression" (Young, 1990, p. 164).

So, when making theories of formal equality, one is simply ignoring the many feasibility constraints, like for example social differences, which in the end takes from equality, as it will be difficult to add to the theory afterwards.

One has to think of the ideal of assimilation itself, and who defines that ideal. When the system has already been made, the privileged tend to be blind to the struggles of the marginalized groups – and by turning to assimilation and formal equality, it makes it impossible to even find those struggles, as all are equal to the law.

When later adding people, after assimilation, they are not entering a neutral domain, but a domain made for one specific group. They are not entering a neutral culture, but the culture of the privileged, the culture that has become the "neutral" norm. People who support the assimilation ideal tend to believe there is a humanity in general, a humanity that is neutral (Young, 1990, p. 165). But in reality, that "humanity" is just a norm set by the people making the systems. And when people are not exposed to differences, they "tend to assert their perspective as universal" (Young, 1990, p. 187).

The theory of Young is in many ways similar to the theory of Mill, who also argues that numerous assumptions are made by a privileged group of people (Mills, 2005, p. 172). Turning to realistic theory, based on the struggles we see in the real world, will help discover struggles much better than comparing it to a universal ideal (or an ideology in Mills eyes). This fits with people using their own experiences as universal, and questions who is doing democratic theory and who is not.

To use descriptive representation, according to Young, is based in the real world, where one acknowledges group differences and how social structures help or hurt certain groups.

She criticizes formal democratic processes for elevating the experiences of privileged groups and highlights participatory democracy as an element of social justice (Young, 1990, p. 183). A democratic public should give voice to the group differences within it, instead of aiming at transcending group differences (Young, 1990, p. 184). This means working with, and not against the feasibility constraints, like cultural differences, designing the democratic system to accompany all groups, not just the privileged. This can be done through descriptive representation, where one ensures perspectives from marginalized groups, and therefore actively welcomes feasibility constraints into the development of democracy, instead of ignoring them and creating a universal, but unfair, system.

Mansbridge follows the logic of Young, when basing her theory in the real world. Instead of making a new ideal, she tries adding feasibility constraints to the standing ideal of democratic representation, to see who needs special attention. The ideal that everyone should be fairly and equally represented in democracy, leans more to an ideal of neutrality, where one's characteristics should not matter, as you are equal. Assuming that the ideal is correct, and that everyone is equal in democracy and the laws it produces, Mansbridge points out, with the help of empirical data, that that is not the case. This helps her point out feasibility constraints, that she adds to the theory, and therefore the solution; Descriptive representation.

Mansbridge makes a clear distinction between normative theory and the real world, and she recognizes that descriptive representation is not always necessary but depends on the situation. In theory descriptive representation might be solved with one representative elected through standard electoral systems, but "In practice, however, disadvantaged groups often need the full representation that proportionality allows in order to achieve several goals: deliberative synergy, critical mass, dispersion of influence, and a range of views within the group" (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 636). By applying those feasibility constraints to the theory, it allows Mansbridge to set up some conditions for special treatment – and to see where the theory is not extensive enough, to actually make a difference in this world.

Unlike Young, her theory is not as broad, and she differentiates between situations where descriptive representation is necessary, and situations where it is not, looking at other democratic ideals and the dangers of descriptive representation (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 335). Though Young also agrees that not everyone should be descriptively represented, Mansbridge is more clear in what situations, and defines them as conditions in her theory.

By discussing theory vs. practice, Mansbridge recognizes that it is sometimes not enough to just follow utopia and make laws from that – sometimes more steps are needed to reach that goal, which means adding a number of feasibility constraints to the theory. Similar to Young, she recognizes the limits of the theory produced by a certain group of people.

Pitkin has another approach to theory, by not basing her theory on a problem, but on the question; What is representation? This approach allows her to not add too many feasibility constraints, as she is going for a more universal application of a concept, looking for a timeless essence. But it does not mean that she is not adding any constraints – she is still working from the perspective of our world (or a world close to ours). Though not directly commenting on it, she describes what a representative must ideally do, to make representation successful (Pitkin, 1967, p. 210).
This means that though is accepting some feasibility constraints, as she is working with institutional designs, she cannot allow herself to add too many, as it would cost the universality of the theory.

Pitkin recognizes that representation is more complex than a simple answer, as political issues are complex and without a straightforward answer, where the ends and the means are often mixed together (Pitkin, 1967, p. 212). One cannot assume full rationality, but one also has to assume some, to make sense of the world and to find out what ought to be done. Here she tries to find a middle ground. Theories of representation are not meant for questions with true answers, but when we need to decide something without a simple answer (Pitkin, 1967, p. 212).
Although she acknowledges the real world, she still finds it important to understand concepts ideally.

When looking at representation from different angles, instead of understanding the concept as it is, she argues that you risk putting focus on specific problems or terms, while ignoring other things that also have to do with the concept (Pitkin, 1967, p. 226). The different perspectives are not

necessarily each other's best solution, and it is therefore important to be clear of the perspective one is using, instead of generalizing that perspective on the whole understanding of representation.

Pitkin is more utopian than the two others in her purpose, but one has to remember that she is dealing with a concept that is to be universally understood all over the world (or at least countries with similarities to the US in the 1960's).

When looking at the whole picture of representation, she is looking at it from both a general and abstract idea, from understanding the word, to applying it to concrete institutions (Pitkin, 1967, p. 235).

She is describing what Erman and Möller are writing about, saying that utopian ideas, though unattainable, shape the way we do politics. One takes some ideas and applies them to the world. And though that might not always go as wished for, one knows what to strive for, something that will also be discussed in the next part.

Pitkin argues that we need both when securing representation. That one cannot only deal with institutions, abandoning all hope for reforming and improving representation, or only with theory, making it impossible to apply (Pitkin, 1967, p. 238). One has to use both perspectives to find an optimal solution for our world, though not discussed here, one can argue if she does.

The differences between the three philosophers reflects Valentini's critique of the distinction, namely that the distinctions are not opposites, but simply different perspectives on a given problem. This is very clear here, when looking at the purpose of what each theory is saying.

