

5. Music: Playful Power for the Personal and the Political

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On one thing most scholars of the impact of music agree: music is an incredibly powerful (emotional) force (Garofalo, 2010). However, its force can be used to achieve highly disparate goals. For instance, music's capacity to generate positive feelings and emotions, is used in the public domain to influence activities such as buying behaviour or to force people into a calm mood in public spaces. Garofalo (2010) describes how music can be exclusionary. Music organizes society into sub groups or subcultures. Music can be used to promote patriotism and national identity, distinguishing the in-group from the out-group. In national contexts, for instance, music is used to mobilize citizens by singing a national anthem. At public events, such as a soccer match, songs distinguish the supporters of one team from the others. In authoritarian regimes, music is employed as part of the propaganda machine. In the past, art, music, visual arts, theatre, and film have been used by various oppressive regimes to propagate their ideological view: the former Soviet Union, North Korea, and Nazi Germany are a few examples. At the other end of the spectrum, we find examples in which music's capacity to mobilize people is used as a force for resistance and/or solidarity. Music—protest songs—play a distinct role in the resistance against repression. Solidarity is often the goal when music is used as a means to build bridges and unite people or to help people in need as was the case, e.g., with Band Aid and Live Aid (Garofalo, 2010). As we will come to see, making music and singing tends to generate a feeling of togetherness and triggers our emotions—but it does so whatever the aims of the

gathering. This means that, if art is to work for solidarity or as a device to create tolerance, it should be directed at doing so.

This contribution explores how and in what context participation in the arts contributes to positive feelings, which result in enhanced individual and group skills and empowerment, which in turn, will positively benefit society and the creation of public value. This is an urgent matter for several reasons. The cultural and social dynamics in western welfare states, such as the Netherlands, demand changes on many levels. The roles of citizens are changing as a consequence of the aging population, the financial and economic crisis, huge cutbacks in governmental spending, and governmental decentralization processes. Moreover, the current arrival of large numbers of refugees, and the subsequent tensions between groups of people, combined with the rise of a network society, cry for creative solutions to create public value for all citizens. Elsewhere in this volume, Trienekens argues that citizenship in a post-multicultural context demands skills that enable all citizens, with their various backgrounds and needs, to participate in a shared public democratic culture consisting of relationships built around shared interests and needs. These skills are also known as transversal skills: the skill to listen, to debate, to be empathic, and to resolve conflicts. Nussbaum (2013) describes the values of a “just” society, in which people of all ages, cultural and social backgrounds can participate in an environment of equality, inclusion, and distribution. An advisory committee to the Dutch Ministry of Culture and Education writes that “in our future education the emphasis is on participating in a democratic society and about respect for each other” (Ons onderwijs 2032).

Practices in the field of community development show that these skills, and other competencies needed in contemporary society, do not come automatically, but must be cultivated by citizens, civil servants, policy makers, and professionals in a wide variety of domains. It calls for different forms of interaction. Music Generations, however small its programmes may be, can be understood as a practical example and forerunner of these new forms of interaction. In this contribution, I set out to explore *how* it is that participation in the arts can have a positive societal impact (cf. Bos, 2015). To make a case for the arts, I venture into various academic disciplines. First, I explore how positive feelings are generated, according to psychologists, and with the help of insights from sociology, I explore the benefits for groups and the broader society. In the second part, I focus on the arts, especially on music. How does it generate emotions, what emotions are evoked, and in what context will participation in the arts benefit or contribute to the skills needed in a democratic “just” society?

Positive Emotions, Emotional Energy, and Play

The end of the last century saw increased interest in positive psychology. The work of scholars such as Csikszentmihalyi (1997) and Frederickson (1998) intended to counter the dominant focus on negative emotions in psychology. These emotions tend to narrow people’s thinking as well as their focus, and are the cause of many problems for people and their environment. Negative emotions also tend to narrow people’s “thought-action repertoire.” Positive psychology looks at positive emotions and their impact on an individual.

