



Universität Stuttgart

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**Democracy
without Shortcuts:
The democratic ideal
of self-government
and the
problem of blind
deference**

Vortrag

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**Democracy without Shortcuts:
The democratic ideal of self-government
and the problem of blind deference**

In reaction to growing discontent in democratic societies, many conceptions of democracy offer reform proposals that are supposed to be helpful “shortcuts” for solving difficult problems of democratic governance such as overcoming disagreements, citizens’ political ignorance, or poor-quality deliberation within the public sphere. I examine the institutional proposals offered by deep pluralist, epistocratic andlottocratic conceptions of democracy. I show that, for all their conceptual and political differences, these conceptions promise to help us reach better political outcomes ‘faster’ by relying on citizens’ blind deference to the political decisions of others. However, an expectation of blind deference is quintessentially incompatible with the democratic ideal of self-government. In addition, these proposals naively assume that a political community can reach better outcomes if it bypasses the actual beliefs and attitudes of its own citizens. Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts to make a political community better than its members, nor can a community achieve progress ‘faster’ by leaving its citizens behind. Against these views, I conclude that the only road to better political outcomes is the long, participatory road that is taken when citizens forge a collective political will by changing one another’s hearts and minds.

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