Compared to justice theory, the texts are not utopian, as they are very reliant on institutions and people. For example, they have to encompass the fact that democracies have elections, where people vote independently and freely. This means that they cannot avoid including feasibility constraints into their theories, no matter how ideal they want to be, as democratic theory rests on some practical assumptions that justice theory in many cases does not.

3.5 End state vs transitional theory

Ideal theories usually focus on the end, showing how the world would ideally be, while non-ideal theories put more focus on the road to an eventual ideal, focusing on small steps that can improve current situations.

When discussing end state vs transitional theory, one can really see a difference between the three philosophers, as it becomes more clear what they expect from their theories – and what they are working towards.

While Pitkin and Mansbridge are working with a more "traditional" ideal, Young has completely rejected that ideal, questioning if it is realistic or even desirable.

She has instead made a new ideal – and although she calls it an ideal herself, it contains several transitional traits, and no clear end. Although Young's own ideal might be considered an end state at first, it is in itself very open, as it accommodates for both differences and similarities within different groups. Young describes a society where differences are good, but she does not set an end goal, for what those differences or similarities should be – just that they should be allowed to exist, and thereby evolve and promote understanding. This also means that one cannot predict where it ends, as one can assume that the acceptance of diversity will lead down new roads.

By recognizing and accepting the heterogeneity of the public, changing the way people are represented as well as how much they are represented, will promote more justice than a homogeneous public, Young argues (Young, 1990, p. 184). This means treating different groups differently, with the goal of promoting justice.

The ones who should get more representation are the groups that need it to gain the same recognition in the political climate as the dominant groups, the ones who set the agenda. By treating different groups differently, one makes sure that they all have access to democracy in general, and not on the terms of a more dominant social group. This of course does not mean that those groups should be in that position forever. This also makes her theory transitional, as one should continuously judge where more representation is needed.

By constantly changing and looking at individual groups, and what kind of help they might need, one is working towards a goal, but in smaller steps – and by adding all those smaller steps, one is also opening up to the possibility of change of ideals.

Like other non-ideal theorists, the end goal is not necessarily the most important part, as the journey might change, and the things done now, might change the ideal as well. So when Young has no set ideal, but rather an idea, it can be because her ideal might change, as new groups and ideas are formed through working together with our differences.

This makes her theory transitional, as one is not sure of where it will end up – as it will constantly change and evolve. The end goal might change along the way. This of course can be difficult, when looking at critique from ideal theorists, as one does not know where to aim, or where to stop. As Young has not clearly defined a goal, her theory can seem vague. That also opens up her theory to new developments and makes it tough against bigger changes, as it will be able to accommodate products of new ideas formed in the process.

Mansbridge has a similar approach with transitional qualities. The main difference is she is working towards a more traditional ideal of formal equality, or a world where only formal equality is needed. The transitional properties of Mansbridge are best shown in her thoughts on quotas; "They should be used and portrayed as a practical and perhaps temporary response to centuries of discrimination, rather than as an eternally necessary recognition of essential differences" (Mansbridge, 2005, p. 635).

While Young recognizes those differences, Mansbridge is using quotas to help build a bridge between the differences and allowing minorities and marginalized groups to enter the playing field. Whether or not the playing field is fair, or how it should be, is another discussion I will not be taking here.

Mansbridge sees the dangers in descriptive representation, as it might increase essentialism, but as a means to eventually have a more equal and just society, it is worth it in some cases (Mansbridge, 2005, p. 635).

This also corresponds with several non-ideal theorists, as Mansbridge is trying to solve contemporary problems, so we eventually can deal with the ideals. She sees that working with an ideal might not help everyone, and that it is therefore necessary to take some steps before applying the ideal (or some of it) to society.

With a whole other purpose, Pitkin does not in the same way describe a way to an ideal. She is not making practical a guide to better representation, but trying to understand what representation is, and how definitions contradict each other.

This means that she is very aware of how different perspectives and transitional properties can end up hurting the ideal. She is critical to descriptive representation, as it is not a good ideal; "(…) that ideal may be chimerical, and therefore dangerous" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 86), which can end up hurting democratic theory if one is not aware of the dangers of applying an ideal. When applying descriptive representation in real life, one cannot ensure that we get the best representatives, and if they do badly, they cannot be held accountable in the same way, therefore going away from what true and good representation actually is; "The best descriptive representative is not necessarily the best representative for activity or government" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 89). So, by acting in transitional steps, one might end up going further from the ideal, than when one started. Pitkin views the cost of using descriptive representation as too great for it to be justifiable.

By making theory timeless and more general, one knows what to aim for. This means that when knowing what (the best) representation is, one should also have that in mind when using that concept in the real world – if that is even possible.

All three philosophers are working with an ideal, but the difference is how much focus they have on the transition from the current situation, to their ideal, and how set the ideal is. While Young and Mansbridge are very transitional in their theory, dealing with contemporary problems and solving historical injustices, Pitkin takes the approach of finding the purest form of representation, not really focusing on the way there, but rather arguing that some tools might have greater costs than benefits.

These differences are important when judging a theory in a contemporary perspective or in an ideal perspective, as they show where the philosopher wishes to apply her theories and what the purpose of the theories are.

3.6 Summary of the three categories

Though very different, all three theories can be applied to the three categories within the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory. Below is a table summarizing the main points from the analysis, bringing them forward with me to the next chapter.