In his theory, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) outlines that people are happiest when they experience a state of “flow.” This is a state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand

and the situation. In an interview with *Wired* magazine, Csikszentmihalyi described flow as “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. This is a feeling everyone has at times, characterized by a feeling of great absorption, engagement, fulfillment, and skill” (Geirland, 1996). The ego falls away. Time flies. One forgets to eat. Every action, movement, and thought follows the previous one almost automatically. One’s whole being is involved and skills are used optimally. To reach a state of flow, people need a goal and the skills to reach it. All kinds of activities can lead to this state, e.g., ironing, repairing motorbikes, singing, and dancing. In *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Csikszentmihalyi outlines his theory that people are happiest when they are in a state of *flow*. He even maintains that possessions and income above an elementary level of living are not contributing to happiness, but the—repeated—experience of flow does.

In 1998, Frederickson published an article called *What good are positive emotions?* The purpose of the article is “to introduce a new model of the form and function of a subset of discrete positive emotions.” Not only does she aim to level the uneven knowledge base between negative and positive emotions; she also intends to enhance “applications and interventions that might improve individual and collective functioning, psychological well-being, and physical health” (Frederickson, 1998). She refers to a wide range of research literature, including her own, to show how—repeated—positive emotions influence people’s thinking and acting (thought-action repertoire). People that experience repeated positive emotions feel better, and are more open. This, in turn, has the effect of building the individual’s physical, intellectual, and social resources. Frederickson refers to this finding as the “Broaden and Built” model. This model thus assumes that positive emotions are necessary for sound individual and collective functioning.

Frederickson more specifically describes the form and function of a subset of positive emotions: including joy, interest, contentment, and love. She considers these emotions to be fundamental human resources with multiple advances. Positive emotions build and broaden the thought-action repertoire, and counter lingering negative emotions. They also fuel psychological resilience, and help to develop this resilience; thus they contribute to an upward spiral to enhanced emotional wellbeing. These positive emotions she refers to can be evoked by a wide variety of activities, and among those the active and receptive participation in arts (and culture).

Joy

As Frederickson (1998) explores the emotions of joy, interest, contentment, and love, she looks at their conceptual space, how the thought-action repertoire is constructed, and what its possible effects are. Joy, she writes, shares conceptual space with other relatively high-arousal positive emotions such as amusement, elation, and gladness (cf. de Rivera et al., 1989). Joy is often used interchangeably with happiness (Lazarus, 1986) and feelings of joy arise in contexts appraised as safe and familiar. She quotes Frijda (1986) to underpin the action tendency associated with joy. Frijda refers to it as free activation: “[it] is in part aimless, unasked-for readiness to engage in whatever interaction presents itself and in part readiness to engage in enjoyments” (in Frederickson, 1998, p. 304).

According to Frederickson, joy creates the urge to play and to be playful in the broadest sense of the word, encompassing not only physical and social play, but also intellectual and artistic play. The urge to play represents a generic, nonspecific thought-action tendency. Joy and related positive emotions can thus be described as broadening an individual’s thought-action repertoire.

Joy can have the incidental effect of building an individual's physical, intellectual, and social skills. These new resources, she argues, are long-lasting and can be drawn from, long after the instigating experience of joy has subsided.

Interest

Interest is, in Frederickson's view, sometimes used interchangeably with curiosity, intrigue, excitement, or wonder, and shares conceptual space with challenge and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Interest arises in contexts appraised as safe and as offering novelty, change, and a sense of possibility (Izard, 1977) or mystery (Kaplan, 1992). The momentary thought-action tendency sparked by interest, according to Izard (1977), is exploration, explicitly and actively aimed at increasing knowledge of and experience with the target of interest. Importantly, the openness to new ideas, experiences, and actions is what characterises the mind-set of interest as broadened, rather than narrower.

Interest also builds the individual's store of knowledge. Again, this store of knowledge becomes a long-lasting resource that can be accessed in later moments. DeNora (2010) shows how Izard (1977) pushed this idea further, for he understands interest as the primary instigator of personal growth, creative endeavour, and the development of intelligence.

Contentment

Contentment is, in Frederickson's view (1998), often used interchangeably with other low-arousal positive-emotion terms such as tranquillity or serenity, and shares conceptual space with mild or receptive joy (Izard, 1977). As she explores various theoretical writings on contentment

and related positive emotions, she suggests (referring to De Rivera et al., 1989; Izard, 1977), that “this emotion prompts individuals to savour their current life circumstances and recent successes, experience “oneness” with the world around them, and integrate recent events and achievements into their overall self-concept and world view.” She links contentment to the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1990) by describing it to be the positive emotion that follows the stage of flow. Associations with integration, receptiveness, and increasing self-complexity characterise contentment as an emotion that broadens individuals’ momentary thought-action repertoires and builds their personal resources.

