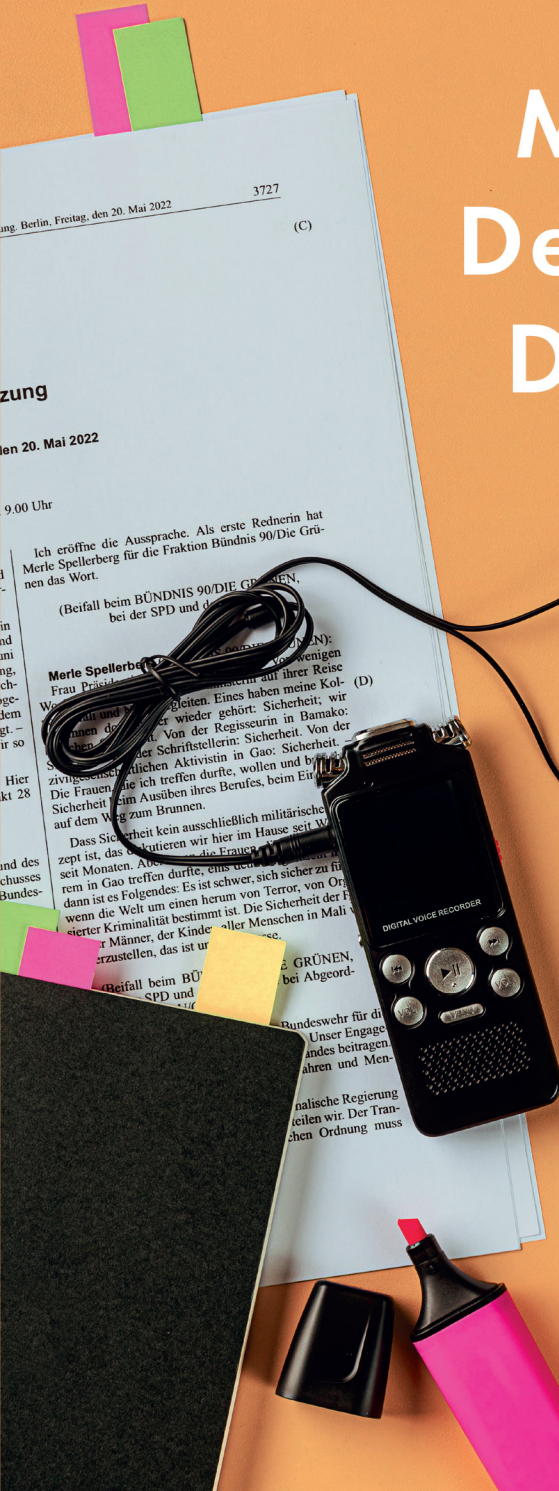


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Research Methods in Deliberative Democracy



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Foreword

Graham Smith

Deliberative democracy is a contested field of study. Its central practice of deliberation has a number of generally accepted features. One of these is the celebration of pluralism. Pluralism has value in both normative and epistemological terms. Deliberation rests on the presence, articulation, and consideration of a plurality of perspectives. Inclusion of the voices of the full diversity of social groups is a moral foundation of deliberative democracy. Equally, pluralism underpins collective judgement. Only through recognizing and understanding the perspectives of diverse others do we come to considered political judgements. Deliberative democracy requires openness and respect towards pluralism: to different ways of seeing the world and in the collective search for meaning.

If the practice of deliberation rests on openness and respect towards different ways of seeing and meaning making, the same holds true for the *study* of deliberation. We require openness and respect towards different ways of seeing our object of analysis. Just as pluralism is a foundational value for deliberative practice, so it should also be for research on deliberation.

Deliberative democracy is a political project that embraces conceptual analysis through practical action in varying forms. The questions we ask of that political project will vary. And the way we aim to answer those questions will vary too. Social science is at its worst when method comes before questions; when we dogmatically make sense of the world through only one methodological frame.

My own engagement with deliberative democracy as a field of study has generated a raft of questions, the answers to which have required the application of a range of methods. When troubled by the potential implications of the deliberative systems perspective undermining the core justification of deliberative democracy, tackling this question meant engaging in normative democratic theorizing. When questioning whether citizens' assemblies could tackle contentious issues such as Brexit, colleagues and I not only adopted a positivist experimental design, but also had to organize a national four-day assembly! When making sense of why the innovative NHS Citizen participatory system had failed, an interpretivist framework was embraced, enabling us to investigate the perspectives and motivations of different actors towards the legitimacy of the initiative. In these and other research enterprises, I have had the pleasure of working with colleagues with very different methodological orientations who have forced me to reflect on my own methodological preconditions and prejudices and, I believe, this has led to better work in the process. The main

lesson I have learned: we should not be afraid to venture across traditional lines of methodological contention.

Just as deliberative democracy as a political project demands openness, respect, and listening across difference, the same needs to be true for our application of different methodologies. Entertaining different methodological orientations and research methods takes us out of our comfort zones, challenges our prejudices, and makes us see the world in different ways. These are virtues of deliberative processes—and they should also be the virtues of the research community that is engaged in their study.

While this book is written primarily for researchers, I have a strong sense that it will prove valuable to the deliberative practitioner and activist communities as well. This is not simply because it provides important insights into how to evaluate and draw comparisons across discrete projects. Most practitioners I know have a broader set of concerns about how their work can be understood in more systemic terms: broader questions of citizen empowerment and civic renewal. The chapters in this collection may well inspire approaches to evaluation and reflection that respond to these systemic and political questions.

The embrace of methodological pluralism that underpins this impressive collection is the sign of a mature and reflexive community of practice. That this book project is directed from the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance at the University of Canberra should not be a surprise. This is a research centre that has promoted and sustained a pluralist orientation to the study of deliberative democracy. We should thank the Centre, editors, and contributors for modelling the kind of disposition towards methodology that is essential for good social science. Our object of study is a set of reflective practices. Such reflexivity in the application of research methods must define our collective project of sense-making.

Acknowledgements

We started this book project in 2018 with the ambition of producing an open access resource that could spark a conversation about the diversity of methods used for researching deliberative democracy. This idea emerged from a workshop we held that year at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance University of Canberra, just before the International Political Science Association's conference in Brisbane, Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, University of Canberra. We took the opportunity to entice colleagues to make a side trip to Canberra to discuss a scholarly issue that affected us all but had little systematic discussion so far: research methods in deliberative democracy.

After the workshop, the need for a publication compiling different methods in deliberative democracy research became clearer to us. Initially, we listed around ten widely used methods in the field. Yet, when we started to look at the scholarship from a methods perspective, our list continued to grow. We identified fifteen, then twenty, and finally thirty-one different methods that researchers use in their theoretical and empirical work on deliberative democracy.

What we imagined as a modest online publication that could help graduate students in their research on deliberative democracy, turned into a mammoth book project covering thirty-one methods written by over fifty authors from across the globe, published by one of the leading academic publishers in the world.

We thank the contributing authors for sharing their expertise. We would not have been able to put this volume together without their commitment to complete their chapters, amidst all the challenges we faced in the past years due to the global pandemic. It took four years to complete this project, and so we are grateful for their patience.

We are also grateful to a community of scholars who read various chapters and provided concrete feedback on how these chapters can be improved. Dimitri Fazito and Ian O'Flynn are amongst these colleagues. We also thank the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback and drawing our attention to methods we had missed in the initial iteration of this volume.

We are particularly grateful to two icons of deliberative democracy, John Dryzek and Jane Mansbridge. The book benefited from many discussions we have had with John Dryzek about normative theory and empirical research, and different ways of researching deliberative democracy. Similarly, Jane Mansbridge was very generous with her time and comments. She read through all the chapters of this book to write a concluding chapter that beautifully captures the essence of this book.

viii Acknowledgements

Our gratitude also goes to Graham Smith for his support and encouragement, and for writing the Foreword, which affirms the importance of this project.

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This book is published open access. This was made possible by the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, based at the Faculty of Government, Business and Law, with the strategic funds received from the University of Canberra. We are also thankful to the Australian Research Council (DP180103014, *Metastudy of Deliberation*), to the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes/Proex) and to the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development of Brazil (CNPq 423218/2018-2) for funding the preparation and proofreading of the manuscript.

To publish an open access methods book on deliberative democracy matters to us. We are supporters of open knowledge, for we consider this as one step towards addressing asymmetries in knowledge production and dissemination. The book calls for an inclusive, global, and critical exchange of ideas in researching deliberative democracy. This is only possible if anyone who wants to join this conversation can have access to and engage with the ideas that the authors have shared in this book.

We are honoured to put together this volume. We hope that it serves as a useful, relevant, and inspiring resource to the growing community of scholars and practitioners of deliberative democracy across the world.

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1

Researching Deliberative Democracy

Methods and Approaches

Selen A. Ercan, Hans Asenbaum, Nicole Curato, and Ricardo F. Mendonça

As the field of deliberative democracy continues to grow, methodological questions loom large: Which methods are a good fit for the study of deliberative democracy? How can we translate normative theory into empirical research? Can the methods used for the study of deliberation in small-scale settings be used to assess deliberation at the large scale?

This book aims to answer these and many other questions and showcase a variety of methods and approaches used in deliberative democracy research. We identify the strengths and limitations of each method and reflect on how different methods can be combined to generate a comprehensive and multidimensional account of deliberative democracy. As editors of this book, our goal is both ambitious and modest. It is ambitious insofar as we hope to provide a ‘go-to resource’ for anyone wishing to study deliberative democracy. It is modest insofar as we recognize that this book, or any book for that matter, can never be complete in its coverage of methods, especially in a dynamic and growing field of study. Nevertheless, we have put our best efforts into curating a volume that features both established and emerging methods for researching deliberative democracy.

There are more than thirty methods covered in this book, approaching the study of deliberative democracy from different angles and engaging with different kinds of research questions and agendas. Some methods zero in on specific characteristics of deliberative practices, while others address broader questions in the field. By bringing all these diverse methods together, the book aims to practice what deliberative democracy preaches: enabling reflection and advancing critical engagement across different perspectives. We hope that our readers receive this book as an invitation to reflect on, evaluate, and articulate their assumptions about what deliberative democracy is and how it can be studied. At the same time, we hope that it encourages them to engage across different methods and approaches and contribute to the development of deliberative democracy as an innovative, reflexive, and inclusive field of study.

We begin this chapter by providing a brief overview of deliberative democracy research and explaining how the normative theory interacts with empirical research in the field. This is followed by a discussion of how deliberative ideals shape the

2 Researching Deliberative Democracy

practice and purpose of research. We show how scholars from different disciplinary and methodological backgrounds go about researching deliberative democracy and outline the key approaches and methods they employ. The chapter concludes with an overview of thirty-one different methods included in this volume. We hope that upon reading this book, or parts of it, readers will feel inspired to undertake research on deliberative democracy and thus advance the capacity of the field to address the problems facing contemporary democracies.

Bridging Normative Theory and Empirical Research

Deliberative democracy is a political ideal where ‘people come together on the basis of equal status and mutual respect, to discuss the political issues they face, and, on the basis of those discussions, decide on the policies that will then affect their lives’ (Bächtiger et al. 2019, 2). It is a normative theory about how collective decisions ought to be made (Habermas 1992), as well as a political project that advances practical ways of moving contemporary societies in a deliberative direction (Curato et al. 2018). Over the past two decades, we have witnessed various practical applications of deliberative democracy, from the ‘wave’ of deliberative mini-publics around the world to social movements’ deliberative decision-making and authoritarian regimes using deliberative processes to listen to the people (della Porta and Rucht 2013; He and Warren 2011; OECD 2020). The rise of deliberative practices in diverse settings and different countries offers a rich ground for researchers to conduct theoretical and empirical research on deliberative democracy, while also raising significant methodological questions.

One central methodological question in the field of deliberative democracy is how to bridge normative theory and empirical research. Normative theory is about the question of ‘what ought to be’, whereas empirical research focuses on ‘what is actually happening’. There were several key debates within the field, which sought to clarify the relationship between normative theory and empirical research (Mutz 2008; Neblo 2005; Thompson 2008). While sceptics may view the normative nature of deliberative democracy as a sign of its inapplicability to an imperfect world, empirical researchers have shown various ways in which normative theory interacts with real-world politics, and how this interaction can further both theory and practice.

Some scholars use normative theory to develop hypotheses to be empirically tested (see, for example, Grönlund et al. 2010). They draw on deliberative ideals to create experimental settings to test the conditions required for successful deliberation and explore ways to improve deliberative quality. For example, they investigate whether the introduction of deliberative norms in like-minded discussions alleviates group polarization (Strandberg et al. 2019). Others conduct experiments in ‘real-world’ settings with ‘real-world’ actors, such as elected officials. Drawing on deliberative ideals, Michael Neblo and his colleagues (2018), for example, design deliberative town halls where citizens meet and interact over the Internet with their elected representatives.

In these studies, the normative theory of deliberative democracy serves as a key starting point informing experimental design, and the hypotheses to be tested in the course of these experiments.

Other scholars use the normative ideals of deliberative democracy as a framework for interpreting or assessing the political dynamics in existing democracies (e.g. [Fan 2020](#); [Hendriks et al. 2020](#)). Taking the ideal conditions for deliberation as their benchmark, they examine the deliberative quality of discussion in both small groups and the broader public sphere. They have, for example, investigated the large-scale processes of deliberation on various issues such as climate governance ([Stevenson and Dryzek 2014](#)), LGBT equality ([Barvosa 2018](#)), and animal rights ([Parry 2017](#)). Meanwhile, some scholars take an inductive approach, and use empirical work to sharpen deliberative theory's normative claims ([Doerr 2018](#); [Curato 2019](#); Asenbaum, Chapter 5 in this volume) or use empirical research to bring deliberative democracy's principles to life (e.g. Cunningham and Tamale, Chapter 30 in this volume).

These studies and many others show that normative theory and empirical research can be combined in ways that advance both. The field moves back and forth, between theory and empirics, resulting in their mutual enrichment. Empirical research can throw new light on the normative questions that deliberative democrats are grappling with. The insights gained from the close study of deliberative practices (in both real-life and experimental settings) help 'in the process of identifying normative principles themselves' ([Bächtiger 2019](#), 657). Take, for example, Nicole [Doerr's \(2018\)](#) ethnographic research on political translation. Doerr makes a case for the role of translators not as 'neutral' actors in a deliberative process but as disruptors, or the 'third voice' for marginalized participants to be heard and understood. In this regard, Doerr's work challenges deliberative theory's assumptions about the virtue of neutrality in facilitating deliberation, and instead emphasizes the need for challenging structures of inequality for deliberative goals to be realized.

This approach to empirical research and theoretical refinement speaks to John Dryzek's call to use empirical research to refine the theory and make it 'more sensitive to real-world constraints and opportunities' ([Dryzek 2007](#), 240). In this sense, theoretical ideals should not be viewed as fixed but as contingent points of orientation that, informed by empirical experience, adapt, mature, and change over time. Empirical research enables us to capture what has not been theorized before and hence produce new ideals and contribute to the development of what Simone Chambers calls 'critical applied theories' (Chambers, Chapter 2 in this volume).

Diversity of Research Methods

The development and refinement of deliberative ideals is driven by a variety of theoretical and empirical methods. The field draws on established methods such as survey research, field experiments, ethnography, or narrative analysis. At the same time,

4 Researching Deliberative Democracy

it also creates new methods of its own. The Discourse Quality Index (DQI) is one of the best-known methods specifically designed to operationalize norms of deliberation as conceptualized by Habermas's normative theory. It originally sought to provide a tool for the measurement and comparison of the deliberativeness of parliamentary debates (Bächtiger et al. 2005; Steiner et al. 2004), although it has also been applied to assess the quality of deliberative mini-publics amongst lay citizens (Himmelroos 2017). Other specific methods developed in the field include the Deliberative Reason Index (Niemeyer and Veri, Chapter 7 in this volume), the Listening Quality Index (Scudder, Chapter 8 in this volume), and the Online Deliberative Matrix (Kies, Chapter 10 in this volume). These methods point to the relevance of constant innovation in deliberative democracy research.

The scholarship on deliberative democracy is built on a diverse epistemic community. This diversity is reflected in the methods included in this book. Scholars from various research traditions, disciplinary backgrounds, and geographic expertise present the methods they use while researching deliberative democracy. These include the methods used not only by empirically oriented scholars, but also those adopted by political theorists. While questions of methods are often thought to be something only empirical scholars should worry about, we show that theoretically oriented scholars also need methods (Chambers, Chapter 2 in this volume). The book offers a glimpse into the toolboxes of both theoretical and empirical scholars of deliberative democracy and presents the methods, and approaches they use for researching deliberative democracy. Theorists, political scientists, sociologists, policy analysts, and communication scholars contribute to the volume by presenting a distinctive angle on how deliberative democracy can be researched and further improved. They showcase examples of deliberation happening not only in structured forums or face-to-face settings, but also in the messy public sphere, in and through various media outlets, the Internet, social movements and everyday conversations. They offer a variety of methods and approaches that can be used to study not only textual and verbal communication but also nonverbal communication including visuals, colours, sound, silence, presence or absence in public deliberation (Ercan and Hendriks, Chapter 22 in this volume, Mendonça et al 2022)

Some may find it perplexing that there are many methodological possibilities for researching deliberation, and yet no single approach is agreed to be the best. There are also different comprehensions of deliberative democracy. Diana Mutz (2008, 525) may have been exaggerating when she stated that 'there are as many definitions of deliberation as there are theorists'; nevertheless, it is accurate to say that there has been an expansion of conceptual approaches and interpretations of deliberative democracy over the years (Bächtiger and Hangartner 2010). This raises concerns about 'concept stretching', and a worry that normative theory will lose its prescriptive force (Goodin 2018, 883). In response to this danger, Robert Goodin suggests distinguishing between different kinds of concept stretching, and accepting only those that are good for deliberative theory. In his view, we may stretch the original vision of deliberative democracy (developed by Habermas) for the purposes of making it 'more

democratic’ (meaning more inclusive), ‘more deliberative’ (meaning open to relevant information, and better informed), or ‘more realistic’ (meaning more applicable to the real world). These three conditions can be read as the shared commitments of deliberative democracy scholarship. What scholars share is not a rigid definition of deliberation, but a set of commitments that drive research and progress in the field.

Rather than searching for ‘the correct definition of deliberation’, we could understand deliberation as contingent, dependent on different contexts and goals, as suggested by André Bächtiger and John Parkinson (2019). On this account, the conditions for ‘good deliberation’ change depending on whether we seek to realize them in formal institutions or the public sphere. Additionally, the ‘systemic turn’ brings new ways of characterizing and assessing deliberation by shifting the focus from structured forums to multiple other sites of deliberation (Elstub et al. 2019; Steiner et al. 2017). Here, the conditions for good deliberation are defined more dynamically. In a healthy deliberative system, good deliberation is not necessarily evenly distributed; the low quality of deliberation in certain sites is compensated for by high-quality deliberation in other sites (Dryzek 2009). More importantly, low deliberative quality may accompany or even be an integral part of protests or other political organizations that add information and draw attention to issues in the deliberative system (Parry 2017). These suggestions open new ways of understanding and studying deliberation.

Despite the dynamism and progress of deliberative scholarship in the past decades, there is still a lot to do. More needs to be done, especially in sharpening the critical edge of our research agendas and broadening our sources of knowledge. For example, we, as editors of this book, recognize that we need to pay attention to the process of knowledge production, and work towards making it more inclusive and democratic (see Asenbaum, Chapter 5 in this volume). Scholars of critical race studies and feminist researchers have long criticized social science methods for using the logic of extraction where researchers ‘take, hit, and run’ (Reinharz 1992, 95). Deliberative democracy research is not immune from these critiques, for many of the methods we use are legacies of colonial traditions which we replicate as we study different societies (Banerjee 2021; Morán and Ross 2021; also see Smith 1999). While most researchers do follow guidelines for ethical conduct in ensuring the safety and dignity of participants, we understand the wider demand that our research be a non-exploitative process that views people as participants in co-producing knowledge.

We also witness the emergence of movements to decolonize knowledge in different disciplines. Indeed, deliberative scholarship needs to re-examine its assumptions about the state, citizenship, and even its own core normative principles as hinged on a particularistic history of Western democracies. Finally, we recognize the domination of countries in the Global North as centres of knowledge production, although we now see increasing recognition of different centres of knowledge production in the

field of deliberative democracy. Despite these and many other open questions, there is considerable scope for challenging deliberative democracy to continue evolving and realizing its emancipatory promise.

Practicing What We Preach: The Purpose of Deliberative Democracy Research

The scholarship on deliberative democracy is interested in thinking about ways to improve democratic practice in various settings, ranging from parliamentary debates to everyday conversations. The normative ideals of deliberative democracy not only provide an analytical framework that inform the generation and analysis of data, but also shape the purpose and process of research in important ways.

Just as feminist ideals shape the purpose and conduct of feminist research, for example by requiring researchers to reflect on the significance of gender and gender asymmetry in their work, and utilize their work for advancing women's empowerment (Fonow and Cook 2005), deliberative ideals such as inclusion, diversity, listening, or openness to new ideas shape the conduct and purpose of research in deliberative democracy. Deliberative democrats aim to problematize exclusions and marginalization or illegitimate decision-making in a democracy and create the conditions for meaningful political communication. They aim to fulfil the democratic ideal of emancipation by disturbing existing democratic practices and prioritizing inclusive forms of engagement (Wojciechowska 2019). In this sense, the tradition of critical theory, in which the goal of knowledge production is emancipation from domination (Hammond 2019; Mendonça 2013), is essential to deliberative democracy as a field, even though not all deliberative democrats see themselves as critical theorists. Critical theory, which originally emerged in the Institute for Social Research (or the 'Frankfurt School') in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, refers to a particular mode of research and analysis. For critical theorists, the purpose of scientific inquiry is to serve human as well as nonhuman interests and illuminate topics that ordinary people care about (Smith 2002). This requires putting philosophical questions under the spotlight of empirical social science research, with the aim being to effect change in society and enable freedom from oppression.

Some scholars are more explicit than others about these normative commitments and their influence on the topics they choose to study, or the type of research they undertake. They explicate how deliberative norms shape their research and view this process of explanation as strengthening their research and its validity. In this volume, Genevieve Fuji Johnson argues that research informed by deliberative democratic theory cannot be a value-free exercise. The ethically appropriate role of a researcher is to stand in solidarity with groups, communities, and nations experiencing oppression and seeking justice as they define it. 'Solidaristic research involves recognizing the

privilege and power we have as scholars and deploying our resources of social capital, time, and mode toward ending forms of expression' (Johnson 2021, 15). Johnson invites scholars of deliberative democracy to conduct solidaristic research, and take a stance in solidarity with, and empower particularly, those seeking racial justice, such as Indigenous peoples. We should do so, she argues, not simply to feel good about ourselves and our efforts but 'to contribute constructively and purposefully towards their liberation and resurgence' (Johnson, Chapter 4 in this volume). In her view, this is how researchers can help to fulfil the emancipatory ideals of deliberative democracy.

Not everybody might agree with this level of normative involvement on the part of researchers in the research process. Researchers can play different roles in deliberative democracy research (Evans and Kotchetkova 2009). Sometimes their role is to design deliberative processes, other times their role involves evaluating these processes. Nevertheless, the attempt to practice what the field preaches remains a frequent feature of deliberative democracy research. Researchers, drawing on deliberative ideals, have engaged with pressing controversies, such as the abortion debate in Ireland, and established deliberative institutions to break the years of political deadlock facing this issue (Farrell and Suiter 2019). The increasing popularity of citizens' assemblies in Belgium, France, Ireland, and the United Kingdom speaks to a similar practical agenda. Deliberative democracy researchers are a key driver of this development; they advocate institutional reform that enables citizens to deliberate on political issues in an inclusive, reasoned, and consequential manner. (e.g. Curato et al. 2021; Farrell and Suiter 2019; Renwick et al. 2018).

Finally, some researchers draw on deliberative ideals within their own research and make research processes more deliberative. They do so by including themselves in a deliberative dialogue with their research participants. Ricardo Mendonça (2009), for example, uses this kind of dialogue in his engagement with the dwellers of former leprosy colonies in Brazil. These dialogues enable him to unpack how people with leprosy articulate their suffering and grievances in everyday conversations and in interaction with each other. When informed by the principles of deliberative democracy, qualitative interviews can generate what Nicole Curato (2012) calls 'intersubjective knowledge'. Such form of knowledge is developed 'through a linguistic process of exchanging standpoints and bringing together different perspectives into a shared frame of understanding' (Curato 2012, 577). Kei Nishiyama (2018) follows a similar path and seeks this kind of knowledge production, when he conducts group dialogue to unpack the lived experiences of high school students in Japan. Epistemological diversity, justification, and reflection are essential dispositions to research practice for these scholars and many others. Marit Hammond describes this approach as 'activist deliberative democracy', where the goal of researchers is not to provide solutions for laypeople but to treat them as 'capable agents' who diagnose their political problems and intervene to improve their situations (Hammond 2019, 801). The idea is that the research is done with, rather than on, participants

(Bussu et al. 2020). Such activist or participatory research approaches put the political project of deliberative democracy at the centre of creating knowledge about deliberative democracy.

Tackling Big Questions through Multiple Methods

Many questions drive deliberative democracy research as it continues to grow in new directions. It would be impossible to do justice to the rich variety of questions that the field raises in this introduction. Yet, based on the chapters included in this book, we have identified four sets of questions that drive research in the field and four corresponding research approaches: theorizing, measuring, exploring, and enacting deliberation (see Table 1.1).

The structure of the book reflects these four approaches in the study of deliberative democracy. These are, however, non-exhaustive categories. First, there are important and sometimes inevitable overlaps between the categories. Second, research in deliberative democracy entails many other activities, such as interpreting, evaluating, criticizing, and prescribing. Our four categories aim only to provide a heuristic to organize the multiplicity of research approaches and methods included in this book.

Theorizing is a significant part of deliberative democracy research. It takes various forms, from normative or critical theory to explanatory theory. Despite its significance, there is little guidance on how theorizing is done. Methods courses in political science, sociology or communication studies mostly involve training in empirical methods for data gathering, processing and analysis. They also involve exposure to key theoretical texts, but there is little, if any, guidance as to how theorizing is done. They seem to assume that if students read theory, they will learn to write theory. In the social science literature, the few accounts that instruct how to theorize (Leopold and Stears 2008; Vincent 2004) are almost overwhelmed by the plethora of instruction on empirical methods. So how does theorizing work? What concrete steps does a theorist take in her research on deliberative democracy? How

Table 1.1 Questions and Approaches in Deliberative Democracy Research

Questions	Approaches
(1) What are the normative underpinnings and implications of deliberative democracy?	Theorizing deliberation
(2) What counts as good deliberation and what are its facets?	Measuring deliberation
(3) How is deliberation experienced in 'real life'?	Exploring deliberation
(4) How can deliberative democracy be brought to action through research?	Enacting deliberation

do theorists develop deliberative norms? This book presents concrete answers about the forms philosophical and theoretical engagement can take and how to employ empirical methods to develop deliberative theory (see [Ackerly et al. 2021](#)). As Jane Mansbridge (Chapter 33 in this volume) suggests, empirical researchers and practitioners can become theorists and theorists can become empirical researchers and practitioners.

Measuring allows researchers to develop and operationalize the indicators for good deliberation based on a normative framework. The normative elaboration of the moral principles of deliberation and their translation into empirical indicators needs mathematical abilities, logical rigour, and contextual sensibility as much as theoretical acuity. Measuring deliberation is an important empirical aspiration with several clear gains. First, it allows for research on a large number of cases, and the consequent capacity to reach generalizable findings. Second, measuring deliberation helps establish causal explanations. Third, measurement allows for comparability amongst cases, facilitating clear conclusions. Hence, measuring deliberation can help tell us what does and does not work in the real world. It is essential to building more effective deliberative practices and systems.

Exploring deliberation involves different ways of employing deliberative lenses to critically analyse the complexities and nuances of existing phenomena. Interpretive research methods are important in this regard ([Ercan et al. 2017](#)). Their capacity for nuanced engagement with a smaller number of cases allows researchers to lay bare the dynamics of deliberative exchanges. These methods enable researchers to stumble upon novelty and uncover the unexpected. Although deliberative theory works as a guiding framework, deliberative norms are not fixed a priori. Rather, they inspire empirical researchers to explore how deliberation works in the real world and how deliberative ideals might be expanded or adjusted. Rather than accepting as given a pre-established, external reality, the process of exploring deliberation co-constructs deliberative realities through the engagement of researchers and research participants. Exploratory approaches also allow scholars to employ deliberative lens(es) to read and interpret a wide range of phenomena, such as the crisis of democracy, enabling them to redefine the problems and find possible solutions from a deliberative perspective ([Hendriks et al. 2020](#)).

Finally, *enacting* deliberation in the context of research processes reconceptualizes research as a democratic activity. Realizing deliberation in the research process itself can include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. At the heart of enacting deliberation is a new understanding of the role of researchers and research participants. Contemporary science increasingly acknowledges the social responsibility of researchers and makes central the real-world relevance of research. Yet, understanding researchers to have a mandate and obligation for realizing social and political norms clashes with traditional understandings of researchers as detached, objective observers. Inspired by deliberative democratic norms and the tradition of action research, some deliberative scholars employ participatory methods that bring

participants as active agents into the research process. Rather than being sources of knowledge to be extracted, participants co-create knowledge on an equal footing with academic researchers (Bergold and Thomas 2012; Bussu et al. 2020). In doing so, they contribute to the process of democratizing knowledge production, as noted earlier.

We have divided the thirty-one methods included in this book into these four approaches of researching deliberation. Table 1.2 provides an overview of these approaches and the associated methods.

Navigating this Book

The methods presented in the book are explained directly by those who are using them in their theoretical and/or empirical research on deliberative democracy in a variety of settings, contexts, and countries. Each chapter presents one method, elaborates on its application in deliberative democracy, and offers illustrative examples showing how the method is used, or can be used, in practice. The chapters discuss the strengths of each method as well as its limitations. This kind of critical reflection comports with the deliberative values we embrace in the book, and it is crucial for the continuation of methodological development in the field.

Part I: Theorizing Deliberation

The chapters in Part I focus on theoretical investigations in the field. They emphasize different pathways to constructing theories of deliberative democracy and present theorizing as an important methodological skillset one can learn. Promoting an open and broad discussion on how to conduct theoretical research is essential for the development of the field and its agendas.

Chapter 2 elaborates on different *Methods of Theorizing* in deliberative democracy research. Simone Chambers argues that while empirical social sciences have a relatively well-defined set of methods, tools, and approaches to work with when designing and undertaking research, political theorists have no clear toolbox to draw on. She introduces a typology of five types of normative theory: ideal theory, critical reflective theory, constructive reflective theory, critical applied theory, and constructive applied theory, and then demonstrates how each is developed and utilized within the deliberative democracy tradition.

Chapter 3 argues that *Formal Models* are essential to promote conceptual clarity, which is necessary for empirical research. James Johnson argues that models should not be employed exclusively in 'positive' research. He notes the need to overcome a misguided dichotomy between positive and normative research, which artificially disentangles facts and values. Models are tools for the interpretation of reality and

Table 1.2 Research Methods in Deliberative Democracy

Theorizing	Measuring	Exploring	Enacting
Methods of Theorizing	Discourse Quality Index	Ethnography	Deliberative Policy Analysis
Formal Models	Deliberative Reason Index	Rhetorical Criticism	Action Research
Grounded Normative Theory	Listening Quality Index	Process Tracing	Community of Inquiry
Democratic Theorizing	Macro-level Assessment of Deliberative Quality	Q Methodology	Deliberative Camp
	Online Deliberation Matrix	Dramaturgical Analysis	
	Experimental Methods	Narrative Analysis	
	Deliberative Field Experiments	Frame Analysis	
	Scenario Experiments	Talk-based Analysis	
	Survey Methods	Media Analysis	
	Social Network Analysis	Mixed Methods	
	Big Data Analysis	Case Study Research	
	Qualitative Comparative Analysis		

Source: Authors' own table

also lie at the heart of theoretical investigations. He illustrates the implications of theoretical modelling in the context of empirical research by focusing on the concept of ‘agreement’ used by many deliberative democrats.

Chapter 4 focuses on the *Grounded Normative Theory* (GNT) approach in deliberative democracy. Genevieve Fuji Johnson outlines the basic contours of GNT as a broad field and presents its solidaristic expression as a mode of inquiry that is capable of fostering justice and of expressing solidarity with oppressed groups. GNT blends empirical study with normative theorizing recursively, inclusively, accountably, and solidaristically. Johnson challenges deliberative democrats to develop their ‘critical muscles’ and to ensure that deliberative democracy remains relevant to addressing pressing political issues, including racialized injustice and oppression.

Chapter 5 discusses *Democratic Theorizing* as a participatory approach to developing democratic theory. Hans Asenbaum develops this approach by drawing on deliberative values of inclusion, diversity, listening, and transparency. In contrast to established approaches to theorizing democracy, it includes human and nonhuman research participants in the theorizing process. Bringing together insights from grounded theory, participatory research, and assemblage theory, democratic theorizing enhances the formative agency of those outside academia. Drawing on a democratic theorizing project with the Black Lives Matter movement, the chapter provides a step-by-step guide to take the reader through the different phases a theorizing project might take.

Part II: Measuring Deliberation

Chapters in Part II present different ways of measuring the quality of deliberation in diverse settings, ranging from parliamentary debates to online discussion forums. Some chapters show how researchers can use the established social science methods, such as surveys, field experiments, or social network analysis, to examine deliberative processes at different levels of political interaction. Other chapters present new methods, which are developed particularly for examining deliberative practices. These include the Discursive Quality Index, the Deliberative Reason Index, and the Listening Quality Index.

Chapter 6 turns to the *Discourse Quality Index* (DQI) and provides guidance for those interested in adopting it in deliberative democracy research. André Bächtiger, Marlène Gerber, and Eléonore Fournier-Tombs survey the development of this method from its original to its expanded versions, including external and perception-based measurements. The authors also respond to some of the common criticisms of the DQI and reflect on novel developments in the automated measurement of deliberative quality.

