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Toward an assessment of marginality in democratic systems: The Charlie Hebdo debate in the United Kingdom

Andrea Felicetti[1] and Pietro Castelli Gattinara[2]

Abstract

This article offers a theoretical and empirical investigation of marginality of actors and ideas in democratic systems. We do so with respect to the extensive public debate that ensued from the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks of January 2015. Using content analytical data retrieved from *The Guardian*, we assess the degree and nature of marginality as indicated by the presence of different types of intervention in the public debate. Our findings show that women very limited visibility; religious and minority groups—particularly Muslims—are sidestepped; and actors challenging the dominant securitisation narrative are systematically neglected by those holding dominant positions. We argue for greater attention to the problem of marginality and introduce the Maximin principle of marginality as a means to address this issue in analyses of democratic systems.

Introduction

As theoretical and empirical research in deliberative democracy continue to develop, ideas from the field are being adopted in a growing array of disciplines (Elstub et al., 2016). Consequently, it is increasingly important to ensure that deliberative democratic analysis is endowed with the means to critically assess extant democratic politics and to engage with a number of pressing issues affecting contemporary democracies (Chambers, 2009). Empirically informed theoretical studies are particularly useful contributions toward these objectives (Bächtiger et al., 2010). In this spirit, this article intends to contribute to the recent spread of large-scale empirical analyses of contemporary societies from a deliberative democratic standpoint (see, for example, Curato and Ong, 2015; Davidson et al., 2016; Kuyper, 2016; Riedy and Kent, 2015). In particular, we aim to shed

[1]Center for Political Research, KU Leuven
[2]C-REX Centre for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo

Corresponding author:
Andrea Felicetti, Center for Political Research, Parkstraat 45 Bus 3602, KU, 3000 Leuven, Belgium.
Email: andrea.felicetti@kuleuven.be

light on an important yet overlooked issue—the problem of marginality in democratic systems. Specifically, we refer to discursive marginality: that is, marginality of actors and their views in public discourse.

By marginality, we mean the extent to which a system features limitations to the effective engagement of some actors in relevant public discourses. Rather than investigating the mere presence or absence of certain actors in a public debate, we are interested in exploring how the visibility of different actors varies in public debates. As we will see, since the early stage of deliberative thinking, the ability of actors to voice their interests and ideas in public discourse has been deemed central to the purview of a deliberative and democratic society (Dryzek, 1990). Despite its significance, however, marginality is largely overlooked in contemporary deliberative democratic analysis, which, thus far, has advanced little or no conceptual means to tackle, asses, and reflect upon the problem of marginality.

Taking as an example the resounding public debate that followed the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks in Paris, this article seeks to show the alarming extent of marginality of certain actors and to identify ways forward in thinking about how to redress this problem. Focusing on the coverage of the debate in the UK media (see below), we address the following questions: How is marginality configured in the way the Charlie Hebdo debate was reported in national media? What type of actors tends to be marginal? And, most importantly, what are the implications of marginality for democratic systems?

Our attempt to answer to these questions begins with an exploration of one of the most recent and influential developments in deliberative democracy: the deliberative system approach (Chambers, 2009; Dryzek, 2011; Mansbridge et al., 2012; Parkinson and Mansbridge, 2012). As we show in the first part of the article, despite its many merits, this approach falls short of providing satisfactory means to deal with the issue of marginality. By identifying the main characteristics and implications of marginality from a democratic perspective, and by discussing the relevance of marginality in real-world public debates, we argue that contemporary systemic analysis needs to be able to assess the multiple ways in which a system may (or may not) feature marginality. In other words, we suggest that the assessment of democratic systems may not rely exclusively on the evaluation of the overall deliberative quality of the system but ought to integrate this with measurements of the extent to which it also displays marginality.

Since we find the deliberative system approach ill-suited to shed light on the issue of marginality, we refrain from adopting a deliberative system approach ourselves. Deliberation, though important, is just one of the activities that need to occur within a working democratic political system, along with voting, protesting, and petitioning, among others. Deliberation can perform only certain functions in a wider democratic system. Consequently, our purview should be on 'democratic' rather than 'deliberative' systems (Easton, 1953; Kuyper, 2016; Warren, 2017).

In the second part of the article, we support our exploration of the issue of marginality in democratic systems with illustrations from extensive empirical analysis of the public debate that unfolded in the United Kingdom, following the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris of January 2015. While the attacks took place in France, our choice to focus on the United Kingdom is justified by the substantive content, as well as the scope, of the ensuing debate. Substantively, in fact, the Paris attacks have produced a short circuit in public discussions on a range of crucial issues for European societies, including immigration, religion, security, and civil rights. The attacks triggered heated debates across Europe in a highly emotionalised atmosphere, as the logic of polarisation between in-groups and

out-groups seemed to prevail; some groups and ideas emerged as the core definitional elements of the problem being discussed, whereas others were systematically excluded (see Della Porta, 2016). At the same time, our choice also offers a unique perspective on the complexities of a genuinely transnational debate, as the symbolic and political impact of the Charlie Hebdo attacks resounded in virtually all European countries (see, for example, Castelli Gattinara, 2017; Titley et al., 2017). While, in general, understanding transnational debates is a crucial challenge for thinking about contemporary democracy (see Fraser, 2014), our choice to focus on the British case allows us to take into account the specificities of the national context where a debate takes place. Understanding this aspect remains particularly important in the absence of a fully fledged European public sphere (Koopmans and Statham, 2010; Machhill et al., 2006).