	Full compliance vs. partial compliance Theory	Utopian vs. realistic theory	End-state vs. transitional theory
Young	• *Cannot assume full compliance in the current system* • *Critique of a universal "neutrality"* • *Questioning the authors behind traditional ideals*	• *Uses a lot of feasibility constraints* • *Rejects the idea of transcending group differences* • *Does not see it as realistic to later add feasibility constraints, as the theory itself is not neutral*	• *Rejecting standing ideal, makes her own* • *Unclear end-state* • *Many transitional properties, that might change the end state*
Mansbridge	• *Cannot assume full compliance in the current system* • *Looking at the inability for*	• *Adds feasibility constraints to the standing ideal, to see where extra focus is needed*	• *Transitional but with a clear end goal.* • *Descriptive representation should not be a permanent*

	some groups to do what is "ideal" • Analyzing the norms of society	• Uses feasibility constraints to justify descriptive representation in certain situations	solution, but a tool to reach an ideal end state, always looking at costs and benefits
Pitkin	• Assumes full compliance when looking at an ideal concept • Assuming partial compliance takes the focus off the essence of the question • Full compliance benefits ideal representation	• Does not add many feasibility constraints • Wants a universal concept of representation • Still tries to add some constraints in the hopes that it will later apply more smoothly to the real world.	• Skeptical to transitional properties, as they might lead away from the ideal • Looking at costs and benefits • One should always have the end state in mind

3.7 Does democratic theory belong in the debate?

In this chapter I have applied three chosen democratic theories on descriptive representation to the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory, to see if the theories fit within the framework. While not having tested every democratic theory, the chapter shows that it is possible to apply theories of representation to the framework of the debate.

While I would argue that democratic theory generally is less ideal in its purpose (at least the theories I examined here), the theories used are still applicable within the debate. By applying them to the three interpretations by Valentini, the purpose of each theory is easier to understand, both in how they react to contemporary politics, as well as how they see the future.

Not only does the application to the framework show that it is possible, it also helps understanding the different theories. When applying them to different categories of the debate, one is forced to consider different perspectives of the theories, thereby widening the understanding of them. As with the second chapter, this chapter also shows how much the categories overlap – but it also shows that theories can contain both ideal and non-ideal aspects, even in different amounts based on the categories.

In this chapter I added the theories to the debate, in the next chapter I will do the opposite; I will add the debate to the theories. Turning the question upside down will help show what the debate can do for democratic theories, and eventually add to my argument that adding the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory will eventually help improve democratic theory.

Chapter 4: Case-Study

Though very different, the three philosophers all have the common goal of improving representation theory. In the chapter above I showed the core points from each theory, demonstrating that they each work with a different goal in mind, and each have individual solutions to reaching those goals. I have shown that theories from democratic theory can be applied within the categories of the ideal and non-ideal debate. Having shown that that is possible, I will in this chapter explore what insights adding the debate to the theories can give us, when judging, using or producing a theory or a concept within the field of democratic theories. This will later contribute to my argument; showing that it is beneficial to use the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory, when making or improving democratic theories.

A theory can be judged in many ways. For this thesis I am choosing to apply a case to each theory, to see both how their theories hold up against it, and if the theory can explain the case, but also to use the results in the scope of ideal and non-ideal theory. This will lead into the discussion of how the addition of ideal and non-ideal theory can benefit the understanding of that case, and therefore the development of their theory.

The transition from theory to a case is not discussed much in justice theory, and there seems to be a lot of uncertainty of how it should be done. The implementation of the theory might not be thought of in the same extent as for democratic theory. But the uncertainty does not stop at justice theory, it also applies to democratic theory, as seen in the critique from Mansbridge and Young.

There is no clear solution from transitioning from one realm to the other, and the philosophers used in this thesis have different answers to the dilemma; Mansbridge has tried to bridge the ideal and the real world by making a transition where some groups get extra representation – but emphasizes that the solution is only temporary. Others, like Young, completely remove themselves from the standing ideal and create a new (non)ideal that takes in as much of the real world as possible. Pitkin also removes herself from the real world and discusses what ideal representation should be – and does not discuss the implementation, but rather the meaning of representation and how it manifests.

This chapter will not discuss whether the theories are right or wrong, but if they will benefit from adding the extra layer of the ideal/non-ideal debate, when trying to explain the case.

4.1 The case

Looking at current Western debates of representation and how group traits have become an important factor in those debates, it is not hard to justify the case of descriptive representation. The choice of case is very relevant in today's political climate, as well as in the debate on representation theory, where philosophers still disagree on what model seems to be the best.

As all philosophers are American and writing from the standpoint of American representation politics, it is natural to use the United States as a focus point for the case. Though there are already some kinds of descriptive representation in the US, for example the overrepresentation of smaller states in Congress, the focus will be on groups that have formerly or are still experiencing injustice when it comes to access to decisions. For this thesis, the case will focus on the descriptive representation of Afro-Americans post 1950 – though I will also be using the word black people, as both words are used by the philosophers and in my empirical data. Both Mansbridge and Young have comments on that exact case, while Pitkin's case is supposed to fit all, as it is a conceptual ideal.

I will be applying the same case to each theory, but tweaking it slightly to fit the individual philosopher, as the purpose of their theories are different – this means seeing what they themselves have referred to or used for data, to justify their own theories.

As shown in the previous chapter, the theories fit into the categories of the debate. As they have different focuses and purposes, they each fall into one category more than the others. Young has many comments on feasibility constraints, Mansbridge has focused on end states and transitions to those, while Pitkin focuses on developing ideal concepts, therefore assumes full compliance. There are of course several overlaps into the other theories as well, but that shows the whole point of categories; that nothing fits perfectly – and that is also the case here. This means that the pillars overlap and the theory from each philosopher spreads out into all categories, which will also be taken into account in the analysis.

4.2 Mansbridge and descriptive representation as a tool

Mansbridge's article describes a way one can get to an ideal state, by combining the uses of end-state and transitional theory.

She argues that descriptive representation, though intuitively seeming unequal, is a necessary tool in order to even get to a point, where one can start working towards an ideal. This strategy uses some of the arguments by non-ideal philosophers, while still aiming at a clear end goal.

She therefore makes a theory by adding non-ideal observations from the real world to a standing ideal – arguing that we should have descriptive representation as a means to reach an ideal end-state. This implies that an ideal state cannot be reached before everyone has an equal chance to reach it – even though that might take from the current justice, as descriptive representation does not intuitively seem just.