Chapter 7 presents the *Deliberative Reason Index*, designed to assess how individuals reason together in a deliberative process. Simon Niemeyer and Francesco Veri introduce this method to capture the extent that a group coheres towards a shared understanding of the issue and its relevant dimensions. This index maps the inter-subjective consistency between actors to understand when and how deliberation improves reasoning. The chapter elaborates on the theoretical underpinning of the approach and the methods used to collect and analyse the results.

Chapter 8 introduces the *Listening Quality Index (LQI)*, an instrument that shifts the attention from speaking to listening in small-scale communicative interactions. Mary F. Scudder offers a critical review of the existing ways to measure listening in deliberation and highlights some of their limitations. She argues that some of these efforts go too far and equate listening with its ‘outcomes’, while others do not go far enough and conflate listening simply with ‘the opportunity to hear’. A less common approach to listening is to look for effects of listening on the ‘speaker’ instead of on the ‘listener’. The LQI incorporates speaker satisfaction into a measure of listening and offers a lexical scale to measure the quality of listening in deliberative processes. The chapter outlines the type of data required for analysis, and how researchers can generate this data during and after the deliberative encounter.

Chapter 9 presents the *Macro-level Assessment of Deliberative Quality*. Dannica Fleuß outlines a strategy for upscaling the measurement of deliberation to the nation-state level by combining elements from two strands of research: the methodological standards of democracy measurements and the conceptual groundwork of systemic approaches to deliberation. Based on a review of previous measurement approaches, the chapter provides practical advice for the conceptualization, operationalization, and aggregation of procedures that allow valid measurement of nation-states’ deliberativeness. By drawing on this method, researchers can compare the deliberativeness of different democracies and identify the type of institutional reforms required to facilitate and promote deliberative democracy at the national level.

Chapter 10 presents the *Online Deliberative Matrix (ODM)* as a method of measuring the quality of online deliberation. The method, introduced by Raphaël Kies, facilitates the assessment of political debates online through a matrix that measures three sets of criteria: the presence of deliberation, the deliberative attitudes of participants, and the outcome of the deliberative process. The ODM can be applied to assess the deliberative quality of public debates taking place in the digital public sphere, including online forums designed for deliberation and common social media or news websites. The chapter also reflects on the utility of this method in light of the systemic turn in deliberative democracy and offers a critical review of attempts to scale up the analysis through automated assessment of online deliberation.

Chapter 11 introduces *Experimental Methods*, detailing the kinds of experiments currently used in deliberative democracy research, including face-to-face, online, laboratory, and field experiments. Kimmo Grönlund and Kaisa Herne elaborate on

how they use experimental methods to examine and detect causal relationships in deliberative mini-publics, such as citizens' assemblies, citizens' juries, and deliberative polls. The chapter also provides insight into an experiment on enclave deliberation and group polarization in deliberative processes. The authors reflect on the future of experimentation on deliberation and discuss the kinds of methodological innovations needed to advance the empirical research in the field.

Chapter 12 focuses on *Deliberative Field Experiments* as a method for conducting experiments in real politics. Jon Kingzette and Michael Neblo define field experiments as systematic attempts to understand the causal dynamics of deliberation by manipulating features of the system: in naturalistic settings (rather than via surveys or in labs); on real political issues (rather than hypothetical scenarios); and by engaging a broad cross-section of people in a specific political jurisdiction potentially affected by pending political actions. The chapter outlines the process of deliberative field experiments and illustrates how they can be used to analyse deliberative events, such as the online town halls that Neblo and his colleagues have been organizing with the members of Congress in the US.

Chapter 13 presents *Scenario Experiments*. Hannah Werner and Lala Muradova explain how they use this method to understand the impacts of deliberation on public opinion formation, democratic legitimacy, and political behaviour. They argue that scenario experiments are most useful when studying the micro mechanisms of internal deliberation and the macro effects of deliberative events on the wider public. They show the application of this method in practice by providing examples from several recent research studies that use scenario experiments to analyze deliberation. The chapter also discusses how the methodological innovations in experimental social science research can improve research on deliberation.

Chapter 14 discusses the many uses of *Survey Methods* in studying deliberation. John Gastil begins with a typology of survey methods to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of mail, phone, Internet, cross-sectional, and longitudinal surveys. The chapter then offers examples from the use of surveys of participants in singular events, such as Deliberative Polls, the Irish Constitutional Convention, and the Australian Citizens' Parliament, surveys of participants in laboratory experiments, and surveys of larger populations—often linked with deliberative events, such as the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly or the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review. The chapter concludes by highlighting the ongoing problems in survey methods and reflects on the type of survey methods needed to span different levels of analysis to inform systemic theories of deliberation.

Chapter 15 focuses on *Social Network Analysis* (SNA), exploring its potential for the study of deliberative processes and, particularly, deliberative systems. Eduardo Silva, Antônio Ribeiro, and Silvio Higgins show how SNA can be employed to explain if and how components of a system relate to each other, as well as different pathologies that may hinder the flow of ideas and proposals from one site to another. The chapter presents different examples illustrating the practical application of SNA

in deliberative democracy research and introduces the key metrics used by these investigations.

Chapter 16 explores the use of *Big Data Analysis* in deliberative scholarship. Delving into this innovative methodological trend, Núria Franco-Guillén, Sebastian De Laile, and John Parkinson define big data and set out methodological decisions necessary in big data analysis. The chapter emphasizes the change in scope represented by the approach, which allows the analysis of massive volumes of data. The authors illustrate the merits and limits of big data analysis in deliberative democracy research by focusing on two case studies: the Scottish independence referendum campaign of 2012–2014, and the Australian campaign to recognize First Nations in its constitution.

Chapter 17 elaborates on *Qualitative Comparative Analysis* (QCA) and shows how this method can be used for comparing different instances of deliberative processes. Matt Ryan explains how QCA combines the generalizability of quantitative research with the deep understanding of interpretive research. Through qualitative investigation of a small to medium number of cases, it identifies patterns that allow for valid conclusions. In deliberative democracy research, QCA is particularly useful for comparing a number of cases and understanding the conditions for good and bad deliberation. The chapter provides step-by-step guidance to undertaking QCA and demonstrates how lessons from QCA can be employed to design more successful deliberative forums in the future.

Part III: Exploring Deliberation

Chapters in Part III of the volume focus on the methods that are used to explore deliberation in structured forums and the public sphere. As readers will notice, some methods use similar data-gathering techniques but diverge in terms of the type of data they gather and analyse. For example, methods, such as the Talk-based Analysis or Narrative Analysis focus on the analysis of talk and text, while others, such as Dramaturgical Analysis and Frame Analysis enable researchers to also take into account non-verbal forms of expression and performances. This part also includes examples of methods that sit at the intersection of quantitative and qualitative modes of analysis, such as Q methodology or Mixed Methods.

Chapter 18 discusses the use of *Ethnography* in the study of deliberative democracy. Nicole Curato and Nicole Doerr outline two purposes of ethnography—to describe and to critique the lived experience of deliberative practice. The chapter presents a variety of empirical cases covering ten years of ethnographic work. In doing so, the chapter invites reflection on the positionality of the observer in culturally complex and multilingual deliberation. It also makes a case for conducting ethnography in non-ideal settings marked by inequality, to sharpen our understanding of deliberative

theory in relation to fields of visual and cultural sociology, performance, and affect studies.

Chapter 19 introduces *Rhetorical Criticism* as a method that enables a close textual analysis of deliberative discourse. Influenced by poststructuralism, critical theory, and feminist theory, rhetorical criticism stresses how discourse constructs reality and how various material and symbolic contexts shape communicative practices. Drawing on examples from recent scholarship, John Rountree outlines how rhetorical criticism can be undertaken. The chapter addresses the key research questions this method can help respond to, its units of analysis, its approach to building a dataset, and its method for translating textual evidence into interpretive arguments.

Chapter 20 explores *Process Tracing* as a method for structuring qualitative, explanatory case-study analysis of deliberative processes. Jonathan Pickering outlines process tracing as a method to identify causal mechanisms that connect the causes of events or phenomena to their outcomes, drawing evidence from a wide array of sources associated with a single case or a small number of cases. Many empirical studies in political science have employed process tracing in a loose manner, and only more recently have political scientists made a concerted effort to develop a more systematic approach. This chapter shows how deliberative democracy scholars can employ process tracing to assess deliberation within and beyond mini-publics, highlighting areas for future research.

Chapter 21 presents *Q Methodology*, which is used for comprehending subjective viewpoints or discourses, involving both quantitative and qualitative elements. Lucy Parry shows how Q methodology is used to identify the balance of discourses in various sites within the broader deliberative system. This is illustrated in a detailed guide drawing on a Q methodology study on the representation of animals in the foxhunting discourse in the United Kingdom.

Chapter 22 introduces *Dramaturgical Analysis* as a way of analysing the performative aspects of public deliberation. Selen Ercan and Carolyn Hendriks outline the key dimensions of dramaturgical analysis, such as scripting, setting, staging and performance. The chapter shows how these dimensions can be used to analyse the communicative interactions in various settings, ranging from structured forums to the broader public sphere. Dramaturgical analysis directs the researcher's attention to often-overlooked or taken-for-granted aspects of public deliberation, such as the performative styles and body language of the actors involved in deliberation, where they stand, how they enact and stage their arguments, what symbols and artefacts they use to reinforce their viewpoints, and how they reach out and persuade diverse audiences. Drawing on dramaturgical analysis, researchers can study verbal and non-verbal interactions taking place in deliberative practices.

Chapter 23 explains how *Narrative Analysis* can be used in deliberative democracy research. John Boswell argues that while narrative analysis has much to offer scholars

of deliberation, the growing interest in and adoption of this approach in social science research presents some complexities and confusions. The chapter clarifies a version of narrative analysis considered as particularly suitable for studying deliberative practice (grounded in the traditions of interpretive policy analysis) and offers examples of how this analysis can be undertaken.

Chapter 24 introduces *Frame Analysis* as a method for studying deliberative democracy generally, and deliberative systems in particular. Ricardo Mendonça and Paula Simões argue that the method's focus on the contextual dimension of meaning-making processes offers a path for the investigation of discursive clashes across time and space. The chapter raises the question of how frames produce particular perceptions of reality and how deliberative democracy draws attention to who has the power to produce such frames. The chapter distinguishes between three traditions of frame analysis and illustrates what frame analysis can contribute to the study of deliberative democracy through a variety of examples.

Chapter 25 describes *Talk-based Analysis*, which can be used for analysing speech, discourse, and rhetoric delivered in deliberative spaces. As Paromita Sanyal explains, this method provides a tool for the qualitative analysis of who says what and how, employing a semiotic approach that links speech and performance. The talk-based method is useful for examining the influence of social stratification and inequalities on public deliberations. Sanyal shows how she used this method in state-citizen discussions in constitutionally mandated village assemblies, *gram sabha*, in India. The analysis draws attention to how citizens talk to the state, as they voice demands or requests for public goods and personal benefits, complain about government negligence, and protest corruption and government inefficiencies.

Chapter 26 explores *Media Analysis* to study deliberative democracy. Rousiley Maia and Tariq Choucair argue that the systemic turn in deliberative theory has invited a reconceptualization of argumentative exchange across different contexts and spaces. A systemic approach cannot afford to ignore interfaces between deliberation in institutional forums and more mundane discussions, and, consequentially, the neighbouring field of mass media and digital communication. This chapter offers a way of employing content analysis for researching mass media material and diversified online platforms. It presents different ways of using content analysis and blending it with other techniques to study deliberation at micro, macro and system levels.

Chapter 27 outlines the use of *Mixed Methods* to analyse deliberative processes and argues that mixed methods are well-suited to grappling with deliberation's complexity. Oliver Escobar reviews methodological foundations and outlines questions and puzzles where mixed methods can contribute to deliberative scholarship. The chapter also covers research design, data generation, analysis, and quality standards, while offering examples and concluding with a call to strengthen the mixed methods community of practice within the field of deliberative democracy.

Chapter 28 highlights the importance of *Case Study Research* for the study of deliberative democracy. Stephen Elstub and Gianfranco Pomatto provide guidance

on how to select cases and collect and analyse data in the field of deliberative democracy. In comparison with other methods, case studies have the advantage of delving into an individual case with the help of various methods and thus exploring it in depth. While it might be expected that case studies are particularly apt for exploring deliberative forums, the chapter shows how such explorations can teach us important lessons about how deliberation can be scaled up in deliberative systems.

Part IV: Enacting Deliberation

Finally, the fourth part focuses on the methods that bring deliberation to action through research. The methods draw on deliberative ideals for producing both knowledge and action. One of these methods, Deliberative Policy Analysis, for example, seeks to bring together a range of actors including citizens, politicians, and experts for formulating and implementing democratically legitimate policies. When researchers enact deliberation as part of their research or analysis, they work alongside participants and seek to improve deliberation in practice. The chapters included in this part of the book show how this may happen in both structured forums and the wider public sphere. They also reflect on some of the limitations and challenges of enacting deliberation in the context of a research process.

Chapter 29 outlines *Deliberative Policy Analysis* (DPA) as an effective alternative approach to mainstream technocratic policy analysis. Hendrik Wagenaar presents two distinguishing characteristics of DPA: its focus on inclusive deliberation as a strategy of policy inquiry, and its orientation towards practice. While DPA accommodates a range of interpretive methods, this chapter focuses on the relatively neglected analysis of practice. The analysis of practice requires a combination of sufficiently close-up ethnographic observation to allow the researcher to capture the deliberative practices, and an inductive theoretical rendition of these observations. The chapter shows how DPA can help to reveal the mundane practices, the hidden configurations of the process of policy formulation and implementation.

Chapter 30 makes a case for using *Action Research* in the study of public deliberation. Kiran Cunningham and Lilian Muyomba-Tamale draw our attention to some of the key principles that action research shares with deliberative democracy. These entail inclusion, equity, and the goal of collective knowledge production. Action research, with its roots in feminist studies and critical theory, not only helps to investigate the processes and impacts of deliberation, but also offers a method of enacting deliberation. Drawing on the example of Civic Engagement Action Plans (CEAPs) in Uganda, the authors show how deliberation and action research can go hand in hand and enable the inclusion of citizens and civil society actors into governmental decision-making processes.

Chapter 31 introduces *Community of Inquiry* (CoI) as a group interview method. Kei Nishiyama elaborates on the philosophical roots of the CoI, which was originally pioneered by pragmatist philosophers, such as John Dewey, as a group dialogue for reflective knowledge-construction. As a research method, CoI enacts

deliberative ideals in practice in two important ways. First, it encourages reflection and reason-giving in the context of the interview process. Second, it emphasizes collaborative questioning and active listening, which help to minimize the power imbalances between an interviewer and interviewees and between interviewees. Nishiyama shows how he uses CoI in conducting group interviews with children.

Chapter 32 presents an innovative method, namely *The Deliberative Camp*, to generate knowledge about social movements interactions, while also promoting such interactions in practice. Donatella della Porta and Andrea Felicetti elaborate on how researchers can co-organize Deliberative Camps along with activists, and how these camps can be used to shed light on dynamic practices performed by social movements and nurture their critical reflection about these practices. As a method of inquiry, the Deliberative Camp formalizes deliberations occurring within and between social movements and provides a powerful tool to deepen the comprehension of the relationships between social movements and deliberative democracy. The chapter discusses the main ideas behind this method, presents the key steps required for its implementation, and outlines its potential contribution as well as limitations for research on social movements and deliberative democracy.

Finally, in Chapter 33, Jane Mansbridge provides concluding remarks on contemporary research in deliberative democracy. In this chapter, which is entitled *Mutual Need*, she argues that the field requires and benefits from a close relationship between theory, practice, and empirical analysis. In her view, this is essential for the production of normatively legitimate decisions in a complex world. Mansbridge concludes the book with a note of hope on human ingenuity and the capacity to strengthen democracy in the face of the grave problems confronting our societies today.

We hope that this book captures the diversity of available methods, and we look forward to learning about other methods that we failed to include in this collection. Our aim in publishing this volume open access is to ‘practice what we preach’. We want anyone wishing to learn about or take part in methodological debates in deliberative democracy to be able to do so without any prohibitions to access to information. We hope that readers find our book both useful and empowering. Rather than a canonical volume that closes a debate, we see this book as the start of a conversation that will increase the diversity and sophistication of empirical and theoretical engagements in future deliberative democracy research.

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PART I
THEORIZING DELIBERATION

2

Methods of Theorizing

Simone Chambers

Deliberative democracy is a large and growing research paradigm. One of this paradigm's defining features is the way it has attracted both empirically oriented scholars as well as theorists and philosophers. Although there is always disagreement about the best or most useful methodological paradigm, empirical social sciences have a relatively well-defined set of methods, tools, and approaches to work with when designing research projects. Indeed, methodology is usually a subfield within empirical social sciences. The question of methods and methodology is not so well defined in political theory where there is no clear toolbox. What is theory? What does it mean to do theory? What are the different ways to theorize? This chapter canvases some common answers to these questions and offers a typology of theory as it relates to deliberative democracy.

What Is Theory?

Empirical social sciences (indeed all sciences) employ and generate theory. This is often (but not always) understood as involving hypothesis construction and generalization. This type of theory can be very modest, for example a theory of recycling would develop and then test hypotheses about the sorts of factors that are likely to lead to recycling. But it can also produce theory on a grand scale. Modernization theory, for example, uses the same independent/dependent variable structure but on a macro scale to suggest a causal connection between economic development and democracy ([Przeworski and Limongi 1997](#)). While causal theories are the most common type of theory in empirical social science, they are not the only type. Max Weber had a theory about the way Protestant (Calvinist) theology, human psychology, and capitalist accumulation interacted, which postulated an 'elective affinity' between Protestantism and capitalism ([Weber 2002](#)). This theory contributed more to understanding the forces involved in modernity and processes of rationalization than to explaining the causes of capitalism. Weber did not test his theory but instead relied on a complex narrative about, and interpretation of, empirical phenomena as well as moral, psychological, and theological claims.

Deliberative democracy also generates various types of empirical theory, some falling squarely into the causal/testable type and others into the interpretive/descriptive type. For example, questions about the empirical conditions of persuasion can generate hypotheses and generalizations that can be tested in all sorts of ways (Bächtiger 2018). Or a systemic approach to deliberative democracy generates the claim that spheres of communication can be or are connected and this in turn can generate a theory of communication flows that is primarily descriptive but not causal (Hendriks 2006). But these types of theories (causal and descriptive) are not what we usually mean by theory when we talk about deliberative democratic theory. One can generate empirical hypotheses out of the theory, but the theory itself is not primarily about how the world works or what is causing what; rather it is about how the world *ought* to work.

Theory in political theory usually means normative theory. Normative theory is essentially prescriptive rather than descriptive (although a great deal of description can be included) and focuses on why we should value certain things (like deliberation) and what we ought to do to promote what we value. This normativity is to be understood very broadly and can be, and often is, deeply rooted in empirical reality. When we think about democratic theory more generally, in the first instance we think that theory outlines why democracy is preferable to other types of regimes, and second, what constitute the defining features of democracy that need to be promoted. Deliberative democratic theory starts here too and only at a second-order level does normative theory generate empirical types of theory. For example, if the theory of deliberative democracy claims that we can expect (predict) certain benefits from deliberation, then we should design research projects that ‘test’ such claims.

So, by ‘theory’ I mean normative theory, and by ‘normative’ I mean theory generating values, prescriptions, and criticisms rather than hypotheses, generalizations, explanations, and predictions.¹ Before outlining what I take to be the main ways of engaging in normative theorizing, I want to say a few general words about methods.

What Is a Method?

Method and methodology are categories that can include many different things, from techniques, styles, and approaches to epistemological assumptions and philosophical commitments. Here I will outline five very broad ways to understand the role and function of normative theory in the study of deliberative democracy. These five ways represent a middle position between, on the one hand, what might be called theories of the source of normativity and, on the other, techniques employed in the service of

¹ I reject the view that associates normative theory exclusively or primarily with the analytic tradition of political philosophy (List and Valentini 2016). Analytic political philosophy is more of a style of philosophy than a method per se and is closely connected to the tradition of Rawls and his critics.

normative theory. In the first category, one might find discussions of Rawls' reflexive equilibrium, Habermas's rational reconstruction, or Kant's transcendental critique. These are all ways or methods, if you like, that particular thinkers have used to build their moral and political philosophies, which in turn have been drawn on by theories of deliberative democracy. As my focus is on deliberative democratic theory and not moral and political theory more generally, I will not spend much time discussing these foundational methods. At the other end of the spectrum are the specialized tools and techniques used in normative theory. Although I suggested above that theorists do not have the clear and well-organized toolbox of the empirical social scientist, there is a toolbox of sorts that contains such things as textual interpretation, the use of archives, ethnography, rational choice models, and counterfactual thought experiments (such as 'trolley cars') just to name a few. But tools and techniques do not add up to a full method or give one a sense of how to do normative theory. A hammer cannot tell you how to build a house and it certainly cannot tell you what kind of house you want to build or why you might want to build it in a particular way. So, the methods of normative theorizing with which I begin ask how we go about thinking about the sort of house we want to live in.

Normative Theorizing

In what follows, I divide normative theorizing into five categories. These are somewhat artificial and analytic, and much of what we might call deliberative democratic theory engages in more than one of these and sometimes all five. Nonetheless these five categories can serve as a helpful heuristic and might be useful for people who are thinking through what they wish to accomplish with their contribution to theory and how to conceive of theoretical research projects. The first category I call *theories of the ideal* and these lay out what is deliberative democracy, normatively speaking, and why it is good or desirable. The second and third categories of theories look to be derivatives of the first (and they are) but they can sometimes make even more important contributions to the theory of deliberative democracy than theories of the ideal. The second category is *critical reflective theory* and this theory questions, probes, and interrogates the first-order theories of the ideal; the third category I call *constructive reflective theory* and here theorists interpret, elaborate, and extend theories of the ideal. The fourth and fifth categories engage the empirical world more directly, but like the reflective type either critically or constructively. *Critical applied theory* engages normativity by criticizing existing arrangements for failing to live up to normative ideals. *Constructive applied theory* engages normativity by suggesting, proposing, and designing innovative institutions and real-world practices to make democracy more deliberative, and so better.

Theories of the Ideal

Theories of the ideal are not to be confused with ideal theory. Ideal theory refers to a very specific type of theory (perhaps even a method) predominantly associated with the work of John Rawls in which, when thinking about principles and how they might work in the world, one imagines full compliance (Levy 2014). Furthermore, the normativity of theories of the ideal is not necessarily idealized in the sense invoked by realists. Realist criticism of some ‘normative’ theory is itself normative in the general sense I am using here. Realists argue that highly moralized or idealized political theory is deeply mistaken not because it is bad science (although it might be thought to rest on bad science) but because it leads us to misunderstand politics and so make disastrous decisions, choices, and evaluations. Realists from Machiavelli and Morgenthau to Bernard Williams and Raymond Geuss all argue for realism on essentially normative grounds and put forward their own theories of the ideal, but here it is of course the realist ideal of a politics based on a true understanding of power and interests.

Theories of the ideal contain two parts. They define what deliberative democracy is and they explain why we should value deliberative democracy. In this category we find what has come to be referred to as first-generation deliberative democracy, which includes the seminal work of Bernard Manin (1987), Jürgen Habermas (1989, 1996), Joshua Cohen (1989), and Gutmann and Thompson (1996) to name only a few. It would be a mistake, however, to think of theories of the ideal as a generational category and my typology of normative theory is not intended as a diachronic reconstruction of the holy history. First, there are theorists still contributing to this type of theory. Here I am thinking of the work, for example, of Rainer Forst (2009), John Dryzek (2017), and Mark Warren (2017). And second, there is a way to retroactively expand our repertoire of theories of the ideal. For example, we can go back and re-read theorists to find and extract these ideals. This is why the history of political philosophy is still a wonderful resource for theorists of deliberative democracy even though most people date the ‘birth’ of this research paradigm to somewhere in the 1980s and 1990s. Two sources that come to mind are the re-appropriation of Aristotle on the wisdom of crowds and a re-reading of Dewey in light of deliberative democracy (Ober 2013; Knight and Johnson 2011). Neither Aristotle nor Dewey have clear theories of deliberative democracy, but they do contain ideals and values that can be recovered in the service of deliberation.

It is hard to describe how to do this kind of theory. Its central reference point is democracy, and its core claims have to do with why deliberation offers a promising core ideal to think about, evaluate, and design democracy. Although the primary contribution of this type of theory is to articulate core ideals that animate the paradigm, the theory itself can be more or less abstract. If we compare the work of Joshua Cohen and John Dryzek, both of whom have powerful articulations of core features of the deliberative ideal, we see that their divergent ‘methods’ and styles can be tied to their respective research traditions. Cohen works in the analytic tradition

of Rawlsian political philosophy in which tightly constructed abstract argumentation defends reason-giving as the most coherent way to understand the value of freedom and equality of each and every person. In contrast to Cohen, Dryzek comes out of a policy studies background. Here the style is much more problem-driven with closer links to empirical research. It nevertheless contains fundamental and original articulations of what is deliberative democracy (normatively speaking) and why deliberative democracy offers a more persuasive view of democratic legitimacy than aggregative views.

Critical Reflective Theory

Deliberative democracy as a research paradigm has grown and developed in quite unprecedented ways over the last thirty years. Part of this success has been the power of criticism (internal and external) to initiate important learning processes in the theory without exploding or destroying the paradigm. Critical reflective theory interrogates and questions core concepts first articulated in theories of the ideal. As noted at the outset, the lines between theories of the ideal and the two reflective types I discuss in this and the next section can be quite blurred: first, because some of the best critical reflective and constructive reflective theories contribute to theories of the ideal; and second, because theory in general is almost always in some sort of reflective relationship with predecessors and contemporaries. Despite some blurry lines, however, I think having an intellectual past and acknowledging influences is not quite the same as engaging in critical reflective or constructive reflective theorizing.

The paradigmatic case for me of critical reflective theory is found in the work of Iris Marion Young. Young questioned and criticized what she deemed to be a rationalist bias in the conceptual core of deliberative theory and asked us all to think about pluralism, diversity, and difference in relation to deliberation (Young 2000). She brought the role of internal and external exclusions to the attention of deliberative theory. This was an enormously important contribution, indeed corrective, to deliberative theory undertaken through critique. The method was to imagine real-world deliberations governed by the narrowly conceived notion of reason-giving and to see the normatively undesirable consequences of the thought experiment. Thus, although Young challenged theories of the ideal from the point of view of real-world consequences, she did not use hard empirical data or historical events as evidence. She was not arguing that the theory was empirically false, but rather that it was normatively problematic: when thought through, it does not jibe with other normative commitments we hold strongly.

I want to contrast Young's criticism of deliberative democracy with another much-cited critic. Lynn Sanders' article, with the provocative title 'Against Deliberation', points to a number of places and venues in the real world where deliberation is not equal and there are significant barriers to entry (Sanders 1997). Sanders' essay, along with a mountain of empirical research cataloguing the way real-world conversations

fall short of the deliberative ideal, alert us to the pitfalls, challenges, and outright failures of deliberation to achieve the ideal of inclusive equality, but they do not contribute to normative theorizing in quite the same way as Young's work does. Sanders shows that we are often not very good at actualizing the deliberative ideal and that there may be more obstacles to that actualization than we had anticipated, but she does not show that the ideal is not valuable; Young shows us that the way we had been conceptualizing the ideal might have normatively undesirable consequences and so we should rethink or be more careful and explicit about what we mean by reason-giving and be more sensitive to questions of inclusion.

The critical reflective approach is a very common research design within normative theory. Very generally there are three axes along which criticism can develop that focus on normative, conceptual, or empirical adequacy of the theories of the ideal. Iris Marion Young is an example of the normative type. There is a lot of work in philosophy and political theory that interrogates the conceptual adequacy of Rawlsian and Habermasian philosophy. Only some of that research is relevant to deliberative democracy and identifying what is and is not relevant is a matter of taste. Public reason, for example, is a concept that has generated a whole subfield of critical reflective theorizing, much of it focused on conceptual adequacy. How much of that debate can be considered part of deliberative democratic theory depends on how one understands deliberative democracy.

As I suggested above, the question of the empirical adequacy of normative theories is a tricky one. On the one hand, normative theories do not claim to describe the world, but rather invite us to think about how the world ought to be. So, simply pointing to the ways in which the real world fails to live up to the ideals of deliberation does not necessarily add up to a serious question of adequacy. This confusion between descriptive and prescriptive claims is a very common mistake made by empirical social scientists who are intent on criticizing the empirical adequacy of normative theory (Achen and Bartels 2016). On the other hand, a normative theory that is based on wildly implausible empirical assumptions indeed has an adequacy problem. I do not think that theories of the deliberative democracy ideal are based on wildly implausible empirical assumptions, but I do think that early misreadings of theories of the ideal presented versions (sometimes caricatures) of the ideals that did seem deeply implausible (Mouffe 2000; Geuss 2008). I discuss this in more detail below.

Constructive Reflective Theory

The idea of constructive reflective theory is to build on, elaborate, and extend theories of the ideal. This can be done at the same time as engaging in critical reflective work, of course. James Bohman is a good example of a theorist who, in critically interrogating the concept of consensus in Habermas, has extended and

elaborated the Habermasian ideal by developing the concept of ‘plural agreement’ as a more pluralism-friendly conception of the ends of deliberation (Bohman 1996, 34). Another good example of this type of theory can be seen in the work of Cheryl Mizak (2008) who takes up and defends the work of the pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce and develops his idea of ‘inquiry’ into an epistemic defence of deliberative democracy. I see much of my own work as an elaboration, extension, and application of Habermas’s model of two-track democracy to contemporary issues and contexts (Chambers 2017). Finally, the most successful and perhaps paradigmatic version of this type of theory is the systems approach to deliberative democracy (Mansbridge et al. 2012).

Somewhat dissatisfied with the growing domination of small-scale one-off deliberative venues as the focal point of much deliberative democracy research, many theorists have sought to scale up the analysis of deliberate democracy (or reinvigorate the scaled-up analysis found in thinkers like Habermas) into a systems approach. The challenge has been to re-imagine the core normative values of deliberation (inclusion, equality, reason-giving) at a macro scale while avoiding simplistic and unrealistic views of democracy as one big face-to-face deliberation. André Bächtiger and John Parkinson articulate the core intuitions of the systems approach very well:

Starting from the view that no one event or process can possibly maximize all the deliberative democratic criteria—it cannot be maximally inclusive, decisive and deliberative all at once—the systems approach assumes the necessity of a division of labour between institutions and actors with different functional strengths and weaknesses.

(Bächtiger and Parkinson 2018, 85)

The systems approach has produced a new wave of normative theory that has been informing the next two types of theory. But the systems approach has been the focus of several important critical reflective studies as well. David Owen and Graham Smith’s important challenge to systems theory is a good example (Owen and Smith 2015). Like Iris Marion Young, they ask us to imagine some of the normative consequences of the systems approach and in particular the division of labour thesis. Here they suggest that, if we are not careful, normative theory will go down a functionalist rabbit hole whereby deliberative outcomes might seem to be the product of systemic forces and yet no individuals actually deliberate, and the picture at the individual level might look quite grim. Again, like Young, this challenge has not demolished the normative claims of the systems approach (nor was it intended to). It has instead spurred a deeper engagement with the normative core of deliberation, particularly the question of the ethical requirements of citizens in a well-functioning deliberative system.

Critical Applied Theory

The critical applied model of normative theorizing takes the normative theory generated by the three types of theory outlined above and uses these theories as yardsticks in assessing and criticizing arrangements in real existing democracies. While the foci of reflective theory are other theories, the focus of applied theory is the real world.

With the expansion and growth of deliberative democracy as a research paradigm, and the successful collaboration between theory and empirical social sciences, applied types of normative theorizing are perhaps the fastest growing field today. The major challenge is in operationalizing normative ideals into either a critical yardstick or a useful and workable institution. This turns out to be very tricky. In this section I focus on the yardstick type of normative theory.

Habermas is well aware of the pitfalls involved in translating normative ideals into workable pragmatic categories. Many theorists mistakenly thought that Habermas's moral theory, discourse ethics, was a normative political theory to be directly implemented in some way in the real world. As he clarifies in *Between Facts and Norms*, however, 'An *unmediated* application of discourse ethics (or of an unclarified concept of discourse) to the democratic process leads to muddled analysis; these then offer skeptics pretexts for discrediting the project of a discourse theory of law and politics at its inception' (Habermas 1996, 158). Critics and enthusiasts alike often appealed to Habermas in projecting a highly utopian political theory in which open-minded and rational citizens would reach cooperative consensus on tough political questions under egalitarian conditions (Geuss 2008). Agonistic theorists like Chantal Mouffe accused deliberativists of wanting to reduce all politics to a rational search for consensus (Mouffe 2000). The mistake here was to think that the ideal speech situation offered a simple yardstick against which to compare all political communication (not to mention all social relations). But the ideal speech situation is a device to represent and model some essential aspects of discourse and justification. Habermas has long abandoned reference to it precisely because so many have read it as containing a goal (even if an unreachable one) to be striven for. It offers insight into when and where processes of communication and justification have gone off the rails. In this sense, then, it is a tool of critique and not an end to be achieved. Some normative ideals are analogous to the idea of a vacuum in science. Thinking about the movement of bodies in a vacuum can tell us a lot about the forces that affect the movements of bodies in the real world and can even suggest ways to improve the movements of bodies, but this useful idealization is not intended as a place to live.

Deliberative democracy offers many tools of critique and Habermas's discourse theory is only one source. The objects of critique can vary from a critical analysis of a single referendum (Chambers 2018) or protest event (Mendoza and Ercan 2015) to democratic regimes more generally (Curato et al. 2019). Although these studies often contain a great deal of empirical description, analysis, and interpretation, they are also contributions to normative theorizing because in operationalizing norms we can get a better understanding and articulation of their meaning and significance.