Having elaborated on our case selection and data, we introduce the main actors and views involved in the Charlie Hebdo debate in the United Kingdom, showing that some of them play a highly marginal role, albeit in very different ways. We illustrate our point by looking at the marginality of women vis-à-vis men, that of religious actors (and of Muslims compared to other confessional groups), and that of actors opposing securitisation compared to those in the pro-securitisation camp. In the debate under examination, the voices of women surface consistently less than those of men, religious groups tend to be cast aside, Muslims are subject to systematic negative targeting, and holders of anti-securitisation views are largely disregarded by the core actors in the system. These aspects deeply affect the democratic quality of the system under examination. The Charlie Hebdo debate, rather than being a more or less egalitarian process of engagement among different actors, resembles a highly centralised system where only a few actors lead the process and others play a very modest role.

In the last part of the article, we urge scholars to build upon the explorative example set out here and develop marginality sensitive approaches to systemic analysis. Indeed, we provide a possible means for enhancing the ability of democratic scholars to engage with the problem of marginality—the Maximin principle of marginality. This idea resonates with the famous Rawlsian normative principle of justice. Yet, here we intend the Maximin principle of marginality to act specifically as a criterion that enables the ranking of democratic systems in terms of the degree by which they engage their marginalised components. While democratic systems may display similar deliberative qualities at the general level, they may still be assessed with respect to the level of marginalisation that they present. In other words, democrats should favour systems where marginalisation is kept to a minimum. This is a fundamental step in order to give critical leeway to deliberative theory and to reinvigorate the original prospect of deliberative democracy as a critical normative project.

Marginality and systemic thinking in deliberative democracy

Democratic theory and deliberative democracy have traditionally paid considerable attention to the issue of marginality. Indeed, some of the classic arguments of critical deliberative democracy engaged with this problem, looking for democratic ways of addressing it (Fraser, 1990; Young, 2000). However, in the aftermath of the systemic turn, deliberative democrats have arguably overlooked the issue. This tendency is problematic to the extent that, as proponents of the systemic approach have argued, systems should not only be deliberative but also inclusive and egalitarian: in a word, democratic (Parkinson, 2012).

In order to focus on the problem of marginality, it is thus worth taking as a starting point a closely related idea present in recent systemic analyses—the study of inclusion (or exclusion) from deliberation in systems. According to Dryzek, 'Without inclusion there may be deliberation but not deliberative democracy' (2009: 1382). The idea of inclusiveness refers to the range of interests present in a political setting and both empowered and public space can be tested 'for the degree to which they are inclusive of relevant interests and voices' (Dryzek, 2009: 1385). Similarly, for Mansbridge et al. (2012: 8), inclusion is central to the 'democratic function of a deliberative system' and 'what makes deliberative democratic processes democratic'.

Thinking in terms of inclusion (or exclusion) does not only offer a way to observe the extent to which different views and actors are involved in high-quality discursive engagement. The systemic approach allows us to say that a system where certain groups and interests are excluded might be problematic for multiple reasons, including its legitimacy, quality of deliberation, and ethical standards (Dryzek, 2009; Parkinson and Mansbridge, 2012).

While we subscribe to these statements and encourage the critical use of the concept of exclusion, in this article we find it more appropriate to refer to the notion of marginality. In our view, marginality is better suited to convey the gradual and multi-faceted ways in which certain actors and ideas have access to a public debate. Accordingly, we reserve the label exclusion for cases of extreme marginalisation, whereby dominant actors, more or less intentionally, completely silence, at least temporarily, certain actors or ideas (see Berndt and Colini, 2013; Billson, 1988). Marginality, instead, simply refers to the presence of limitations to the effective engagement of certain actors in a given democratic system.[1] Exclusion tout-court certainly deserves attention. Yet, it is just one (extreme) manifestation of the problem. Among the 'included' voices there is a varying and very problematic range of marginality that benefit some to the detriment of others.

While we hold that marginality should not be confused with exclusion, we do not claim that recent systemic analyses have been unable to shed light on some forms of marginality. For instance, Boswell (2015) shows 'toxic narratives' targeting marginalised groups in the obesity debate that are systematically excluded from consequential deliberation in Australia, with negative effects on the overall deliberative quality of the system. Curato and Ong (2015) observe that the media may at times grant vulnerable groups only 'narrative agency', rather than 'deliberative agency', thus contributing to reducing the overall authenticity and inclusivity of public debates. While it is positive that systemic analysis allows for some discussion of marginalisation, the issue of marginality in deliberation goes well beyond what has been observed to date.

Consistent with the theory on the systemic approach to deliberative democracy, our approach conceives public debates in the mass media as a deliberative system in its own right (see Dryzek, 2011). However, rather than assessing the overall deliberative quality of the system under examination, we seek to identify its forms of marginality. Among the many available definitions of deliberative systems (Owen and Smith, 2015), John Dryzek's (2010) characterisation is one of the most influential and it is adopted in this article to refer to the Charlie Hebdo debate. Dryzek's definition has the important advantage of being particularly suited to analyses that refer to the idea of democratic rather than deliberative systems (see Kuyper, 2016). According to Dryzek (2010), a system is essentially made up of an empowered and public space connected to each other through transmission and accountability mechanisms. The empowered space is where collective decision-making occurs. We refer to this category when dealing with

government actors, political parties, politicians, and law enforcement agencies. In contrast, the public space features:

> few restrictions on who can participate and with few legal restrictions on what participants can say … Such spaces may be found in connection with the media, social movements, activist associations, physical locations where people can gather and talk (cafés, classrooms, bars, public squares), the Internet, public hearings, and designed citizen-based forums of various sort (Dryzek, 2009: 1385–1386).[2]

To date, deliberative system theorists have tended to think of the media as a specific component of deliberative systems, with its own strengths and weaknesses (Curato and Ong, 2015; Parkinson, 2006b). While this is useful in understanding the role of media actors, in this article we adopt a different approach which exploits the media as a proxy for democratic systems. Precisely because the media reproduce just a fraction of the complex interactions occurring in democratic systems, analysing the content of media coverage offers a formidable resource for a study concerned with systemic marginality. The media consist of highly selective actors, which reproduce or even exacerbate the dynamics of marginality occurring in society at large (Sanders, 1997; Young, 2001). The nature of the media poses substantial challenges to democratic societies (Page, 1996; Bohman, 2007; Habermas, 2006) while also offering a magnifying glass through which to explore marginality in democratic systems.