Love

Love theorists acknowledge that love is not a single emotion and that people experience varieties of love, e.g., romantic or passionate love, compassionate love, caregiver love, or the attachment to caregivers. Frederickson holds the position that love experiences are made up of many positive emotions, including interest, joy, and contentment. She refers to Izard, who maintains that “acquaintances or friends renew your interest by revealing new aspects of themselves and the resulting increase in familiarity (deeper knowledge of the person) brings joy (and contentment)” (Frederickson, 1998, p. 308). Frederickson points out that this cycle is repeated endlessly in lasting friendships or love relationships. And this helps to “build and solidify an individual’s social resources” (Frederickson, 1998, p. 308). These social resources, like intellectual and physical resources, can be accumulated and drawn from at later times.

Rituals

The findings of the sociologist Collins (2004), in spite of his different disciplinary approach, are more or less similar. Repeated positive experiences do generate a more positive view of people about themselves and people tend to become more closely connected with the people with whom they share this experience. This effect is not, as Frederickson sees it, a casual effect of such an experience. In Collins' reasoning, these feelings are generated through the collective experience of rituals. Collins sees a ritual as a ceremony, the going through a set of stereotyped actions where emotions are shared. A ritual is an amplifier of emotion; we as people are literally stimulated or even aroused by a successful ritual. Such a ritual can be a sports event, a great lecture, sex, or a cultural event. During a ritual, emotional charge is built up from entrainment: the micro coordination between participants' gestures, eye contact, and other forms of physical resonance with others involved, thus emotions are shared.

To be with other people during a concert generates a different energy than the one we perceive when listening to a concert alone at home. Especially when the public participates in one way or the other. Collins argues that repeated positive ritual experiences generate emotional energy. This energy makes them think more positively about themselves and the people in their group, and from there, a feeling of solidarity rises among the group members. Moreover, they carry this emotional energy with them, also outside the context of the ritual. Referring to Frederickson, joy and interest might play an important role in these rituals. Similarly, Sennett points to and elaborates on the pleasures of working together in *The Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation* (2012).

Play

Much earlier, in the 1930s, the Dutch historian Huizinga (1938) wrote in his book *Homo Ludens* about the role of play for people and its impact on society. He points out how play, and he includes concerts, theatre, film, and sports in his concept of play, is enacted outside reason, duty, and truth. Agreements about a time slot, the rules, and the place where it is enacted distinguishes play from the real; it is a free space next to and outside of the real. Huizinga even noted that people participating as a group in a play activity are connected, just because they do something special or even secret, not shared by others in the real world. The actual difference between “playing” in a cultural activity and playing in an activity such as sports is that it calls on creativity. The participants create something (new). There are some rules, and within those, a lot of freedom. In sports as a play, the creative space is more limited. Play in sports generally has a competitive character and a relatively tight set of rules apply.

In short

Both Collins and Huizinga thus maintain that positive experiences evoke positive emotions. These emotions help people to think more positively about themselves and help them to raise their self-esteem. People with a positive view of themselves tend to have a more open attitude toward the people around them. According to Collins, the collective experience of a ritual generates emotional energy, which, once it is evoked in people, is maintained. This emotional energy also functions outside the circle where it was generated. Frederickson then shows that people, due to their—repeated—emotions of joy, interest, contentment and love, are more open to and interested in the broader environment. Their attitude is more open and receptive due to their positive experiences, personal growth, and a sense of control over one’s life that comes with it. She does not explicitly address the impact of emotions generated by group activities, as

Huizinga and Collins do. But she too finds that, when people participated in a group and experienced the pleasure of working together, they tended to become more interested in their group members, in people *outside* their group, and more willing to do something for them. These positive experiences can be generated through various activities, including the arts. The arts can be considered to be particularly interesting, as they seem to foster the exploration of creativity, of new ways of thinking and acting.