The yardstick model is critical in the sense that it interrogates, evaluates, and analyses real-world arrangements from the normative point of view, but it does not always have to be critical in the negative sense. It is possible, especially in a comparative framework, to point to positive developments and good practices. But in an imperfect world beset by power, interest, and money, it stands to reason that the real world will always fall short even of our mediated realistic ideals. Deliberative democracy is not a utopian theory with a blueprint of the just and fully democratic society of the future. For deliberative democrats, progress (if it occurs at all) is piecemeal, incremental, and often achieved by pointing out the egregious failures of institutions and people to live up to the ideals of deliberative democracy.

Applied Constructive Theory

This last category of theory is in some sense the least theoretical (but not in a bad way), and it is the area that has seen (and I predict will continue to see) the greatest progress. It also involves operationalizing theoretical norms but the task here is somewhat different than what we saw in the critical applied model. As I noted in closing the last section, deliberative democracy is not a theory with a utopian blueprint. It is not an alternative to representative democracy although it does suggest many institutional innovations to enhance and perhaps, over the long run, radically restructure representative democracy. We are seeing, for example, exciting suggestions for bicameral assemblies that adopt sortition as the method of selection and turn representative assemblies into citizen assemblies (Gastil and Wright 2019). I close this chapter with three examples of applied constructive theory that not only operationalize deliberative norms in tangible and useful ways, but also reflexively contribute to the normative theory on which they draw.

James Fishkin has been refining the Deliberative Poll for almost thirty years (Fishkin 2018). The focus has been on operationalizing norms of deliberation that enhance the epistemic quality of citizens' opinions, as well as procedures of random sampling, in order to make good on the normative claim that deliberative polls can be understood as representative of the larger public. Such careful attention to design features has given us a huge amount of empirical evidence about the conditions under which citizens make evidence-driven, cognitively sophisticated judgements and offers a serious challenge to those claiming that citizens are fundamentally incompetent reasoners.

John Gastil has been a champion, designer, and student of the Citizen Initiative Review (CIR) (Gastil et al. 2016). Whereas Fishkin, until recently, has concentrated on operationalizing the ideal conditions of deliberations, Gastil has been thinking about the connections to be made between citizen deliberation and the broader public debate, thus operationalizing norms of the systems approach. The CIR was created to help citizens outside citizens' assemblies make more informed choices on state-wide ballot measures. Between nineteen and twenty-four citizen panellists, drawn

from a stratified random sample, convene to deliberate for four to five days about ballot initiatives. They hear from both sides of the issue, talk with neutral witnesses, deliberate intensively as a full panel and in small break-out groups, and then write a one-page analysis for distribution to the wider electorate. Data shows that when citizens are aware of what the CIR is and does, trust in the information increases and may outweigh that of partisan sources (Gastil et al. 2017).

The work of Farrell et al. explores the use of deliberative institutions (both full citizens' assemblies and partial citizens' assemblies) in processes of constitutional reform in Ireland (Farrell et al. 2018). The work, while very empirical, begins from a conviction that deliberative democratic theory contains promising suggestions as to how to address some pressing and difficult questions facing democracies. Their work offers empirical evidence of some success in this venture and there is also evidence that other jurisdictions are looking to emulate the Irish experiment.

The three research initiatives outlined above, all focus on designing and inserting randomly selected citizens' mini-publics into the broader repertoire of representative democracy. These are very exciting applications of normative theory and although many of the scholars here are not 'normative theorists', their work draws on and applies normative theory, reflexively contributes to normative theory, and most importantly, explicitly takes up the normative stance of endorsing deliberative institutions as something we *ought* to be promoting. There are many more ways to engage the empirical world via deliberative democracy than the two types of normative applied theory I have just outlined. The rest of this book canvases many of those ways and describes a number of fruitful methods to employ. All of them have normative theory somewhere in the background even though not all of them directly engage in or with normative theory. And all of them can reflexively contribute to normative theory.

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3

Formal Models

James Johnson

How can formal models help us understand deliberative institutions? Many political theorists might well be tempted to answer that question simply and firmly: ‘They cannot.’ Indeed, it hardly is uncharitable to state that ‘the normative literature on deliberation, with very few exceptions, takes essentially no account of the presence of the game-theoretic work on deliberation’ (Landa and Meirowitz 2009). The problem with this state of affairs is that it overlooks decades of productive intellectual engagement. This is not the place for a lengthy review of that history. List (2018) offers an excellent, detailed, and comprehensive overview.

It is nevertheless important to address the aversion some ‘deliberative democrats’ display towards formal models. That aversion is misguided, an artefact of a tangle of conceptual commitments that informed early defences of deliberative democracy. Those early defences traded on what, following Dewey (1920, xxxi), we can call a ‘whole brood and nest of dualisms’. Theorists spoke of deliberation *versus* aggregation, of communicative *versus* strategic action, of reasonable *versus* rational grounds for judgement and action, of arguing *versus* bargaining, and of ideal *versus* non-ideal theory. These dualisms were unsustainable and consequently led inquiry astray. They have been only slowly and partially relinquished.¹ As a result, advocates (and critics) of deliberative democracy failed to notice that purveyors of formal models had all along recognized the importance of discussion, debate, and argument in politics.

The recognition to which I refer emerges more or less from the start. Having proved his famous impossibility result, Arrow (1963) immediately explains that the existence of single-peaked preferences amongst a constituency affords a possible escape from what some democratic theorists take to be a dire fate. Single-peakedness is the most familiar of several ‘value restricted’ preference orderings (Sen 1966). Such restrictions do not require substantive agreement across individuals as to how the issue should be decided. Rather, they impose a particular structure on individual orderings

¹ Many of my early papers were aimed at deflating these dichotomies (Johnson 1991, 1993, 1998; Knight and Johnson 1994). While some advocates of deliberation apparently remain committed to this tangle of unsound dichotomies (e.g. Steiner 2008), numerous others eventually came to accept the arguments I and others had been making all along (e.g. Mansbridge et al. 2010; Warren and Mansbridge et al. 2015). This is the moment to acknowledge that my thinking on the matters I discuss here has been profoundly influenced by my collaboration with Jack Knight (Knight and Johnson 2007, 2011). He is not, however, responsible for any of the formulations I offer here.

and in that sense suggest that relevant agents share a common understanding of the decision confronting them. Crucially, they do not show Arrow's Theorem to be mistaken. Admitting such 'value restricted' preference orderings violates one of his initial axioms, namely universal domain.

I return to this idea shortly. Here it is important only to note that Arrow himself insists—invoking in the process 'the works of Rousseau, Kant, T. H. Green, and many others'—that 'the case for democracy rests on the argument that free discussion and expression of opinion' are amongst the most effective and legitimate means of promulgating value restricted preferences. This, of course, converges with the now common observation that, historically speaking, in representative democracies voting typically is preceded by argument or debate (Manin 1997). The outstanding questions are whether and how such processes of communication relate to some more idealized concept of deliberation.

Political scientists commonly use two families of formal model—game theory and social choice theory. No bright line demarcates the two methods. Austen-Smith and Banks (1998, 1999, 2005) and McCarty and Meirowitz (2007) document the canonical works. Unlike the methods discussed by other chapters in this volume, formal models are not directly empirical. Instead, as I note below, we use them for conceptual purposes. That said, formal models are crucially important to those engaged in empirical political inquiry generally and to empirical studies of deliberation in particular. Diana Mutz makes this clear in her brief for 'getting normative theory and empirical research to speak to one another in the realm of deliberative theory'. She suggests that theories of deliberative democracy are deficient in several ways that are obstacles to such an intellectual undertaking. Most importantly, she suggests that deliberative theories lack clearly defined concepts and are inattentive to the ways that their various component concepts relate to one another (Mutz 2008, 224). Absent such conceptual clarity, Mutz contends, it is difficult to know how to even proceed in formulating empirical assessments of theories of deliberative democracy. In what follows I argue that formal models are useful to students of deliberative democracy insofar as they help provide the sort of conceptual clarity that empirical assessments presuppose.

Mutz rightly complains that, in the broadest sense, 'it would be a stretch to claim that deliberation is itself a well-defined concept' (2008, 225). Do we think of democratic deliberation in moralized terms? Do we insist, in other words, that what counts as 'deliberation' is constituted by the qualities of individuals and their communication (e.g. their other-regardingness, receptiveness to competing viewpoints, willingness to change their minds, etc.)? Or do we treat 'deliberation' as debate, testimony, and other sorts of political communication conducted under certain normative constraints (e.g. freedom and equality)? I have argued for the latter view (Knight and Johnson 2007, 2011). Recent work by formal theorists goes a considerable distance towards clarifying this view (Landa and Meirowitz 2009; Chung and Duggan 2020).

Rather than pursue that broad line of inquiry, I here want to take Mutz's advice that we approach the empirical assessment of theories of democratic deliberation by focusing on 'middle range' concerns (2008, 522). I will focus on how formal models can help us to understand one particular and notably neglected concept: the idea of 'agreement'.² Before we address that crucial substantive question, it will help to briefly consider how we should think about models and how we use them. It may be that political theorists writing on democratic deliberation imagine that models are an inapt tool for normative inquiry. That, it turns out, is seriously misguided.

Models—What Are They Good For?

Prominent political theorists rely on models at crucial junctures in their arguments. This is true, for instance, of both Rawls and Foucault (as well as those labouring in their shadows). For Rawls think of the Original Position. For Foucault think of the Panopticon. Moreover, they rely on those models in the same way, namely for *conceptual* purposes (Johnson 2014). Rawls and Foucault use models to show how, starting from very abstract concepts of justice and power respectively, they arrive at their more concrete conceptions of justice *as fairness* and *disciplinary* power.³ That, as it turns out, is how democratic theorists concerned with deliberative institutions use formal models as well.

Here I depart from the prevailing view in the discipline regarding how and why we use formal models. According to what I call 'the standard rationale', we use such models for more or less directly empirical purposes. We use them to derive predictions that, treated as empirical claims, we can test as hypotheses in familiar ways. Unfortunately, this conventional understanding turns out to be thoroughly misleading. Like Rawls and Foucault, we rely on formal models for conceptual purposes—to articulate what we mean by such abstract concepts of 'rationality', 'institution', 'deterrence', and so on in concrete circumstances (Johnson 2019, 2021, 2022). In what follows I focus on how formal models help us articulate a conception of 'agreement' that is both normatively attractive and analytically useful for inquiry into democratic deliberation.

Before turning our attention to *deliberative* institutions, it is clearly important to answer an obvious question: What is an institution? An institution is a set of rules (e.g. roles, procedures, offices) that provides enduring means of coordinating our

² In short order, the *Annual Review of Political Science* published four essays surveying the growth industry in research assessing the empirical performance of theories of deliberation. See Delli Carpini et al. (2004), Ryfe (2005), Mutz (2008), and Thompson (2008). See likewise Bächtiger and Hangartner (2010). None of these surveys so much as takes up the issue of how we might best conceptualize the agreement, if any, that deliberation might generate.

³ Throughout I rely on the distinction between abstract or general *concepts* and more particular and concrete *conceptions* that will be familiar from reading Rawls and Dworkin.

social and political-economic interactions over time. Typically, institutions have a systemic quality, such that in any given setting an institutional arrangement will hang together in a more or less coherent, if arbitrary and contested, way.

Institutions often require that individuals, groups and organizations act in ways contrary to what they might consider to be their own immediate or even longer-term interests, commitments, and attachments. In short, they trade not solely in voluntary compliance but in compulsion. They must therefore specify more or less fully what can be done, by and to whom, for what purposes, and when. They must also indicate what happens when the rules are breached and who decides when they are. Institutions are pervasive and crucially important. That much is a platitude. The difficulty for purposes of inquiry is that we cannot directly observe an institution *per se*. As Douglass North puts it: ‘We cannot see, feel, touch, or even measure institutions’ (1990, 107). We are, in other words, on properly theoretical terrain. An institution is a conceptual entity.

In an abstract sense, institutions emerge from ongoing social and political interaction and subsequently structure those interactions. But this generic concept encapsulates divergent ideas. This is where *formal* models are especially useful. Specifically, they allow us to articulate at least two distinctive conceptions—institutional equilibria and equilibrium institutions—that address divergent problems and, in the process, illuminate dimensions of the abstract concept ‘institution’.

A thumbnail intellectual history may help see this. McKelvey (1976, 1979) and Schofield (1978) demonstrated that in institutionally sparse spatial contexts, collective choice is generically unstable. These are commonly called ‘Chaos Theorems.’ In reply, Shepsle (1979) advanced his conception of ‘Structure-Induced Equilibrium’ to show how, in legislative settings (but not only there), institutional rules constrain indeterminacy and coordinate collective choice on outcomes that are otherwise not equilibria. In short, he established one variety of *institutional equilibrium*. His argument is helpful here because it shows the crucial impact of separating or collapsing dimensions of decision and action.

The problem, of course, is that such institutional mechanisms are susceptible to being unsettled by relevant actors should they find themselves consistently disadvantaged by them (Riker 1980). This claim is troubling insofar as our abstract concept of institution presumes that they persist over time. Calvert (1995a, 1995b) elaborated game-theoretic models to show institutions to be equilibria in some underlying repeated game and therefore less susceptible to being upset than might have been thought. In other words, he provides us with a conception of *equilibrium institutions* to account for how institutions emerge, change, or persist. None of these models is directly empirical. Most especially, none generates predictions in the way the standard rationale presupposes. Instead, as a group, they sustain the claim that we use formal models for conceptual purposes (Johnson 2021). They help us to articulate and move from the abstract concept of institution to more particular conceptions of institution.

Structured Disagreement

In our argument for the priority of democracy, Jack Knight and I rely on the results produced by formal models in several ways. We do not actually create any such models ourselves (Knight and Johnson 2007, 2011). Instead, we are directly indebted to Dasgupta and Maskin (2004, 2008), for instance, who establish the ‘robustness’ of majority rule relative to other aggregation schemes. Here, though, it is more useful to take up an example raised earlier—the idea of value restricted preference orderings and its usefulness for clarifying the concept of ‘agreement’ which is central to discussions of democratic deliberation. We rely on formal models at this juncture as well.

Any theory of democracy starts from some vision of what we call the ‘circumstances of politics’. We take those circumstances to be constituted by inescapable interdependence and irreducible pluralism (Knight and Johnson 2011, 1–3). On the one hand, members of a polity are stuck with one another. On the other, they typically articulate an exceedingly diverse range of material interests, moral commitments, and cultural identities. While the first feature necessitates that they identify ways to coordinate their ongoing interactions, the second ensures that they will disagree about the best ways of doing so. This predicament haunts not just decisions about policy but, more importantly, politics surrounding the emergence and change of institutions. How are we to understand whatever agreement prevails in these circumstances?

It is implausible to imagine that consensus, meaning unanimity or anything even close to it, will emerge from the circumstances of politics. Moreover, for democratic theorists the task arguably is not simply to acknowledge diversity but to identify institutional arrangements that actively sustain it. Here, formal models are extremely helpful. As mentioned above, a familiar way to address the impossibility Arrow reveals to hold of all aggregation mechanisms is to incorporate ‘value restricted’ preference orderings.⁴ In the current context, the most commonly invoked sort of restriction is known as single-peakedness.

Perhaps the best way to depict this condition is to present it in spatial terms. It helps us understand the familiar depiction of politics as occurring along a left–right dimension. In this sense left and right simply afford a useful and enduring ‘political topology’. They ‘are not ontological concepts but are instead two spatial concepts without specific and constant content’ (Bobbio 1996, 58, 56). Formal models help us specify what particular *conceptions* of left and right mean in relatively concrete circumstances.

⁴ As noted earlier, Arrow (1963) suggests this ongoing line of inquiry. Subsequent relevant studies include Sen (1966), Niemi (1969), Riker (1982), Miller (1992), Knight and Johnson (1994), List (2002), Dryzek and List (2003), Penn et al. (2011), List et al. (2013), Ottonelli and Porello (2013), Duggan (2016), and Rad and Roy (2021). One caveat is in order. Although this is not the place to pursue the matter, it is important not to adopt a caricatured idea of ‘preference’. On this, see Hausman (2011).

Consider a set of alternatives arrayed across a horizontal axis from, to use common parlance, left to right. Then depict the order of preference for each actor on a vertical axis. Roughly, imagine each individual to have an ideal point—a most preferred alternative—amongst some set of available alternatives (e.g. candidates, policies, etc.). Her preference ordering is single peaked if, starting at her most preferred alternative, the lines connecting it to her second, third, and so on most preferred, until we reach her least preferred alternative, slope downwards (Riker 1982, 123–128). This can be generalized to allow for individuals to be indifferent between alternatives. Very recent work on deliberation focuses on the implications of this (Rad and Roy 2021). In any case, a situation where the preferences of relevant individuals (voters) are so characterized commonly is interpreted to mean that ‘the voters have a common view of the political situation, although they may differ widely on their judgments’ (Riker 1982, 126). In short, in such situations, voters who may differ on substantive matters nonetheless share a common understanding of what is at issue in a political interaction.

Questions arise immediately. What kind of agreement are we talking about here? How much of the ‘relevant’ population needs to ‘agree?’ Or, conversely, how much room remains for *disagreement* in deliberative politics? Consider each question in turn.

As List (2002) succinctly puts it, there are ‘two concepts of agreement’ at work here. There is the familiar sort of substantive agreement or otherwise on policies or candidates. But there is also the sort of second-order or ‘meta’ agreement towards which Riker gestures. It establishes what is at stake in our first-order agreement or disagreements. It establishes the meaning, in this or that particular concrete context, of the generic left–right dimension over which our agreement or disagreement is arrayed. Even if we agree on this ‘meta’ level, we might well disagree—sometimes quite vehemently—at the first-order or substantive level.

At least potentially, the sort of second-order agreement we are discussing allows an escape from the impossibility Arrow identifies. Potentially. To see what is at stake here, recall that it is well known that in circumstances where there are multiple dimensions, value restrictions like single-peakedness do not constrain the sort of pervasive collective indeterminacy Arrow illuminates. This is one pillar of the general indeterminacy of majority rule. But even if ‘discussion, debate, civic education, and political socialization’ (Riker 1982, 128) fail to reduce disagreement to a single dimension, political-economic institutions will often do just that. Recall the models of institutional equilibrium I mentioned earlier. This, of course, says nothing about how extensive such second-order agreement must be if we hope to evade the instability of aggregation rules.

Here we can turn to Niemi (1969), a remarkable paper that addresses precisely that matter. Niemi established that the demand that ‘all’ voters must have single-peaked preferences is overly restrictive. He recognizes at the outset that ‘complete unidimensionality is most unlikely empirically.’ But he demonstrates that we need

significantly less than total consensus. In large constituencies, collective intransitivities ‘will infrequently occur if only 75% or 70% or even fewer of the individuals adopt a common standard (dimension) of judgment’. As a result, neither deliberation nor any of the other factors towards which he, like Riker, gestures need ‘accomplish the nearly impossible task of creating unanimous agreement on standards of judgment’. Aggregate instability ‘can be very satisfactorily avoided if common frames of reference are widespread but far less than unanimous’ (Niemi 1969, 494).

Several things follow here. First, there is a broadly methodological issue. Models of the sort I have discussed—whether of the informal sort we find in Rawls and Foucault or of the formal sort exemplified by Arrow’s Theorem—are not tools for representing empirical features of politics. They are instruments of interpretation. We use them for conceptual purposes. My focus has been on how we rely on formal models to interpret one concept central to any theory of democratic deliberation: agreement. On this view, we use our formal ‘models [to] mediate between theory and the world’ (Cartwright 1999, 179–180; see also Johnson 2019, 2021). We use *interpretive* models to show, quite precisely, what, in this setting and for these purposes, the abstract concept of agreement ‘amounts to’ or ‘consists in’—what it *means*—and to consider what rides on our doing so (Cartwright 1999, 41, 189). This need to ‘fit out’ abstract concepts in terms of more concrete conceptions in this way ‘marks an entirely commonplace feature of language’ (Cartwright 1999, 40). But, more specifically, on this account scientific inquiry necessarily involves formulating testable theories that incorporate ‘abstract concepts . . . whose relation to the world must be mediated by more concrete concepts’. I refer to those concrete instances as conceptions. These are ‘very specific in their form: the forms are given by the interpretive models of the theory’. Following Cartwright, this understanding of models illuminates that they play an essential role in how our theories allow us to make substantive claims about and, more importantly from her perspective, intervene in the world (Johnson 2021, 2022).

Second, from a normative perspective formal models make clear that to the extent that it is informed by this conception of agreement, deliberative politics can accommodate significant levels of pluralism. Not only can relevant individuals disagree vigorously about substantive, first-order matters of whether and how to address the matter at hand, but also nearly a third can depart from some shared understanding of what is at stake in their political interaction. That is good news. What we have is less a demand for agreement than a recognition that deliberation is amongst the factors that *structure our disagreements* in ways that render them tractable in the sense that it is possible that they can issue in stable (transitive) aggregate outcomes. This is hardly a naïve process. But it holds out the possibility that we can resolve or settle disagreements in justifiable ways (Knight and Johnson 2007, 2011).

Finally, there is an analytical point. We are treating deliberation as a particular form of discussion or debate, one constrained by a set of normative commitments (equality, freedom, etc.). Not just any casting and counting of votes constitutes an

election. So, too, not just any exchange of ideas or proposals counts as deliberation. In this sense, relying on formal models points in the direction of a less moralistic view of deliberation. What differentiates deliberation from other forms of discussion and debate is *not* the virtues or otherwise of political actors or the type of speech acts in which they engage. Instead, what sustains that differentiation are the normative constraints—commitments to freedom, equality, and so forth—that are built into our democratic institutional arrangements. This fundamental shift underwrites what I take to be the most insightful recent contributions to thinking about deliberation and alternatives to it (Landa and Meirowitz 2009; Chung and Duggan 2020; Knight and Schwartzberg 2020). All of these papers focus our attention on political institutions and the normative characteristics they embody or fail to embody.⁵ This, I believe, is wholly salutary.

Conclusion: Lessons, Methodological and Substantive

The argument I have sketched here suggests numerous lessons. I here mention just three.

First Lesson: Embrace a basic pragmatist impulse. Beware of dichotomies and how they can enshroud inquiry (Putnam 2004). In the domain of political theory, it is especially important to resist the now conventional view that there is a dichotomy between facts and values and that this dichotomy sustains a clear and sharp distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘normative’ inquiry. Given the pervasive ways facts and values are entangled, such a gerrymander is implausible. At least those seeking to police that boundary have yet to defend it persuasively (Knight and Johnson 2015). We should not, in other words, be sceptical of models, formal or otherwise, simply because some mistakenly imagine that they are the provenance of an enterprise called ‘positive’ political theory.

Second Lesson: Embrace yet another pragmatist impulse. Recognize that there is no sharp distinction to be drawn between models that are ‘merely’ verbal and those couched in mathematics. Instead, casting our inquiries in mathematical terms is continuous with, rather than sharply distinct from, doing so in everyday language. What Quine calls the ‘mathematization’ of inquiry consists just in the ‘progressive sharpening and regimenting of ordinary idioms’ (Quine 1986, 150). We should not, in other words, be sceptical of formal models simply because they are expressed in mathematical language. We use models like the Original Position and the Panopticon for basically the same purposes that we rely on game theory or social choice theory:

⁵ The relative indifference that theorists of deliberative democracy often display towards institutional mechanisms follows from accepting the common but ultimately misleading and unsustainable dualism between ‘ideal’ and ‘non-ideal’ theory. On this view, political theorists must first concentrate on articulating principles and ideals and only then concern themselves with problems of how to approximate them in the world. This dichotomy is one methodological bequest of John Rawls. Not just his followers but many of his critics embrace it. It obstructs inquiry insofar as it relegates concern for institutions—in short, for matters of compliance and implementation—to a subsidiary role. Perhaps the most glaring problem with this advice is that Rawls himself never managed to follow it (Orr and Johnson 2018a).

conceptual exploration. That is the thrust of my discussion of how models illuminate ‘structured disagreement.’ The idiom—verbal or mathematical—in which we cast the model is contingent.

Third Lesson: We learn from formal models in multiple ways. We can, as many prominent political economists do, learn from formal models the crucial importance of precisely what they initially exclude. Think here of Thomas Schelling (1960) on the role of what he terms ‘incidental detail’ in underwriting the salience of focal points for individuals facing coordination problems. Or think of the principles Elinor Ostrom (1990) derives for discriminating more or less robust forms of ‘self-governance’ for groups confronting commons problems. Or, finally, think of the role Amartya Sen ascribes to ‘public reason’ in democratic politics beset by various problems of collective choice (Orr and Johnson 2018b).

More obviously, perhaps, we can model processes of democratic politics themselves as do provocative recent papers on debate and deliberation (e.g. Chung and Duggan 2020). But we can also, as do Knight and I, make inferences from formal models of, say, aggregation to features central to other domains of democratic politics, such as debate and deliberation. That is precisely how we formulate our views about structured disagreement I have sketched here. And that, I suggest, advances our understanding, not just of deliberative institutions, but of democratic institutions generally.

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4

Grounded Normative Theory

Genevieve Fuji Johnson

Normative political theory, as a subdiscipline of political science, has evolved tremendously over the past four decades. Deliberative democratic scholars have been at the forefront of this evolution, propelling perhaps its most consequential turn—the turn towards the empirical through the use of interpretive, qualitative, and quantitative methodologies. In large part initiated by political theorist Jane Mansbridge in the 1980s, this turn was decisive; the course it set has been advanced and sustained by scholars including Simone Chambers (1996), John Dryzek (1990, 2000), James Fishkin (1991), Archon Fung (2006), John Gastil (2005), Carolyn Hendriks (2006), Ethan Leib and Baogang He (2006), Ricardo Mendonça (2008), Simon Niemeyer (2011), John Parkinson (2006), Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1998), and Graham Smith (2009), amongst others. Common to these theorists is a commitment to the rigorous engagement of the empirics of deliberative democracy. It is now standard practice for contemporary political theorists, working in a range of fields, to engage directly in the development, assessment, and analysis of forms of empirical evidence or empirical research materials, both of which are terms that include data from quantitative as well as interpretive and qualitative methodologies.

Deliberative democrats may have set the course towards the contemporary union of empirical research and normative theorizing, but as the field of deliberative democracy has advanced, it has run the risk of co-optation by systems and institutions of domination, including representative government, large corporations, and mainstream think tanks. It is not that these serve necessarily in domination; rather, it is that they appear stuck in status quo norms related to whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality, ableism, and capitalism. As opposed to facilitating their democratization—as opposed to enabling the ‘civicization from below’, to use James Tully’s words (2008, 4)—much of deliberative democracy seems only to further reify these systems and institutions. As Selen Ercan and John Dryzek point out, the success of the field may have been at the cost of its critical edge (2015, 244).

Deliberative democracy’s initial Habermasian impulse was not only to examine practices, systems, and structures of domination, but also to advocate for real-world justice (see Habermas 1996; see also Dryzek 1990, 2000; Fung 2005; Fung and Wright 2003; Hammond 2019; and Rostbøll 2008, 2009). An initial goal was to disrupt existing democratic practices in order to prioritize inclusive and communicative over elite and strategic modes of engagement. Instead of disruption, however, many processes adopting the banner of deliberative democracy, and many studies of deliberative

democratic design, serve ultimately to reinforce domination. Their internal processes may meet the criteria of deliberative democracy—although this is not a given—but their outputs and outcomes often remain disconnected from contexts that persist in the oppression of, for example, Black and Indigenous peoples and other people of colour, gender non-binary/gender queer people, differently abled people, neurodiverse people, undocumented im/migrants, hard drug users, inadequately housed people, people living in poverty, people who are highly stigmatized because of their work, and people living any combination of these identities. Given its close association with status quo institutionalism, is deliberative democracy even relevant to contemporary struggles to achieve liberation from forms of oppression and justice for all?

In this chapter, I offer insights from an emergent approach that not only blends empirical study with normative theorizing but does so recursively, inclusively, accountably, and even solidaristically, which may provide inspiration to deliberative democrats to develop their critical muscles. Identified by Brooke Ackerly and her colleagues (2021), Grounded Normative Theory (GNT)¹ is premised on core commitments that may assist those wishing to pursue deliberative democracy in ways that challenge and combat forms of oppression and advance justice struggles. Upon outlining the basic contours of GNT as a broad field, I discuss how my understanding of ‘groundedness’ has evolved thanks to the writings of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Glen Coulthard on grounded normativity (Coulthard 2014; Coulthard and Simpson 2016; Simpson 2015, 2017). Their work reveals pathways towards a firmly solidaristic approach to theorizing that is grounded in the voices and experiences of those who experience oppression. As I touch on in this chapter, in solidaristic theory and practice—for those of us who are settlers—grounded normativity and Indigenous resurgence must be central in informing what solidarity is and what it entails. I then draw from my application of solidaristic engaged or grounded methodology and tentatively offer two suggestions to encourage deliberative democrats to conduct research in ways that are in solidarity with groups, communities, and nations seeking justice as they define it.

The Basic Contours of Grounded Normative Theory

Brooke Ackerly, along with Luis Cabrera, Fonna Forman, Chris Tenove, Antje Wiener, and myself (2021) unearth a body of scholarship constituting Grounded

¹ I came to the term ‘grounded’ from the grounded theory of Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss (2015), which is a dominant approach in qualitative methodology. I have since put time into learning about Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s much richer understanding of grounded normativity, which is rooted in place, territory, land, and water. Increasingly, in my own work, I’m moving away from the moniker of Grounded Normative Theory and toward something along the lines of Engaged Normative Theory.

Normative Theory. We identify the works of Mansbridge as precursor to this approach, which was both based on empirical research and in solidarity with ‘ordinary people’. In her *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (1983), Mansbridge paid close attention to ordinary people and theorized on the basis of what they told her and what she observed about them. She writes that her experience of field work, which involved in-depth interviews and close observations, revealed quotidian ways in which ordinary people try to live by various ideals. How those with whom she spoke and whom she observed interpreted, navigated, and came to live by democratic ideals enabled her to broaden and clarify a range of normative questions—a range that would have otherwise not been available to her (Mansbridge 1980/1983, xiii). Her case studies of a traditional town in rural Vermont, ‘Selby’, and of a participatory workplace crisis centre in an urban setting, ‘Helpline’, enabled her to see, both practically and conceptually, gaps in democratic theory’s account of the importance of political equality for political legitimacy, how to address this gap by bridging adversary and unitary democracy, and ultimately how to realize certain aspects of community, comradeship, and selflessness without the need for all citizens to share common interests. It is important to point out, as Melissa Williams does, that Mansbridge was ‘among the first political scientists to highlight the fact that differences in rates of political participation across the lines of class, race, and gender can be traced in part to the way in which participation is institutionalized’ (2012, 798). In very thoughtful ways, there was a blend of scholarship and activism running through the work of Mansbridge. Recalling Mansbridge’s work of her early days on democracy but also on women’s rights reminds us that when we study deeply contested political issues, ‘analysis . . . is a political act, and one must, as a political being as well as scholar, take responsibility for it’ (1986, xi, cited in Williams 2012, 798).

Grounded Normative Theory as a field is, in large part, indebted to Mansbridge for doing the hard work of qualitative research involving everyday actors and, on this basis, normative theorizing about how they aspire to democratic ideals and about these ideals themselves. Many scholars have developed this type of approach, which is time- and energy-consuming. But, at its best, what we can identify as GNT accomplishes a fine blend of deep description, nuanced conceptual clarity, and a convincing normative orientation, and it points a way towards liberation and justice in the real world (e.g. Ackerly 2018; Baines 2017; Cabrera 2020; Coulthard 2014; Forman and Cruz 2018; Keating 2011; Tenove 2020). As Ackerly and her colleagues observe, within contemporary political theory, there is now a widespread convergence on principles of comprehensiveness in research, recursivity between the empirical and normative, epistemological inclusion, and accountability to research partners, participants, and communities. We identify these as the core commitments of GNT.

Ackerly and her colleagues write that *comprehensiveness* refers to the use by normative theorists of empirical methods—or empirically oriented methods—in order to enrich, widen, and deepen ‘the range of insights, claims, interests,

and actors considered in their development of normative arguments' (2021). Comprehensiveness refers primarily to the processes of collecting, assessing, and analysing research materials, and in these processes grounded normative theorists employ a wide-ranging set of tools from qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches, including surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observations, experiments, focus groups, workshops, and document analyses. Comprehensiveness does not necessarily map onto a linear research process, especially given the overarching recursive nature of the approach.

Both comprehensiveness and *recursivity* may very well be the characteristics that unify the diverse field of GNT, including its non-solidaristic and solidaristic branches. Recursivity refers to the direct, immersive, and accountable incorporation of empirical analysis into normative theorizing. Like John Rawls's 'reflective equilibrium', this process involves an analytical process of moving back and forth. In the case of Rawls, the theorist moves between considered judgements and general principles, revising both until they are mutually consistent. While Rawls's approach is purely introspective, GNT scholars engage directly in primary empirical research, often immersing themselves in contextual details and relational dynamics characteristic of the field in which they are working. Moreover, they often forge relationships with and remain accountable to research partners and participants who share their insights and who contribute to empirical forms of evidence (Ackerly et al. 2021). This back and forth is more akin to a dialogue towards co-producing knowledge and co-developing normative claims through more formal research interviews and focus groups, or more informally through, for example, ongoing practical work, fundraising, and strategizing. Thus, GNT is developed and refined through the ongoing and deep engagement with the empirics of the case(s). Where the research involves partners and participants, grounded normative theorists often continue engagement with them to collaboratively develop and refine the normative theory.

Attentiveness to *epistemological inclusion* is also central for GNT scholars, especially for those of us doing solidaristic research. Epistemological inclusion recognizes that some modes of inquiry silence certain voices and thus exclude forms of knowledge. It refers directly to 'the ideas and direct insights, but also the ways of knowing and generating knowledge, of those engaged in political contestation' (Ackerly et al. 2021). This inclusion extends to claims to knowledge that are in 'tension with the normative claims the theorist ultimately offers' (Ackerly et al. 2021). This type of inclusion involves bringing such claims into analysis, figuring out what drives them, determining what is at stake in them, and working to either resolve or combat them within normative theorizing. If grounded normative—indeed, any normative— theorists are concerned with understanding and addressing various forms of oppression, as they play out often in polarizing terms, epistemological inclusion must be a central methodological responsibility. Without this type of inclusion, the risk is too high that forms of oppression will remain obscured, but real, and will continue to take place. GNT scholars are often concerned with excavating unjust assumptions, practices, and institutions that can be hidden in plain sight; some of us work explicitly

to help address these injustices. For example, a number of GNT scholars seek to reveal deeper injustices obscured by dominant norms that are racist, sexist, homophobic, and ableist in nature. For those who take a more explicitly solidaristic orientation, the aim is to contribute to combatting these expressions of oppression.