Case selection, data, and methods

While the Charlie Hebdo attacks were neither the first nor the last occurrence of political violence with religious-fundamentalist motivations in Europe, the nature and target of the attacks contributed to the creation of a media moment. Similar events are highly suited for the study of marginality in democratic systems (Lindekilde et al., 2009), as they are characterised by focused attention on a specific event, which generally leads actors toward public claims-making, and may trigger the reconfiguration of established narratives on contentious issues (Della Porta, 2016), producing either polarisation or consensus.

While the Charlie Hebdo attacks paved the way to transnational debates on national and European identities, the limitations in the available empirical data forced us to restrict our design to the coverage of the debate in the British media. In this respect, we acknowledge that like other nation-based explorations of transnational debates, our analysis of the substantive content of the debate will be influenced by the specificities of the national system under investigation. Other European countries characterised by similar national conceptions of nationhood, as well as by a comparable pattern of discursive opportunity structures, might feature similar dynamics as the one we observe in this article. Furthermore, our investigation might be built upon by researchers exploring the comparative study of marginality across different Western countries.

Our analysis is based on one of the most recognised newspapers in the United Kingdom, *The Guardian*, which offers extensive, high-quality material suitable for political claims analysis (PCA). As an independent, quality newspaper with nationwide readership, *The Guardian* boasts an established reputation for offering consistent and detailed coverage of political events (Hutter, 2014a; Koopmans et al., 2005; Kriesi et al., 2012). Intermedia comparisons confirm that national quality newspapers offer a valid picture of patterns of

claims-making, irrespective of the political leaning of the broadsheets (cf. Koopmans et al., 2005).

Our approach is not novel to deliberative analysis, which consistently employs quantitative PCA (Cinalli and O'Flynn, 2014; Dolezal et al., 2010; Ferree, 2002; Page, 1996; Wessler, 2008) to address the democratic qualities of public debates. By looking at newspaper coverage of political interventions in the public sphere (Koopmans and Statham, 1999), we conceive of marginality as a measure of the extent to which different actors are involved in the debate.

Claims-making as a form of political behaviour implies 'the purposive and public articulation of political demands' (Koopmans et al., 2005: 254). The media are treated as the broadest public arena for interaction between political actors (see Hutter, 2014b; Koopmans, 2004). This approach offers information on three aspects that are crucial for the design of this article: the presence of different actors in a debate, the visibility of the issues they introduce into the public sphere, and the positions that they adopt on these (Berkhout et al., 2015: 198–199). In short, this approach offers information about the actual involvement of the different players and the extent to which different issues are debated.

News stories were selected based on a broad search string intended to capture all articles that contained implicit or explicit reference to the Charlie Hebdo attacks. Over the first month after the attacks, we found 298 relevant newspaper articles and 868 public interventions. For each claim, we considered its location (when/where), the promoting actor (who), the form (how), the addressee actor (at whom), and the substantive issue (what).[3]

In our empirical analysis, we focus on two principal sets of variables. First, we address claimants, looking at who the most visible actors are in the debate. Claimants are coded using an open-ended list and then grouped in summary codes, looking at the substantive content and at previous studies on similar topics (Lindekilde et al., 2009). We thus differentiate collective actors as state and party actors, or rather as civil society actors, further differentiating across 11 subcategories.

Second, we use variables for issue topics, measuring the two main conceptual components of political conflict in public debates, such as issue salience and positions (Berkhout et al., 2015; Castelli Gattinara, 2016). Issue salience pertains to the *visibility* of different issues in the public sphere, in relative percentage points. In addition, we look at the difference in the political positions of actors on each issue. Issue positions thus measure the direction of the relationship between one actor and the issue at the core of its claim. For analytical purposes, we aggregated the substantive content of claims in 11 issue categories corresponding to five topical fields, such as security affairs, migration politics, state–church relations, discrimination, and identity politics.

As regards to marginality, we follow a twofold operationalisation strategy. On one hand, we focus on the visibility of different issues and actors in a debate. On the other hand, we observe the way in which specific issues and actors are portrayed in the system. In terms of visibility, marginality is concerned with the extent to which different types of actors and the claims they make are present (or absent) in a debate, relative to all other groups and issues. Through the notion of marginality, we focus particularly on actors that despite being greatly affected by the debate under examination have only a very limited role in it. That is, in line with deliberative thinking on this matter, we are more concerned here with the problem of actors that are hardly visible but should arguably have a greater role in the debate than with the absence of actors that are not particularly affected by a certain debate (see Fung, 2013; cf. Näsström, 2011).[4]

Table 1. Groups of actors: percentage share of total claims.

Collective actors	%	N
State and party actors		
Government actors	19.9	109
Legislatives and parties	7.9	43
State executive agencies	15.7	86
Judiciary actors	3.1	17
EU and supranational actors	0.4	2
Total state and party actors	47.0	257
Civil society actors		
Mass media	27.8	152
Religious groups	5.5	30
Unions and professional groups	4.9	27
Left-wing and civil rights actors	4.6	25
Radical right actors	2.6	14
Experts and commentators	7.5	41
Total civil society actors	52.9	289
Total	100	546

EU: European Union.

In terms of how actors are portrayed, marginality is primarily related to the stigmatisation of disadvantaged groups: that is, when actors or ideas are systematically addressed in negative or derogatory terms by other participants in the debate, or are ignored altogether. Our operationalisation of marginality is admittedly minimalist. For instance, it does not allow for comparison across different groups of actors. Such a comparison, however, goes beyond our aim to employ a sufficiently defined notion of marginality that can be empirically used in order to draw explorative conclusions about the system under observation, based on the marginality of different groups within comparable categories of actors (for instance male vs female actors).