In the fear of getting too far away from justice and the ideal, Mansbridge states some of the conditions that needs to be present, before descriptive representation can be justified, and comes up with four conditions: "when (1) communication is impaired, often by distrust, (2) interests are relatively uncrystallized, (3) a group has once been considered unfit to rule, (4) de facto legitimacy is low within the group" (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 652)

She makes it clear that not everyone qualifies for boosted descriptive representation, as descriptive representation is not a goal in itself, but a tool to get vulnerable groups up to pair with the dominant groups in society.

At first hand, the case of Afro-Americans post 1950s fits the conditions described above, and Mansbridge also uses a similar case herself in order to show how descriptive representation would help the interests of that specific group.

Although the article is discussing normative goals, she is supporting her argument with empirical data too, to show the advantages the use of descriptive representation can give us.

With data from Claudine Gay, she points out that Afro-Americans are more likely to contact a representative in their district, if the representative is Afro-American themselves (Mansbridge,

1999, p. 641). The data from Gay was presented at an annual meeting with the Midwest Political Science association in 1996, that Mansbridge attended. I have not been able to find transcripts of the meeting in 1996, and I am therefore unsure of what Gay presented in her earlier drafts. But looking at the data presented in the article from 2002, the results do not mirror those described in the article by Mansbridge.

In her article "Spirals of Trust" Claudine Gay asks the question; "Does a constituent's ability to racially identify with her member of Congress (MC) affect her perceptions of that legislator and of Congress as an institution?" (Gay, 2002, p. 717). The article shows that white people and Afro-Americans in the US place different values on descriptive representation, with white people putting greater value on descriptive representation than Afro-Americans. As Mansbridge also referred to in her article, black people were more likely to contact a representative of their own ethnicity – but they generally feel just as well represented by a white member of Congress who shares their opinions (Gay, 2002, p. 718). Though the relationship between a constituent and the representative are shown to be influenced by race, the perception of Congress as an institution is not.

Although the article shows that there is a connection between race and how a representative is approached by a constituent, it also shows that the people, who Mansbridge wants to help, does not value the tools for helping as much as expected – at least not on the level of Congress.

The theories generated in Mansbridge's article are of course meant to be more general and might not fit every case perfectly. Some of the data from Gay's case definitely conform to the theory, like the experience with historical injustices, the other conditions might not be checked as smoothly. However, as Mansbridge herself has chosen to use data from Gay, it is strange that not everything fits.[4]

When approaching a representative, it can be hard for a subordinate group to contact a member of a historically dominant group, Mansbridge claims in her article (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 642). The data from Gay seems to support this claim, as black people were more likely to contact a black representative. But the data might also indicate that the importance of descriptive representation is

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[4] The article was published in 2002 after Mansbridge's article, which needs to be taken into account.

not as big as expected in this particular case – as there is not a significant difference in how black people feel represented by white or black representatives (who share their values).

However, reducing the standards for a subordinate group in getting their opinions heard can help justify the use of descriptive representations, and though the importance might not be as great as Mansbridge has implied, it does make a difference.

This is a reflection on ideal/non-ideal theory, as Mansbridge acknowledges the difficulties subordinate groups face when trying to enter the political sphere. This takes in the transitions needed to bridge the gap between the dominant and the subordinate group, where the end goal is that black people will contact a white representative just as easily.

One way she points out the necessity to add transitional property is by adding feasibility constraints to the standing ideal, showing that it cannot be applied to the world in its current state.
One has to eliminate those feasibility constraints in order to reach an end state.

When it comes to Mansbridges' second condition of justifying descriptive representation, where interests are uncrystallized, the answer does not appear as clear as in the first condition. This is partly because Gay is not researching those specifics in her article. Though, it is an underlying assumption when researching or arguing for descriptive representation – and Gay is also testing that assumption in her own article.

Mansbridge assumes that you can represent a group better if you are from that group – especially if you have experienced life outside of the spectrum of the dominant group. When it comes to deliberation, it is important to have those voices represented in the debate, as they cannot be represented by people who have not experienced systematic oppression.
Gay's results show that black people think they are being represented just as well with a white representative (if the representative shares their opinions) – the study shows that it is white people who value descriptive representation the most and are less likely to vote outside of their race.
Gay hypothesizes that it can be because white people attribute black people with "black interests" to a much larger degree than black people do (Gay, 2002, p. 726). This means that a white person will not vote for a black person, as they believe the black person's interest is in representing the black community, and therefore not them.

This is rather ironic in relation to Mansbridge's article, where she does the exact same, as she argues why it is important that black people represent black people.

The point here is not whether she is right or not – but what results she would have gotten if she included a black perspective, like a co-author, on descriptive representation? Would they value the transitional tools the same way as her? This will be discussed later in this part of the chapter.

As for being formerly branded not fit to rule, there is no doubt that African Americans belong to that condition. Being excluded from democracy for many years, and still having a significantly lower voter turnout than white people,[5] this shows that there are still electoral problems when it comes to securing black voices in democracy.

This can also (arguably) be seen in the data from Gay – the same way as in the second justification, through the lenses of white people. Through the exclusion, a social meaning has been created, and as Gay hypothesizes, white people might assume that black people are only representing black – and not them ((and therefore (in a worst-case scenario) making them not fit to rule all)).

This can also show the necessity of transition theory instead of just acting through the ideal of everyone just voting for whomever they want. Because it points out some of the reasons why people think some groups can or cannot represent them.

When using descriptive representation, one could fear that white people might believe that race plays an even bigger role, as an assumption for descriptive representation is that people with the same background represent each other best. Here Mansbridge weighs the cost and benefits, as she risks heightening the assumption by white people if descriptive representation is used as a tool, but at the same time risks not changing a standing system if not used.

She partly avoids too much essentialism by adding transitional properties to descriptive representation, as she makes it changeable. When presenting it as a tool, she makes people aware of an existing inequality, while still focusing on getting to a point where people do not connect ethnicity and representation.

The last justification, de facto legitimacy of the polity is not directly answered in the data from Gay. Though black people are more likely to contact black representatives, the results of the data are

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[5] https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/large-racial-turnout-gap-persisted-2020-election

limited (Gay, 2002, p. 731). Mansbridge includes a lot of non-ideal aspects into her theory when trying to even out the playing field before reaching an ideal. This is a methodically smart move, as it acknowledges that not everyone starts at the same point, and that it might not be possible to follow the pure theory in this world, and it shows that she is aware of the flaws of the standing ideals.