Epistemic *accountability* is another central methodological commitment in GNT. Primarily with respect to the interpretation of findings, this form of accountability entails managing the risk of misrepresenting a group or community's desires, interests, and needs when speaking and writing about its members (Ackerly et al. 2021). This form of accountability involves attending to potential power imbalances in the conduct of research itself and is particularly important in research either directly or indirectly involving participants. Even if research materials do not derive directly from research participants but instead from other sources, insofar as they are about a set of people or a community, GNT scholars typically exercise humility in trying to understand and express their views. They will often employ steps in interpretive analysis of what Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow call 'member checking' (2012, 106–107). Checking in with participants is a way of ensuring an adequate understanding of their perspectives as filtered through the interpretations of the researcher. But, especially for solidaristic GNT, this checking is a form of accountability, allowing participants and researchers to work together to ensure that the normative theorizing not only makes sense to the participants but also aligns with their interests in advancing their justice struggles. Ackerly and her colleagues write that in more solidaristic approaches to GNT, 'theorists foreground epistemic responsibility to ideas and persons disadvantaged in political struggles against exploitation, exclusion, oppression, and domination' (2021).

The Solidaristic Stance of GNT

In my view, solidaristic Engaged or Grounded Normative Theory has tremendous potential to make contributions to groups, communities, and nations in their struggles for emancipation, justice, and resurgence (e.g. Ackerly 2008, 2018; Forman 2018; Forman and Cruz 2018; Johnson and Porth in progress; Sangtin Writers Collective and Richa Nagar 2006; Tenove 2015, 2020). Researchers have resources—including money, time, expertise, social status, public reach, etc.—that can be directed towards *advancing* struggles for justice and not simply *studying* such struggles. Underlying the solidaristic approach to GNT is a political solidarity—a solidarity that entails actively taking a side in struggles for justice with those experiencing oppression (e.g. Scholz 2008; Shelby 2002). As Sally Scholz writes, political solidarity 'unites individuals on their shared commitment to a political cause in the name of liberation or justice and in opposition to oppression or injustice' (2007, 38). Solidaristic GNT is part of a larger tradition of scholarly activist work in which scholars deploy their resources in the service of activists.

Solidaristic GNT necessarily involves direct engagement with community members in learning about their justice struggles. It involves ongoing, genuine dialogue with those struggling for justice and empathetic scrutiny to assess and bolster their claims. It involves learning from and developing with them a vision of a future of liberation within a just social, economic, and political order and committing to working with them—as scholars and as activists—to realize this vision. Theorists engaging in this work commit to comprehensiveness, recursivity, inclusion, and accountability, but they focus explicitly on advancing the justice claims by people, communities, or nations experiencing oppression. They commit to the meaningful inclusion of voices and epistemologies of the oppressed and to accountability through dialogue with and action alongside them in their justice struggles.

In my own work, I am learning from the writings of Indigenous resurgence scholars, and in particular the writing—and the spoken word—of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (e.g. 2015, 2017). From her blend of scholarly, artistic, and political expressions, my understanding of groundedness has radically shifted from one with roots in sociological grounded theory to one that is much more powerfully based in place—‘place’ as we might understand it in a very literal sense, but also place that is much more expansive, dynamic, and norm-generating. I am still learning about this understanding of place-based grounded normativity (Coulthard 2014), but as I understand it, it refers very directly to life, land, and water. Living within place involves recognizing our dependency on land and water and sharing necessities with others, present and future. There is a deep respect for the totality of place that generates knowledge about ways of living collectively and responsibly. Along with Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard, Simpson develops their conception of grounded normativity, which takes normative direction explicitly from groundedness in place (Coulthard and Simpson 2016). In their words, from groundedness, we can learn ‘how to be in respectful diplomatic relationships with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations with whom we might share territorial responsibilities or common political or economic interests’ (Coulthard and Simpson 2016, 254). Their articulation of grounded normativity is a powerful frame through which to understand the past and present violence of colonialism, as well as possibilities for Indigenous resurgence. For Simpson and Coulthard, it is from this understanding of groundedness that they practice their solidarity with others who are struggling against ‘white supremacy, anti-Blackness, heterosexual and cis-male dominance, and/or the violence of the state’ (Coulthard and Simpson 2016, 251). Similarly, Sarah Hunt, member of the Kwagiulth community of the Kwakwaka’wakw nation, and Cindy Holmes, a white settler living on the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh people, emphasize building allyships and solidaristic connections based on relationships and relational knowledge production through conversation and storytelling, while also recognizing the *immediacy* of ongoing settler colonialism on the lands in which these relationships are forged (Hunt and Holmes 2015).

Drawing from these scholars, I understand solidarity with those who experience oppression to involve a recognition of the historical and ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples and a commitment to addressing this dispossession by working to empower Indigenous peoples. It involves a commitment to advancing their causes and interests, as they lead the way in advancing them, and to being motivated not simply to feel good about ourselves and our efforts but to contribute constructively and purposefully towards their liberation and resurgence. As Simpson writes, it involves actively keeping in check any tendencies towards ‘saviourism’, actively decentring whiteness, calling out white privilege and supremacy, and prioritizing Indigenous peoples as autonomous agents. It involves a genuine willingness ‘to join in the ways that Indigenous peoples are already organizing at the community level’ (Simpson 2016, 20). What I learn from these writings is that any expression of solidarity with those who experience oppression has to work in concert with Indigenous-led endeavours to end colonialism, return Indigenous lands, and support the resurgence of Indigenous peoples. We should all ensure that, as Coulthard and Simpson write, ‘when we present our work on solidarity against the ‘misery of . . .’, we are not standing on the backs of Indigenous peoples but instead engaged as related comrades joined in critical co-resistance against the convergence of forces that divide and conquer us and the Earth on which we depend’ (2016, 250). This understanding of grounded normativity and political solidarity can help us—those of us who are interested in deploying our resources as researchers and scholars towards the ends of ending oppression and realizing liberation—deepen our thinking about how to contribute to movements towards racial justice and Indigenous resurgence.

Contributions from Solidaristic GNT to Deliberative Democracy

Nicole Curato, along with Dryzek, Ercan, Hendriks, and Niemeyer, suggests that deliberative democracy may be up to the task of addressing forms of racial injustice, claiming that its practice and theory are inclusive, involving multiple sorts of communication, and that it can be applied in deeply divided societies ‘to good effect’ in bridging ‘deep conflicts across religious, national, racial, and ethnic lines’ (2017, 34). But it is far from clear how deliberative democracy can contribute meaningfully to addressing racism that is deeply embedded in ideological, social, political, and economic systems, and that is bolstered by a dominant culture of white privilege and supremacy. It is even less clear how deliberative democracy can contribute to decolonization and Indigenous resurgence, particularly given its tethering to liberal institutionalism, its strong association with colonial states (e.g. citizens’ assemblies and citizen initiative reviews are directly linked to representative government, intending to supplement or even bolster it) and extractive corporations

(e.g. deliberative polls have often been deployed by energy utilities, arguably to legitimize them; [Johnson, 2015](#)). Despite being based on important ethical principles central to liberalism, deliberative democracy can easily serve as a ‘ritual’ of state power reinforcing colonial world views, practices, policies, and institutions ([Ashforth 1990](#)). Moreover, Indigenous cultures have their own, very long-standing protocols for making collective decisions; the assumption that deliberative democracy can contribute to capacity building within Indigenous communities or that it has anything to add to Indigenous governance needs to be seriously interrogated.

Drawing from my understanding of solidaristic GNT, there *may* be ways in which deliberative democratic practices and studies are implemented in solidarity with those experiencing racialized injustice and colonial violence. In terms of basic principles that may be helpful, I offer two. First, deliberative democrats need to acknowledge the ways in which their practices and studies may perpetuate forms of racialized and colonial marginalization and violence. They need to take stock of their own assumptions and biases to begin dismantling racist and colonial aspects of their work. Exercising intellectual humility, they need to build relationships with racialized and Indigenous communities in order to learn from them, to follow their lead, and to be accountable to them. This involves a serious commitment of time and energy and extends well beyond academic endeavours. Second, and closely related, deliberative democrats should be critical of highly structured micro forums, especially those connected to policy processes of states and corporations. Principles of solidaristic GNT *may* help to ensure that any re-designs function to resist entrenched forms of oppression. But, in addition, deliberative democratic scholars should continue and deepen their studies of macro forums—again, while exercising intellectual humility as well as cultural awareness—especially grassroots organizing by community leaders, including Indigenous Elders, Hereditary Chiefs, Indigenous organizations, and their acknowledged allies. In the field of macro activities, there is much more openness for diverse forms of communicative exchanges, even those that are temporally, spatially, and culturally different from mini-publics associated with deliberative democracy. Often contestatory and oppositional, macro activities can enhance and are necessary in truly public deliberation. For example, they can serve in organizing and mobilizing those who experience oppression, revealing obscured forms of knowledge, provoking shifts in public opinion, and scrutinizing those in political power.

One such study, in which I attempt to do this work, focuses on the grassroots organizing around missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Vancouver, British Columbia (2020). In the Canadian province of British Columbia (BC), Indigenous women and girls have gone missing from, and been found murdered in, northern BC, Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES), and regions around the city. In response to these profound tragedies and to the prolonged inadequacy of responses by police departments, municipal governments, and the provincial government, family members, grassroots women’s organizations, Indigenous organizations, and Indigenous and other public leaders mobilized in an attempt to build pressure for

an official inquiry into this violence and for the implementation of strategies to put an end to it. For more than twenty years, they engaged in peaceful demonstrations that would evolve into political protest. These forms of organization and expression were eventually successful in bringing about an official inquiry in 2010.² Were it not for their efforts, it is very likely that the inquiry would not have occurred. But, from its outset, the BC Missing Women Commission of Inquiry was seriously flawed, and when this became clear, Indigenous women-led protests served to reveal the ways in which the inquiry replicated the same kind of exclusion and marginalization that contributed to the forsaking of so many missing and murdered women.

My study of these demonstrations and protests, which was informed by principles of solidaristic of Engaged or Grounded Normative Theory, highlights the critical role played by Indigenous and women's organizations in pushing for an official inquiry and in exposing its troubling flaws. Engaging in recursivity between my understanding of the empirics of the case and the normative claims I was identifying, tending to epistemological inclusion and accountability, I deepened my understanding of the crucial importance of listening to, and acting on the insights of, historically oppressed peoples, including many Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women living and working in the DTES. This can help to ensure that theories and practices of collective governance address the complexity and tragedy characterizing many social problems conditioned by deep structural inequalities and sexist, racist, and colonialist ideologies. Ultimately, this study revealed to me not merely that contributions of marginalized and experiential knowledges expressed in peaceful demonstration and protest *can* contribute to less oppressive and more emancipatory social and political systems, but also that they are *necessary* in this endeavour. Again, it is important to point out that this 'study' was much more than just that. It emerged from several years of volunteering in the DTES with women-serving organizations and involved ongoing discussions and relationships with community members and leaders. I remain committed to supporting members of this community.

Challenges for Deliberative Democracy

Several deliberative democratic scholars are engaging in work that may be understood in terms of GNT, orienting themselves to the empirical in order to expand their normative questions and claims; some appear to be doing so within a Mansbridge tradition of activist scholarship. In the work of scholars such as Ercan, Afsoun Afsahi, and Edwina Barvosa, we see attentiveness to how marginalized people participate in deliberative democratic processes. Afsahi explores how differently abled individuals and communities participate within deliberative systems (2020a). In another

² It is important to note this inquiry investigated not only the disappearance and murder of Indigenous women but also of non-Indigenous women from the DTES during the 1990s and into the 2000s (see [Oppal 2012](#)).

study, she draws from original survey and experimental data to observe and theorize women's willingness to deliberate (Afsahi 2020b). On the basis of this study, she develops two innovative approaches to better ensuring that women participate equally in deliberative forums (2020b). Similarly, motivated to advance the interests of women, Ercan (2017) explores how deliberative democracy—especially as dispersed through a system of public discourse—has the potential for promoting a form of dialogue with violent members of illiberal migrant communities around the treatment of women. She moves between the theorizing of Dryzek, Monique Deveaux, and William Connelly and her case study work on 'honour' killings in the UK. She ultimately argues that there are conditions in which discursive contestation could occur between those advancing the rights of women and those who are violently opposed to the rights of women.

With reference to the rights of members of LGBTQ2S+ communities, Barvosa engages in extensive empirical work—both qualitative and quantitative—to develop the claim that at least one large-scale deliberative system has emerged in the US in the form of a 'publicly self-assembled, national-scale, public engagement' on the social and legal equality of members of queer communities (2018). Barvosa's empirical analysis and normative theory make clear that achieving the promise of deliberative democracy on a large scale requires not only the hard, concerted work of *demos* members towards social, procedural, and institutional change, but also the hard 'self' work of each to overcome her/his/their cognitive obstacles of implicit bias, identity threats, and fear. Barvosa encourages deliberative democrats to research and theorize about not only fear and trauma, but also racialized, gendered, and heteronormative privilege and its classic defensive manifestations of avoidance, denial, tears, and anger. A logical conclusion of her argument is that deliberative systems are possible only if we take on the responsibility to scrutinize our personal biases and to overcome cognitive obstacles and consider our fellow *demos* members as equally worthy of meaningful inclusion in democratic decision-making, no matter their sexual orientation, gender expression, race, religion, ability, or citizenship. The works of Afsahi, Ercan, and Barvosa constitute an important contribution to ensuring that the field of deliberative democracy has a critical edge and contributes to real-world struggles against oppression. But for those of us who take seriously analysis as a political act and our responsibilities to it, there is more work to be done.

In a recent article, Fung briefly touches on some related challenges facing deliberative democracy. As he writes, for 'some social justice advocates, this moment calls for increasing conflict rather than focusing on public reasons and the common good' (Fung 2020, 75). Fung goes on, stating that 'after all of those who benefit from institutional racism, capitalism, sexism, and globalism have been cancelled from the polity, there might not be all that much polity left' (2020, 75). Fung appears to be referring to the so-called 'cancel culture', which is puzzling, perhaps even troubling. It suggests both a reduction of struggles—many of which are matters of life and death—to something akin to cancelling dinner plans with people we have recently decided we

do not like, and a need to retain people who benefit from oppression in the polity as if the polity depended on them.

My suggestions, drawing from GNT in a solidaristic expression, are intended to encourage deliberative democrats not to succumb to the rhetoric of cancel culture, but instead to acknowledge their participation in oppressive practices and institutions and to listen to, learn from, and work in solidarity with those on the frontline of struggles against multiple and real forms of injustice. They are intended to encourage those implementing and studying forms of deliberative democracy to deploy their considerable resources of money, time, energy, and social capital directly in the service of taking on structures of domination, ending forms of oppression, and empowering those who experience this oppression. If deliberative democracy is a revolutionary idea, if it has a critical edge, deliberative democrats would do well to step up their game by adopting principles of Engaged or Grounded Normative Theory, particularly those of recursivity, inclusivity, accountability, and even solidarity.

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5

Democratic Theorizing

Hans Asenbaum

In recent decades, deliberative democratic theory has developed an ambitious normative programme, characterizing democracy in terms of inclusion, diversity, listening, and transparency (Chambers 1996; Dryzek 2000; Young 2000). Many deliberative democrats, moreover, claim that democracy is not restricted to state institutions but extends to every sphere of human and even nonhuman interaction (Javier and Dryzek 2020). These ideals are generated in an unwelcoming context. Modern-day academia is characterized by hierarchical organization, competitiveness, and output orientation. For the most part, deliberative theory to date has been produced by a particular group of people who have undergone years of academic training in educative institutions that shape the way we, as democratic theorists, think, speak, and act. This process not only produces a certain kind of thinking but is often accessible only to a few who are equipped with the necessary educational and economic resources.

This chapter problematizes this exclusivity and offers a way of producing deliberative democratic theory in accordance with deliberative ideals. The two questions this chapter seeks to answer are as follows: (1) How can deliberative democratic values be realized in the process of generating democratic theory? and (2) How can those outside academia be included in deliberative theorizing? To answer these questions, the chapter presents a novel approach. Instead of ‘theorizing democracy’—the established approach to generating democratic theory through an engagement with academic literature—I advance *democratic theorizing* as an alternative (Asenbaum 2022). Democratic theorizing theorizes democracy in a democratic manner. In this process, theorizing itself becomes an inclusive, diverse, and transparent deliberative process.

The point of departure for building such an approach is the acknowledgement that we need a method of theorizing that allows theorists to leave their ‘ivory tower’ and engage directly with the life experiences of others. Grounded theory, especially in its recent renditions of critical grounded theory, offers a valuable starting point for this (Redman-MacLaren and Mills 2015). Here theory emerges out of an immersion in the field and a deep engagement with others’ life experiences. This approach can be deepened further by drawing on participatory research, a recently evolving approach (distinct from action research) that advocates the active engagement of those outside academia in the research process (Bussu et al. 2020). In addition to grounded theory and participatory research, a third resource for democratic theorizing can be found in

assemblage theory (Fox and Alldred 2015). This step allows us to include nonhumans, things, events, and natural forces in democratic theorizing.

The approaches of grounded theory, participatory research, and assemblage theory are usually used for empirical research. Bringing them together in a novel approach to create *normative theory* presents new opportunities, but also significant challenges. That this is a worthwhile endeavour is also claimed by Ackerly and colleagues (2021, 19) who recently argue that ‘normative political theory needs to be informed by empirical insights’. In proposing to ground normative theory, they highlight the normative theorizing that deliberative democrats such as Mansbridge (1983) already do today (see Genevieve Fuji Johnson: Chapter 4 in this volume). In this chapter I seek to contribute to this agenda by proposing a step-by-step guide to the process of democratic theorizing. My suggestion builds on the work of feminist and decolonial studies (Houh and Kalsem 2015), which have developed a rich repertoire of participatory techniques for ‘collective theorizing’ (Vaccaro 2020).

The goal of democratic theorizing is to enhance the formative agency—the ability to shape the norms we live by (Dryzek and Tanasoca 2021)—of those outside academia. The resulting theory need not be ‘better’ than theory produced in the established manner. However, we can expect such theory to be closer to the various lifeworlds of humans and nonhumans outside ‘the ivory tower’ (Hendriks et al. 2020).

Theorizing Deliberative Democracy Democratically?

The field of deliberative democracy, and political science more generally, offers little guidance on how to theorize. While the texts on how to conduct empirical research are innumerable, theory is for the most part produced in a black box. Theories are the product of theorists’ theorizing. That’s it.

Lately, however, some deliberative and democratic theorists have begun to open up the black box of theorizing. Three different approaches to theorizing democracy have emerged: First, the *professional approach*, which conceptualizes theorizing as restricted to the professional domain of academics. Second, what I call the *analytical approach*, which engages with people outside academia as research subjects to include their viewpoints in theories of democracy. Third, the *emphatic appeal*, which fervently calls for including those outside academia in the theorizing process as co-theorists, but provides little guidance on how to achieve this.

The professional approach to theorizing democracy can be exemplified by Mark Warren’s problem-based approach. Warren (2017) presents a ‘strategy for constructing democratic theories’ (39) by highlighting the questions that democratic theorists need to ask. While this provides valuable guidance for (aspiring) democratic theorists, it clearly assigns theorizing democracy to a professional domain. In a similar vein, Fleuß and Schaal (2019) describe theorizing democracy as a problem-solving

activity that produces normative theory in close interchange with empirical reality. They raise the question: ‘What are we doing, when we are doing democratic theory?’ The ‘we’ in this question clearly refers to the academic community of professional theorists.

The analytical approach, in contrast, seeks to enrich democratic theory with the viewpoints of people outside academia. Dryzek and Berejikian (1993), for example, directly address the problem of the exclusion of the demos from theorizing democracy. They employ Q methodology to survey people’s understandings of democracy: ‘We intend to develop a truly reconstructive approach that lets subjects speak for themselves about their interactive competences, and the categories (in our case, democratic theories) that these competences help construct’ (49). In a similar vein, I have engaged in theorizing democracy by interviewing activists of the Russian ‘informal movement’ about their visions of democracy during the Perestroika period. The results provide vivid accounts of liberal, anarchist, socialist, and green theories of democracy (Asenbaum 2012).

A third group of democratic theorists articulates emphatic appeals for a more active role for research participants in theorizing democracy. James Bohman (1999) criticizes critical theory which, despite its emancipatory ethos, understands the theorist as enlightened intellectual, as ‘critic with a superior status over and above the limits of the participants’ perspectives’ (460). The hierarchical organization of science—which divides the roles of the researcher who controls the setting, and the subject whose reactions to manipulation are measured—is also reflected in normative theorizing. In contrast, critical normative theory needs to embrace a deliberative ethos of cooperation: ‘critical social inquiry . . . addresses the subjects of inquiry as equal reflective participants, as knowledgeable social agents. In this way, the asymmetries of the context of technical control are suspended’ (474). Similarly, Hendriks et al. (2020) stress the benefits of incorporating the experiential lifeworlds of the demos into conceptions of deliberative democracy. They ‘call for a more grounded understanding of connectivity in the deliberative systems thinking’. The authors go on to argue that by studying ‘the way contemporary politics is experienced and enacted on the ground by citizens, politicians, and policymakers, deliberative democrats are better placed to identify a broader suit of practical, effective, and sustainable approaches to democratic repair’ (31–32).

So, if we acknowledge that the inclusion of non-academics in the process of theorizing democracy is desirable because it enacts deliberative norms, how might we go about doing this?

Grounding Deliberative Democratic Theory

Developing an approach to theorizing that realizes deliberative norms is a challenging undertaking, not least because of the context within which this process occurs.

Deliberative theory is produced in an academic context, one that is heavily shaped by professional hierarchies, a division of labour, competition, and output orientation. So how can the process of theorizing be democratized?

Thankfully, there are some established methodological approaches that are experienced in enhancing the role of non-academics in academic knowledge production. To develop democratic theorizing, I start from the grounded theory method (GTM). Instead of understanding theory as the product of an enlightened thinker who remains outside and above the object of research, GTM requires theorists to immerse themselves in the field and create theory inductively. The result is theory that reflects not only the perspective of the theorist, but also those of many participants: 'By starting with the data from the lived experience of the research participants, the researcher can, from the beginning, attend to how they construct their worlds. That lived experience shapes the researcher's approach to data collection and analysis' (Charmaz 1990, 1162). Despite this promising outlook, to my knowledge there is no democratic theory produced through GTM. And despite the fact that GTM is the most used methodological approach in the social sciences, it has hardly been applied in political science (Becker 2012).

While there are different versions of GTM (Timonen et al. 2018), a few basic steps are common to all of them. Grounded theorists approach the field with an open mind. While the original version of GTM urged theorists to forgo an engagement with the existing literature on a given topic (Glaser and Strauss 1967), today a more flexible approach is advocated that allows for, and indeed encourages, a back and forth between fieldwork and literature engagement (Thornberg 2012). Research questions are either constructed before approaching the field, in which case they are supposed to be open rather than hypothesis-driven, or they emerge from the engagement with the field (O'Neil Green et al. 2007, 477). The core of conducting GTM consists of a constant move between collecting and analysing data. While qualitative methods such as textual analysis, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations are the most common choices, a mixed methods design, including quantitative methods, is also frequently employed. The inductive data analysis begins with open coding. As patterns and core categories emerge through constant comparison of insights, both data gathering and coding become more selective. Through the continuous back and forth between data gathering, data analysis, and in some cases literature engagement, basic categories merge into categories of higher abstraction until a theory emerges that has made its way from a specific case to a general validity for other cases (Reichertz 2007).

It is important to note that classical GTM was developed to produce *empirical* theory. In contrast, democratic theorizing aims at generating *normative* theory. If we are interested in the normative theories that GTM can produce, we have to also ask about its ontological underpinnings. In the original iteration of GTM by Glaser and Strauss (1967), this question was disregarded. GTM was seen as a normatively neutral approach, a tool to analyse reality and formulate generalizable principles. Later,

this version of GTM was identified as positivist and challenged by a constructivist version (Charmaz 1990). Rather than understanding reality as a stable condition external to the researcher, reality is co-produced through the theorizing process itself. This also fundamentally changes the roles of grounded theorists and the field they engage with. Interviewees are now seen as research participants who co-construct theory, rather than research subjects whose knowledge is extracted. More recently, GTM has benefitted from a third ontological perspective. Building on feminist and decolonial approaches (Mignolo 2021; Bhambra 2007), critical theorists have put forward what has been termed critical, transformative, and indigenous grounded theory, which harbours particular potential for democratic theorizing, as ‘critical indigenous grounded theory inquiry necessarily becomes disruptive . . . and radically democratic’ (Denzin 2007, 460).

Critical grounded theory (CGT) and deliberative democracy share their normative roots in critical theory. CGT builds on the emancipatory objectives of critical theory from the start of the theorizing process: ‘In CGT, the choice of research problem is explicitly driven by moral and/or social concerns in an ambition to produce critical knowledge to enable social emancipation’ (Belfrage and Hauf 2017, 9). At the end of this process stands ‘theory that can be used to challenge excluding and oppressive structures and systems for positive change’ (Redman-MacLaren and Mills 2015, 4). Although ‘[g]rounded theory, because of its commitment to critical, open-ended inquiry, can be a decolonizing tool for indigenous and non-indigenous scholars alike’ (Denzin 2007, 456), the role of those external to the research participants’ reality needs special attention. Critical grounded theorists who see themselves as allies of marginalized groups need to make a special effort to reflect on their class, race, and gender positionality, their assumptions and preconceptions, and to learn as much as possible about the lifeworlds of their participants (O’Neil Green et al. 2007).

This still leaves open one central question: To what extent can critical grounded theorizing be employed to generate not empirical but *normative* theory? By moving away from its positivist origins and embracing the normative role of researchers, CGT naturally lends itself to normative theorizing. Genevieve Fuji Johnson makes a powerful argument that empirical methods can and should play a key role in developing normative theory (see Chapter 4 in this volume). In theorizing with those who struggle, grounded normative theory puts forward a broad agenda of inclusive, empirically driven theory. Democratic theorizing builds on this approach and aims to outline the concrete steps that such a research endeavour might entail.

Theorizing as a Deliberative Process

So far, we have established that, from a viewpoint of deliberative norms, theorizing democracy in a democratic manner is desirable and CGT provides a valuable starting point for this endeavour. What we are still missing is an understanding of how

those outside academia can be included in democratic theorizing. Here, insights from participatory research (PR) can help (Bussu et al. 2020). Over the years, PR has built considerable expertise in uncovering the deliberative potential of research participants: ‘Participatory research methods are geared towards planning and conducting the research process with those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study’ (Bergold and Thomas 2012, 192). Growing out of action research, PR has only recently developed its own distinctive features.

In conducting PR, researchers need to shift their roles from neutral investigators who analyse the world from a detached position, to engaged facilitators and enablers who provide participatory infrastructures (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). Researchers need to engage with participants with genuine curiosity and humility as learners. ‘The aim of participatory or emancipatory research is to confer control over the “telling” and ownership of the data on to participants, and to give them opportunities to present something of themselves’ (Aldridge 2017, 28). In a sense, this turns the established academic hierarchies on their head. Researchers do not know better because of the number of books they have read and written. Rather, participants are always better informed about their personal life experiences; they are experts on their lives. This does not deny a special role of academic researchers who have different stakes and greater responsibilities. The decision of whether to apply PR methods is not a simple yes or no choice; rather, it is a matter of degree (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Aldridge 2017). The degree of the fulfilment of deliberative values within a research project also depends on the resources, energies, and willingness of participants.

The deliberative norms of democratic theorizing can further be expanded by paying attention to nonhumans in the theorizing process. Deliberative democratic theory increasingly asks how deliberation can include nonhuman animals (Parry 2016) and natural events (Javier and Dryzek 2020). Indeed, even inanimate objects play an important role in deliberation (Bennett 2010, 94–109). What does this mean for a deliberative understanding of democratic theorizing? Lupton (2018) proposes to understand personal data generated through digital devices as a lively companion species. They are born through human and machine interaction, and they are continuously interpreted differently. In a similar vein, Schmidt (2019, 148) understands matter as a participant in social practices: ‘things and non-humans appear as participants: each collaborates in its specific materiality and is involved in its practice-specific manner.’

Including data and other nonhumans in the research process as participants leads us to an understanding of what Fox and Alldred (2015) call the ‘research assemblage’. Research assembles researchers with their personal histories, intentions, and interests, research methodologies, theories, literature, data, software, computers, laboratories, (home) offices, and libraries. Assigning data, methods, theories, and software a more active role means raising questions such as: ‘*what is this data doing in relation to this inquiry?*’ (Timonen et al. 2018, 7). Theorists need to be attentive to how the use of a certain software might structure their thinking, how the confrontation with certain data makes them feel, and how the research project affects their personal life. Not only the research process, but the phenomenon under study

consists of an assemblage. Understanding the interaction between academic and non-academic theorists as the interface between a hybrid research-event assemblage, enhances sensitivity to the interaction of the various parts involved.

CGT, PR, and assemblage theory all stress the value of method and data triangulation (Fox and Alldred 2015, 408), well expressed in the classical GTM credo ‘all is data.’ This also resonates with recent developments in deliberative democracy research, which call for greater attention to be paid to nonverbal expressions, such as images, sounds, and presence (Curato 2019; Mendonça et al. 2020). Assemblage thinking lends further credit to this approach. It expands the methodological repertoire of original GTM from interviews and document analysis to including visuals, artistic performances, and material artefacts. Visual grounded theory, for example, has potential for democratic inclusion, as ‘marginalised individuals or communities are able to construct visual representations of how they personally experience and understand their lives’ (Liebenberg et al. 2012, 60).

Democratic Theorizing in Practice

Combining the key insights from CGT, PR, and assemblage theory, I propose democratic theorizing as a method for developing theory in a deliberative manner. In what follows, I will describe the concrete steps that researchers, wishing to employ this method, might undertake. In doing so, I am guided by my own experience in conducting a democratic theorizing project together with Black Lives Matter activists. Not all the steps elaborated below need to be taken, nor do they need to be done in this order. Each individual project will differ depending on the specific research topic, context, and personal preferences.

Phase I: Ideation: The democratic theorizing process starts with developing a plan. We can think of it in terms of a research design that guides the theorizing endeavour (Wahyuni 2012). This plan may be contingent, up for revision, and may change through the research process. Let’s think of this kind of planning more in terms of ideation—collecting ideas about how to bring together the research assemblage (Fox and Alldred 2015). Democratic theorizing entails a sensitivity to phenomena, actors, or topics at the periphery or outside of mainstream discourses. These actors can play a crucial role in the ideation phase. If they are nonhumans, there may be ways of listening to them, however they may express themselves. Ask yourself: What connections can I establish with ‘the field’ early on? Get in contact with some actors related to your topic and ask them for advice. It might also make sense to invite academic or non-academic collaborators and form a team. While non-academics might not have the time or other resources necessary to be involved full-time, offer them the chance to contribute to the project on their terms. Think about what resources are available to you for offering financial or other types of compensation to participants. Start forming a network around the theorizing project. You may also advertise your idea on social media or on a public project website and ask who would like to

contribute. For my project, I set up the Democratic Theorizing Project website to call for participation (Asenbaum 2021).

Once you have your team or network in place, there are many choices to be made: What are the central research questions? Which methods are best suited to answer these questions? Keeping in mind that democratic theorizing favours a multi-methods approach, which methods complement each other? Who should be invited to participate? Who will play which roles in the theorizing process? This first phase is also an important time for self-reflection. Why are you drawn to this topic? How does it relate to your personal life and biography? What power asymmetries between you and research participants may be at work?

Phase II: Diving in at the deep end: We can never simply forget all the prior knowledge or opinions we have about the subject we are researching. In fact, if we are drawn to a particular topic, we may already know quite a lot about it. This is not a problem. Democratic theorizing, however, works best with an open mind. To truly listen, it is better to not block our receptive capacities with the academic knowledge that is already out there. This is why, unlike in traditional research designs, the literature review in democratic theorizing comes last. After the first phase of ideation, data generation and analysis start immediately. Diving in at the deep end may be a little scary, but it is also fun! This can take many forms: photo elicitation, interviews, social media analysis, surveys or more engaged forms such as the Community of Inquiry or the Deliberative Camp (as introduced in Chapters 31 and 32 in this volume).

For my project, this phase focused on social media analysis. On Twitter and Instagram, I collected 323 social media posts with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. The contrast between the textuality of Twitter and the visuality of Instagram played an important role in creating a vivid research assemblage. Images spoke a different language and conveyed affectivity and emotion. I coded each post with the help of a qualitative research software, before collecting the next. This allowed me to take the insights from each bit of analysis to the next. Rather than gathering a big pile of data and then coding them all at once, the recursive movement back and forth between collecting and analysing allows an understanding to emerge gradually and organically (Reichertz 2007). Think of this process not so much in terms of analysis but more as a conversation with data. How does the data respond to your questions and how do you react to the data? I also started writing memos—short notes to record any thoughts and insights that came up during the coding process (Bex Lempert 2007). These can be an important source for writing up the theory later.

Phase III: Listening: The next phase focuses on active listening and an open exchange. I entered into conversations with twelve Black Lives Matter activists in online interviews.¹ To invite participants as widely as possible, I posted open invitations on social media and set up a public website that invited anyone to contribute to the project (Asenbaum 2021). Throughout the entire theorizing process, I published current findings on the website and shared them on social media, to

¹ This project has been approved by the Human Resource Ethics Committee of the University of Canberra, ID 4746.

enhance the deliberative value of transparency. I also contacted various groups in the movement directly.