The Charlie Hebdo debate in the United Kingdom as a system

Before focusing on the issue of marginality specifically, a brief look at the main features of the Charlie Hebdo debate in the United Kingdom is in order. Below, we outline the main characteristics of claims-making in terms of the promoters of public interventions and of their substantive content.

Starting with the promoters of claims reported in *The Guardian*, the data on the percentage share of total claims by groups of actors (Table 1) indicate the predominance of three types of actors. First, media actors account for more than 27% of the total claims. This makes perfect sense given that we base our analysis on newspaper articles and that the debate we observe is highly intertwined with issues concerning media practices, freedom of speech, and media responsibility (Sniderman et al., 2014: 10–11). Second, government actors also stand out as privileged claimants in the debate, accounting for about 20% of the total claims. This seems reasonable since the disruptive nature of the attacks called for the intervention of public authorities. Third, state executive agencies, including law enforcement agencies, account for an additional 15.7% of total claims. Interestingly,

Table 2. The content of claims in the debate.

Issues	%	N
Security affairs		
State security	19.9	207
International security	6.3	66
Migration politics		
Immigration and asylum	1.1	11
Integration and minority rights	4.8	50
State–church relations		
Freedom of speech and religion	31.1	323
Secularism	0.2	2
Islam as a religion	17.9	186
Discrimination		
Islamophobia	6.1	64
Racism and anti-Semitism	9.4	98
Identity politics		
European identity	0.8	8
National identity	2.4	25
Total	100	1040

while civil society actors in total account for about half of the debate, groups such as religious actors (5.5%), left-wing and civil rights groups (4.6%), and the radical right (2.6%) occupy a remarkably small space overall.

Table 2 illustrates the substantive content of the debate. The main issue is that of civil rights, mainly addressed in terms of individual and collective freedoms, such as freedom of religion and freedom of speech. About one third of the debate (31%), therefore, is directly concerned with the publication of the cartoons, which are considered either as manifestations of free speech or as an attack on Muslim minorities and their religion. The second most important issue is state and international security, which accounts for an additional 26% of the total claims, most of which are concerned with internal aspects of state security (19.9%). In addition to these, issues related to Islam as a religion (17.9%), Islamophobia (6.1%), and racism and anti-Semitism (9.4%) also appear quite frequently. Contrary to this, immigration and integration issues do not seem to represent a priority in the debate (5.9%).

Marginality at work in the democratic system

Female actors in the Charlie Hebdo debate

Having outlined some overall features of the system under observation, we move to the crucial question of marginality in the construction and unfolding of the public controversy. In this respect, a first glaring element concerns the extent to which the voice of female actors is present. A striking 81.7% of claims in the debate are made by male actors whereas only the remaining 18.3% are made by females.[5] This does not mean that women did not participate in the debate. Women certainly took part in the debate in other media that we did not observe; this study rather focuses on a mainstream newspaper that, as seen, is highly selective in the actors it features among all those discussing an issue. Yet,

Table 3. Gender composition by group of collective actors.

Collective actors	% Males	% Females	Total (%)	N
State and party actors				
Government actors	82.1	17.9	100	78
Legislatives and parties	65.6	34.4	100	32
State executive agencies	88.2	11.7	100	17
Judiciary actors	0.0	100.0	100	1
EU and supranational actors	100.0	0.0	100	2
Total state and party actors	78.5	21.5	100	130
Civil society actors				
Mass media	82.0	18.0	100	89
Religious groups	90.9	9.1	100	11
Unions and professional groups	92.9	7.1	100	14
Left-wing and civil rights actors	81.8	18.2	100	11
Radical right actors	100.0	0.0	100	7
Experts and commentators	95.8	4.2	100	24
Total civil society actors	86.5	13.5	100	156
Total	100	100		286

EU: European Union.

in the Charlie Hebdo debate in the United Kingdom, as reported in *The Guardian*, the visibility of female actors is considerably lower than the visibility of male actors.

Marginality becomes even more dramatic if we look at the gender split of the different types of actors making claims in the debate (Table 3). While the presence of female actors in the debate under examination is substantially low across all group categories that we consider, the most striking differences emerge when we look at the more powerful actors in the system.

Women account for 11.7% of the claims made by state executive agencies (in particular, the police and the military) and for only 4% of the experts and commentators called upon for interventions and interviews in *The Guardian*. Claims by government actors are also overwhelmingly dominated by males (82%), alongside the interventions by media actors (82%). Furthermore, female claims-making is highly concentrated among a few government figures and political leaders—such as Angela Merkel and Theresa May—who represent the higher end of the empowered space. By themselves, these figures absorb about one quarter of the total of female claims-making. The data for men are much lower, as the top three actors (David Cameron, Manuel Valls, and François Hollande) account for just 8% of the debate. What we observe cannot be reduced to the exclusion of women from one part of the democratic system. Rather, the marginality of female actors manifests itself to different degrees in each part of the system under consideration.[6]

Similarly, Table 4 shows that while female voices tend to play a marginal role across all topical fields, their marginality is considerably more striking in the fields of security affairs (12%) and state–church relations (16.7%), whereas female actors are relatively more present in debates on migration, discrimination, and identity politics.

Our data on the Charlie Hebdo debate certainly do not counter a wealth of studies underlining the progress made in Western societies in terms of women's political participation (see, for example, Inglehart and Norris, 2000; Karl, 1995; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer,

Table 4. Gender composition by topical field.

Topical fields	% Males	% Females	Total (%)	N
Security affairs	88.2	11.8	100	110
Migration politics	68.4	31.6	100	19
State–church relations	83.3	16.7	100	96
Discrimination	75.0	25.0	100	52
Identity Politics	54.6	45.4	100	11
Total	100	100		286

2012). Yet, evidence of the under-representation of women across media and of the tendency to portray them in a circumscribed manner is clear (Howell and Singer, 2017; Rudy et al., 2011). Rather than excluded from the crucial public debate under observation, female actors are restricted to a marginal role. Researchers envisioning a more deliberative and democratic society need critically and more systematically to question assumptions—such as those about the roughly equal role and the presence of women in public debates. Women are subject to varying degrees of marginality depending on the type of actor they are and/or the issue under examination. Acknowledging this multi-faceted problem is the first step in understanding the dynamics responsible for this phenomenon and addressing them.