However, one could question if descriptive representation is the appropriate choice of action. The data from Gay both shows that descriptive representation works, but also that it is not valued as much as expected. The chapter here is not discussing whether Mansbridge is right or wrong in assuming the necessity for descriptive representation as a tool to reach a more just ideal. Though the data from Gay do not completely support her claim, there might be other data that do.

Adding the debate of ideal/non-ideal theory points out two big flaws in Mansbridge's theory, namely her use of data and her position as a philosopher, but it also shows its strengths. Though some of the points, like her position as a philosopher, do not directly connect to transitional properties, it shows the connection to the debate of ideal and non-ideal as a whole, and also shows how Mansbridge's theory bleeds into the other categories as well.

The first flaw is the use of data – or more precisely, data that has not been fully checked before referring to it. When doing non-ideal theory, one bases oneself in the real world and refers to problems from the real world to show that the ideal theory is not enough. Adding empirical data only helps if the data support your claims and helps show the necessity of non-ideal steps. After applying the theory of Mansbridge to the case with data she herself has referred to, there seems to be some problems with the use of empirical data.

A quick search on different databases shows that many studies have been done on black descriptive representation, and some with more positive results than the one from Gay. This means that Mansbridge might not have come into any trouble justifying her points, if she had referred to the correct data, or data more fit to her theory.
From a non-ideal angle, one could also question how the empirical data is used in normative theory, and how the uses of more non-ideal theory might help the focus on correct usage of data.

The second flaw is Mansbridge's own position as a philosopher. As she includes many non-ideal components into her theory, it appears curious that she does not comment on her own position, writing the theory as a white woman in academia. But as her article also includes the perspective on other marginalized groups, the critique appears a little out of context.

Though one can argue that nothing is wrong with writing theory, no matter one's position, it would strengthen her theory if she justifies her own position and explains her own way into the topic. This should not stand alone as an argument against Mansbridge, but rather something to think about when discussing the production of theory, and perhaps when conducting future research on philosophers' position in democratic theory. But when applying the debate to her article, her position will have be mentioned, as it is something widely discussed in the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory.

As mentioned above, Gay hypothesizes if white people assume that black people represent black interests, instead of the average American. Though Mansbridge might not be doing this, it would strengthen her claims if she acknowledged her own position, and how she tries to overcome biases. By acknowledging one's own position, as well as seeking advice or including voices of the people one is trying to help, one can ensure more perspectives into a theory – just as Mansbridge herself claims, when arguing that more perspectives in deliberation are needed in order to represent all.

Non-ideal theory does not discourage the production of theory, but it puts extra focus on the biases one brings to theory based on one's background. Including the debate should not discourage philosophy, but it should help the philosopher understand where they are coming from, and how that affects the production of theories.

As for strengths, Mansbridge avoids much of the harder critiques from both sides of the ideal-non-ideal spectrum by using them both when creating her theory. By standing on the shoulders of a more traditional ideal of equality, she avoids going deep into the justifications of the concepts of equality – but at the same time she acknowledges that the world is not at a point where we can start defining our society through that ideal. Her theory is not too ideal, but at the same time it is not too specific and non-ideal to discuss future wishes and end states.

4.3 Young, feasibility and critique of the norm

Young works consistently with feasibility constraints to ensure that her theory reflects the real world as much as possible. This makes her theory extensive, both in preparations to the ideal state as well as in the ideal (which is described as a non-ideal ideal). Her theory also appears ever-changing, as it will have to be changed to the specific time and place, and always has a focus on improving the situation and the problems that might appear no matter the time and place.

The theory has one key principle; "a democratic public should provide mechanisms for the effective recognition and representation of the distinct voices and perspectives of those of its constituent groups that are oppressed or disadvantaged" (Young, 1990, p. 184)
The principle seems simple at first glance – but through explaining it, we learn that it has a lot of subsections that are mentioned, but not thoroughly explained.

Applying the case to the theory is difficult. As Young makes sure to base her theory in real life, the theory has difficulties explaining what specifically is wrong with the situation of the group described in the case – it just tells us that the situation is wrong. Though the case shows many of the feasibility constraints shown by Young, the theory makes it difficult to tell what are the most severe.

I will therefore also be using the dataset by Claudine Gay to see if more specific empirical data can be explained by the theory. As Young refers a lot to Mansbridge, I thought it would be interesting to apply her theory to the same dataset by Claudine Gay. Though both Young and Mansbridge agree that we need to include the real-world situation into our theory, they disagree to what extent and for how long. The study by Gay does not work with descriptive representation as wanted in the book by Young, as descriptive representation does not exist for the social groups described in my case in congress. It is working with normal US-elections and democratic laws. The results showed limited support for descriptive representation, although black people were more likely to contact a representative from their own ethnicity.

The results are therefore not a test of Young's theory but will be looked at in light of the theory, to see if the results can be explained by it.

Instead of working towards a traditional ideal, Young creates a new non-ideal "ideal", where she rejects neutrality, arguing that that is created by the dominant class and kept as a norm (Young, 1990, p. 186). Just because something becomes the norm, does not mean it is neutral. A dominant group will struggle to represent a subordinate group, as they will see their own experience as universal, and therefore forget to put focus on other struggles that they are not a part of. Descriptive representation is therefore important when ensuring that all struggles will be dealt with.

The data from Gay shows limited support for descriptive representation, as black people do not value it as much as they need to do, according to Young's theory, if their interests as a group are to be taken seriously. Their indifference might harm them more.

But from another angle, the results could show a symptom and not a cause, as the indifference towards descriptive representation could show how powerful the universal ideal is – and the tools for black people are non-existent when having to vote for a politician.

But this turns into more of a proof why the old ideal is not working, and not a proof of her own theory.

The results from Gay, showing that descriptive representation is not valued as much as expected, also lead us to an assumption by Young, namely that the people representing, have an interest in representing a particular group, and that the people being represented will be best represented through that.