Researching Music (Arts) and Emotion

Although few would disagree with the assertion that to participate in arts and culture is beneficial for the people involved, it is not yet fully understood *how* positive emotions can be evoked through participation in arts and culture and how the impact of the arts on individuals, their social environment, and society at large, comes about. However, more and more research becomes available showing that people experience positive feelings or emotions when participating in the arts (Matarasso, 1997; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004; Trienekens & van Miltenberg, 2009; Van den Hoogen, Elkhuizen, & van Maanen, 2010; Belfiore, 2010; LKCA, 2013; Scherder, 2015). Especially, the effect of music has been researched by various academic disciplines. “Music and emotion,” for instance, is the subject of an impressive handbook by Juslin and Soboda (2010). It illustrates how music has been used in a number of applications in society that presume its effectiveness in evoking emotions: marketing, film, and music therapy. It too shows the positive effect music can have on individuals in various contexts.

Research into the impact of music is conducted in a wide range of academic disciplines. The brief exploration of several of these disciplines allows us to accumulate insight into the workings of music and/or art in general.

Neurobiology

Among others, Scherder (2015), Koelsch, Siebel, & Fritz (2010), Peretz (2010), and Sacks (2010) researched, from the perspective of neurobiology, what happens in our brains when we listen to or make music. Scherder (2015), for instance, describes how art challenges our brain and causes excitement, feelings of love for what we see, listen to, or experience. This is caused by the interplay of the brainstem, the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex. The brain is stimulated by listening to music, looking at visual art, and even more so by actively playing music or creating art. The reward circuit is activated and one longs for more. For our understanding of music's impact on emotions, it is important to know that, when we participate in the arts, primal parts of our brains are also triggered. This corresponds to different parts of the brain than the cognitive ones; the primal parts are beyond our direct control.

In a project called Strong Experiences with Music (Gabrielson, 2006, 2010), over five hundred people were asked to describe their strongest, most intense experience of music that they have ever had. The reactions people described were classified in a variety of categories. Among the experiences people described were physiological reactions such as tears and thrills, goose bumps, muscle tension, and perspiration. Behavioural actions were also registered such as jumping and clapping, moments of complete absorption, and loss of control. Respondents even mentioned existential and transcendental experiences.

Hodges (2010), based on his meta-analysis of more than fifty studies on psycho-physiological effects of music, classifies the effects in various categories such as skin conductance, heart or

pulse rate, respiration, blood pressure, muscular tension, temperature, gastric motility, and various other phenomena. Among his many findings, he states that stimulating, arousing music tends to cause an increase in heart rate, while sedative music tends to cause the opposite. Some of the studies find a similar connection for blood pressure, but other studies do not. Hodges confirms the idea of people experiencing chills, thrills; such as shivering, goose bumps, tingling along the spine, and he explores how listeners respond to music with body movements, i.e., physiologically. Most studies in his meta-analysis underpin the idea that music, in various ways, stimulates the uncontrollable primal parts of our brain, next to other brain parts that we can influence (more or less).

This finding helps us to understand why music has such an impact: it (also) has an effect on the areas of our brain that we either cannot (brainstem) or only partly (limbic system) influence, which makes listening or playing music, in a sense, a “magical,” powerful experience.

Social Psychology

From the perspective of social psychology, Juslin and Västfäll (2008) consider emotion to be a construct, which points to a set of phenomena of feelings, bodily behaviours, and bodily reactions that occur together in everyday life. The task of emotion psychology is to describe these phenomena and to explain them in terms of their underlying processes. The explanations can be formulated at different levels: feelings, types of information processing, and on a hardware level (brains, hormones, genes). They state that the emotional response to music occurs in a complex interaction between the music, the listener, and the context. As such, extra-musical variables influence emotional responses. For instance, goals and motives of listeners play an

important role (see also DeNora 2010). Psychologists agree that emotions are biologically based, but also acknowledge a range of socio-cultural influences.