The online conversations with activists were video recorded, so that not only their words, but also their body language could feed into the interpretation. In the conversations, I asked big questions, such as ‘What does “life” mean for you?’ It was fascinating to hear their brilliant responses. Rather than traditional interviews, these were philosophical conversations. Everyone is a philosopher. Yet, most people do not know that they are one. Giving an interview can sound quite intimidating. When I invited one activist to an interview, he said: ‘Let’s just talk. I’m not good at interviews.’ Accordingly, I also shared my own opinion in these conversations or referenced previous conversations with other activists. This made conversation partners feel more at ease. The process provided several opportunities for participant feedback. During the interviews, I summarized my interpretations of what participants had said, to give them an opportunity to correct me. After each interview, I sent the complete interview transcript to participants along with a one-page summary in which I highlighted my main takeaways. I then asked for corrections and additions.

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

The response to the public website and social media invitation I sent out at the beginning of this phase was tremendous and unexpected. People from various domains, including democratic practitioners, public servants, filmmakers, community organizers, and graduate students responded to the invitation. I held a series of conversations with them, both sharing my experiences of democratic theorizing and at the same time feeding their insights into the process.

Phase IV: Immersion: An important element of democratic theorizing is to immerse oneself in the given topic by assembling multiple sources, inputs, and media. This can also take the form of temporarily infusing one’s own personal life with research content. How far one goes in this direction is a personal choice in which one’s own well-being and self-care need to be taken into consideration.

During this phase, I made checking the social media hashtag #BlackLivesMatter a daily habit, which meant waking up and going to bed to Black Lives Matter content. I constantly took screenshots and fed current content into the analysis process. I further enriched the process with non-academic sources regarding the movement, including journalistic and activist texts and YouTube documentaries. Working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, I hardly had a meal without watching a Black Lives Matter documentary. My evenings were filled with episodes from the Netflix show *Dear White People*, which critically reflects on issues of racial identities and discrimination in the US. I kept a personal diary in which I documented insights and personal thoughts on each of these items. The diary was important for self-reflection about my role in the project and my interactions with participants and data.

Phase V: A stopover in the ivory tower: After having assembled different insights and experiences, we can now turn to the academic literature. A literature review helps to support or contrast findings, and to see what is new and what has been said before. It might be a little scary to do this last. What if what we have found is already known? In my experience, however, every project is unique. It requires time, work, and creativity to identify what is special. The established literature is a valuable source for enriching and deepening your normative theory.

Phase VI: Bringing it all together: So where does the actual theory come from? Or better, how do all these varied things we have assembled translate into a coherent theory on paper? From the inductive grounded theory engagement, core categories will emerge. They build the core structure of the theory. Memos written throughout the entire process are an important source for writing up the theory. You may want to lay out categories on pieces of paper on the floor, write them on sticky notes attached to the wall, draw a mind map or visualize them through software graphs, all of which can be done alone or with participants.

For me, after the social media analysis, conversations with various actors, participatory analysis sessions, multimedia input, personal diary, and literature review, things started to come together. I wrote a first paper draft. I sent this draft to the participants and asked for feedback. I then invited them to an online focus group, where we discussed the core categories of the theory and reflected on the process. I fed their reflections into the next iteration of the paper.

Conclusion

Democratic theorizing as introduced in this chapter aspires to realize the deliberative ideals of inclusion, diversity, listening, and transparency in the theorizing process. In contrast to established approaches to theorizing democracy, which are limited to the professional domain of academic theorists, democratic theorizing aims at realizing the formative agency of people outside academia (Dryzek and Tanasoca 2021). It constitutes a common process of co-constructing theory with those who are the actual experts when it comes to their own lifeworlds. This kind of theorizing goes against the established logic of academia, which is situated in a context of neoliberal market economies and governance structures. It requires theorists to step out of established thinking and knowledge production patterns.

As a white, male academic from Europe, engaging with a Black-led US movement entailed some tensions, moments of suspicion, feelings of guilt (Luttrell 2019). Being a distant supporter but not an active participant in the movement sometimes made it hard to establish trust between myself and research participants. Perceiving myself as a reflective and progressive thinker and supporter of the movement, this process has shattered parts of how I see myself, my work, and the world around me. Acknowledging my own privilege was painful at times, but it also allowed me to grow personally and as an academic. Growing pain is good. As democratic theorists, we should be

open to learning something new, not only about our research topic but also about ourselves.

The guidance to democratic theorizing I have provided here is just one way of going about this. Democratic theorizing has the potential to fulfil the deliberative aspiration of diversity and this can take various forms. I hope that this approach will inspire future theorizing projects and contribute to a bigger movement towards a more democratic way of creating democratic theory.

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PART II
MEASURING DELIBERATION

6

Discourse Quality Index

André Bächtiger, Marlène Gerber, and Eléonore Fournier-Tombs

How *deliberative* are communicative interactions in politics and society? This is one of the big issues for deliberative theorists and empirical scholars alike. This chapter focuses on the Discourse Quality Index (DQI), which provides a quantitative content analysis of deliberative quality. The DQI can be employed in a variety of settings. It has allowed researchers to examine the deliberative qualities and consequences of parliamentary interactions (Steiner et al. 2004; Bächtiger and Hangartner 2010; Lord and Tamvaki 2013) as well as deliberative mini-publics (Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2014; Gerber et al. 2018). It has also been used in experimental research (Baccaro et al. 2016) and served as a template in the *Varieties of Democracy* project for assessing the deliberative aspects of a country's politics (Coppedge et al. 2011). We document the DQI's evolution, its blind spots as well as recent developments towards a machine-learning DQI.

The Original DQI

The original DQI was developed for the analysis of parliamentary debates. It is strongly rooted in a Habermasian-inspired understanding of deliberation, which emphasizes rational argumentation. In its original conceptualization, the DQI employs five indicators of deliberative quality (Steenbergen et al. 2003):

- (1) Participation Equality: When focusing on legislatures, participation is naturally restricted to MPs, so the DQI operationalizes participation in terms of interruptions (other than normal limitations on debate time) that makes it impossible for an MP to express his or her views.
- (2) Level of Justification: In politics (but also elsewhere), it is usually difficult to apply external and substantive standards to what constitutes a good reason. Hence, the original DQI focuses only on the syntactic structure of argument and judges to what extent a speaker gives complete justifications and thus makes his speech accessible to rational critique. At the centre of the concept of justification is the inference in which the conclusion of content is derived from the premises (i.e. primarily reasons). The relations (links) between premises and conclusion may contain argument connectives such

as ‘since’, ‘for’, ‘so’, ‘therefore’, ‘because’. Yet argument connectives can also be made implicitly. Consequently, coders cannot rely upon a predetermined list of connectives, but they must interpret. The DQI distinguishes between four levels of justification rationality: no justification; inferior justifications where the linkage between reasons and conclusion is tenuous; qualified justifications where ‘decent rationales’ (Neblo 2007) are offered and a linkage between reasons and conclusion is made; and sophisticated justifications where ‘sophisticated rationales’ (Neblo 2007) are offered and a problem is examined in depth or from different viewpoints.

- (3) Content of Justification: Drawing from Cohen (1989; and see Chambers 2018), many deliberative democrats emphasize that arguments should be formulated with an eye to what we have in common and what is universal. The DQI measures whether arguments are cast in terms of narrow group or constituency interests, whether there is neutral reference or mixed reference (i.e. reference to both narrow group interest and common good), or whether there is a reference to the common good. With regard to the common good, the DQI focuses both on the common good stated in utilitarian terms, that is, as the best solution for the greatest number of people, and the common good expressed through the difference principle, that is, the common good is served when the least advantaged in a society are helped.
- (4) Respect: According to Gutmann and Thompson (1996, 79), respect is one of the core principles of deliberative democracy: ‘it requires a favorable attitude toward, and a constructive interaction with, the persons with whom we disagree’. The DQI measures respect with three dimensions: respect towards groups, demands, and counterarguments. The DQI respect indicators are based on the concept of ‘appraisal respect’, that is, participants are expected to have (or to develop) a positive attitude towards other participants’ demands, arguments, and needs. Having a positive appreciation for the reasonableness of one’s political opponents may not mean that the content of one’s own positions should be corrected, but it could mean that one should be willing to forge a moral compromise with them. The codes for the three respect dimensions involve disrespect, neutral evaluation, and explicit respect and agreement.
- (5) Constructive Politics: This indicator is based upon the principal goal of classic deliberation to reach consensus. The DQI distinguishes between four levels of constructivity: positional politics; alternative proposals, that is, proposals that attempt to mediate but that do not fit the current agenda; consensus appeals, where speakers make an unspecific appeal for compromise or consensus; and mediating proposals that attempt to mediate within the same agenda.

The goal of the original DQI was to produce a measurement tool that satisfies the (demanding) requirements of empirical scholars in various fields of the social sciences to create good instruments (e.g. Munck and Verkuilen 2002). In a series of

tests, it was demonstrated that the DQI has good-to-excellent inter-coder reliability, that is, there is generally broad agreement where a particular speech act falls on its indicators. We have much more to say on the aggregation of the various DQI items, but we first turn to *conceptual blind spots* that have led to several amendments of the original DQI.

Blind Spots and Amendments: Updating the Original DQI

The original DQI has blind spots on the measurement of participation equality, interactivity and reflection, alternative forms of communication, substantive argumentative quality and sincerity, as well as an appreciation of the sequential character of deliberative quality (and “deliberative moments”). There are further and more fundamental blind spots of the DQI, especially context- and goal-sensitivity, to which we turn in the last section.

Participation equality. Measuring communicative interruption does not tap into the dynamics of inclusion and equality in deliberation (Thompson 2008). Instead, as Dutwin (2003) has proposed, one standard for evaluating equal participation in deliberative processes is to focus on the frequency and the speaking time by specific social groups (e.g. gender or cultural minorities). Consequently, an updated version of the DQI follows Dutwin (2003) and Stromer-Galley (2007) and proxies equality (or domination) by counting the frequency and volume of participation, the latter measured by the number of words. The latest development is Gerber’s (2015) distinction between ‘equality of participation’ and ‘equality of consideration’. While equality of participation captures the frequency of participation, equality of consideration investigates whether discussants are recognized as equal discussants with legitimate claims (Knight and Johnson 1997). To capture equality of consideration, Gerber (2015) analyses whether the arguments of specific social, cultural, and political groups receive a response from another group. The data obtained by this analysis also lends itself to network analysis; for instance, it can be used to check for ‘homophily’ in deliberative settings (Gerber 2015).

Interactivity and reflection. The original DQI does not capture interactivity or reflexivity, or it does so only indirectly. With regard to interactivity, the original DQI tries to measure this in the respect dimension, namely under the rubric of counterarguments: it counts whether counterarguments are included or ignored. But this measure has not proved to be ‘sharp’ enough to thoroughly explore patterns of reciprocity and listening in deliberation. Consequently, Pedrini et al. (2013) have developed a new indicator for interactivity, assessing whether participants make a direct reference to other participants as well as to other participants’ arguments. Himmelroos and Christensen (2013), in turn, have made an effort to incorporate the

concept of reflection into the DQI. Concretely, they measure whether a participant considers a counterargument in their own argumentation or compares or weighs different arguments. Surely, both attempts are only approximations of the concepts of interactivity, listening, and reflection. A full-blown analysis would require that one also explores the ‘deliberation within’ component, investigating whether participants have listened to others but do not explicitly report this.

Alternative forms of communication. Difference democrats have long argued that a focus on rational argument may be exclusive of specific social groups and speaking styles (Sanders 1997; Young 2000). Since a key goal of deliberation is to include ‘all affected interests’, a tension between inclusion and deliberative ability may arise, turning deliberation into a potentially harmful intervention that further marginalizes already disenfranchised groups. Both Sanders and Young stress the importance of alternative forms of communication—such as testimony, storytelling, or rhetoric—to avoid these constraints. Updated variants of the DQI have made an effort to incorporate ‘storytelling’ and narratives. A new measure was created to check whether participants use personal narratives or experiences.

Substantive argumentative quality and sincerity. While the DQI captures the formal properties of arguments, it says nothing as to the substantive quality of arguments, or the sincerity with which they are offered (Bächtiger et al. 2010; Neblo et al. 2018). Assume that we find an actor who scores highly on all DQI indicators, that is, provides extensive and complex justifications for her positions, is oriented towards the common good, shows respect for other demands and counterarguments as well as empathy for the needy, and offers a mediating proposal of how to resolve the dispute. While this looks like an indication of true deliberative action, one cannot exclude the possibility that this actor is engaging in sophisticated cheap talk designed to manipulate the terms and outcomes of discussion (Schimmelfennig 2001). Only if we could see through one’s intentions, finding that one really means what one says, would we be in a position to make a case that this is true deliberative action. Even when additional evaluation criteria are applied—for example, no horse-trading, no side payments, opinion shifts in direction of positions of less powerful actors, or a high amount of normative arguments during discussion (Deitelhoff 2006)—it is difficult, yet not impossible, to make a statement regarding sincerity.

Neblo et al. (2018) have supplemented the DQI with ‘substantive quality’ and ‘sincerity’ codes. They employed an ideologically diverse set of coders to check whether an argument was substantively sound and whether the argument was offered in sincere ways. Intercoder reliability levels on these categories were high (hovering around 80 per cent); as Neblo et al. (2018) note, research in psychology suggests that people are generally apt at assessing a speaker’s sincerity. We think that such codes for ‘sincerity’ should be routinely built into assessments of deliberative quality.

Sequential Character of deliberative quality and deliberative moments. Traditional DQI analyses have analysed entire debates based on the aggregation of individual speeches. But this ignores the fact that entire debates may not have a high deliberative

quality throughout; rather, deliberative quality may vary across discussion phases, requiring the adoption of a sequential perspective. Focusing on small group discussions, Gastil (1993, 123) noted that groups achieve high-quality deliberation only ‘during brief, brilliant flashes’ that ‘last a few minutes, or perhaps an hour’. This requires that deliberative quality is analysed in sequences and ‘deliberative moments’ are identified in which various indicators of deliberative quality—justification rationality, respect, constructivity—all score highly, whereas a focus on the entire debate would lead to a more ‘nuanced’ evaluation of deliberative quality (see Bächtiger et al. 2010).

The importance of focusing on ‘deliberative moments’ is also picked up by Steiner et al. (2017). They correctly claim that ‘existing instruments to measure the quality of deliberation are too static, focusing too much on the analysis of individual speech acts’. Instead, they propose to focus on so-called ‘transformative deliberative moments’, where the level of deliberation is either lifted from low to high or drops from high to low. According to Jaramillo and Steiner (2014), one has to understand the dynamic and the context of a discussion to identify the situations in which the discourse becomes significantly lower or significantly higher from a deliberative perspective. This is accomplished in an interpretive way by coders. Sequencing deliberative quality is a first step towards a systemic approach that understands deliberation as an ‘emergent’ phenomenon (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019). It also taps into the complexities of aggregating deliberative quality, a topic which we will address below.

Aggregation

Since deliberation contains multiple attributes and relevant indicators, it must wrestle with the aggregation problem, namely deciding which attributes and indicators to combine into a single index, whether to add or multiply them, and how much weight each component should be given. There also needs to be a correspondence between theory and the selected aggregation rule (Munck and Verkuilen 2002). For instance, if theory indicates that two attributes have the same value, one would simply add the scores; if they are necessary features, one could multiply both scores; or if they are sufficient features, one could take the score of the highest attribute (Munck and Verkuilen 2002). Last but not least, in order to draw conclusions about the aggregated deliberative quality, analysts also need to deal with the question of whether the attained scores are ‘good enough’ from a theoretical point of view, that is, they are required to set certain threshold values for high and low deliberative quality. We will address these points in turn.

Simultaneity is a traditional expectation in aggregation, that is, good deliberators should ideally comply with all quality standards, and *equivalence*, that is, no priority or differential weight is given to specific indicators of deliberative quality

(see [Gerber et al. 2018](#)). [Goodin \(2005\)](#) calls this the ‘unitary deliberator model’ where all deliberative virtues are simultaneously and continuously on display. The DQI epitomizes these ideas and operationalizes deliberative quality as a unidimensional construct. For instance, the more justification in a speech, the more respectful it should be, and so on. If unidimensionality exists, then the aggregation of the various components is easy (they are just counted together) and researchers obtain a powerful measurement instrument yielding results that can be interpreted in a straightforward way (the higher the score on the scale, the better).

An original test based on a publicized British House debate showed remarkable unidimensionality of the original DQI components ([Steenbergen et al. 2003](#)). But in the context of parliamentary debates in various (institutional) contexts, the DQI attributes do not constitute a unidimensional phenomenon. A re-analysis of twenty-nine parliamentary debates at the level of speakers shows that there is a fairly strong correlation between sophisticated justifications and common good orientation ($r = .61$; $p = .01$); a medium correlation between respect towards demands/counterarguments and constructivity ($r = .39$; $p = .04$); and no or weak correlations between sophisticated justifications and respect towards demands and counterarguments ($r = .08$; $p = .58$), between sophisticated justifications and constructivity ($r = -.04$; $p = .83$), between common good orientation and respect towards demands and counterarguments ($r = .20$; $p = .29$), as well as between common good orientation and constructivity ($r = -.07$; $p = .73$). These results are confirmed by a factor analysis, extracting two factors at the level of debates: one factor combining sophisticated justifications and common good orientation and one factor combining respect towards demands/counterarguments and constructivity (see [Table 6.1](#)).

The factor analysis indicates that deliberation in the real world is more complex than previously thought. One reason for this multidimensionality of deliberative quality is the public/non-public divide. While public debates accentuate the sophisticated justification/common good dimension, non-public debates accentuate

Table 6.1 Factor Analysis of Deliberative Components in 29 Parliamentary Debates in Switzerland, United States, and Germany (see [Steiner et al. 2004](#))

	Loading on Factor 1	Loading on Factor 2
Sophisticated Justification	.89	.01
Common Good Orientation	.90	.00
Respect towards demands/counterarguments	.11	.84
Constructive Politics	-.10	.84
Eigen Value	1.62	1.40

Note: Extraction Method: principal component analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

the respect and constructivity dimension. But if the elements of deliberative quality do not co-occur, we are left with a problem of interpreting what the different elements of deliberative quality actually *mean*. For instance, when actors justify their positions at length in a plenary debate but are simultaneously disrespectful, are we seeing a (moderate) contribution to deliberative quality (since they provided reasons), or are we observing ritualistic behaviour (Tanasoca and Sass 2019) or even (sophisticated) strategic behaviour? It is possible that a combination of ritualistic and strategic behaviour is at play here: since the norms of public debating in Western democracies generally value reasoned argument but not respect for the arguments of political opponents, strategic actors will use such mixed strategies (justification and disrespect). As such, the unidimensionality question touches upon a crucial validity problem: if there is no unidimensionality, then other action logics than true deliberation are present (Tanasoca and Sass 2019).

Regarding ‘threshold’ values, Dryzek (2007, 244) has noted: ‘In applying the discourse quality index, it is hard to say whether the deliberation in any of the cases analysed is actually good enough by any theoretical standards. The index is just a comparative measure.’ The threshold-level problem is intertwined with a *level of analysis problem*. To date, the quality of deliberation is usually checked at the level of individual speeches (which is then aggregated to an average score for each speaker). But this is problematic: in order to achieve an overall maximum score, every speaker would not only have to justify their demands and arguments thoroughly in every single speech, but they would also have to be simultaneously oriented towards the common good and be respectful at all times. Even staunch advocates of deliberation might agree that this is impossible. In the context of Europolis, Gerber et al. (2018) have applied a *holistic approach* which analyses the overall deliberative performance of each speaker in an *entire discussion*. To do so, they have dichotomized the DQI indicators in accordance with pre-specified (and demanding) cut values. In concrete terms, they evaluated whether speakers offered a sophisticated rationale, referred to the common good, showed explicit respect towards other participants’ arguments as well as empathy to other groups, offered stories, and questioned what others have claimed—at least once in the discussion. In order to explore whether the pre-defined standards of classic and Habermasian-inspired deliberation represent a latent variable of deliberative quality, Gerber et al. (2018) used (Bayesian) item response theory analysis (IRT)¹. Deliberative ability is then constructed similarly to intelligence in educational science, namely with regard to how well citizens are able to achieve the various standards of deliberative quality (sophisticated justification, explicit respect, etc.), while simultaneously assuming that some quality standards are more difficult to achieve than others. The empirical results are quite striking: in the context of Europolis, the deliberative ability of European citizens turns out to be a latent and unidimensional construct at the level of the speaker. This means that the various standards hang together, implying that a person who justifies

¹ A Bayesian approach using prior information is essential for model identification.

her positions at length also listens respectfully and is oriented towards the common good. Intriguingly, storytelling—while being the easiest standard—turned out to be a partial complement to justification rationality, that is, people who make sophisticated justifications also tell stories. As Gerber et al. (2018) concur: ‘This . . . provides a hint that the classic distinction between rational discourse and alternative forms of communication may be misleading, since high-skilled deliberators also use personal experiences to back up their positions and arguments.’

Another route to aggregate deliberative quality could follow the idea of ‘concept-driven’ *lexical aggregation* (Skaaning et al. 2015; Gerring et al. 2018). Lexical aggregation takes inspiration from John Rawls (1971) who orders the three principles of his theory of justice (liberty principle, fair equality of opportunity principle, and the difference principle) in order of ‘lexical’ priority: ‘That is, one should not consider B or C until A has been satisfied nor C until both A and B are satisfied’ (Gerring et al. 2018). Notice first that lexical aggregation is generally similar to a (deterministic) Guttman scale and IRT (which adopts a probabilistic understanding of the relationship between a latent variable and an observed characteristic): a positive value for an item implies a positive value for all less difficult (or lower ranked) items (Gerring et al. 2018;). Notice further that IRT employs a data-driven measurement model, requiring that the various items must co-vary. But when this is not the case, ‘researchers are at pains to solve the aggregation problem in a more deductive fashion’ (Gerring et al. 2018). Consequently, Gerring et al. propose a non-Guttman-type ‘lexical scale’ which takes a ‘concept-driven’ or ‘deductive’ approach to aggregation². Box 6.1 illustrates how the DQI could be turned into such a concept-driven lexical scale.

Both IRT and lexical scaling understand deliberation as a ‘unitary’ phenomenon where the various quality standards complement one another in a cohesive whole. Notice, however, that the ‘unitary deliberator model’ has come under attack in the past decade. Several scholars have argued that deliberation should not be conceived of as a ‘single evaluative whole’ (Thompson 2008). According to Thompson (2008), aggregating deliberative quality into a single indicator may obscure the distinct strengths and weaknesses of different deliberative standards. Similarly, Mutz (2008, 532) argues that it may be problematic to test deliberation as a compound phenomenon:

[m]ost human behaviour is sufficiently complex that mere additive models are unlikely to account for it . . . It would be not logical to ask how well a given deliberative encounter stacked up on all of the factors, create a combined score of deliberative goodness, and expect more beneficial outcomes associated with higher scores.

² We thank Molly Scudder for helping us to clarify the distinction between different types of lexical scales.

Indeed, future research may be more interested in goal- and context-specific sensitive assessments of deliberative quality, requiring that we focus on more variegated configurations of the various standards of deliberative quality (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019), a point to which we turn in the next section.

Box 6.1 A Lexical Index of the DQI

We make a first attempt to develop a *lexical index* for deliberative quality, based on a classical definition of deliberation focusing on extensive reason-giving and respectful listening. Focusing on the two crucial indicators of justification rationality and respectful listening, we construct an ordinal scale with five categories, running from not deliberative to high deliberative quality (Table 6.2). ‘Not deliberative’ means that participants provide no decent rationale for their positions. ‘Minimal deliberative’ quality means that a participant provides a decent rationale but does not refer to what other participants have said. ‘Medium deliberative’ quality implies that a participant both provides a decent rationale and makes a reference to other participants’ arguments. ‘High deliberative’ quality means that participants make both a sophisticated justification and a reference to other arguments. ‘Very high deliberative’ quality implies that there is a sophisticated justification as well as an explicitly respectful reference to other arguments. Finally, in the categories ‘very high’ deliberative quality, both sophisticated reason-giving and respectful listening must be present.

Table 6.2 Lexical Scale of Deliberative Quality

0. Not Deliberative (in classic sense)	~ J		
1. Minimal Deliberative Quality	J	~ I	
2. Medium Deliberative Quality	J	I	~ SJ
3. High Deliberative Quality	SJ	I	~ RI
4. Very High Deliberative Quality	SJ	RI	

Note: 0–4 = ordinal scale; J = Justification, I = Interactivity, SJ = Sophisticated Justification, RI = Respectful Interactivity = conditions that are satisfied; ~ J, I, SJ, RI = conditions that are not satisfied; empty cells = undefined. Relationships are deterministic.

Using the Europolis database, we dichotomized all DQI indicators at the speaker level in accordance with these dimensions. The results are displayed in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Deliberative Lexical Scale

	Frequency	Per cent
Not Deliberative	39	21.7
Minimal Deliberative Quality	9	5.0
Medium Deliberative Quality	69	38.3
High Deliberative Quality	13	7.2
Very High Deliberative Quality	50	27.8
N	180	100

It is striking to see that a considerable number of participants (about 28 per cent) reached a very high quality of deliberation. This means that they were both capable of formulating a sophisticated argument and referring to what other participants said in an explicitly respectful way. As a side note, correlating the IRT measure with our lexical index yields a score of 0.79. The high correlation score is not surprising since the IRT analysis reveals that deliberative quality formed a latent and unidimensional phenomenon in the Europolis discussions (Gerber et al. 2018). Consequently, a partly additive approach as inherent in the lexical approach will lead to similar results. But a lexical approach might be superior when deliberative quality is not a unidimensional phenomenon and the various indicators do not co-vary.

The Future of Measuring Deliberative Quality: Challenges and Paths towards Automation

Despite attempts to reconceptualize the DQI and align it better with current deliberative theory, two major challenges persist: an interpretivist as well as a functional and systemic challenge. This combines with a further methodological challenge, namely the demand—and possibility—to automatically code deliberative quality.

Interpretivist Challenges

Several scholars have questioned the validity of measuring the quality of deliberative processes on the basis of external and quantitative measurement. As King (2009, 9) argues, Habermasian discourse ethics ‘is interested in the intersubjective achievement of understanding a process of decision-making’. Hence, a proper evaluation of deliberative quality must assess ‘how this is perceived by other participants—not merely the subjective speculations of outside observers’. Bevir and Ansari (2012)

have offered an even more vigorous attack on the quantification of deliberative quality. They argue that if deliberation is meant to realize the goals of political legitimacy and emancipation, then scholars must treat deliberating actors as ‘intentional actors with the capacity for creative reasoning and agency’ (Bevir and Ansari 2012, 3). It is important to note that Bevir and Ansari do not fundamentally object to quantifying strategies, as long as coding efforts are based on careful interpretation by external coders. For instance, they acknowledge that the Discourse Quality Index ‘implicitly incorporate[s] interpretive approaches.’

Nonetheless, quantitative measures such as the DQI have largely obscured the meanings of deliberative acts. Interpretation is made by external coders and the focus of these instruments is usually on the variation of proportions of the different indicators of deliberative quality (whereby the size of the proportions is affected by different institutional incentives and norms). What is not considered is that the indicators of deliberative quality—such as justification rationality—may take on different meanings according to context. For instance, extended justifications in non-public settings may provide participants with good information and persuasive arguments. In the context of a plenary debate in a competitive and majoritarian system, however, extended justifications may take on a very different meaning: they may serve to protect and promote the party’s ‘brand’, and not be addressed to interlocutors at all (see Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019). Participants’ (and observers’) perceptions of the meanings of deliberative acts might vary as well. A respectful utterance may be perceived differently by different participants; or it may have multifaceted meanings which cannot be captured by a single code made by external coders.

One possible way forward is to embrace more qualitative and interpretive approaches (Ercan et al. 2018). But we also think that it is misleading to put all of the eggs in the qualitative basket. While a purely quantitative approach will never be able to uncover the perceptions and meanings that participants attach to deliberative and other communicative acts, a purely qualitative research strategy might be blind to deliberative dynamics as well as to complex transmissions in deliberative systems, which participants may not always see through (Bächtiger 2018). As we shall discuss below, this requires computer-assisted tools and big data analyses to understand transmissions and dynamics happening at a supra-individual level.

Functional and Systemic Challenges

Recent developments in deliberative theory apply a problem-based approach to conceptualizing and measuring deliberation (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019). A problem-based approach understands deliberative quality as contingent, that is, dependent on different contexts and goals, as well as distributed across space and time. This means, for instance, that we cannot apply the same deliberative quality indicators for plenary debates in parliaments and deliberative mini-publics: in the former context, what counts is the quality of argument to realize a parliament’s

accountability function, whereas in the latter context, respectful interactions may be crucial for creating a civic spirit amongst citizens. From such a functional perspective, the time ‘for a grand, unified index of deliberative quality is over’ (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019, 138). When deliberative goods, such as reason-giving or listening, are contingent on goals and contexts of deliberation and can be distributed across space and time, then ‘measuring’ deliberative quality cannot be done on the basis of an index which aggregates fixed deliberative standards found in a communicative sequence of a single forum. The right number of indicators depends on goals and contexts, and thus becomes flexible and changeable. This will require novel and more theoretically grounded ways of aggregating deliberative quality.

Towards Automation

For a long time, studying the processes of deliberation empirically was a highly demanding and time-consuming endeavour, requiring in-depth content analysis and extensive reliability testing. Computer-assisted textual analysis can help to speed up data collection and supersedes reliability testing. The automation of the DQI was taken recently with DelibAnalysis, which used machine learning to derive scores for online deliberations with politicians (Fournier-Tombs and Di Marzo Serugendo 2019), as well as an updated version for parliamentary deliberations in the three Canadian Territories (MacKenzie and Fournier-Tombs 2019). The machine-learning approach employed in the original DelibAnalysis used a so-called classification algorithm to categorize DQI scores into either low, medium, or high scores: in order to obtain the scores, a small subset of data (usually < 1%) was manually coded by the researchers, in order to provide parameters for the quality of discourse in a given context. From that, the algorithm was trained, predicting scores for the rest of the comments in the dataset. In the updated version of this methodology, the researchers created a model for each indicator in the DQI. Unlike the human coder who uses a coding manual to determine the DQI scores, the model uses quantitative features, such as the presence of phrases or parts-of-speech and character counts. As a general rule, the models generated for these studies had an 80 per cent or higher accuracy, with some models reaching upwards of 95 per cent accuracy. Although this approach requires some manual intervention at the onset, it benefits from flexibility, allowing researchers to measure quality in different contexts, languages, and platforms, without relying on a rules-based programming method. In sum, automation will be an indispensable part of analysing deliberative quality in the future, especially when it comes to assessing systemic deliberation.

Conclusion

The DQI and other measurements of deliberative quality have contributed to making a normative concept amenable to empirical research. Yet, as we have seen in this chapter, this translation is anything but simple, and requires constant updating of

empirical strategies in order to meet demanding—as well as changing—normative standards and approaches. Indeed, future research on deliberative quality calls for more sophisticated empirical strategies: strategies that take into account elements of the goal- and context-dependency of deliberative forms and that capture the distribution of deliberative acts across space and time. Yet, somewhat paradoxically, the fact that we are currently experiencing a crisis of public communication (Dryzek et al. 2019)—including the rise in simplifying and disrespectful populist language—has turned both high-quality argumentation and respectful listening into a new focal point for assessing political discourse. Its manifold blind spots notwithstanding, the original DQI provides an excellent diagnostic tool with which to analyse high-quality argumentation and respectful listening (see Marien et al. 2019).

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Deliberative Reason Index

Simon Niemeyer and Francesco Veri

The Deliberative Reason Index (DRI) offers a substantially different method for evaluating the effects of deliberation compared to its counterparts. Its outstanding feature concerns an approach to analysis of the content of reasoning as a group-level reasoning, resulting in a property of deliberative reason that is greater than the sum of reasoning by individuals. The development of the method reflects a growing recognition that group reasoning is an *metaconsensus* intrinsic feature of human cognition—sometimes for worse (Sloman and Fernbach 2017); but also for better, if a group context is sufficiently deliberative (Mercier and Sperber 2011; Chambers 2018). The method also provides a measure of how well the group and the individuals that comprise it have contributed to improvements in reasoning.

Although DRI is a relatively recent development, its history dates as far back as 2000, when its empirical precursor, intersubjective consistency, was first observed as part of the Bloomfield Track study (reported below). Over the past two decades it has been subject to verification and refinement, including the development of a method for aggregating and indexing.

Deliberative reason, as measured by DRI, involves mutually constructing an understanding (or shared ‘logic’) of what is at stake for an issue and establishing the contours of ‘reasonableness’. Individual positions may diverge, but on terms that are mutually agreed. Those terms include higher-level agreement concerning relevant interests, values, and beliefs (*metaconsensus*; Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007), as well as coherence in the form of a mutually shared ‘representation’ of the issue (Mercier and Sperber 2011) guiding how considerations inform preferences. Empirically, the effect of these conditions produces intersubjective consistency, measured as proportionality between reasonable disagreement (or agreement) among pairs of individuals regarding considerations on one level and preferences on the other. DRI is the group-level aggregation of this effect.

Measuring DRI first requires the development and deployment of a multi-level survey instrument capable of capturing intersubjective consistency—soliciting opinions regarding issue considerations on one level, and preferences regarding possible policies or actions on the other. The degree of consistency between these levels amongst individuals in the group is then analysed and aggregated to produce DRI.

DRI can be used to analyse the extent to which group reasoning has improved during deliberation and the conditions that best facilitate it (e.g. Niemeyer et al. 2021). It also lends itself to detailed interpretive analysis of how individuals variably contribute

to group reason and how these dynamics connect to wider political discourse, as well as understanding the mechanisms that improve reason in wider deliberative systems. Empirical applications include multifactor analysis across deliberative cases and comparative analysis of deliberative reason between different cohorts, as demonstrated below.

This chapter elaborates briefly on the theoretical foundations of the method, before outlining the process of implementation and interpreting results. It then demonstrates how DRI captures the impacts on group reason, before outlining its limitations and providing concluding remarks.