Sidestepping and negative representation of religious minorities

As already mentioned, religious actors represent a highly marginal voice in the Charlie Hebdo debate, despite the frequency with which religion is discussed. Reflecting on the significance of this aspect introduces us to the second problem of marginality in the system under study. By looking at the data presented earlier in Table 2, issues of direct relevance to religious minority groups (such as migration, state–church relations, and discrimination) make up over 60% of all the claims.

By breaking down the general debate by issue and topical field, we can see how much each actor participated in the debate on each substantive element under discussion (Table 5). Overall, the main actors that dominate the general debate are also predominant on the most salient issue dimensions—the government dominates on security (29%) and the media on state–church relations (51.3%). More broadly, state and party actors promote most claims on the issue of security (71% of the debate) and identity politics (58%), whereas civil society actors dominate debates on state–church relations (79%) and discrimination (64%). On the other hand, religious and left-wing groups stand out as having little voice on most issues.

Although religious groups have a certain voice in discussions on discrimination (14%), this part of the debate is dominated by the media (26%) and government actors (24%). Moreover, religious actors are virtually absent on debates on state–church relations (only 2%) as well as migration affairs and identity politics.

Against this background, the evidence that religious actor groups represent a mere 5.5% of the claims-makers (out of which 76% are Muslim actors) appears as a worrying feature of the system under examination. This is particularly the case since a multicultural societal model has long been advocated for in Great Britain and the country has long been held as an example of multicultural society (Heath and Demireva, 2014; Meer and Modood, 2009). Of course, religious actors are not the only ones entitled to make claims

Table 5. Attention given by the different actors to the various issues.

	Security affairs	Migration politics	State–church relations	Discrimination	Identity politics
State and party actors					
Government actors	29.0	4.8	10.8	24.6	25.0
Legislatives and parties	15.5	38.1	1.3	8.7	33.3
State executive agencies	24.4	9.5	4.1	1.7	0.0
Judiciary actors	2.1	0.0	3.4	0.0	0.0
EU and supranational actors	0.4	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0
Total state and party actors	71.4	52.4	20.3	35.0	58.3
Civil society actors					
Mass media	10.5	28.6	51.3	26.3	33.3
Religious groups	0.8	0.0	2.0	14.0	0.0
Unions and professional groups	4.2	0.0	5.4	7.0	8.3
Left-wing and civil rights actors	4.2	0.0	6.7	5.3	0.0
Radical right actors	2.9	19.1	1.3	3.5	0.0
Experts and commentators	5.9	0.0	12.8	8.8	0.0
Total civil society actors	28.6	47.7	79.5	64.9	41.6
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	238	40	148	57	12

EU: European Union.

about religious issues and minority politics. Nonetheless, as argued by Hertzberg (2015), when it comes to debates in which religion is a relevant aspect, the presence of religious actors can enhance democratic engagement by presenting religious arguments in ways that other societal actors can understand and vice versa. In our case study, evidence shows that the space not taken by religious actors in the system is occupied by others. This is most clear if we isolate only claims focusing on Islam as a religion and Islamophobia. While religious actors participate in this debate relatively more than in any other issue field, they only account for 12% of the discussion, whereas state executive agencies (24%), the government (16%), and other empowered actors, such as the judiciary, and legislatives and parties (12%), occupy considerably larger shares of the debate.

To use a metaphor, we could say that in the Charlie Hebdo debate, religious actors are easy 'prey' for other actors. Religious actors become prey as they engage in endless efforts to counter attacks from other sides of the system. This leaves them with little ground to make their case positively since, as we have seen, they have a marginal voice on issues such as migration, civil and religious freedom, immigration, and discrimination, among others. On the contrary, other actors dominate the debate on issues of relevance for marginalised actors. These actors can be identified with political parties and the far right when it comes to migration and integration, whereas religious actors are completely excluded (see Table 5). The media single-handedly dominate the debate on freedom of expression and religion, with religious actors only accounting for 2% of the claims on these issues. Finally, government and executive actors act as predators in debates on racism and on Islam as a religion. Hence, religious actors are not only under-represented, they are also deprived of a voice regarding issues on which they may legitimately have something to say.[7]

It is particularly concerning that under the current arrangements, religious actors mainly react to claims that others make about them. Indeed, these actors often represent

the object of claims originating in other areas in the system. To account for this, we look at all interventions for which religious groups represent either the *addressee* of the claim, or the *object* of the claim. In other words, we isolate claims that either engage with religious actors, or speak about religious actors. Furthermore, we measure whether the reference to religious actors takes on a positive or negative connotation. We find that the vast majority of claims referring to religious actors are concerned with Muslim actors only (87%). Also, while Muslim actors are quite frequently the *object* of claims by other actors (about 12% of the claims), they are considerably less frequently engaged with—they are the *addressee* in only 4.7% of the cases. Moreover, we find that claims about religious actors have an overwhelmingly negative tone—58% of the public interventions addressing or mentioning religious actors do so in highly derogatory terms, whereas an additional 5% describe these groups in milder, yet always negative terms. While 6.5% of the claims express neutral or undefined positions toward religious actors and Muslims, only 23% of the total claims promote an unconditionally positive image of Muslims.

In short, our data suggest that the problem we are facing is not one of the exclusion of religious actors. Rather, religious actors are marginal in the general debate about Charlie Hebdo, as well as in most of its specific issues. Moreover, religious actors are much more often the object, rather than the addressee, of claims by other actors, meaning that they are seldom engaged with. Finally, religious actors are addressed in mainly negative tones.