Like some of the neurobiologists, psychologists also find that music not only transfers emotions, but also evokes them. Moreover, Juslin & Västfäll's (2008) findings show that music evokes mainly *positive* emotions in listeners. They point out the most frequently reported responses by their respondents to music were "calm contentment" and "happiness elation" (more than 50 per cent of the emotions reported), while negative emotions such as anger-irritation or anxiety-fear only occurred in five per cent of the cases. According to Juslin and Västfäll, positive emotions were also more prevalent in musical than in non-musical events. Additionally, they found an emotional change during the musical episode and almost ninety per cent of the changes were positive. Juslin and Sloboda (2010) maintain that musical emotions are evoked through the activation of one or more mechanisms, each incorporating a distinct type of information processing. Juslin and Västfäll (2008) described these mechanisms as brain stem reflexes, emotional contagion, visual imagery, episodic memory, and musical expectancy.

These findings help us understand that music not only transfers, but also evokes emotions. The brainstem reflexes are mentioned both by neurobiologists and psychologists. The psychological studies added insight into complementary mechanisms such as emotional contagion, episodic memory, and musical expectancy are added. What emotions are evoked in a particular person depends on the goals, motives, and context of the listener or performer. It is also important to note that music mainly evokes positive emotions. These findings deepen our understanding of how music is a powerful force.

Sociology

The music sociologist DeNora (2010) shows us some important findings of research on music and sociology. She maintains that Collins' work on rituals and emotional energy, (re)created space for emotions in the domain of sociology. She explores how people appropriate music as a resource for emotional experience. People link forms of music to forms of social life as part of their on-going constitution of their life worlds and themselves (cf. Hall, 1986). People use music as a resource to construct their identity and to create and maintain a variety of feelings. DeNora refers to this as "aesthetic agency"; she uses this term "to highlight the consumption of aesthetic media as a means for self-interpretation and self-constitution" (2010, p. 168). She shows, by referring to studies by Gomart (1999) and herself (DeNora, 2000, 2010), how music is used as a device for "emotional work": "the bodily cooperation with an image, a thought, a memory; a cooperation of which the individual is aware" (1999, p. 171). In these studies respondents describe how they use music "to regulate moods and energy levels, to maintain desired states of feeling (e.g. relaxation, excitement) or to diminish or modify undesirable emotional states (e.g. stress, fatigue)" (DeNora, 2010, p. 171). Other studies show (Batt Rawden, 2006) that people with chronic diseases can learn to use music to regulate their emotions in order to manage and cope with their situation. In a contribution by Thaut (2010) on active and passive methods of music therapy, this is confirmed. Active methods involve making (playing) music, and receptive ones listening to music.

Social/Political Sciences

DeNora (2010, p. 163) quotes Martin (1995) on the idea of how music can be an important means for social action. Martin describes music as the non-cognitive basis of the ability and the will to act and to engage in social action. Music helps people to feel and become conscious of a situation. Matarasso (1997), for instance, found that arts projects can nurture local democracy. Participation in (community) arts encourages people to become more active citizens and strengthens their support for local and self-help projects. In one of his studies, after participating in an art project, almost two-thirds of the participants indicated that they were willing to participate in other community projects (Matarasso, 1997).

Obviously, there is also the notion of music as protest, as resistance against repressive regimes as the introduction to this article mentioned. Music can be interpreted as providing political guidance. As was already described by Eyermen and Jamieson in an interview with a participant looking back at how they treated Bob Dylan's music during his period in Students for Democratic Society in the 1960's: "We followed his career as if he was singing our songs: we got in the habit of asking where he was taking us next" (1998, p. 116). In this respect, music plays a role in the structure of social collective action. It works as a prescriptive device of agency (in its dynamics, sounds, harmonies, and textures) through which people can appreciate themselves as agents with particular capacities for social action.

Another illustration of the socio-political impact of music is its contribution to conflict resolution. Music can function as a means for transforming existing emotional dynamics between adverse groups. Chapter 2 referred to Syrious Mission's work in Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra of Arab and Israeli musicians. The idea of

resolving conflicts through music may possibly be too ambitious. Still, people of conflicting groups meet one another in music or arts activities and get to know one another. Sharing their passion for singing and playing music (or theatre, for that matter) can contribute to mutual understanding. Bergh (2007, in DeNora, 2010, p. 177) points out that it seemed important to avoid wishful thinking or the over-estimation of music's great capacities. Nonetheless, we should remain open to the actual findings showing that "despite its reputation as a 'universal language,' music's powers operate (...) typically via grassroots appropriations of music, which themselves require unpacking if music is to become an effective resource for the resolution of conflicts."