Deliberative Reason and DRI

The method for obtaining DRI builds on an understanding of deliberative reason as inherently a group process involving mutual communication regarding relevant considerations about matters of common concern to arrive at conclusions regarding what should be done (Bächtiger et al. 2018). Reasoning under ideal deliberative conditions of openness, reciprocity, and sincerity involves a process of justification, bringing arguments, interests, and concerns to light, and holding individuals in the group accountable to the conclusions that they draw. The overall effect induces ‘enlarged thinking’ (Arendt 1961) that expands the domain of moral consideration and incorporation of shared knowledge into reason.

The process of deliberative reason, thus described, also results in improvement in *integrative reasoning*, reflecting a shared appreciation of the world that deliberators cohabit, the meanings that they imbue from it, and the various interests impacted by the choices they make—without necessarily agreeing (for good reasons) on should be done. Their efforts to achieve integration take account of those considerations that are raised via deliberation.

Integrative reason(ing) here involves a more demanding version of the psychological construct of integrative complexity, which measures reasoning in terms of differentiation and integration of perspectives (Tetlock 1986). Higher integration results in more sophisticated forms of reasoning that synthesize and accommodate alternative views (Wyss et al. 2015), creating a more inclusive politics (Wright 2019). In addition to sophistication, deliberative reason benchmarks the level of integration into reasoning across¹ the range of considerations that deliberators mutually agree to be relevant—even if they do not agree on their veracity or importance. The imperative to account for these considerations acquires a moral force via the deliberative ideals of respect and reciprocity (Gutmann and Thompson 1996) in not only recognizing those impacted by a decision, but accommodating their interests

¹ This agreement on relevant considerations constitutes a form of meta-consensus (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006).

into reasoning alongside *all* relevant considerations identified by the group *without exception* (Misak 2004).

Deliberative reason also involves the formation of *coherence* (Davidson 2001), such that group members understand each other's justifications. This shared reasoning holds individuals accountable to a mutual group understanding of the world and the internal values that inform their judgements. Any revealed dissonance leads either to the group accommodating that individual's perspective or adjusting their understanding according to a common standard of reasonableness, which regulates what constitutes a good argument.

The net effect of this deliberative process is to widen the field of view of individuals, who take seriously their mutually identified set of relevant considerations. It also produces a shared justificatory basis whereby judgements regarding claims of fact and relative priorities of values inform decisions regarding what should be done (preferences)—resulting in a mutually shared 'representation' of the issue regarding how premises connect to conclusions (Mercier and Sperber 2011).

A representation may be partly formed before a given deliberative encounter and subject to revision or evolve as a product of deliberation. Deliberative reason accommodates contestation across overlapping issue representations—so long as they share a working meta-consensus (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006) on relevant issue considerations—accommodating and synthesizing different forms of reason structures (e.g. across different cultural settings) without necessarily requiring agreement on outcomes.

Take, for example, the challenge of constructing an effective policy response to a pandemic, such as COVID-19. Relevant considerations informing what to do include epidemiological knowledge concerning the transmissibility, mortality, and morbidity of the virus and relevant risk factors. Other considerations might concern the economic impacts associated with the use of available policy levers, such as lockdowns. Certain prior representations of the issue may treat these considerations as legitimate trade-offs, leading some to support a policy of herd immunity, given the uncertain prospect of an effective vaccine at the time. Other considerations, such as restricted freedom of movement contributing to social and psychological impact may also factor in reasoning. Representations incorporate contested facts, such as those concerning the effectiveness of certain policies. Deliberation improves knowledge and its incorporation into a revised representational framework—improving epistemic performance (Landemore 2017), settling contested claims, dispelling misinformation (Niemeyer 2011), or questioning established wisdom in light of arguments. For example, arguments in favour of herd immunity may lose validity in the face of growing evidence that economic performance depends on confidence in public safety, or the emergence of effective vaccines, with either development reconfiguring representational understanding. Deliberation might also serve to remind us of moral obligation to the aged and immunocompromised, producing representational adjustments that reframe understanding of the term 'dies with' COVID to imply greater collective responsibility for those affected.

Whatever its form a shared representational framework constructed during deliberation should render all aspects of an issue mutually intelligible, along with acceptance of relevant values, and implications of actions where facts are settled. Where they are not, a deliberatively shared framework accommodates diversity, as well as creating conditions for resolving contested elements (Landemore 2017).

Deliberative reason in the longer term involves ongoing updating of representational frameworks, which gain sophistication as more facts become settled and enlarged thinking accommodates a growing set of relevant considerations. In the shorter term it pushes individuals towards group coherence, on terms they themselves set, synthesizing disparate elements of representations in the formation of positions as they come to reason together, and in doing so facilitating greater levels of trust (Mercier and Sperber 2011).

The effect of deliberative reason described above is the formation of a mutually constructed representation that accommodates a ‘reasonable pluralism’. The result is a shared rationality—literally, in the sense that it embodies a proportionality that can be observed at the group level. Well-formed positions are deliberative to the extent that they are consistent with that structure, which is capable of integrating all relevant arguments, even if only to establish grounds for disagreement that can be mutually endorsed as reasonable. This reasoning may involve some measure of tacit knowledge (Benson 2019) accessed through intuitive reason (Habermas 2017). But it nonetheless produces regularities of reason within the group such that a given level of disagreement on opinions regarding considerations is regulated via a shared representational framework, resulting in proportionality between preference/consideration agreement level, or *intersubjective consistency* (Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007).² It is this effect that forms the basis of DRI.

Measuring Deliberative Reason

The measurement of DRI involves the development and use of a survey designed to capture opinions regarding the relevant issue considerations on one level, and preferences for actions or policies on another. The items used to survey considerations usually take the form of statements sampled from the relevant public debate—where it is important that the instrument reflects the working meta-consensus, or range of considerations deemed relevant to the issue.³

Opinions regarding considerations can be surveyed using a Likert response along an agree–disagree scale, although higher quality data is obtained using quasi-ranking. Most of the studies reported below have used both methods when surveying

² For a more detailed explanation of this effect, see Niemeyer et al. (2021).

³ A requirement reflecting the operation of meta-consensus (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006). Although DRI is an entirely separate method to Q methodology, it shares an approach with best practice for collecting and developing survey items (Niemeyer 2020), where Q methodology uses the language of ‘concourse’ instead of meta-consensus (Stephenson 1986).

responses.⁴ The approach involves first obtaining a Likert response, which can be optionally be used as the basis for beginning the process of sorting statements into a series of (usually up to eleven) categories (columns) from most disagree to most agree.⁵ Surveying preferences involves the ranking of a set of options (usually between five and ten) in the form of implementable actions or policies.⁶

Once opinions and preferences have been surveyed, DRI is obtained via four steps. The first step involves correlating, in turn, responses to the survey of considerations, and a preference survey, for pairs of individuals (using Spearman correlation; ρ).⁷ In the second step, the level of consistency for all pairs of individuals is calculated. The third step calculates DRI for each individual. Finally, in the fourth step, the result is aggregated to produce DRI for the group.

The first two steps of the process are explained using Figure 7.1. The figure plots intersubjective consistency for four sample individuals (A,B,C,D) drawn from the Bloomfield Track case study—concerning a controversial road constructed in a World Heritage Listed rainforest (Niemeyer 2004).⁸ In step 1, the intersubjective correlations for both considerations (ρ_j^{cons}) and preferences (ρ_j^{pref}) are calculated for all sets of pairs ($J = [AB, AC, AD, BC, BD, CD]$)—where, for $n = 3$ individuals in the example, the total number of pairs (n_z) ($n_z = \frac{n(n-1)}{2} = 6$). The figure plots these pairs, with the corresponding values for the pair AB ($\rho_{a,b}^{cons}$ and $\rho_{a,b}^{pref}$) illustrated using dotted lines.

Step 2 calculates the distance of all pairs from the 1:1 (intersubjective consistency) line, shown in Figure 7.1. The modal orthogonal distance (d) is obtained for a given pair (j) using $d_j = |\rho_j^{pref} - \rho_j^{cons}|/\sqrt{2}$. In the figure, the distances for all our example pairs ($d_{a,b}$, $d_{a,c}$, $d_{a,d}$, $d_{b,c}$, $d_{b,d}$, $d_{c,d}$) are indicated using dashed lines.

Step 3 then involves finding individual DRI (DRI^{Ind}) for each member of the group (i), beginning with finding the average distance and then transforming the result into a -1 to 1 scale.

The average modal distance (\bar{D}_i) is found using the formula:

$$\bar{D}_i = \frac{1}{m_i} \sum_{j=1}^{m_i} d_j^i \text{ for all pairs that include individual } i;$$

($J_i; j \dots m_i$; where $m_i = n - 1$)

⁴ For a detailed list of these studies, see Niemeyer et al. (2021).

⁵ Surveying can either involve a specifically designed online survey facility or be performed manually using cards that are sorted into a distribution (see Niemeyer 2020).

⁶ For some cases, the outcome options are already established as part of the mini-public design; in others, those options are developed as part of the deliberative process. There is evidence that designing a deliberative process to develop options has a more positive effect on deliberative reason than voting on pre-established options, which potentially has a negative impact. See Niemeyer et al. (2021).

⁷ We employ Spearman ρ because it is particularly appropriate to correlate non-linear relationships and ordinal data, such as the Likert scale's ranks (Lehman et al. 2013, 127). Java-based software is available (DeliberateQ). It can be downloaded at <https://github.com/DeliberativeAnalysis/DeliberateQ/releases>.

⁸ The points A,B,C,D correspond to participants 'ASW', 'KEI', 'JAN', and 'TAM' from the study. The data and the survey instrument are available at <https://participedia.net/case/38>. The data are also built into the DeliberateQ software, which can be used to replicate the results (see note 10).

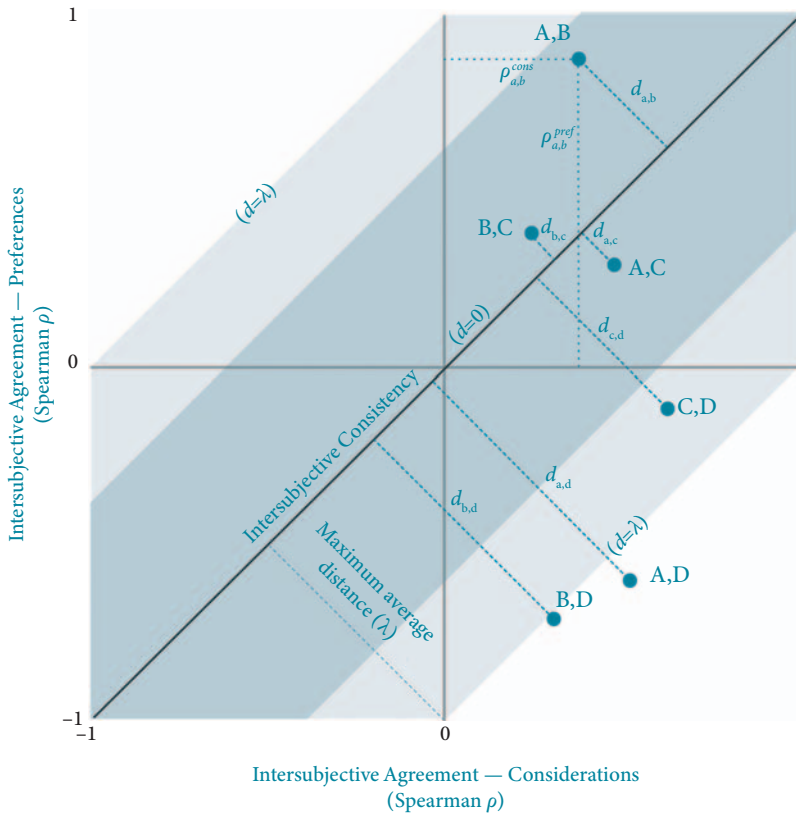


Figure 7.1 Intersubjective Consistency: Illustrative Plot

Using individual A from Figure 7.1 as an example, the average modal distance (\bar{D}_a) is obtained for all pairs that A is part of ($J_a = [d_{a,b}, d_{a,c}, d_{a,d}]$).

Individual DRI (DRI^{Ind}) is then calculated by transforming \bar{D}_i into a -1 to 1 scale. This is done using the theoretical maximum average distance for a given group—or Lambda ($\lambda = \bar{D}_{max}$), where λ is graphically indicated in Figure 7.1.⁹ The resulting formula for individual i is

$$DRI_i^{Ind} = \frac{-2\bar{D}_i + \lambda}{\lambda}$$

⁹ Because of the interrelationships between pairs, λ is constrained to a value less than maximum geometric distance ($\sqrt{2}/2$ or 0.71) for any case where $n > 2$. Even if the distance for some points is greater, the average quickly asymptotes on λ as $n \rightarrow \infty$. To illustrate, if we take individuals X and Y who are in perfectly inconsistent agreement (e.g. plotting at the 1,0 in Figure 7.1), such that $d_{x,y} = 0.71$, and we then add an additional individual (Z) who is in perfectly inconsistent in disagreement with X ($d_{x,z} = 0.7$) they would, by definition, be in perfectly consistent disagreement with Y ($d_{y,z} = 0$), such that the maximum average distance (λ) declines from 0.71 to 0.47, and so on until $\lambda \rightarrow \sqrt{2}/2$.

Finally, DRI is calculated for the group by averaging DRI^{Ind} using

$$DRI = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n DRI_i^{Ind} \text{ for all } i (i \dots n)$$

Note that it is possible to use a shorter method for calculating DRI that does not require calculating DRI^{Ind} , by obtaining and averaging \bar{D}_i for all points in step 3. However, as discussed below, using DRI^{Ind} permits greater interpretive and analytical possibilities.

Interpreting DRI

The previous discussion illustrated the overall relationship between DRI and the average distance of its constitutive points (i.e. of individual pairs). This relationship is geometrically illustrated for A,B,C,D in Figure 7.1, where the overall average distance is shown as the darker, inner band running parallel to the intersubjective consistency line. The boundary of this band is slightly greater than half the maximum average distance ($\bar{D} = \lambda/2$) which equates to a DRI slightly less than 0.¹⁰ A similar result occurs when all twelve participants from the Bloomfield Track study are added to the pre-deliberative plot, as shown in Figure 7.2 ($DRI_{post} = -0.2$)—where the average distance is also indicated by a dark band, and its intersection with the y -axis projected onto the DRI graph located between the pre- and post-deliberative plots.

A DRI of 0 ($\bar{D} = \lambda/2$) suggests a complete absence of consistency across the group as a whole—which might occur, for example, where complete non-attitudes apply to all considerations across all individuals, or extreme partisan framing induces very little integration beyond narrow or irrelevant considerations.

A DRI approaching -1 ($d = \lambda$) reflects cases of perfect *inconsistency* in reason, for example, where wilful partisanship produces reason using a representation that inverts the conclusions that would be drawn from the same opinions—a very unlikely outcome. By contrast, a DRI of 1 represents perfectly consistent reason, where all points fall precisely on the intersubjective consistency line in Figure 7.1. In practice, most observations of DRI fall above 0 (see Figure 7.3). Care should be taken when interpreting overall group DRI, particularly for values that fall near DRI = 0. Such cases may involve variability in levels of reason beneath the headline figure that produces a similar overall result—for example, where a small subgroup with very low DRI^{Ind} disproportionately impacts the group result (see the discussion of cohort analysis below).

Take the example from Figure 7.1, where individuals A,B, and C collectively exhibit relatively high levels of agreement on both considerations and preferences—their

¹⁰ An average distance of λ represents DRI = -1 . DRI = 1 where all points fall on the intersubjective consistency line ($\bar{D} = 0$).

points (AB, AC, BC) plotting towards the upper right-hand quadrant of the figure and close to the intersubjective consistency line. Their subgroup DRI is relatively high, and so too are their consensus levels, indicating a reasonable agreement in terms of preferred outcome.¹¹

Importantly, consensus does not connote reason. The pair AB have the strongest agreement on preferences, but are slightly less consistent compared to the pairs AC and BC. Nevertheless, the interaction between consensus and reason can be used when interpreting the results. Take, for example, participant D who has a much lower DRI^{Ind} than the rest of the group. While D shares relatively high consideration agreement, this does not translate into the comparably high levels of disagreement on preferences. This inconsistency effect, combined with the pre-deliberative consensus regarding considerations, and the fact that D has a disproportionately disruptive effect on DRI, all contribute to the interpretation of reason for the wider Bloomfield Track Citizen's Jury case, which is conducted below.

Interpreting Deliberative Reason: The Bloomfield Track Example

The pre- and post-deliberative plots in Figure 7.2 add the remaining pair combinations of the twelve individuals for the Bloomfield Track case to those illustrated in Figure 7.1.¹² The pre-deliberative plot on the left-hand side of the figure shows a similar distribution of all pairs along the right-hand side of the y -axis to Figure 7.1. This is typical of most of the pre-deliberative studies analysed and reported below in Figure 7.3, reflecting a similar pattern to that achieved using randomly generated values (Monte Carlo simulation), but with a distribution to the right of the y -axis, reflecting a non-random level of agreement on considerations.

In the case of the Bloomfield Track, the explanation of this distribution is the domination of the issue by misinformation which, before deliberation, induced partisan reason and polarization (Niemeyer 2011). Before deliberation, there was a strong pre-existing agreement on a range of considerations—such as the ecological preservation of significant rainforest and reef environments surrounding the road, which did not translate into comparable agreement on preferences—across options, ranging from upgrading the crudely built track to a conventional road, to closing it and rehabilitating back to rainforest.

The explanation for this inconsistency involves the effect of partisan framing, which dominated the politics of the issue, creating salience effects that served to fracture underlying consensus. It did so by harnessing narrow but symbolically important

¹¹ Although agreement on outcomes should be interpreted with care, ideally drawing on a detailed understanding of the operating preference meta-consensus (see Niemeyer 2020).

¹² Plotting all combinations of pairs for all twelve participants n , we end up with $n(n-1)/2 = 66$ points.

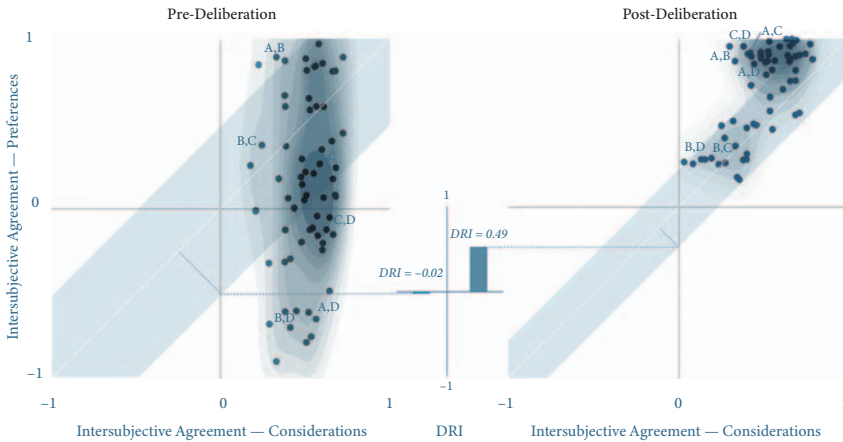


Figure 7.2 IC Plots: The Bloomfield Track (Far North Queensland Citizens' Jury)

arguments in order to mobilize support for the outcomes proposed by partisan actors (Niemeyer 2004). The outcome was poor deliberative reason, reduced integration, and polarized preferences.

The impact of deliberation in remediating these partisan frames is illustrated in the post-deliberative plot for the study on the right-hand side of Figure 7.2 (where DRI improves from -0.02 to 0.49). Notably, transformation involved relatively little opinion change, except for those considerations subjected to misinformation before deliberation. Preference transformation amplified these relatively small opinion changes, with reduced impact of misinformation attenuating salience effects, leading to greater integration of all considerations into reason. The effect dramatically changed the overall outcome, from favouring upgrading to a strong majority in favour of closing the road altogether (Niemeyer 2004).

The nature of this effect demonstrates the limitations of using opinion change alone as a proxy for deliberative reason. Opinion change on considerations can be observed in Figure 7.2 via the relatively small level of horizontal movement of pairs compared to very strong vertical movement (preference transformation) using the individuals A,B,C,D from Figure 7.1.¹³ For this group, much of the change is attributable to D, although the effect was more evenly distributed across the case as a whole.

The result is a post-deliberative preference consensus reflecting a pre-existing consideration consensus, and a much higher DRI, driven by improvement in deliberative reason. Importantly, this effect was not *only* due to improvement in reason by the outliers. The wider group also became attuned to those concerns that had been most amenable to symbolic manipulation (Niemeyer 2004). Rather than dismissing them, they accommodated and integrated them into a shared representation,

¹³ The animation of this transformation can be observed at <https://youtu.be/8UQ4hPvzr2Y>.

thus discursively creating the conditions of trust necessary to combat the impact of misinformation.

Preference consensus was incomplete following deliberation. There remained a small group after deliberation that required more evidence before endorsing road closure. However, a well-developed common representation of the issue post-deliberation meant that differences could be understood and accepted by all as reasonable (Niemeyer 2004).

DRI in Deliberative Democracy Research

The Bloomfield Track example above demonstrates the use of DRI as a tool for analysis of deliberative reason. The method uses similar survey-based inputs to those traditionally used to measure deliberative opinion transformation (e.g. Lindell et al. 2017), where DRI avoids the problem where simple opinion transformation may occur for non-deliberative reasons, such as increased polarization. DRI can be applied to a broad range of research design settings, different scales, and for drawing inferences about reason regarding individuals (in relation to the group), groups, and subgroups. The discussion below outlines some of the possibilities.

Inferential Applications of DRI

The Bloomfield Track case represents a straightforward example of the application of DRI, analysing changes to deliberative reason during mini-public deliberation. DRI is measured at multiple stages during the deliberative process. Ideally, the confidence in findings is improved when analysis is paired with a control group performing the same pre- and post-surveys without deliberating. This is the case for the Uppsala Speaks and AusCJ studies in Figure 7.3, where arrows indicate the direction and magnitude of change (pre- to post-deliberation). DRI does not change significantly for either of these control cases, compared to the significant changes to their deliberative counterparts (as indicated by asterisks).

Comparisons across Cases

The use of DRI for testing improvement in group reason is also demonstrated in Figure 7.3. The cases in the figure are divided into two groups based on their approach to ‘group building’. The vast majority of nineteen deliberative cases experience improvement, but the effect is variable. Much of this variability is accounted for by differences in group building, where the group-building treatment produces

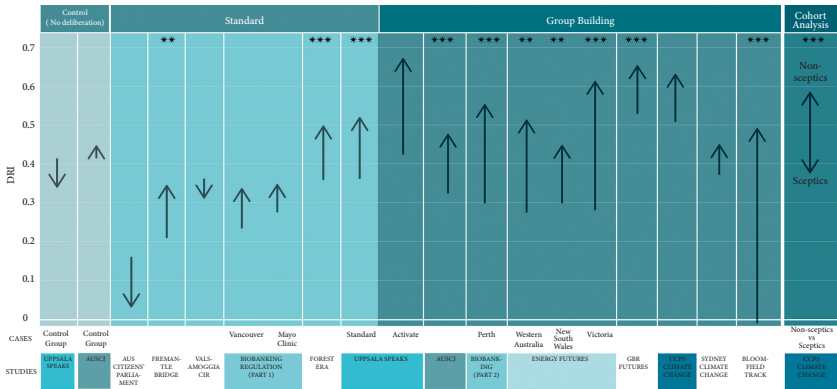


Figure 7.3 Summary DRI Results

Note: One-tailed Wilcoxon Test: $p < 0.05^*$, $p < 0.025^{**}$, $p < 0.01^{***}$.

significantly higher group reason than the standard group. This effect was specifically tested using an experimental design for the Uppsala Speaks, where DRI was capable of discriminating between design effects, and the control, unlike opinion transformation.¹⁴

DRI and Analysis of Causation

DRI can also be used as a variable (dependent or independent) to establish causal relationships in more complex modelling. Structural equation modelling can be used to estimate the mediating effects between factors that characterize participants, the deliberative process itself, and DRI. Using multi-level regression, causal influences on DRI can be explored using characteristics at the individual level (such as demographic, socio-economic or cultural characteristics), as well as case-level features (such as process design, issue features, or even contextual variables such as country or political system) (Niemeyer et al. 2021).

A potential limitation with DRI includes commensurability between studies. This does not apply to the Uppsala Speaks study, which involved an experimental treatment with cases that share the same issue and survey instrument. However, other comparative analysis may involve different instruments, potentially impacting robustness. One way to overcome this limitation is to structure multiple regression analyses using a model that nests individuals within the cases, thus holding the transformation effects constant. This analysis was performed in Niemeyer et al. (2021), which used changes to DRI^{indiv} as a dependent variable to analyse improvements

¹⁴ Significance of DRI change was tested using non-parametric version of the t-test (Wilcoxon test) and one-way ANOVA (Mann-Whitney and Kruskal Wallis). See Niemeyer et al. (2021).

to deliberative reason for nineteen cases of mini-public deliberation reported in Figure 7.3 using individual- and case-level variables, including group building.¹⁵

Cohort DRI Analysis

DRI can also be used comparatively to explore deliberative reason across different cohorts of individuals as separate groups, connected by the same issue and survey instrument. Cohorts (or enclaves) may be delineated within a given target population, or they may be drawn from different populations separated by some boundary such as a national border. These cohorts may each separately exhibit high levels of deliberative reason, but not when combined as a group (e.g. across cultural differences), ‘talking past’ each other in the absence of an intersubjectively shared representation of the issue.

The approach to testing cohorts can be illustrated by the most right-hand case shown in Figure 7.3 which was part of a wider study on Climate Change and deliberation (Hobson and Niemeyer 2011). The study tests differences in DRI between two cohorts, the first involving self-identified climate sceptics ($n = 43$) which were compared to their non-sceptic counterparts ($n = 59$) who were all surveyed prior to deliberation regarding their positions (Hobson and Niemeyer 2013).

The potential sources of differences between sceptics and non-sceptics can be understood in terms of deliberative reason via three possibilities: (1) *reasonable disagreement* where sceptics and non-sceptics metaconsensually share a representation of the matter—disagreeing on conclusions but in a manner consistent with deliberative reason; (2) *enclave deliberation*, where the groups develop different representations such that sceptics and non-sceptics share an internal reason structure within their own discourses, but not across the two cohorts; and (3) *variable deliberative reason*, at least one group exhibits a lower standard of group reason.

Analysis of DRI across the sceptic and non-sceptic cohorts supports the third of the three hypotheses: that there is variable performance in deliberative reason, with the climate sceptics cohort (DRI = 0.39) performing significantly more poorly than their non-sceptic counterparts (DRI = 0.59) ($p < 0.001$). The result, illustrated in Figure 7.4, is consistent with a growing body of evidence that the reason of deep sceptics (see Hobson and Niemeyer 2013) is more likely to involve deliberative pathologies such as motivated reason (Whitmarsh 2011). Overall, deeper varieties of sceptic are less likely to engage in deliberative reason, implying a lower DRI, which was reflected in their behaviour when participating in the deliberative process (Hobson and Niemeyer 2013).

¹⁵ The multi-level modelling and the multi-level moderator analysis support the group-building hypothesis discussed above, as well as identifying features such as use of voting for transmitting outcomes versus reasoned reports on group reason or issue complexity—though these effects are themselves moderated by use of group building.

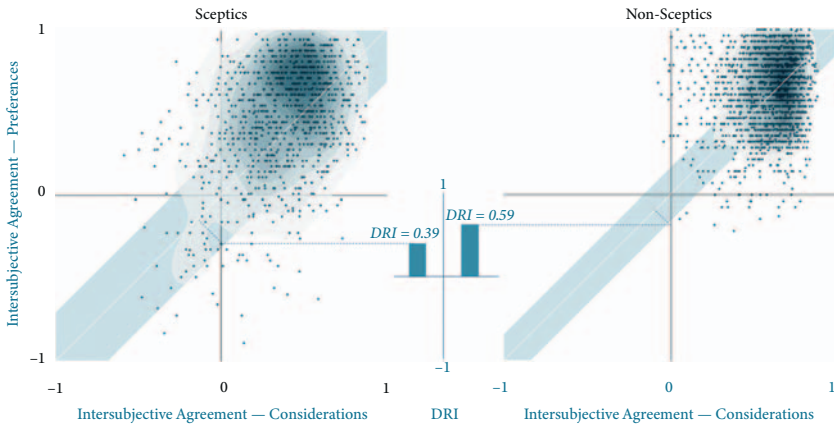


Figure 7.4 DRI Analysis of Climate Sceptics versus Non-Climate Sceptics

Methodological Limitations and Future Developments

Despite DRI's analytical power, there are limitations associated with the method. As discussed earlier, direct comparability of DRI scores is impaired between cases that do not share the same survey instrument—although this is surmountable using specific methods (see above). Poor instrument design may also skew results. For example, a high pre-deliberative score may result from a survey instrument design involving high-level or generalized statements for which it is relatively easy to find common basis of reason, but which do not necessarily reflect the substance of the issue. Alternatively, an artificially low DRI may result from a poorly designed instrument that includes considerations or policy options that are irrelevant, or omits others that are pivotal, such that it does not adequately reflect considerations or options that are relevant to the group (i.e. failure to reflect meta-consensus).

These limitations reinforce the need to develop a survey instrument that is appropriate for a given issue. The survey instrument must not only capture a prevailing meta-consensus, it also needs to do so at the appropriate level of resolution. Careful attention to survey development is particularly important where the issue at hand is complex or where there is relatively little existing public debate from which to sample statements.

Depending on the study and complexity of the topic, implementing DRI can be relatively demanding. Development of the survey instrument ideally involves a series of pilot tests to assess how well it covers the relevant considerations and action options. Analysis and interpretation of results also requires care. As discussed above, the DRI method works best when combined with strong qualitative and interpretive skills.

However, the DRI method produces strong results, and (we argue) provides a more theoretically defensible approach to measuring deliberative outcomes than standard survey methods (Dryzek 2005). Further testing and development will help to simplify

the task of survey design, and potentially reduce the number of items required to capture deliberative reason with confidence. Further reliability testing will also render the method suitable for wider application, using shorter survey formats.

Conclusion

When properly developed and applied, DRI represents a powerful approach for opening the black box of deliberative reason(ing), with the potential to inform our understanding of the processes involved and the implications for deliberative theory and practice. Further development will lead to an updating of the method—providing greater certainty regarding its application, addressing sensitivity to the survey instrument, and permitting easier application in wider settings.

Although DRI involves abstraction of group reason to produce a single index, the method works best when the researcher seeks to understand what is at stake from the perspective of the survey respondent, particularly when developing the survey instrument. The results can also be used interpretively to understand variations occurring within the group, and the various factors driving them to arrive at their conclusions at different deliberative stages. In this sense DRI is an authentically deliberative research instrument, where analysis ideally extends to understanding the dynamics that have produced a given DRI result.

Further Reading

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Listening Quality Index

Mary F. Scudder

Listening is at the heart of meaningfully democratic deliberation (Bickford 1996; Dobson 2014; Scudder 2020). Yet empirical researchers of deliberative democracy have struggled to provide an adequate means of studying listening in practice (Eveland et al. 2020). The Listening Quality Index (LQI) presented in this chapter seeks to fill this gap by providing a theoretically informed, normatively relevant, and empirically feasible measure of listening to be used in the empirical study of small-scale or ‘micro’ deliberation.¹

One key challenge to assessing listening in micro deliberation is observation. Ultimately, listening is an internal act and can only be measured indirectly by looking for observable behaviours that we might expect to correspond with listening. But even ‘silence’, which is readily observable and perhaps a necessary condition for listening, is just as likely to signify withdrawal from discourse as it is meaningful engagement (Bickford 1996, 154). Given these observational challenges, empirical deliberation research has relied primarily on ‘responsiveness’ as a proxy for listening (Steenbergen et al. 2003; Steiner 2012; Button and Garrett 2016). But there are limitations to this approach. By equating listening with responsiveness, existing accounts miss important variations in listening and listening quality. On the other hand, measures that equate listening with its antecedent conditions, or simply the opportunity to hear, run the risk of overestimating the amount of listening taking place.

The LQI addresses these challenges of measuring listening by combining various listening attributes into a lexical scale. Lexical scales use a cumulative logic, where each attribute included in the measure is seen as a necessary condition for advancing up the ordinal scale. Drawing on insights from normative political theory, the LQI identifies relevant listening indicators, for example, recall or responsiveness, and then arrays these indicators along a continuum where each level represents a distinct step towards democratic listening. The LQI improves upon existing measures by allowing researchers to capture more variation in listening while also making quality

¹ Listening is just as important in macro deliberation, or the communication that occurs in broad, informal public spheres (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Scudder 2020). But assessing listening quality in that context requires a different set of strategies (Scudder 2020, 140–143). The LQI is a tool designed specifically for micro deliberation including citizens’ assemblies, mini-publics, parliamentary debates, or experiments, either online or face-to-face. A portion of this chapter draws on Mary F. Scudder, ‘Measuring Democratic Listening: A Listening Quality Index’ which was published in *Political Research Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2022). I am grateful for permission to reuse that material here.

assessments of listening behaviours. For example, the LQI tells us how we should compare a situation where a listener responded to a speaker, but interrupted, and a situation where a listener did not respond, but allowed the speaker to finish speaking. In this chapter, I first outline the existing measures of listening before presenting the LQI and explaining how it can be used to measure the quality of listening in deliberative processes as well as in other communicative interactions.

Operationalizing Listening in Deliberative Democracy

According to the existing empirical literature on deliberative democracy, there are three main ways to measure listening: listening as *exposure*, listening as *responsiveness*, and listening as *deliberative effects*. In this section, I offer an overview of these measures and highlight some of their limitations. As I will show, none of these measures, on their own, can adequately capture all the normatively relevant aspects of listening itself. In other words, while some of these efforts to operationalize listening go too far in equating listening with its *outcomes*, others do not go far enough and conflate listening with simply the opportunity to hear.