We deem these three aspects crucial to conclude that religious actors, most notably Muslims, have been marginalised in the Charlie Hebdo debate. The presence of Muslims in the debate is mostly due to the stigmatisation perpetrated by other actors in the system. Claims-making by Muslim actors is largely devoted to countering the unremitting attacks they are exposed to, in particular, by the government, the media, and the far right. This represents a straightforward case of marginalisation by means of stigmatisation. Actually, Muslims are certainly involved in the debate, and are integrated in the wider system. Yet, they are often relegated to the role of scapegoats for the incriminatory remarks of other actors. Our findings about the Charlie Hebdo debate specifically are consistent with extensive evidence from more long-term longitudinal studies (Baker et al., 2013; Bleich et al., 2015; Poole, 2011; Richardson, 2004; Saeed, 2007) documenting the limited, controversial, and often negative role reserved to Muslims in British press. Indeed, as Moore et al. (2008) show, about two-thirds of the recent relative increase in coverage about British Muslims focuses on them as a threat (see also Richardson, 2009). We suggest that this dynamic may help to explain the challenging position in which Muslims find themselves when attempting to engage in high-quality deliberation (Cinalli and O'Flynn, 2014).[8]

Pro-and-anti securitisation camps and marginality in public discourse

In this section of our article, we investigate the marginality problem with respect to two sets of actors starkly opposed to each other in the debate on the need for further securitisation in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attacks. Increasing security against terrorist threats stands out as one of the most popular and consequential discourses in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in Western countries (Giroux, 2003; Huysmans, 2006). The reaction to the Charlie Hebdo events is no exception to this trend (Fassin, 2015). For instance, legislative measures in European countries have been put in place with the declared objective of enhancing security (Downing et al., 2015) such as the extended state of emergency declared in France in the aftermath of the attacks (Pelletier and Drozda-Senkowska, 2016). The UK government has also taken measures intended to intensify security and

Table 6. Support and opposition to increased security by type of collective actor.

	Supportive of securitization (%)	Critical of securitization (%)	Total (%)	% of security debate
Government actors	93.0	7.0	100	29.0
State executive agencies	91.5	8.5	100	24.4
Legislatives and parties	76.6	23.4	100	15.5
Mass media	79.4	20.6	100	10.5
Experts and commentators	64.7	35.2	100	5.9
Unions and professional groups	50.0	50.0	100	4.2
Left-wing and civil rights actors	0.0	100.0	100	4.2
Judiciary actors	83.3	16.7	100	2.1
Radical right actors	100.0	0.0	100	2.9
Religious groups	100.0	0.0	100	0.8

policing, including introducing the Investigatory Powers Bill, tellingly nicknamed the 'Snooper's Charter'. Indeed, research shows that actors involved in the securitisation debate, particularly in discussions related to terrorist attacks, can be generally divided in two opposed camps of pro-and-anti securitisation actors (Brown, 2010; Hussain and Bagguley, 2012).

The empirical analysis presented in the above sections indicates that security stands out as one of the main issues of the Charlie Hebdo debate. Unsurprisingly, claims about internal and international security comprise 26% of the whole debate. What is more, not all actors participate equally in this part of the debate, and the presence of claims in support and in opposition to increased securitisation varies considerably depending on the group making the claim. Table 6 details the amount of claims in support and in opposition to securitisation, and the per cent of the security debate accounted for by each actor.

In line with extant research, these findings show that the pro-securitisation camp is primarily accounted for by government actors and state executive agencies, which includes representatives of law enforcement. Only 7% and 9% of their claims, respectively, expressed critical stances on securitisation, aired, for instance, by representatives of the Liberal Democratic Party, which disagreed with conservative members of the government on this issue. In addition, radical right actors, religious groups, and the judiciary are also by and large supportive of security measures. To the contrary, only the category of left-wing/civil rights actors stands out for their clear-cut opposition to increased security measures. The category of unions and professional groups is split in half because of different positions taken by police unions and other workers' associations in the debate.

Overall, pro-securitisation claims largely outnumber anti-securitisation ones, indicating the predominance of these positions in the debate. Indeed, 78% of the total claims in the security debate are in support of increasing securitisation domestically as well as the deployment of troops against threats abroad, while only 22% are critical of such measures. This means that very few groups promoting pro-securitisation claims dominate the whole debate, thus leaving only a marginal space for all other actors and dissenting voices.

In addition, Table 6 displays considerable variation in the visibility of the various groups, depending on whether they belong to the pro- or anti-securitisation camp. While government and executive actors, the two most vocal groups in the security debate, account for more than half of the total claims-making on security (53%), anti-securitisation actors of the left account for a mere 4.2%. Furthermore, three actors stand out for promoting claims in support, as well as claims against securitisation. Albeit arguably for different reasons, the mass media, experts, and legislative actors display intermediate positions between the two camps, showing a certain degree of disagreement vis-à-vis securitisation. For all three actors, however, pro-securitisation arguments tend to dominate.

The predominance of pro-security arguments over dissenting anti-securitisation voices is thus confirmed for empowered actors (government and executives), as well as for the media and experts, among others. This is all the more striking considering that we analyse the debate from the vantage point of *The Guardian*, whose liberal editorial line can be considered—in general terms—more supportive of the latter than the former. While the divide across pro- and anti-securitisation camps has deep roots in British politics (Barnard-Wills, 2011), our findings seem consistent with the view that increasing media-attention to the issue tends to reserve a prominent role to the legitimising narrative by government and security agencies vis-à-vis more critical actors (Lischka, 2017).

The debate on securitisation shows that a small group of powerful actors not only determines the political agenda but also dominates the public debate; all other actors play a marginal role, particularly the critical voices. The gap between this situation and the deliberative legitimacy ideal, wherein decisions are subject to deliberation by all those affected by it (Manin, 1987), seems vast. Acknowledging the marginalisation dynamics affecting democratic systems is an important step toward finding solutions to narrow this gap.