Young is very clear in her theory, that the representation should not come from an interest group or an ideology, but from a social group (Young, 1990, p. 186). This means that apart from being a "normal" politician, there is an expectation to represent the social group you come from. But the results do not show that – and that leads to the question if Young has created an (maybe unattainable, or some might even argue undesirable) ideal herself?

When analyzing the results from applying Young's theory to the case, one quickly notices two problems; that the theory merely confirms a situation without providing insights and that the theory is based on a critique of another theory, rather than on empirical data or independent thoughts.

For both the case and the data provided by Gay there is uncertainty of what the results will lead to. As the theory is so extensive, and based in the real world, the theory can take us many ways, and at the same time lead to a lot of uncertainty.

The analysis above seems chaotic and without any complete answers to the case or the data. Youngs (non)ideal seems vague, and though the way to a better world is described, it does not contain any specifics. One is unsure of which groups fit, and how those groups should organize. At the same time, it is also very clear that many groups do not qualify for descriptive representation. If she had made a number of conditions, like Mansbridge has, it would have been easier to apply. When accepting so many feasibility constraints, it can take the generality out of a theory, and that can make it difficult to apply, as shown above. Though it comes with a solution of descriptive representation, it helps more with explaining the situation of marginalized groups, than actually supplying with concrete theory that can help them get out of that situation.

Though Young's theory helps us identify the group from the case as a group that needs help, it does not specify how or to what extent. She denies access to interest groups, but she does not specify how we should ensure that the people from the minority-group are interested in representing the minority. This of course would not be a problem, if Young tried to make another ideal theory, changing the traditional end goal. However as so much of the real world is taken into account, one would assume that the theory is made ready to use and with more concrete solutions.
But when adding that many feasibility constraints, describing how the political arena is unreachable for certain groups, it becomes challenging to apply the theory to a case. Unless you conduct the research yourself, with all the constraints included, there is no guide to how the feasibility constraints should be prioritized or analyzed.

Though ideal theories can definitely have too few constraints, it might also be possible to find a middle ground, or a way to make the theory applicable to a wider arrangement of cases. That can be done by ranking the constraints, or suggesting an order to go, when the general terms are fulfilled. Mansbridge gets her way around this by suggesting four conditions that need to be filled, before one can justify descriptive representation. If Young had done that herself, she would be able to help the application of the theory to a case.

When going full non-ideal one has to look at the application area of the theory, as the feasibility constraints can make the theory difficult to apply to real life cases, without just helping to describe a situation rather than to change it. This is also the case here; The theory ends up not saying much, as there is much uncertainty on how to use it.

Though there is nothing wrong with that, how does Young ensure that the theory is still useful? When a theory cannot be applied, because too much is missing, it might be hard to find out where to even start, when fixing a situation. This goes against what she is actually meaning to do, as she describes how the old ideals are ineffective in making a real difference.

Another problem with the production of her theory is the justification of her own concepts and principles; Her own theory is partly a critique of the unsuccessfulness of the old ideals, particularly the Rawlsian approach to making theory (Young, 1990, p. 101), arguing that that will not be found in real life. She argues that the plurality of people will lead to better outcomes, as it better captures the real world. Young criticizes the old ideals of democratic theory – the ideals of unity and that everyone should be treated the same. She argues that it only carries on the ideology from the dominant groups in society, making their cause "neutral" (Young, 1990, p. 186). By trying to generalize and group people together, you lose perspectives that might improve society and the democratic decisions made.

In criticizing Rawlsian theory, she falls into the trap described by Valentini. She ends up criticizing a theory that has a completely different purpose than her own. Rawls is not describing how the world is, and he is not making theory to fit exactly on the current issues in the world. When Rawls is placing people behind the veil of ignorance, he is well aware that such scenarios cannot happen in the real world.

Theories made in ideals are being applied to the real world – and that is a problem. But it is not the theory's problem, it is the actors behind applying that theory. Young captures that – but she puts the blame on the wrong actor (the philosopher). And though there might be much to critique on that way of doing philosophy, she is criticizing it from the wrong platform.

By making that clearer in her book, her critique would be stronger. By adding the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory, it might make it clearer in understanding the purpose of the theory – and it will help her criticize other theories. This will strengthen her theories on representation.

At the same time, basing her own theory on more empirical data, as she wishes it to mirror the real world, would strengthen her claims far more than by proving that the other theories are wrong. A wrong theory does not necessarily make her own theory right.

4.4 Pitkin. What damage can a theory really do?

The concept of representation by Hanna Pitkin is one of the most used works on political representation, and is currently being cited by 13102 on Google Scholar.[6] The book has had a massive influence on how we think of representation theory (Dovi, 2018), and a lot of new works, even critiques of her book, stem from her four definitions on representation.

Applying the case to Pitkin's theory will be a bit different, as she does not work with a specific case in mind, but rather tries to figure out what representation is and what it should be. I therefore start by using Pitkin's ideal to describe how my case should ideally look, and thereafter look at the distance between the ideal described and how the real world is.

As mentioned in chapter two, Pitkin is in the camp of ideal theory, and most prominent in the strand of compliance theory, as she focuses on how the person representing is acting, or rather how they should act, in order to get the most successful representation of the people. When assuming substantive representation, Pitkin argues that the person representing is reflecting the voters' wishes, calling representatives "Servants of the sovereign people" (Pitkin, 1967, s. 117).

This means that ideally it would not matter who represents black people, as the representative serves the will and wishes of all the people that have voted for them. This implies a couple of implications; that black people will feel just as represented when represented by a white person; that black and white engagement in democracy should be the same; and that black and white people will be not only formally equal but also informally, as well as many other implications.
Ideally, there would not be a case as described earlier in this chapter, as there would not be a significant distance between the case and the rest of the population in terms of representation. The

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[6] On the 30th of March 2023

interests of black people would be just as well represented as the rest of the population's. There would be no need for descriptive representation at all.