Listening as Exposure. One way to operationalize listening is to link it to exposure, or to being in the presence of another who speaks or signs a comment in a language they can understand (Mutz 2006; Neblo et al. 2018). But while exposure to another person's input may be a necessary condition for listening, it is not sufficient. Exposure to an utterance should be seen as an *opportunity* for others to listen rather than as evidence of their actually having done so.

Listening as Responsiveness. Responsiveness, or a verbal acknowledgement of what another says, is a common measure for listening (Steiner 2012, 269; Button and Garrett 2016, 42) and related concepts such as reciprocity, interactivity, and reflection (Pedrini 2014; Himmelroos and Christensen 2014). According to the Discourse Quality Index (DQI) employed by Steiner (2012, 269), the presence of an 'undistorted' response shows that a person listened to another. If a person's response is a non-sequitur or clearly distorts what the other person said, then we would conclude that the person did not listen well. Similarly, the absence of a response is seen as evidence that a particular person ignored the speaker. Notably, the relevant item in the DQI is 'respect (listening)' (Steiner 2012, 269), and in some applications of the DQI, investigators look specifically for a *respectful* response (Pedrini 2014).

While using responsiveness to assess listening has its advantages—especially in allowing researchers to assess listening quality after the fact through transcripts—it also has severe limitations. By equating listening with responsiveness (and respect for that matter), we miss instances of democratically significant listening that—for a variety of valid reasons—may not result in a response (Scudder 2020, 136). For example, a failure to respond might actually indicate careful listening whereby a person was convinced and no longer feels the need to respond or perhaps was offended and does not want to dignify a comment with a response. Alternatively, a listener

might not have the opportunity to respond if others are dominating the conversation. Ultimately, a lack of response is not reliable evidence of failed listening, and so this measure likely underestimates the amount of listening going on in a wide range of deliberative encounters.

Listening as Deliberative Effects. Another way to get a sense of whether listening has occurred is to look for changes in deliberators' behaviours and positions. Was a person persuaded or influenced by what she heard in deliberation (Gerber et al. 2014; Neblo et al. 2018, 131; Beauvais 2021)? Or if they were not persuaded, did listeners better integrate others' perspectives into the justification they gave for their preferences (Niemeyer 2019)? While listening is likely a necessary condition for these effects, we cannot conclude that listening failed simply by their absence.

A less common approach, however, is to look for effects of listening on the *speaker* instead of the listener. Political theorist Susan Bickford (1996) has suggested speaker satisfaction as one possible indicator of listening. As Bickford (1996, 157) explains, "Being listened to" is an experience we have in the world, whether or not we can point to an unambiguous indication of listening.' Incorporating speaker satisfaction into a measure of listening helps us get at important questions of sincerity which are notoriously tricky to assess (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019, 61; Srader 2015). Still, participant perspectives are not always reliable. A person might interpret others' continued disagreement as a sign that they did not listen when, in reality, his or her arguments simply failed to convince. While we ought to avoid relying solely on subjective feelings of being heard when assessing democratic listening in deliberation, the LQI productively combines this measure with other, more intersubjectively valid indicators.

Each of these measures touches on an aspect of listening. What matters for listening, however, is usually the combination of several of these aspects. The LQI combines these and other necessarily incomplete measures of listening into a single scale, giving researchers a more accurate instrument for assessing listening in deliberative forums, such as citizens' assemblies.

Listening Quality Index

The LQI offers a novel approach to measuring listening by combining elements of existing measures into a lexical scale.² The term 'lexical scale' comes from John Rawls's lexical ordering of his three principles of justice (Rawls 1971, 42; Gerring et al. 2021, 783). In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls presents three principles of justice and then orders them according to 'lexical priority'.³ By this, Rawls means that the principles

² For general discussions of lexical scales, see Rawls (1971), Neblo (2009), and Gerring et al. (2021).

³ Rawls actually refers to two principles, with the second principle having two parts, that is, 1, 2a, and 2b. These are the Liberty Principle (1), the Fair Equality of Opportunity Principle (2a), and the Difference Principle (2b). With his lexical ordering of these principles, Rawls is saying that, when pursuing justice, we must not trade basic liberties for more economic opportunity.

of justice are not interchangeable and cannot be summed. As such, satisfying two principles of justice is not always better than satisfying one. Instead, the order matters. Given the principles' lexical ordering, a society that satisfied the first principle of justice but not the others should still be seen as more just than a society that satisfied both the second and third principles, but not the first. According to Rawls, the second and third principles only carry their full normative weight in the presence of the first principle. And we should not consider principles 2 or 3 until principle 1 has been fully satisfied.

As with Rawls's principles of justice, the listening attributes I include in the scale below are ordered in a normative sense, where the lower-level items on the scale are more central to listening than each succeeding item. More specifically, the LQI is constructed using the strategy of lexical scaling outlined by Gerring et al. in their 2021 article.⁴ As the authors explain, lexical scales are ordered deductively, using 'a cumulative logic to aggregate attributes according to their logical entailments, functional dependence, and conceptual centrality' (Gerring et al. 2021, 781). Their ordering, while contestable, 'is a preempirical question' based on our normative understanding of democratic listening (Gerring et al. 2021, 780).

The LQI considers a discussion or deliberative encounter as an opportunity for all present to listen. The unit of analysis is the listener-to-speaker pairing (or directed dyad) at the conversation level.⁵ Unlike with the DQI, where a person is only included in the dataset if they speak, the LQI gives all participants (both speakers and non-speakers) a listening score. The LQI's data structure resembles a complete network analysis of the people present during a deliberation. If there are four people in a group, and each person speaks once, then each person would have three listening scores. In other words, we would code listening for Persons B, C, and D with respect to Person A's contributions to the conversation. The LQI includes the following indicators:

1. *No listening*: The listener reports not listening to the speaker.
2. *Listener reports listening to the speaker*: The listener reports listening to the speaker, but interrupts the speaker to the point of silencing.
3. *Listener does not silence the speaker*: The listener does not interrupt to the point of silencing the speaker. The listener allows the speaker to speak.
4. *Listener recalls speaker's comment*: The listener can recall what the speaker said.
5. *Listener responds to the speaker*: The listener responds to the speaker. The response can be verbal or nonverbal (nodding, shaking head).

⁴ In the social sciences, lexical scales are often associated with 'Guttman-type scales' and 'item response theory' (Guttman 1950). The LQI, however, is a non-Guttman lexical scale. For more on this and the construction of the LQI, see Scudder (2022).

⁵ As Mendonça et al. (2022) argue, we ought to 'expand our understanding of deliberative democracy and make it more attuned to the non-verbal forms of communication' (2). This is especially important when we talk about 'macro' deliberation occurring in the broader public sphere. The LQI, however, is designed for 'micro' deliberation with the aim of helping us better understand the extent to which participants listen to the verbal expressions of others.

6. *Listener gives a substantive response to the speaker:* The listener responds to the speaker in a substantive and relevant way.
7. *Speaker reports feeling heard by the listener:* The speaker reports being satisfied with the sincerity of the listener's listening.

As these listening indicators are lexically ordered, for a person to receive a given score, all prior criteria must be met. Importantly, however, satisfying a higher-order criterion does not imply that the listener has also satisfied all lower-order criteria (Gerring et al. 2021, 800). In other words, it is possible for a person to satisfy criterion 4, but fail to satisfy criterion 3. This person would then receive a score of 2 according to the LQI. A listener only moves up the scale if they satisfy all previous criteria. Thus, in order to receive a score of 6, a listener must satisfy criteria 1–6. For a visual representation, see Figure 8.1. The names of each level of listening (listed in the last column in Figure 8.1) are intended only to describe these theoretically derived levels of listening. In the remainder of this section, I elaborate on the significance of each of the listening indicators included in the LQI. A more detailed account of the instrument can be found in Figure 8.2 in Appendix 8.1 of this chapter.

1. *Listener reports listening to the speaker.* Does the listener report having listened to the speaker? In political science and communication research, a self-report from would-be listeners has been used to capture levels of listening in conversations (Johnson et al. 2019, 2176; Eveland et al. 2020; Rojas 2008). When it comes to the LQI, in order to achieve above a 0, the listener must report having listened. This is a bare minimum. If a participant reports not having listened, we

0.	Listener reports not listening to speaker					<i>No Listening</i>
1.	Listener reports listening to speaker	Listener silences speaker with interruption				<i>Failed Listening</i>
2.	Listener reports listening to speaker	Listener does not silence speaker	Listener does not recall speaker's comment			<i>Passive Listening</i>
3.	Listener reports listening to speaker	Listener does not silence speaker	Listener recalls speaker's comment	Listener does not respond to speaker		<i>Attentive Listening</i>
4.	Listener reports listening to speaker	Listener does not silence speaker	Listener recalls speaker's comment	Listener responds to speaker	Listener does not give a substantive response	<i>Active Listening</i>
5.	Listener reports listening to speaker	Listener does not silence speaker	Listener recalls speaker's comment	Listener responds to speaker	Listener gives a substantive response	Speaker reports not feeling heard by listener <i>Responsive Listening</i>
6.	Listener reports listening to speaker	Listener does not silence speaker	Listener recalls speaker's comment	Listener responds to speaker	Listener gives a substantive response	Speaker reports feeling heard by listener <i>Performative Listening</i>

Figure 8.1 Listening Quality Index

should trust this assessment. This first criterion gives us relevant information with which to interpret other behaviours. For example, a person who reports not listening should not get ‘credit’, so to speak, for allowing another person to speak. In this case, not interrupting is consistent with the listener ‘checking out’ of the conversation. On the other hand, just because someone reports having listened, it does not mean that they have done so successfully or in a meaningful way. Thus, this self-report should be interpreted as an intent to listen. It is a precondition for the other listening attributes to have any meaning whatsoever. Put differently, the absence of this attribute is more telling than its presence. A person reporting not having listened would receive a score of 0.

2. *Listener does not silence the speaker.* Does the listener allow the speaker to speak? Or does the listener interrupt the speaker to the point of silencing them? Some level of interruption is consistent with listening, for example, interrupting to ask a clarifying question. The key element of this indicator relates to whether or not the speaker was interrupted to the point of being silenced. To meet this criterion, either the listener must not interrupt or else their interruption must not derail the speaker.
3. *Listener recalls the speaker’s comment.* Can the listener recall what the speaker said? Simply being able to recall a person’s input does not prove that you listened sincerely and with the intention of fairly considering what you heard (Mueller and Oppenheimer 2014). But recall does help establish that the listening act met a minimum threshold of attentiveness (Sillars et al. 1990, 505). Most often used in measures of listening comprehension, recall is a relatively noisy measure. It captures not only how well someone listened, but also the listener’s memory, intelligence, and his or her prior knowledge of a subject. Successful recall could also be driven by the speaker’s style of speaking. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that even the most engaged and generous listener will not always be able to recall the specifics of what someone said, especially if recall is measured only after deliberation ends.

Importantly, by placing recall after both self-reports of listening and letting someone speak, we are able to capture instances of listening (types 1 and 2) even when it is not ‘successful’ in the sense of effectively transmitting a message. Type 3, or what I describe as ‘attentive listening’, would occur only when the listener reports having listened, does not interrupt the speaker, and can recall a particular message communicated in a listening opportunity.⁶

Existing measures of listening as responsiveness fail to register, let alone differentiate between, any of the categories of listening described so far. None of the preceding attributes would be registered using the DQI because they do not

⁶ The purpose of including an independent recall measure in the LQI is to give listeners the opportunity to demonstrate listening in the absence of a response. Still, given the nature of recall and how the measure works (being asked only after deliberation is over and being susceptible to measurement error because of this delay), it makes sense to allow a substantive response (criterion 5), when present, to satisfy the third criterion.

produce a speech act to be assessed. By incorporating these first three criteria into the measure, we are able to look for instances of more passive listening on the part of those who either do not want to speak up or do not have the opportunity to do so.

4. *Listener responds to the speaker.* Does the listener provide any sort of response to the speaker? This next level of the LQI is achieved when the listener provides at least a simple response to the speaker. This category includes non-verbal responses such as a nod or shake of the head, or a simple question like ‘Can you repeat that?’ This kind of response should only be considered as evidence of listening if all previous criteria have been satisfied. That is to say, for a simple response to provide an indication of someone having listened, the listener must also report having listened, let the other person speak, and be able to recall what was said.
5. *Listener gives a substantive response to the speaker.* Does the listener respond substantively to the speaker?⁷ A substantive response would be any form of acknowledgement of *what* the speaker has said. A simple ‘okay’ would not qualify. This response can be in the form of a question, including a substantive or rhetorical question, including ‘what did you mean by X?’ To satisfy this indicator, the listener might ask the speaker to expand on what he said or to explain how it relates to something else.

This item of the LQI corresponds most closely to the DQI’s measure of ‘respect (listening)’ and is satisfied when the listener does not ignore a speaker’s comment. For the LQI, however, a substantive response need not communicate respect for what was heard (Pedrini 2014; Pedrini et al. 2013). Even a dismissive response (e.g. ‘I’m not going to listen to this’) indicates some level of listening, and thus would satisfy this condition.

Importantly, however, to qualify as a true *response*, it must relate to what the other person has said. The particularities of what the speaker said must be taken into account in the response. A non-sequitur, whereby someone changes the subject would not satisfy this criterion, no matter how substantive it was. As with the DQI, this will be judged by the investigator or other third-party coders.

6. *Speaker reports being heard by the listener.* Does the speaker report feeling heard by the listener? Most of us have a sense of when someone is really paying attention to us versus merely going through the motions or coming up with a response (Bickford 1996, 157). In a small group experimental setting, this would entail asking individuals to report the extent to which they felt heard *by* particular others. Speakers’ perceptions are a valuable

⁷ Note, a person who gives a substantive response (criterion 5) should also be seen as having satisfied the simple response indicator (criterion 4). This has implications for data collection and analysis: even if listeners do not nod their head or ask a speaker to repeat herself, if they respond in a *substantive* way then we would take them to have satisfied both criteria 4 and 5.

indicator of listening as they help get at issues of sincerity and authenticity that have long plagued empirical approaches to the study of deliberation (Ercan with Bächtiger 2019, 102).

Given the placement of this indicator in the lexical scale, we would only consider a speaker's perception of being heard if the other components of listening are also satisfied. In other words, the speaker's satisfaction would enhance the overall listening score, but the absence would not detract from other indicators of listening, including a substantive response. Drawing on the 'listening act theory' I present elsewhere (Scudder 2020, 87–105), I describe this level as 'performative listening'. Here, we judge the listening to have met the performative threshold needed to achieve a meaningful level of intersubjectivity or engagement with others. Importantly, by performative listening, I do not mean listening that is staged or affected. Instead, I mean listening that is done for listening's sake rather than for strategic reasons.⁸

As mentioned above, questions of sincerity are notoriously difficult to get at empirically. Still, this category offers the most evidence that sincere listening has occurred: the listener reports having listened, the third-party coders find independent evidence of the listener having listened, and the speaker reports feeling heard. In other words, all signs point to a meaningful level of listening having been achieved.

Employing as it does the strategy of lexical scaling, the LQI solves the problem of aggregation, allowing us to make quality comparisons between various observed behaviours. For example, using the LQI, we are able to compare a level 2 case wherein a person did not interrupt, but was unable to recall what a speaker said, and a level 1 case where a person replied, but without first letting a speaker finish her thought.

The data required for the LQI is generated both during and after the deliberative encounter, using participant surveys or interviews and investigator observations. Specifically, observations for indicators 1 (listener self-report), 3 (recall), and 6 (speaker self-report) are collected through participant surveys conducted as soon as possible after the deliberation concludes. Indicators 2 (interruption), 4 (simple response), and 5 (substantive response) are measured by the investigator or a third-party coder who observes the deliberation. For these investigator-coded indicators, the deliberation needs to be either observed in real time or else recorded for post-deliberation evaluation.

Because the LQI relies on participant reports in addition to investigator observations, it cannot be applied easily to cases of deliberation after the fact. The LQI is designed for use in real time and does not allow for researchers to assess listening solely on the use of transcripts or records of previously occurring deliberation. While

⁸ For more on this usage of 'performative', see Austin (1962), Habermas (1984), and Srader (2015).

the inclusion of real-time reports from participants improves the instrument, it also makes it less widely applicable.

In sum, by combining various indicators of listening, the LQI offers a more complete and normatively relevant measure of listening in democratic deliberation. And as I will explain below, this measure is well suited for identifying both the antecedents and effects of quality listening.

The LQI in Practice

Listening carries both normative and practical significance for deliberation. As such, the LQI can help us answer important questions, especially as they pertain to micro or small-scale deliberation. For example, deliberative democracy research reveals that participation in deliberative forums ‘facilitates political learning, promotes individual opinion change and increases subjective political efficacy’ (Suiter et al. 2016, 199). Future research using the LQI might examine whether these effects are mediated by listening quality.

For example, recent work aiming to understand opinion change amongst participants in the Irish *We the Citizens* deliberative experiment found that the ‘deliberative citizen’, or the ‘citizen most likely to shift opinion following deliberation, is under 65, with median levels of knowledge’ (Suiter et al. 2016, 198). For Suiter et al. (2016) participation, as such, was the key experimental treatment, though they also looked at group composition, for example, how heterogeneous a group was. Importantly, however, in studying the dynamics of opinion change, the investigators did not account for differing levels of participation amongst citizens. Building on this research, future work using the LQI could examine whether and how the listening capacities of citizens’ assembly participants impact the outcomes of deliberation. Do more ‘deliberative citizens’ listen more or better than their less deliberative counterparts? If we found, for example, that those most likely to change their opinion also tended to be better listeners, then we would know where to focus our efforts to improve citizens’ deliberative capacity.

Alternatively, the LQI could help us assess whether listening is impacted by the particular issue or topic being discussed. For example, does listening quality increase when citizens are discussing less salient issues, compared to periods when they are discussing more hot-button issues? How does this potential variation in listening affect changes in opinion? Besides citizens’ assemblies, the LQI can also be used to better understand the dynamics of deliberative polling (Fishkin 2018) and the deliberative town halls designed by Neblo et al. (2018).

In these contexts and more, a cumulative LQI score can be used as either a dependent or independent variable. Using an LQI score as a dependent variable, we can investigate the factors that bear on listening quality. How do different deliberative

formats (e.g. moderated or not, small groups, big groups, homogenous or heterogeneous groups, online or face-to-face) impact listening quality? We can also study whether some groups of people listen more or better than others, and whether actor-specific factors, like gender or age, affect listening quality. Are some people more likely to be listened to than others (Beauvais 2021)? In other words, the LQI can be used to identify the factors that facilitate or disrupt democratic listening.

As an independent variable, on the other hand, an LQI score can help uncover the effects of high- or low-quality listening in either experimental settings or deliberative forums like the Irish citizens' assembly discussed above. Does listening or being listened to affect a person's respect for her fellow citizens or representatives? Does the quality of listening in a decision-making process increase citizens' perceptions of the legitimacy of the policy outcome? In sum, researchers can use participants' composite LQI scores to better capture both the antecedents and outcomes associated with listening quality.

Furthermore, the LQI's flexibility allows for disaggregation. Some research questions might not require the entire index or aggregate score. In such cases, elements of this index, or particular listening indicators, could be peeled off to study particular relationships between listening behaviours and deliberative outcomes. For example, we might want to study whether certain deliberative conditions, moderated interactions for example, are more conducive to avoiding interruptions or generating a response. The LQI allows for some elements to be used in the absence of others when 'listening quality' as a whole is not the particular subject of interest.

Conclusion

The LQI offers a new way to measure and assess the quality of listening amongst participants deliberating in small-scale deliberative venues or mini-publics. Improving on existing measures of listening in micro deliberation, the LQI helps us capture listening quality beyond mere exposure but without fully collapsing the categories of listening and responsiveness. As such, the LQI conceives of listening as a distinct practice of deliberation and helps to push empirical deliberative democracy research beyond a politics of voice. That said, LQI is still a relatively voice-centric measure of listening, insofar as it focuses on listening *to* speech acts. In other words, in its current form, the LQI cannot easily capture listening to non-verbal or embodied expression, nor to what is *not* said (Mendonça et al. 2022).

While the LQI can help improve our understanding of listening within discrete moments of deliberation, deliberative democracy is clearly broader than the mini-publics and small-scale deliberation discussed here (Chambers 2009; Hendriks 2006; Scudder 2021). Deliberation also occurs on a systems level (Mansbridge et al. 2012). And the democratic quality of this system-wide deliberation is dependent on the quality of listening taking place amongst and between citizens and their representatives (Scudder 2020). As such, we must also consider how to measure and assess

the listening that occurs (or not) within and across broad and unstructured public spheres. As Bächtiger and Parkinson (2019) suggest, the tools we use to assess micro deliberation are not always applicable to macro deliberation. Still, the LQI provides a useful starting point to think about system-wide listening: teaching us that quality listening should not be confused with mere *exposure* to what someone says, while also reminding us that meaningful listening can occur in the absence of obvious policy effects.

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Appendix 8.1

1. Listener Self-Report (Subject Survey)	2. Interruption (Coder Report)	3. Recall (Subject Survey)	4. Simple Response (Coder Report)	5. Substantive Response (Coder Report)	6. Speaker Self-Report (Subject Survey)
During the preceding discussion, how often did you (Person A) listen carefully to what Person X had to say?	Did the subject (Person A) ever interrupt Person X?	List as many of Person X's contributions to the conversation as you (Person A) can recall.	Did the subject (Person A) show any sign of response to Person X.	Did the subject (Person A) offer a substantive response to Person X?	How often did you (Person X) feel that Person A considered carefully what you had to say?
LQI Score	LQI Score	LQI Score	LQI Score	LQI Score	LQI Score
(1) Never, (2) Rarely 0	(1) yes, and Person X was effectively silenced by interruption 1	(1) Subject cannot accurately recall any of Person X's contributions to the conversation. 2	(1) no 3	(1) no 4	(1)Never, (2)Rarely 5
(3) Occasionally, (4) Often (5) Almost Always ≥ 1*	(2) yes, but Person X was not silenced (e.g. it was a simple clarifying question and the speaker was able to complete the utterance). (3) no ≥ 2	(2) Subject accurately recalls at least one of Person X's contribution to the conversation. ≥ 3	(2) yes ≥ 4	(2) yes ≥ 5	(3) Occasionally, (4) Often, (5) Almost Always 6

* This score indicates that the subject (Person A) has satisfied the criteria for this level. As such, this participant's cumulative LQI score would be *at least* 1. The coders would only move on to assess the participant on the second indicator (interruption) if he/she answered either (3), (4), or (5) for this first question. The same logic applies throughout the Table. A participant whose response to the third question (recall) is coded as two would receive an aggregate LQI score of at least three, and only these subjects would move on to be assessed on the 'simple response' indicator.

Figure 8.2 LQI Measurement Instrument

Macro-level Assessment of Deliberative Quality

Dannica Fleuß

Deliberative theory stipulates that deliberative democracy has a positive impact on citizens' political attitudes and competencies and may help to bridge deep disagreements and inner-societal divides (Dryzek et al. 2019; Ercan 2017; Mutz 2006). But are citizens in 'more deliberative' democracies actually more engaged, open-minded, and satisfied with political institutions and outputs? Are more deliberative democracies really better equipped to counteract populist challenges? And what concrete institutional reforms can facilitate and promote democracies' deliberativeness? Questions like these call for systematic comparative analyses of democratic systems' deliberativeness (henceforth: 'macro-deliberativeness'). Yet established measurements of democratic quality cannot serve as a basis for comparative political scientists to answer these timely questions: they usually depart from distinctly liberal conceptualizations of democratic quality that give little attention to the quality of political communication within and across different social and political spheres.

This chapter introduces the method of macro-level assessment, which is developed to conduct such analyses and determine the degree to which a democracy fulfils the normative requirements of deliberative theory. So far, the most advanced attempt at providing an index of nation-states' deliberative quality is provided by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) (Coppedge et al. 2020a, 2020b). Despite its various strengths, however, this measurement approach cannot live up to its promise to provide a theoretically sound and methodologically robust measurement. V-Dem bases its assessment on criteria that are frequently used to evaluate deliberative procedures in individual forums (e.g. Steenbergen et al. 2003). The core approach involves experts evaluating deliberation 'at all levels of society' based on their level of justification, common-good orientation, respectfulness, and inclusiveness (for a more detailed account, see Fleuß and Helbig 2021, 315). Yet a closer look at this approach reveals that a measurement of macro-deliberativeness must not simply 'transfer

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criteria that were applicable at the micro/meso level to a larger scale, but should account for the specifics of deliberativeness at a systemic level in conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement (Fleuß et al. 2018, 12; see also Fleuß and Helbig 2021).

Any attempt to conduct a valid measurement of macro-deliberativeness that meets the standards of both deliberative theory and comparative political science must face a range of conceptual, methodological, and research-pragmatic challenges. This chapter demonstrates that measuring macro-deliberativeness is demanding, but that these challenges can be met by joining two strands of research, that is, the theoretical underpinnings of systemic deliberative theory and the procedural and methodological guidelines of democracy measurements. The first section of this chapter outlines step-by-step guidelines for conceptualizing, operationalizing, measuring, and aggregating macro-deliberativeness. Although until now there has been no one-size-fits-all solution for measuring macro-deliberativeness (Dryzek 2009, 1390; Fleuß et al. 2018), scholars can make good use of existing methodological tools in deliberative democracy. Against this background, the second section illustrates by means of exemplary applications how researchers can utilize and combine existing methodological tools to measure macro-deliberativeness. The chapter concludes with recommendations for applying this ‘methodological toolkit’ to comparative studies seeking to assess the deliberativeness of different democracies.

Three Phases of Measuring Macro-Deliberativeness

The process of measuring democratic quality is usually subdivided into three phases that pose distinct methodological and research-pragmatic challenges. Comparative politics scholars have developed strategies for meeting these challenges in measuring democratic quality (Munck and Verkuilen 2002; see also Møller and Skaaning 2012; Pickel et al. 2015). The following paragraphs apply these insights and provide strategies for conceptualizing (Phase 1) and operationalizing macro-deliberativeness (Phase 2) as well as for providing an aggregate measure or ‘score’ that represents a democratic system’s overall deliberative quality (Phase 3).

Phase 1: Conceptualization

All measurements of democracy start out from a conceptualization that specifies evaluation criteria. Unsurprisingly, the concepts ‘democracy’ and ‘democratic quality’ are notoriously subject to disagreement, but conceptualizations applied in established measurements share one feature: they almost exclusively refer to liberal understandings of democracy. Accordingly, they operationalize democratic quality mainly by indicators measuring the quality of elections, their competitiveness, as well

as (constitutionalized) checks and balances and individual liberties (e.g. Bühlmann et al. 2012, 522).

Deliberative understandings of democratic quality, meanwhile, highlight the value of reasoned, inclusive, respectful, coercion-free communicative exchanges that take place in public and empowered spaces. Collectively binding decisions—democratic laws and policies—must be legitimated ‘bottom-up’, that is, by deliberation in the public sphere and broader civil society. Therefore, a high-quality democracy needs deliberation in different ‘sites’ or ‘spaces’ of political-societal systems *and* ‘flows in communication’ or transmission between public and empowered spaces (see Dryzek and Niemeyer 2010, 11; Habermas 1996). Systemic deliberative theorists conceptualize macro-deliberativeness as an ‘emergent property’ that ‘cannot be reduced to a mere aggregation of other qualities of the political system’—that is, to an accumulation of individual procedures’ deliberativeness (Fleuß et al. 2018, 12; Mansbridge et al. 2012, 1).

A core challenge of measuring macro-deliberativeness is developing a sufficiently precise conceptual account of this ‘fluid’ or ‘emergent’ phenomenon. Scholars must identify the concepts’ core dimensions (their ‘attributes’), define their characteristics and outline their relationships (Pickel et al. 2015, 504). The most practical way to represent this conceptual logic is to construct a ‘concept tree’. Concept trees organize attributes of complex concepts vertically by level of abstraction; the elements at the lowest level of abstraction are metaphorically termed ‘leaves.’¹ These concept trees must avoid being too minimalist or too maximalist: Researchers should aim at including *all* attributes necessary to differentiate ‘macro-deliberativeness’ from related concepts—and they should include *only* attributes necessary to discriminate amongst cases studied (Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 9, 21). The concept tree for macro-deliberativeness that identifies and organizes the concepts’ attributes and sub-attributes should reflect two fundamental premises of systemic deliberative theories: Deliberative democracies are characterized by (a) *deliberation* in different systemic sites, and (b) communicative exchanges—*transmissions*—between these sites (see Figure 9.1).

Undoubtedly, this account still leaves some room for interpretation: Researchers must (a) further determine what evaluation standards should be applied to evaluate deliberation in individual deliberative sites (that is, what ‘meso-deliberativeness’ means). For the sake of simplicity, we can organize the existing conceptual diversity by distinguishing two ideal types. Both types mainly differ in how broadly they conceptualize ‘deliberation’: While narrow type I conceptualizations refer to strictly rational, consensus-oriented reason-giving, more expansive type II conceptualizations incorporate ‘alternative forms of communication’ (Bächtiger et al. 2010, 33–34). Assessing deliberation at a systemic level necessarily involves studying heterogeneous

¹ In constructing this concept tree, scholars should respect two ‘basic rules of conceptual logic’: To avoid *conflation*, attributes must be organized according to their level of abstraction and assorted to the ‘proper branch of the concept tree’. To avoid *redundancy*, attributes at the same level of abstraction should not ‘overlap’ but refer to ‘mutually exclusive aspects’ (Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 13).

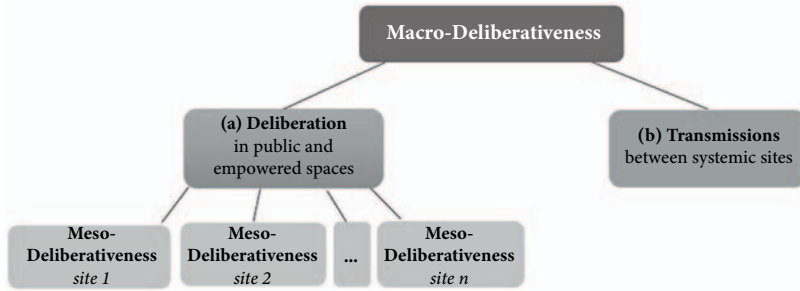


Figure 9.1 Concept Tree

Source: Author's own graph.

deliberative procedures in diverse sites. Against this backdrop, scholars have recommended including 'different styles or forms of reason-giving' in systemic assessments (Esau et al. 2020, 90). There may be no definite recommendation as to include *specific* alternative forms of communication such as rhetoric communication or narratives. Yet, particularly when researchers wish to include an assessment of political communications in informal settings, it has proven useful to consider emotional expressions and narratives as potential means of deliberation (see Esau et al. 2020).

As a conceptual basis for measuring deliberativeness at a systemic level, researchers should provide a 'map' of the deliberative sites to be assessed. Minimally, this map should include a differentiation between *empowered spaces*, such as parliaments or national courts that are home to deliberation with the capacity to make collectively binding decisions, and *public spaces* such as the mass media or civil society organizations that are the locus of opinion-formation processes. As deliberative sites in public and empowered spaces fulfil distinct functions for democratic processes, researchers should differentiate them in their conceptual framework and assess them separately (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019).

This 'map' of deliberative sites is also crucial for the conceptualization (and the consecutive measurement and aggregation) of the second attribute of the concept tree: to specify (b) 'transmissions', researchers need to be clear about what 'communicative flows' between which sites they consider relevant for democracies' macro-deliberativeness. At a fairly abstract level, transmissions between deliberative sites can be characterized as a triple relationship: Arguments or discourses are transmitted from public to empowered sites of a democratic system (or vice versa). Although transmissions cannot be conceptualized as 'a one way-process' (see Neblo 2005, 177–178), deliberative democrats tend to put prime value on 'bottom-up' transmissions that proliferate arguments and discourses from deliberations in the public to deliberations in the empowered space (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2010, 11).

Phase 2: Operationalization and Measurement

In Phase 2, researchers depart from the 'attributes at the lowest level of abstraction' which they identified by constructing the concept tree (Munck and

Verkuilen 2002, 15). '[M]easurement processes build numerical bridges between abstract concepts and empirical realities' (Schedler 2012, 22; Pickel et al. 2015, 506). Consequently, the core task here is to assort the (sub-)attributes of macro-deliberativeness which refer to empirically observable phenomena and facilitate a *valid, reliable, and replicable* measurement.

To be valid, indicators must correctly and comprehensively measure the abstract concept. Multiple indicators reduce measurement error and accommodate for the fact that there may be multiple manifestations of one conceptual attribute in empirical reality (Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 15–16). The process of measuring complex concepts 'requires the specification of the rules by which numerals are assigned to objects'. Hence, the validity of indicators also depends on the measurement level (Pickel et al. 2015, 507). While there are no 'a priori grounds' for choosing a particular measurement level, researchers should avoid choosing scale levels that introduce excessively fine-grained or coarse-grained distinctions (Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 17). There is, however, no hard and fast rule to choosing either appropriate indicators or measurement levels. Rather, these steps of developing a measurement approach require 'both theoretical justification and empirical testing' (Fleuß and Helbig 2021, 310).

Due to the talk-centric nature of deliberative understandings of democratic quality, the measurement of the two attributes (a) deliberation in individual sites and (b) transmissions (see Figure 9.1) must refer to textual data from political communications in public and empowered spaces. Consequently, a measurement of macro-deliberativeness cannot rely on 'hard data' but must at least be partly based on 'subjective' data, that is (manual) coding procedures. Here, it is crucial that the guidelines for coders are precise and unambiguous (such that different coders interpret them in the same way and the measurement's *reliability* is ensured) and transparently documented (to ensure replicability) (Pickel et al. 2015, 507).