Toward a Maximin principle of marginality in democratic analysis

Taking marginality seriously demands that systemic theory develops a more nuanced approach to this substantial problem. A fundamental step in this direction consists of challenging one of the features of systemic analysis: its tendency to focus exclusively on the overall quality assessments of systems. For instance, according to Mansbridge et al. (among others), the different components of a system should be assessed 'according to how well they perform the functions necessary to promote the goals of the system' (2012: 10). These goals consist of the three overall (epistemic, ethical, and democratic) functions of a deliberative system (Mansbridge et al., 2012: 13). Similarly, Dryzek argues that in assessing systems we focus on their overall deliberative capacity: that is, 'the degree to which a polity's deliberative system is authentic, inclusive and consequential' (2009: 1382).

Deliberative democrats adopting a systemic perspective are open to the idea that in democracies, like in any other system, different components perform different functions (Parkinson, 2006a). The overall quality of the system depends on the way in which different components interact, 'when one part fails to play an important role another can fill or evolve over time to fill it' (Mansbridge et al., 2012: 5). These ideas are valuable to the systemic approach. Nonetheless, the viewpoint that flaws in one part of the system can be made up for in another part of it corresponds to a highly stylised notion of deliberative systems. Desirable as it may be, the above idea may well be distant from what occurs in

real-life systems. The above-mentioned dynamic certainly cannot be observed with respect to the problem of marginality in the Charlie Hebdo debate. Increasing awareness of the complexities of real-world systems calls for conceptual refinements.

Women, religious groups, and anti-securitisation actors face systematic marginalisation from the system under examination and there seems to be no mechanism to redress this problem. Certainly, there are public debates in which, for instance, religious groups or opponents of securitisation might understandably have no particular role (think, for instance, of a debate on tax reform to support the use of renewable energy in private households). In this sense, Mansbridge et al. (2012: 12) are right in pointing out that 'a well-functioning democratic deliberative system must not systematically exclude any citizens from the process without strong justification that could be reasonably accepted by all citizens, including the excluded'. However, we investigated a system where such a justification seems improbable. In the case study under examination, it is hard to think of an acceptable justification to give to women, Muslims, and supporters of the anti-securitisation camp the limited space, negative targeting, and neglect that we observed.

The problems that emerge from the above analysis make it necessary for us to develop a way of accounting for the extent of marginality in democratic systems. Future research could address this issue by supplementing overall assessments about the quality of a system with what we call a Maximin principle of marginality. This principle states that among systems with a similar overall deliberative quality, deliberative democrats should prefer the ones in which the extent of marginality of the most marginalised actors and views is kept to a minimum. Relatedly, in recommending political solutions for the democratisation of systems, deliberative democrats should look for ways of enhancing inclusion in authentic and consequential deliberation (Dryzek, 2009) but also ways of reducing marginality.

Using the idea of marginality introduced in this article, future research may be able to investigate empirically how systems vary not only in their overall deliberative quality but also in type and extent of marginality. Furthermore, once the empirical evidence has been gathered, the Maximin principle of marginality can orient investigators in their critique of systems, in their assessments of the relative urgency with which discursive marginality should be addressed in different systems and in envisioning proposals to redress marginality. Our vision is fully consistent with the egalitarian and critical values underpinning deliberative democracy theory and with long established, yet largely neglected, calls for including the voice of outsiders (Sanders, 1997; Williams, 2000; Young, 2000).

Introducing a Maximin principle of marginality in deliberative analysis gives a Rawlsian twist to the systemic turn in deliberative democracy. Of course, since we side with critical deliberative theorists who see the promotion of democratic deliberation in the public space as a key democratic challenge (see Felicetti, 2016), we do not refer here to a preference for formal and institutional forms of deliberation over public sphere engagement characteristic of the Rawlsian approach to democracy (e.g. Rawls, 1997).[9] Likewise, we do not engage in this article on the merits of the vast and complex philosophical debate that Rawlsian liberalism has generated. Rather, we suggest that the adoption of a conceptual device such as the Maximin principle of marginality represents a possible way to introduce into democratic analysis a preference for systems that are able to improve the conditions of the disadvantaged actors in democratic societies.

Over decades, the application of John Rawls' Maximin principle to economic thinking has represented a valuable tool to develop reform agendas aimed at empowering economically disadvantaged groups (see, for instance, Ravallion, 2015: chapter 2). The

Maximin principle of marginality we introduce in this article may likewise provide a conceptual tool that helps envision political reforms aimed at granting greater visibility and fairer coverage to actors that might emerge as systematically marginalised in public debates. This fairer coverage would be no mean feat toward improving the conditions of these groups, given that the ability to present one's own perspective on political problems before the public has long been recognised as a fundamental resource to achieve political success (see, for instance, Phillips, 2003). Countering marginality is an important challenge for critical deliberative analysis and this article provided a first attempt at doing this. In the aftermath of the systemic turn, developing analyses, on one hand, capable of assessing the overall qualities of a system and, on the other, sensitive to issues of marginality seems not only desirable but also possible.

Conclusion

This article sought to advance deliberative democratic analysis with respect to the problem of marginality. With illustrations from a very important recent debate in the United Kingdom concerning the attacks on the Charlie Hebdo magazine, we have shown that marginality represents a substantial problem deserving of greater attention than it has so far been granted in systemic analysis. Our analysis has captured the ways in which the voice of female actors is limited; religious groups are sidestepped and, in the case of Muslims, negatively represented, or stigmatized; and the anti-securitisation camp is disregarded by key actors in the democratic system.