In the real world – that is not the case. Even though one could argue that the data from Gay formerly referred to fits a lot of the theory – there is data that completely disagrees with Pitkin, not only on representation, but also on democratic engagement and equality. As mentioned in the part about Mansbridge, the voter turnout for black people is significantly lower than for white people.

If there was no significant difference between the two ethnicities, there would not be several studies in several fields investigating it – there would be no need for investigation at all.
The distance between the ideal and how the world really is, is therefore big enough to investigate. We cannot apply the theory as is, because it is too far away from the real world. At the same time application would be difficult, as technicalities of the theory are not described.

But as Pitkin is dealing with ideals, it would not be fair to judge her based on the real world, as she is not describing what is, but what should be. The theory was also produced several decades before the introduction of the ideal and non-ideal debate and its comments on the current political climate – and it has naturally not been written with the debate in mind. This of course is true for all theories and is what this thesis is testing.

Criticizing Pitkin from a non-ideal angle therefore takes a different form – as Pitkin had no chance of knowing the political climate of today. Then again, when writing conceptual ideal theory, one also assumes some amount of timelessness, as the theory is supposed to withstand different times and cases. The question is; would she re-write her work after the non-ideal critique, or will it help strengthen her theory to involve some of the critique?

Pitkin assumes full compliance when writing her theory and to find out what true representation is. If she did not do that, and had to write with the real world in mind, her results would have looked very different. If one were to introduce partial compliance, it would take from the essence and timelessness of the concept.

Assuming full compliance is not in itself wrong, as there are different purposes and goals when making theory, but when facing non-ideal critique, one has to justify that decision and show why it cannot be done with partial compliance.

Rawls does that by assuming that most people would comply, when they have a reason to (Moen, 2022, p. 6)[7]. But can that reasoning be applied to Pitkin?

As argued earlier, when writing democratic theory, one has to include people and institutions far more than justice theory, as democratic theory deals with not only pure theory, but the application of that theory into real world electoral systems. This leads to the question; does it make sense for Pitkin to assume full compliance?

The distance from the ideal to the real world seems big enough to question if the theory from Pitkin will be useful today, or maybe even in the future. And one could argue that such an ideal does not help democratic theory, as the usage of the theory could end up hurting assumptions, we have about representee behavior. In a worst case it could dull voters into accepting representatives, as they believe the representative acts in their best interest.

This is of course not a problem, if Pitkin makes it clear of what she is assuming, and what the purpose of her theory is. And namely this problem shows when analyzing her theory through the lens of ideal and non-ideal theory. One is not completely sure of the purpose, as she uses so many real-life examples.

Applying the debate to her theories also asks another theoretical important question: What implications does the production of ideal democratic theory have for the way we understand the world? As mentioned above, Pitkin has been widely used in democratic theory – but can the making of an unreachable ideal damage the way we analyze representation today?

Through the constructivist turn Pitkin has been widely criticized as subjective representation, the one she argues for, does not fit the real world. Michael Saward takes on Pitkin's Concept of representation claiming that it is too narrow and ultimately ignores the many aspects and sides of representation in a democracy; "Representation may well have a core meaning – making something

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[7] See chapter 1.2 for a more detailed explanation.

present in some sense that is literally absent (e.g., as Hanna Pitkin argues). By contrast, I argue that it is the rendering of such a claim of presence that is most crucial to understanding political representation" (Saward, 2010)

He argues that what Pitkin has done, understanding the core of representation, is not the most important aspect one can do when researching representation. Instead, one should focus on all the aspects around the term – moving the question from a what to a how (Saward, 2010). Saward is moving away from a static understanding of representation and towards an understanding that changes with time and with new challenges in democracy. This is the complete opposite of Pitkin, who, although doing normative evolutions, tries to find a static concept of representation. Though not walking through the entire theory to Saward, it is important to note that through his and other constructivist scholars' critique, the view of how we should research representation has changed. There have been questions of the necessity of knowing the ideals, and rather a shift towards finding out processes and influences in relation to representation, which diminishes the importance of Pitkin's work.

This critique matches with a non-ideal critique of ideals, and especially arm-chair philosophizing. When applying Pitkin's theory to real life cases, the results can be dangerous if one does not realize that Pitkin is working with ideals. But does one realize that? Pitkin herself refers a lot to the real world, and it might take some time to realize that she is doing conceptual normative ideal theory. One could wonder how the theories of Pitkin have affected democratic analysis in general. But does that responsibility lie on the reader or the philosopher? Both, one could argue, as theory deserves to be thoroughly read to be understood – but good theory should not leave the readers with doubt or confusion.

Criticizing Pitkin through the lens of non-idealism shows a big flaw in Pitkin's theory; that she is not clear of the purpose and how the theory is to be used. When discussing other types of representation, like descriptive representation, and showing us their flaws, Pitkin is not necessarily helping her own theory, as it does not fit perfectly as well, and it confuses the reader, as the others are critiqued through the lens of the real world.

By being clearer of her purpose can help Pitkin placing her theory in the sphere of democratic theory, helping the reader to understand what to use the theory for.

One can always discuss the necessity of a theory, it can also be justified quite easily, as we humans are curious, and starting a project of finding a core is something done in many different fields. Though newer theories might disprove or make her ideals less important, the creation of ideals is still an important subject in democratic theory, and through the critique above, Pitkin should be able to defend its place in democratic theory.

4.5 Summary of results

When adding the debate to the theories, flaws or potential improvements of theory are shown. In the table below, I have summarized the most important points from the analysis above.

	Mansbridge	Young	Pitkin
Results from adding the debate to the theories	• *Flaws in uses of empirical data* • *Questions the philosopher behind the theory and their own assumptions* • *Combines ideal and non-ideal theory when handling transitions from one realm to another*	• *Uses a lot of feasibility constraints while not being clear on how to use the theory* • *Bases her own theory on criticizing other* • *Forgets to criticize on the right platform*	• *Not clear of the purpose of her theory, which can create confusion* • *Newer theories questions if her way of doing representational theories are still relevant today*

Chapter 5: Discussion of results

Applying the debate to the three theories from Young, Mansbridge and Pitkin pointed out some aspects left undiscussed, either with the production of their respective theories or with the conclusions drawn.