The question of *how* such impact comes about is not addressed in studies such as the ones mentioned here. With the help of the research on positive psychology, their findings can however be better understood and interpreted as a result of the positive emotions (joy, interest, contentment, and love) people experience during arts projects, and the effect these emotions have on their thought-action repertoire.

Impact on the Personal, the Social and Society

Maton (2008), in his empowerment theory, perceives of a setting where making and listening to music are shared, as an empowering setting. Such settings are distinctive as they contribute at the same time to psychological, social, and civic empowerment (Maton & Brodsky, 2011).

On a personal, psychological level, we know music and other art forms can generate positive experiences, as they evoke positive emotions. We know music is a powerful force and this seems also to be likely for other art forms. Art, and especially music, is highly forceful since it triggers

primordial layers of our brain, next to more cognitive layers. Having repeated positive experiences helps people to feel better, to develop (more) self-esteem, to be of value, and be worthy and to “allow themselves to be,” and thus to open up their thought-action repertoire.

When it comes to the experience and connection on a social group level, music seems to be a powerful means for (amateur) musicians and the public to engage in a “ritual,” and by doing so, develop an interest in, and respect and appreciation for, and a connection with people of various backgrounds, beliefs, and ideas. Moreover, research showed that people who feel positive and develop emotional energy also become more interested in others outside the group with which they were involved in positive experiences. Also, they seem to be more willing to do something for others who are not so fortunate. This new openness, through (repeated) positive experiences, especially when they are experienced as a group, also contribute to people’s ability to listen, to be empathic, and thus to resolve conflicts.

The consequences of cultural participation—such as making music and singing—for personal empowerment and the functioning in and of groups are important prerequisites in a well-functioning, inclusive, and democratic post-multicultural society.

MusicGenerations

The majority of studies on the impact of music focus on passive consumption of music, i.e., listening to music. There are, however, sound reasons to think that active participation will have an even stronger impact. MusicGenerations allows for active participation. However small,

MusicGenerations is an example of a project and could be an example for future—educational—approaches.

MusicGenerations is a unique meeting place where people come together to sing; people from various backgrounds and age groups. As they get together to sing, they collectively engage in a playful ritual. Enjoying the pleasure of singing together, the older and younger people from various backgrounds connect in a friendly, non-hierarchical way and they become interested in one another. Singers with Kurdish-Dutch, Turkish-Dutch, Dutch-Dutch, Surinamese-Dutch and other backgrounds share the stage. An 80-year-old singer sings a duet with a 16-year-old, as equals. Through the shared experience of singing, the singers get to know and appreciate one another. This is obviously an outcome of the context created by the MusicGenerations organisation, paired with the power of music to speak to the non- or partly-controllable parts of the brain. This helps people to forget all kinds possible hesitations of a more cognitive nature and lets them just enjoy the skills and the presence of other people.

Music triggers mainly positive emotions and people tend to open up when they experience repeated positive emotions. The joy of singing together generates an interest in the other and in what they carry with them as singers. It so happens that the Talent for Freedom singers sing songs they weren't interested in before. For instance, a Dutch-Indonesian lady who shifted her musical interest away from romantic songs to songs with rather more politically charged lyrics and a Dutch-Dutch girl started loving the Kurdish language and music during the project. They had never heard a Kurdish song before.

The project also showed that singing together, and the joy and togetherness it generates, seems to be stronger than the urge to emphasise the different (ideologically- or historically-based) emotions evoked by songs of freedom. Working with a diverse set list—with songs referencing various contexts of freedom—helped in this particular context—the positive experience of singing together—to create more awareness about the meaning freedom has to the individual singers. Indeed, the songs had different meanings for the various people, depending on their context, age, and experience. For one, it triggers thoughts of the history of slavery, whereas others refer to struggles for personal freedom. In the project, these differences in evoked emotions exist, but are unproblematic.

Through the pleasure of making music together, the positive emotions this evokes, even more so when it is repeated, people develop self-esteem and interest in one another. Research shows that the effect of these experiences even carry further, beyond the group, in their thought-action repertoire, and people's increased willingness to do something for others, such as their community. This is an important step toward participation in a shared public democratic culture of a "just" society.

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