Focusing on a single national setting and on a single debate, this article cannot escape confronting with the issue of generalisability. Among other elements that might shape a debate such as the one under investigation, this study is inevitably limited by the specificities of the British media system, as well as its citizenship regime and church–state regulations. While we believe in the scientific value of context-dependent knowledge, we also think that future studies on democratic systems may investigate whether marginality takes on different forms in the presence of other types of controversies, such as domestic rather than transnational debates, or look at cross-national variation in the marginality of specific actors. In this respect, a highly interesting development in research on discursive marginality would be to look systematically not only or mainly at the type of actors being marginalised, as we do in this article, but also at the type of discourses that are marginalised in a given public debate. In addition, comparative multi-method studies and across systems or over time may break new ground in the study of systemic marginality, providing a better understanding of the roots of this phenomenon as well as better assessments of its impact.

Nonetheless, this article represents a necessary prelude to these future developments and a reminder of the importance of giving marginality due attention. Our Maximin principle of marginality represents one possible instrument to ensure that the latter happens. Future refinements to our approach or alternative ways to address marginality in democratic analysis are to be welcomed. In fact, they would contribute to addressing what may be the central challenge for the systemic approach—expanding and refining its theoretical apparatus to keep deliberative analysis loyal to its nature of a critical and democratic project.

Notes

1. For the sake of our argument, we are assuming that actors want to engage. We are aware that some actors may deliberately not want to engage or may be impeded to do so by adverse circumstances. Exploring these different circumstances (and other possible ones) would require another paper. However, we believe that wherever there is no evidence that some actors deliberately decided not to participate in a debate, and we found no such evidence in our case study, it is unwarranted to attribute marginality to a deliberate choice of actors.
2. We also include religious groups (see Hertzberg, 2015) and individual opinions of citizens in this category.
3. The basic structure of claims and the main variables used in the analysis are reported in Appendix 1. The full codebook, data, and supporting materials necessary to reproduce the numerical results in the article are available upon request.
4. As an illustration, it might be greatly concerning if on a complex debate such as the one on transnational labour regulations, unions might not be granted visibility while it might be unproblematic if local conservationist groups had no place in this discussion.
5. This data refer to claims made by individuals whose gender could be identified or was explicitly mentioned in the article (e.g. named representatives of speakers) for a total of 410 claims (about half of the total).
6. Since the presence of foreign political figures is seen as an integrating part of transnational debates (see Fraser, 2014; Koopmans and Statham, 2010), we retain these figures in our investigation of the Charlie Hebdo debate.
7. This is in line with insight from research on public policy, mass media, and agenda setting, whereby it is acknowledged that public attention is a scarce resource allocated (by the government or the media) among numerous competing priorities and actors (see, for example, Jones Baumgartner, 2005; McCombs, 2004). If attention is limited it follows that marginality of a given actor implies that one or more other actors in the system are instead prioritised (Kingdon, 1995).
8. An in-depth analysis of the situation of religious and ethnic minorities is beyond the reach of this work. For insightful analyses on discursive and institutional opportunities for European Muslims see Cinalli and Giugni (2013a, 2013b).
9. According to the Rawlsian approach to democracy, the expectation is that the bulk of deliberation in a political system occurs within political institutions (such as higher courts or parliamentarian chambers and committees) (see Dryzek, 2010).
10. See also Berkhout et al., 2015; Koopmans et al., 2005.

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Appendix 1. Main variables used in political claims analysis[10]

	Who (subject actor)	When	Where	How (form)	At whom (addressee)	What (issue)	For/against whom (object actor)
Variable	SACTOR1-2-3	CYEAR CMONTH CDAY	COUNTRY LOCATION	FORM	ADRES1-2-3 ADREVAL 1-2-3	ISSUE1-2-3 POSIT1-2-3	OBJACT1-2-3 OBJEVAL1-2-3
Label	'Summary first actor'	'Year of Claim' 'Month of Claim' 'Day of Claim'	'Country where the claim was made' 'Name of City'	'Form of action'	'Addressee of Claim' 'Evaluation of addressee'	'Main issue of the claim' 'Position of claim towards issue1'	'First Object actor of claim' 'Effect of claim on object actor'
Example 1	Parti Communiste Francais	13 Jan 2015	Paris	Sit-in demonstration	Demanding the government	To withdraw the security package VigiPirate	The French in general (applies to all)
Example 2	European Parliament	22 Jan 2015	Brussels	Official declaration	Demanding the French government	Measures to improve religious allowances for Muslim citizens	Muslim migrants in France; Muslim population of France

DICHIARAZIONE SOSTITUTIVA DI CERTIFICAZIONE SULLA DISTRIBUZIONE DEL LAVORO DI RICERCA

Il sottoscritto **Pietro Castelli Gattinara**

Nato a Roma (RM), il 14/08/1985 e residente a Roma in via Lagrange 1.
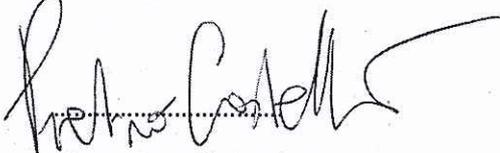
Il sottoscritto **Andrea Felicetti**

Nato a _Ascoli Piceno_ il _15/05/85_ e residente a _Ascoli Piceno, via delle fresie, 7_

DICHIARANO

In relazione all'articolo: "Towards an Assessment of Marginalization in Democratic Systems: the Charlie Hebdo Debate in the UK". *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*: 1467-856X, doi: DOI: 10.1177/1369148118758237, dichiariamo che gli autori hanno collaborato alla sua stesura, ma che ogni autore ha contribuito a sezioni specifiche. Castelli Gattinara: Case Selection, Data and Methods; The Charlie Hebdo debate in The UK as a System; Marginality at work in the democratic system, Conclusions. Felicetti: Introduction, Marginality and systemic Thinking in Deliberative Democracy, Toward a Maximin principle of marginality in democratic Analysis, Conclusions.

Ascoli Piceno, 24 Marzo 2018

Il Dichiarante

Pietro Castelli Gattinara

Il Dichiarante

Andrea Felicetti