When making theory, and especially theory to try to solve contemporary issues, one often refers to data, supporting one's claims. Mansbridge does that in her article on descriptive representation, but presents the results in a misleading way, only referring to data that supports her claim.
Another result from the chapter above, when looking at Mansbridge through a non-ideal lens, is her position when writing her theory. Both in the sense as a philosopher using empirical data, but also the background to the philosopher, and what assumptions that background contains.

At the same time Mansbridge does some clever reasoning, reflecting on the different ways to reach an ideal, with combining both aspects from ideal and non-ideal theory into a plan to reach an end-state.

Young works with a lot of feasibility constraints which ensures that she bases her theory on the real world, rather than on ideals she has criticized throughout her book. She takes a clear non-ideal approach to theory but fails to specify the "how" part of her theory, or how one should deal with a non-static theory. This makes it difficult to apply to real life cases, as one is left unsure of what is right or wrong – what works and what does not.

On a more theoretical point, Young seems to base large parts of her theory on critique of Rawls and other ideal philosophers, however instead of finding support elsewhere for her own theory, she bases the proof in the critique. Her critique ends up failing, as she criticizes Rawls on the wrong platform. Young herself is not completely free of ideals, she is using ideals of for example equality or justice, but she does not mention how those can be justified in terms of her theory.

Pitkin, unlike the two others, writes an ideal piece, focusing on what ideal representation is. But as much of her argumentation is based on why certain types of representation have problems in the real world, the purpose of the theory can easily get lost. As mentioned in the chapter above, there is

nothing wrong with writing an ideal piece, but problems might arise when people are not completely aware of that, or when she is unclear.

The results of the case study have shown, that when you apply the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory to democratic theories, one is more easily made aware of flaws in the theory – or potential points that needs to be evaluated, if one wishes to guard oneself against a certain type of critique.

By adding the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory to democratic theories, one gets a clear view of flaws and potential improvements for the theory. This will not only help improve old theories, but also help democratic theories in the future, as one gets a list of things one should note when developing theories. As shown in the chapter above, application of the debate to democratic theories can be challenging, but it is still manageable as the theories have much in common with theories of justice, where the debate originated from.

While we are usually busy looking for logical flaws and inconsistency of arguments, the debate helps with finding methodological flaws in a theory. This helps to understand a theory from a bigger perspective and to place the theory in the framework of democratic theory.

The debate on ideal and non-ideal theory is more than a debate on what type of theory is most important. Though this thesis does not discuss what a right theory is, the debate on ideal and non-ideal theory has more potential than to just answer that question; it is a tool to understand how a theory is produced, and to understand the purpose of a theory. Application of the debate, or awareness of the debate, helps the philosopher reflect on her own purpose, assumptions and goals before even starting to write the theory.

That understanding can help lift the theory from a single individual theory to a theory produced in a network of other theories. And it can help both the reader and the philosopher to understand how to use that given theory.

From a more general point of view, introducing the debate to the field of democratic theory questions how the theory is produced, and what is assumed. As argued earlier, a lot of assumptions

in democratic theory stem from justice theory, and it is therefore natural that democratic theorists start discussing those assumptions as well. One could wonder why it has not been done before.

And exactly this shows why it is important to expand the debate from justice theory to democratic theory – as it can help improve or develop theories.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the use of ideal and non-ideal theory in democratic theories, by adding them to the framework from justice theory. Through original research the thesis has shown that it is not only possible to add democratic theory to the debate – it is also useful in understanding the theory behind democratic theories of representation.

The second chapter dealt with understanding the debate as it is in justice theory, creating a framework that would later be used in the thesis. Showing that democratic theory can be added to the debate was the main focus of the third chapter, as it answered the first sub-question of the research question: *"Is it possible to add democratic theories to the framework of the ideal and non-ideal debate on theories?"* and paved the way for further analysis in chapter four, answering the second sub-question: *"how can theories of representation be understood through the lens of ideal and non-ideal theories?"* In chapter three and four, three theories from the philosophers Iris Marion Young, Jane Mansbridge and Hanna Pitkin were used, both to add to the debate, and later to add the debate to. The analysis showed the flaws in the theories, eventually leading to the discussion in chapter five, where I concluded that adding the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory to democratic theory is beneficial not only to standing theories, but to the development of new ones, answering the main research question: *"What can the addition of the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory add to the understandings and development of democratic theories?"* with a walkthrough of the fallacies made by the philosophers, for example the use of data, their own position, how they justify their arguments and how clear they show the purpose of their theories.

The whole thesis shows the benefits of adding the debate to democratic theories, while also questioning why it has not been done before, by arguing that democratic theory and justice theory have much in common.

In the introduction, it is stated that this assignment wishes to help expand democratic theory. And while an expansion of every aspect of democratic theory is a bit too ambitious for a master's thesis, it has shown that the debate of ideal and non-ideal theory can be applied to theories of representation, with results that could potentially help improve those theories.

Starting at the intersection between justice theory and democratic theory, theories of representation have many components from justice theory, and base a lot of their justifications on themes like equality or justice.

But what about other theories of democracy? Though not being tested in this thesis, I would argue that it would be possible to expand this project and apply the debate to other theories within the field of justice theory, as they too have a lot in common with justice theory, though some may argue that parts can be further from the intersection between the two line of theories.
As said earlier, democratic theory rests on a lot of assumptions from justice theory, without necessarily justifying those assumptions. It would therefore be natural to think that if justice theory is reviewing itself, it would also apply to democratic theory.

This thesis is a good starting point for investigating ideal and non-ideal theory in democratic thought, as it firstly shows that it is possible to use the debate and secondly, that the results produced will help democratic theory. But this thesis is only the starting point, and much could be researched in the future depending on the approach. One could for example investigate where justice theory and democratic theory split (if one believes they have the same origin), one could look at the position of the philosophers in democratic thought or one could apply the debate to another branch of democratic thought, adding on to the argument of this thesis and widening it.

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