Phase 3: Aggregation

Measuring democracies' deliberativeness requires not only measurement approaches for (a) deliberation in individual sites and (b) transmission, but also demands a strategy for aggregating individual (sub-)attributes to a score that represents democracies' macro-deliberativeness. In a nutshell, in Phase 3 researchers must 'reverse the process of disaggregation that was carried out during the conceptualization [and operationalization] phase'. The fundamental benchmark that researchers must meet when aggregating attributes of complex concepts is 'concept-measurement consistency' (Goertz 2006). To determine an aggregation strategy, researchers must therefore be clear about the logical relationships between the concepts' attributes and sub-attributes (as represented in the concept tree). Aggregation procedures usually involve multiple rules: They start out with rules for aggregating the numerical values

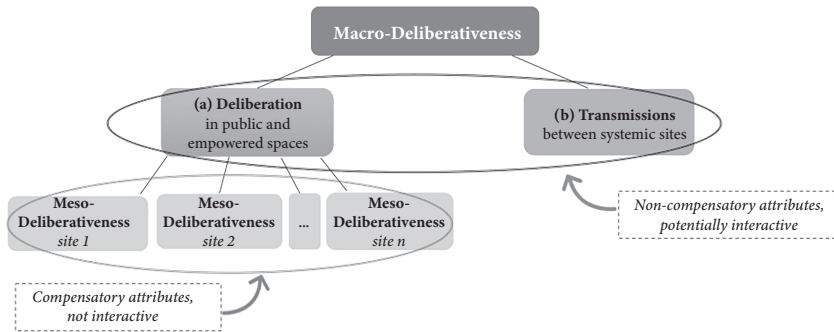


Figure 9.2 Relationships between Attributes

Source: Author's own graph.

assigned to the leaves of the concept tree and move step by step to higher levels of abstraction.²

I focus on two questions to illustrate the choices that researchers have to make here in assessing macro-deliberativeness (see Figure 9.2): First, are its attributes and/or sub-attributes *necessary conditions* for democracies' macro-deliberativeness? Second, do they interact with each other, that is, is the score of one (sub-)attribute impacted or conditioned by the score of another (sub-)attribute (see Møller and Skaaning 2012, 236)?

The conceptualization of macro-deliberativeness outlined above leaves room for interpretation. Yet this basic conceptual account determines core parameters of suitable aggregation strategies (see Figure 9.2): First, systemic theories of deliberation assume a 'division of labour' between different deliberative sites and thereby presuppose that deliberations can, at least to some extent, compensate for the lack thereof in other sites (Fleuß et al. 2018, 18). Second, deliberative democracies require deliberation in individual sites *and* transmissions between sites (i.e. both attributes are *necessary* and *non-compensatory*). To further specify suitable aggregation strategies, potential interactive effects between (sub-)attributes must be considered. While there is no indication to consider the scores for meso-deliberativeness in individual systemic sites as interactive, it makes good sense to think about the scores for (a) deliberation in individual sites and (b) transmissions as mutually conditioned. The quantity and quality of deliberation in individual sites in the deliberative system may impact the extent to which discourses are transmitted across other sites. For

² At a foundational level, this mathematical procedure includes two core components: operations and weights. Weights must reflect the attributes' relative importance for 'democratic quality'. Operations mirror the attributes' relationship, for example, if attributes are considered as necessary or substitutable elements of a concept. While the choice of aggregation procedures should be theory-driven, it also requires empirical testing and robustness checks (Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 8, 25; Møller and Skaaning 2012; see also Fleuß and Helbig 2021, 321). To ensure the measurements' replicability, the aggregation rule must be documented and published (Pickel et al. 2015, 500).

Table 9.1 Aggregation Rules

Aggregation rule	<i>Attribute necessary or compensatory?</i>	<i>Interactive effects between attributes?</i>
Multiplication	Necessary	Interactive
Minimum rule	Necessary	Noninteractive
Geometric mean	(Partially) compensatory	Interactive
Arithmetic mean or addition	(Partially) compensatory	Noninteractive
Maximum rule	Compensatory	Noninteractive

Source: Møller and Skaaning (2012, 236).

example, numerous and intense debates in public spaces make it more likely to solicit reactions and engagement from actors in the empowered space. Likewise, ‘communicative flows’ between different deliberative forums are likely to inspire more frequent, intense and constructive debates in individual forums. However, the interactivity between attributes is not a purely theoretical-conceptual matter, but requires empirical testing to ‘gain a sense of the robustness of aggregate data’ (Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 25).

These considerations suggest appropriate aggregation strategies for assessments of macro-deliberativeness (see Table 9.1): While the scores for meso-deliberativeness in different systemic sites can be aggregated with an additive rule, the stipulated relationship between the attributes (a) deliberation in individual sites and (b) transmissions calls for a multiplicative procedure.

A Methodological Toolkit for Measuring Macro-Deliberativeness

There is no one-size-fits-all solution for measuring macro-deliberativeness (Dryzek 2009, 1390; Fleuß et al. 2018). Yet scholars can use existing methodological tools if they apply and combine them in a manner that reflects both the normative benchmarks of deliberative theory and the methodological requirements of democracy measurements. In this section, I shall demonstrate how such tools can provide the means for assessing the core attributes (a) and (b) identified in the conceptualization phase (see Figure 9.1). By applying and combining them in accordance with the conceptual and methodological recommendations outlined above, researchers can then assess democracies’ macro-deliberativeness (see Figure 9.2). Due to the talk-centric nature of deliberative democracy, the unifying feature of these tools is that they rely on methods for analysing political communication, specifically quantitative text analysis methods.

Instruments for Measuring Meso-Deliberativeness in Individual Sites

Deliberative democracy scholarship has developed a broad variety of well-tested approaches for measuring meso-deliberativeness (for an overview of direct and indirect measures, see [Black et al. 2010](#)). For illustrative purposes, this section focuses on guidelines for applying the Discourse Quality Index (DQI) ([Steenbergen et al. 2003](#)), which is often considered as the ‘best practice example’ for meso-level assessments (see [Fleuß et al. 2018](#), 11; see also Bächtiger, Gerber, and Fournier-Tombs, Chapter 6 in this volume). The DQI presents a theory-driven operationalization of meso-deliberativeness and corresponding coding instructions for evaluating political communication. Its original coding categories reflect the evaluation criteria as suggested by type I-concepts. They refer to speakers’ free and uncoerced participation, the level and content of justification, and the respectfulness and constructiveness of their contributions ([Steenbergen et al. 2003](#), 27–30).

The main challenge of using established measures of meso-deliberativeness in assessments at the systems level results from the fact that they must include heterogeneous deliberative sites. The DQI’s measurement was originally developed to study parliamentary deliberation, that is, communication in highly formalized and regulated settings in the empowered space. Researchers who aim at a measurement of macro-deliberativeness must assess debates in empowered *and* public spaces. To analyse debates in diverse systemic sites, it can be necessary to adjust coding procedures and instructions (also see [Esau et al. 2020](#)).

The following exemplary application of the DQI to German debates on abortion policies (1991–1993) is based on two data sources: First, on data generated in a research project that has been explicitly devoted to applying the DQI to German empowered space debates (see [Bächtiger et al. 2005, 2008](#); [Steiner et al. 2004](#)). Second, the meso-deliberativeness of public space debates has been evaluated based on an analogous assessment of German mass media contributions; more specifically, randomly selected articles published between January 1991 and December 1993 in four leading national newspapers covering a broad political spectrum (for an overview of the results, see [Figure 9.3](#) and [Table 9.2](#)).³

A number of issues that are particularly relevant for macro-level assessments became visible in this exemplary analysis. For example, for the analysis of newspaper articles it was necessary to adjust the unit of analysis (in the analysis of parliamentary debates: individual speeches) as there is no ‘natural’ way to subdivide articles into individual ‘speeches’. Further, details of the coding instructions used to evaluate debates’ respectfulness (particularly the DQI-indicator ‘respect towards demands’

³ The text corpus for the analysis of public space debates’ meso-deliberativeness is identical to the corpus used in the transmission analysis (see note 6). I would like to thank André Bächtiger for providing me with the disaggregated data for empowered space debates. Here, the units of analysis are individual speeches (for both parliamentary debates N = 193; heckles excluded).

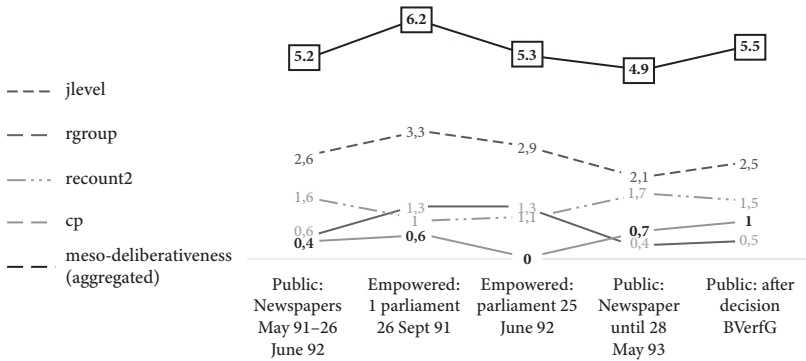


Figure 9.3 Meso-Deliberativeness Measures in Different Deliberative Sites
 Source: Author’s own graph.

Table 9.2 Measurement of Meso-Deliberativeness in Public and Empowered Spaces

Indicator	jlevel	rgroup	recount2	cp	Meso-Deliberativeness
<i>Public Space (mass media debates)</i>					
May 91–26 June 92	2.6	0.6	1.6	0.4	5.2
–28 May 93	2.1	0.4	1.7	0.7	4.9
–Dec 93	2.5	0.5	1.5	1	5.5
<i>Empowered Space (parliamentary debates)</i>					
26 Sept 91	3.3	1.3	1	0.6	6.2
25 June 92	2.9	1.3	1.1	0	5.3

Source: Author’s own graph.

which was originally used to evaluate parliamentary debates that explicitly aim at deciding upon the ‘demands’ put forward by different speakers) were not applicable. Given the controversial topic, the public space debates displayed surprisingly high levels of justification and high meso-deliberativeness scores (see Figure 9.3).⁴

However, this is likely to also result from the *kind* of public sphere debates analysed: the text corpus was compiled from elite national newspapers. German (elite) newspapers privilege ‘[e]motionally detached, disembodied argumentation’ while considering ‘personal narratives [highly inappropriate]’ (Ferree et al. 2002, 273). While this makes elite newspaper debates likely to conform with the original DQI’s measurement standards (Steenbergen et al. 2003), this need not be conducive to macro-deliberativeness, but rather may also have exclusionary effects: Especially ‘personal narratives’ in mass media debates can be ‘a way of helping

⁴ In line with Steenbergen et al.’s (2003) original approach, the meso-deliberativeness scores here have been computed with the help of an additive aggregation rule (i.e. meso-deliberativeness = jlevel + rgroup + recount2 + cp). For alternative strategies and amendments, see Bächtiger et al., Chapter 6 in this volume.

citizens connect their own experiences with a policy debate and as a way of overcoming discourse that has become unreal through too much abstract argumentation’ (Ferree et al. 2002, 273).

Particularly when informal conversations or ‘everyday political talk’ are included in the assessment, researchers may consider including additional indicators for alternative forms of communication that capture, for example ‘whether a comment reported a personal experience [...] expressed in narrative form’ or ‘contained positive [or negative] emotions’ (Esau et al. 2020, 102).⁵ Depending on the quantity of communications they want to include in their assessment of macro-deliberativeness, researchers should consider the potentials of conducting the analysis of meso-deliberativeness with the help of machine learning tools (e.g. Fournier-Tombs and Di Marzo Serugendo 2019).

Instruments for Measuring Transmissions

To assess transmission, researchers must essentially measure the quantity of arguments or discourses proliferated across systemic sites. This measure should be complemented by an analysis that tracks ‘where the transmitted elements come from and where they are transmitted to’ (Fleuß et al. 2018, 18). While measurements of meso-deliberativeness such as the DQI refer to the *procedural* qualities of political communication (Steenbergen et al. 2003, 43), measuring transmissions requires scholars to explore the *content* of political communications in diverse systemic sites. Case studies frequently apply interpretive research methods to determine such content and apply methods such as process tracing (see Collier 2011; see also Pickering, Chapter 20 in this volume) to identify the mechanisms and conditions relevant to transmission (Ercan et al. 2017; Hendriks et al. 2007; see Papadopoulos 2012).

The basic methodological strategy for measuring transmissions in democratic systems can be summarized in four basic steps (see also Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019, chapter 7; Beste 2016; Parkinson et al. 2020):

- Step 1: *Content exploration*—Researchers should rely on an inductive approach to identifying the ‘discursive elements’ (arguments or topics) (Ercan et al. 2017) in public and empowered spaces.
- Step 2: *Identification of main discourses*—They should then combine this content exploration with clustering techniques that are either theory-driven or guided by secondary (qualitative) research. Clustering techniques

⁵ The heterogeneity of deliberations in various sites may also impact index-building procedures such that context-sensitive aggregation strategies for calculating meso-deliberativeness scores may be required (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019, 62, 139).

group discursive elements and identify the fundamental overarching ‘discourses’ (also see Niemeyer 2011, 107–108).

- Step 3: *Analysis of spread of discourses*—In the next step, the spread of these discourses across different sites of democratic systems should be tracked to answer the question: *where* did particular discourses occur *at what point in time*?
- Step 4: *Transmission score*—Finally, to provide a measure of communicative flows in a democratic system, researchers should calculate an aggregate score representing the quantity of transmissions between the public and empowered space.

For the German abortion debate introduced above, manual coders inductively extracted fourteen main arguments from the corpus of sample public space debates (Step 1) and grouped them into four overarching discourses (Step 2).⁶ Figure 9.3 shows the relative frequency with which arguments assorted to the discourses *Women’s autonomy*, *State’s responsibility to protect unborn life*, *Relationship state/individual and social policy*, and *Comparison GDR* occurred in sample empowered and public space debates (Step 3).⁷

To provide a proxy measure of transmissions between deliberative sites (Step 4), I first studied sets of subsequent debates in public and empowered spaces and analysed the extent to which respective discourses overlap (in each case, these sets included: *public space debate 1—empowered space debate—succeeding public space debate 2*, see Table 9.2).⁸ I applied Gallagher’s Least Squares Index (LSq) that is an established measure for electoral systems’ relative disproportionality between votes and parliamentary seats to calculate the extent to which discursive patterns between subsequent public and empowered space debates *diverge*:

$$LSq = \sqrt{\left(0.5 \times \sum_{i=1}^n (DiscPublic_i - DiscEmp_i)^2\right)}$$

⁶ The corpus for the explorative analysis was compiled from the two parliamentary debates held on 26 September 1991 and 25 June 1991 and the federal court’s justification of its rule in May 1993 (<https://www.servat.unibe.ch/dfr/bv088203.html#Opinion>) as well as seventeen randomly selected articles published between January 1991 and December 1993 in four leading national newspapers covering a broad political spectrum (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel*, and *Die Tageszeitung*). The results of the analysis in Steps 1 and 2 were checked by two interdependently working coders for intercoder consistency (see Thomas and Harden 2008).

⁷ The ‘women’s autonomy’ discourse is constituted out of a constellation of arguments which emphasize women’s sole responsibility to decide about their own body; ‘state’s responsibility to protect unborn life’ is comprised of arguments dealing with the state’s responsibility towards embryos and potential (legal) enforcements; the third discourse addresses the relationship between individual (women) and the state and related matters of social policy; and ‘Comparison GDR’ is comprised of arguments that concern the task of homogenizing the legal regulations on abortion in Eastern and Western Germany.

⁸ This *proxy* measure of transmissions between two deliberative sites measures the ‘overlap’ of discourses. This overlap is certainly only a *necessary*, not a sufficient condition for successful transmissions of discourses between deliberative sites.

For democratic systems' macro-deliberativeness, transmission *from public to empowered spaces* is of outstanding importance. Generally speaking, *all* communicative flows between public and empowered deliberative sites can be beneficial to democratic systems' quality. Yet when actors in the empowered space manage to impose their arguments or discourses on public spaces, this tends to negatively affect democratic systems' macro-deliberativeness. Accordingly, the rule used for calculating the *Transmission Score (TS)* should punish cases in which public space debates change subsequently to empowered space debates, such that they then mirror empowered space debates more closely than preceding public space debates.

The following rule for calculating a transmission score constitutes one way to represent this basic rationale. In this formula, LSq(A) represents the extent to which the discursive patterns in the first public space debate (*public space debate 1*) of the sequence analysed diverge from those in subsequent empowered space debates; LSq(B) is a measure for the divergence between patterns in empowered space and subsequent public debates (*public debate 2*). LSq(C) represents the extent to which *public space debate 1* and *public space debate 2* diverge.⁹

$$TS = [100 - LSq(A)] - \left[\frac{[100 - LSq(B)] \times LSq(C)}{100} \right]$$

In *Sequence 1* (see Figure 9.3), the patterns of discourses between the first phase of public debates (May 1991 to June 1992) and subsequent empowered space debates (parliamentary debates in September 1991 and June 1992) display comparatively large deviations (LSq(A) = 30.7) while there are larger overlaps between empowered parliamentary debates and subsequent public space debates (LSq(B) = 10.7). A good example is the 'women's autonomy' discourse: it is the most prevalent discourse in the first phase of public space debates (44.4 per cent), but then only constitutes roughly 20 per cent of subsequent parliamentary *and* public debates. In *Sequence 2*, we can observe the reverse: empowered space debates more closely mirror preceding public space debates than in *Sequence 1* (while the patterns of subsequent public space discourses deviate from empowered space patterns to a larger degree). Consequently, the transmission score that can be computed for *Sequence 1* (TS = 45.93) is lower than for *Sequence 2* (TS = 66.25).

⁹ In a nutshell, this formula leads to low transmission scores in cases that display the following features: There is a low overlap between discursive patterns in the public space and in subsequent empowered space debates (high values for LSq(A)). This particularly points towards a domination of public space debates by empowered space debates *if* there is a pronounced overlap between these empowered space debates and subsequent public space debates (low values for LSq(B)) *and if* this overlap does not result from the fact that discursive patterns in public space debates *before and after* empowered space debates did match to a large extent in the first place (low values for LSq(C)). In *Sequence 1* of the debate analysed here, we can observe that the discursive patterns of public debates preceding and succeeding parliamentary deliberations diverge significantly (LSq(C) = 26.1), meaning that the low value for LSq(B) actually indicates that public space discourses have been shaped by empowered debates.

Methodological tools that allow for applications of the basic approach summarized in Step 1 to Step 4 on a large scale present answers to one fundamental research-pragmatic challenge: Exploring and analysing the content (i.e. arguments or ‘topics’) exchanged between public and empowered spaces of a democratic system requires handling large amounts of textual data. Hence, it is recommended to utilize computerized content analysis methods. Along these lines, Beste uses an unsupervised computerized text analysis and statistical methods (iterative principal factor analysis) to uncover and model ‘topics’ or ‘frames in a set of textual data’ (2016, 303–304). Relatedly, [Parkinson et al. \(2020\)](#) apply *Structural Topic Modelling* (STM) to ‘the pool of perspectives’ and the spread of discourses throughout a variety of public and empowered spaces during the Scottish Independence Debate of 2007–2014 and an Australian debate on constitutional issues (see also [Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019](#), 145). An assessment of transmissions at a large scale can therefore proceed by utilizing computerized content analysis tools in Step 1 to Step 3 shown below:

- Step 1: *Content exploration*—To explore the content of political communications at a large scale, researchers should apply an unsupervised automated content analysis tool, such as STM, which identifies ‘hidden semantic structures’, patterns of co-occurring words in large amounts of textual data.
- Step 2: *Identification of main discourses*—Researchers must select and cluster the topics that they take to represent relevant political discourses. To make this selection in a methodologically guided and reliable manner, they may rely either on blended-reading procedures that supplement the computerized analysis with selected close readings ([Lemke et al. 2015](#)) or on complementary qualitative and secondary research (see [Parkinson et al. 2020](#)).
- Step 3: *Analysis of spread of discourses*—After identifying the political discourses that occur in the overall corpus of textual data, researchers can analyse the discourses’ distribution across deliberative sites. Here, STM is a particularly useful tool as it enables researchers to include document-level metadata referring to the time and locus of communication ([Roberts et al. 2014](#)). Consequently, it provides a useful basis for studying ‘transmission-paths’—that is, to answer questions such as ‘*where did the discourses appear first?*’ or ‘*What route did they “travel” through the political-societal system?*’.

In sum, my approach to measuring macro-deliberativeness combines established methodological tools to assess and then combine the measures for two core attributes: (a) deliberation in individual systemic sites and (b) transmissions. The application of

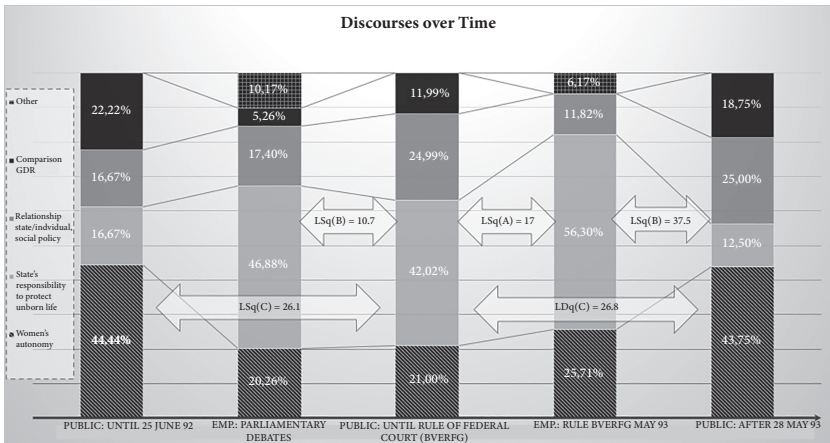


Figure 9.4 Discourses on Abortion Policies over Time

Source: Author's own graph.

these tools to German abortion debates showed that they generally display high levels of meso-deliberativeness in both public and empowered spaces (see Figure 9.3).¹⁰

Yet, what is crucial for democratic systems' macro-deliberativeness is not just that debates conform to *procedural* criteria such as respectfulness, reasonableness, etc. Rather, from a deliberative perspective, 'democratic quality' also requires the uptake of the *contents* of political communications, that is, of discourses or discursive elements, in the empowered space. In other words: the 'pool of perspectives' of all affected citizens (Parkinson et al. 2020) needs to be represented in institutions that have the capacity to make collectively binding decisions. A mere accumulation of the scores representing the meso-deliberativeness in individual forums would not be sufficient to evaluate macro-deliberativeness. Researchers also need to study the transmissions between public and empowered spaces. While the democratic process assessed here achieved high meso-deliberativeness scores, it performed less well in this dimension: for *Sequence 1* of the analysis period, the comparatively low transmission score results from public space debates being strongly shaped by the discourses of empowered spaces, while public space debates had relatively low influence on the constellation of discourses in empowered space deliberations (see Figure 9.4). This highlights the merits of combining measures of debates' meso-deliberativeness and of transmissions to arrive at a valid assessment of deliberativeness at a systemic level.

¹⁰ Even compared to debates on other highly polarized issues—that are generally assumed to display lower levels of meso-deliberativeness than debates with low issue-polarization, the empowered space debates analysed are characterized by high levels of justification, respect, and constructiveness (see results from illustrative analysis as visualized in Figure 9.3 and Table 9.2; see also Bächtiger et al. 2008).

Measuring Deliberativeness at the Nation State Level: Concluding Recommendations

To arrive at an aggregate measure of macro-deliberativeness, researchers need to *combine* the measures of meso-deliberativeness in deliberative sites assorted to the public and the empowered space of a democratic system with their measurement of transmissions. To ensure concept-measurement consistency, they should aggregate individual measures of meso-deliberativeness with the help of an additive procedure while the attributes (a) deliberation in individual sites and (b) transmissions should be combined with a multiplicative procedure (see section ‘Phase 3: Aggregation’).¹¹

Throughout the previous section of this chapter, I illustrated applications of methodological tools by referring to German debates on abortion policies (1991–1993). While ‘abortion talk [may] tell [...] a great deal [...] about the nature and concerns of democracy as a whole’ (Ferree et al. 2002, 4), analysing a single policy debate certainly cannot suffice for assessing a democracy’s macro-deliberativeness in a given time frame. This points to a crucial research-pragmatic challenge: Even if researchers choose a comparatively short analysis period in which they wish to study a democracy’s macro-deliberativeness, they will not be able to study *all* formal and informal political communication in a country. To ensure the feasibility of their undertaking, researchers should therefore resort to theory-driven sampling of debates (see Bächtiger et al. 2008, 280–281). More specifically, researchers should analyse debates in public and empowered spaces that deal with both highly and less-polarized issues. Choosing exclusively debates on either highly polarized or very consensual issues would likely bias the assessment of democracies’ macro-deliberativeness (Bächtiger et al. 2008, 282). In selecting sample debates for assessing democracies’ deliberativeness, researchers should also account for pragmatic issues such as data availability: While there are comprehensive text corpora of parliamentary debates in many democratic nation-states,¹² and corpora of sample debates in traditional mass media are comparatively easy to assess and/or compile, analysing informal debates amongst citizens in online and offline spaces often poses more severe challenges and requires creating new corpora of textual data.

Measurements of deliberativeness at a large scale involve ‘a classic empirical trade-off’ (Parkinson et al. 2020, 2) and require scholars to carefully balance real-world complexity and the demands of cross-system comparability and conceptual parsimony. Systemic deliberative theories provide adequate conceptual groundwork for a comparative assessment of deliberativeness at a large scale. This chapter demonstrates

¹¹ For example, for *Sequence 1* of the abortion debate featured in the exemplary application of measurement tools above, this would amount to multiplying the arithmetic mean of Meso-Deliberativeness of the sample public space debates and empowered space debates with the Transmission Score (TS).

¹² For openly accessible text corpora of parliamentary debates, see, for example, ParlSpeech: (<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/L4OAKN>) or Clarin-D: (<https://www.clarin.eu/resource-families/parliamentary-corpora>).

that fundamental methodological and pragmatic challenges associated with this undertaking can be overcome when we draw from established procedural guidelines of democracy measurements and utilize tools of electronic social science.

Yet, this empirical trade-off also points towards the fact that assessing macro-deliberativeness with the toolkit outlined in this chapter is subject to the following caveats: First, the research-guiding question and the scale of analysis should indicate that more context-sensitive methods of inquiry are *not* feasible. Second, researchers should critically reflect on the procedures and results of building indices: Computations of ‘scores’ at a high level of aggregation are not a panacea (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019, 150)—but they are a means for solving problems in comparative research. Meanwhile, macro-level assessments can serve as a basis for systematic comparative analyses that test and refine middle-range theorizations. They can provide valuable insights into the effects of deliberative democracy and the conditions that facilitate and promote deliberativeness at a systemic level.

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10

Online Deliberative Matrix

Raphaël Kies

In the last decade, online deliberation has gained visibility in the fields of political science, political philosophy, political communication, and big data analysis. The term ‘online deliberation’ corresponds not only to a topic of analysis that can be broadly defined as the quantitative and qualitative assessment of the political debates taking place in the digital public sphere, but also to a model of e-democracy that aims to shape the different political usages of the web (Dahlberg 2011). In this chapter, I present one particular method to assess online deliberation: the Online Deliberative Matrix (ODM) (Janssen and Kies 2005). This matrix refers to the criteria aiming to contextually assess the quality of deliberation taking place in online spaces. It can be used for any political debate occurring on the web.

The chapter is structured into three sections. In the first section, I argue that the *ideal speech situation* and the *two-track model of democracy* advocated by Habermas are still relevant theories to operationalize and assess online deliberation, especially from a systemic perspective. Next, I present a way of operationalizing online deliberation by distinguishing between: (1) the criteria that can be used for assessing the visible presence of deliberation (inclusion, discursive equality, justification, reciprocity); (2) the criteria for assessing the deliberative attitude and intention of the active and passive users of the forum (reflexivity, empathy, sincerity); and (3) the criteria for assessing the expected outcomes of a deliberative process (plurality, external impact). In the final section, I briefly review several studies that fully or partially use the ODM to evaluate the deliberativeness of online debates in different contexts.

Measuring Online Deliberation

The ODM was first developed in 2005 (Janssen and Kies 2005) building on the first attempts to measure (online) deliberation (Schneider 1997; Dahlberg 2004; Graham 2002; Steiner et al. 2005), and further elaborated some years later by reviewing the operationalization of certain criteria and how their ‘score’ should be contextually interpreted (Kies 2010). ODM takes the Habermasian idea of deliberative democracy as its normative starting point. As such, it refers to the ‘ideal speech theory’ (Habermas 1989) and the ‘two-track model of democracy’ (Habermas 1996). While

ideal speech theory provides us with the deliberative criteria to be measured (to be discussed below), the *two-track model* directs our attention to the levels of the opinion-formation and decision-making processes within which these deliberative ideals can be realized. The two-track model promotes a dynamic political process according to which the deliberative project is to be achieved as a result of the interactions of, on the one hand, the ‘strong publics’ (in particular, parliament and government) where decisions are taken, and, on the other hand, the weak publics (in particular, civil society) where new issues of public relevance can arise. Amidst these two publics is the general public dominated by the mass media (newspapers, television, radio) where the opinions and demands of the weak publics and those of the strong publics are presented and debated. In order to promote the appearance of a critical and informed public opinion, the media should be independent through the use of self-regulation procedures. They should also give visibility, without any distortion, to the opinions coming from the different publics, particularly the weak ones (civil society), which have lesser public and political influence (Habermas 2006).

By referring explicitly to the systemic theory of Habermas, the ODM constitutes an early attempt to take into consideration the ‘systemic turn’ in the analysis of online deliberation (see Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012). The reference to the two-track model implies the necessity to adapt the deliberative criteria, in particular their evaluative standards, to the contexts in which the online forums are taking place. Accordingly, these standards should be defined by the *external impact* and the political/ideological beliefs of the social or individual actors hosting the online debate. The ‘external impact’ is a proxy for distinguishing the weak–strong distinction present in the two-track model, which helps to identify the constraints and functions of a discursive arena within the opinion- and decision-making process. In the next section, I will provide some examples of how the external impact influences the standard applied to several deliberative criteria. But before doing so, let me present the criteria considered to measure deliberation for any type of online discussion space.

Table 10.1 lists nine deliberative criteria used in the assessment of online deliberation. As noted above, these criteria were developed through a close examination of the Habermasian ideal speech theory and the two-track model of democracy. In the next section, I will show how these criteria can be contextually operationalized.

Operationalization of Deliberative Criteria for the Empirical Study of Online Sites

For the empirical analysis, the criteria are merged in three analytical categories referring to different aspects of the deliberation and methods of investigation. The criteria of *inclusion*, *discursive equality*, *reciprocity*, and *justification* seek to measure the apparent presence of deliberation, that is, the level of deliberation assessed through the analysis of the discursive architecture of the forum, and the dynamic and content

Table 10.1 Criteria for the Online Deliberative Matrix

Deliberative criteria	Meaning
Inclusion	All who are affected by and/or interested in the issues under discussion should be able to participate either actively or passively.
Discursive equality	Participants should have an equal opportunity to introduce and question any assertion whatsoever and to express attitudes, desires, and needs.
Reciprocity	Participants should listen and react to the comments formulated by other participants.
Justification	The opinions and propositions should be accompanied by accessible justification(s).
Reflexivity	Participants should critically examine their values, assumptions, and interests, as well as the larger social context.
Empathy	Participants should be sensitive to other views and opinions, not only of those present during the debates.
Sincerity	Participants must make a sincere effort to make known all relevant information and their true intentions, interests, needs, and desires.
Plurality	A deliberative context should be one in which a plurality of voices is heard even if these voices are critical of the dominant opinions/ideologies.
External impact	A successful deliberative process should have an impact on the opinions and decisions that are taken outside the context of the debate.

of the discursive exchanges. Conversely, the criteria of *reflexivity*, *empathy*, and *sincerity* measure the non-visible aspects of deliberation. They focus on the conscious or even unconscious deliberative attitude and intention of the active and passive users of the online forums. Finally, the last two criteria, *plurality* and *external impact*, assess two expected outcomes from a successful online deliberative process: first, that it was able to confront a diversity of relevant voices and opinions; second, that it has an impact outside the online forum. To remain synthetic, I will not review in detail how other scholars have measured these criteria, but instead will focus on the ODM methodology.¹

Criteria Related to Apparent Presence of Deliberation

Inclusion

The normative requirement of inclusion is that all those who are affected by, and/or interested in, the issues under discussion should be able to contribute and read

¹ For a review of the existing attempts to measure online deliberation see [Kies \(2010\)](#), [Monnoyer and Wojcik \(2012\)](#), [Mendoza \(2015\)](#), and [Friess and Eilders \(2015\)](#). — (here is the correct name [Mendonça \(2015\)](#))

others' contributions. The operationalization of the requirement of inclusion in an online environment implies that researchers assess mainly three types of threats for inclusion.

The first threat is the digital divide, understood as the difference between people who have easy access to the Internet and those who do not. To test whether the digital divide influences inclusion, we should observe, first, whether people have access to a device with an Internet connection and, second, whether they have the capacity to access and contribute to an online forum. Researchers can report descriptive statistics on Internet access, computer ownership, and survey data on Internet use and Information and Communications Technology skills. For example, several Eurobarometer surveys provide information to assess the connectivity and digital skills in EU Member States.²

The second aspect concerns the moderation regime and/or technical architecture of an online forum as well as the requirements of registration and identification that can make access easier or harder and can thus be reported as factors that affect the level of inclusion. A moderation regime can vary a lot. It can be more or less intense: from no moderation at all to active moderation. It can occur before posting a message (i.e. pre-moderation), or after the posting of a message (i.e. post-moderation). Finally, moderation can be more or less conducive to inclusive and deliberative debate. The moderator can be a 'censor'—for example, by removing opinions that are at odds with the main ideology of the discussion space—or they can be a 'promoter of deliberation' by, for example, implementing a system of synthesis of debate, by giving more visibility to minority opinions, by offering background information related to the topics, etc. Some empirical findings suggest that well-balanced moderation is crucial to enable an inclusive and deliberative debate (e.g. Wright and Street 2007; Janssen and Kies 2005; Edwards 2002). That being said, several studies also underscore that high levels of moderation can negatively impact the experience of deliberation on perceived procedural fairness, validity claims, and policy legitimacy (e.g. Meyer and Carey 2014; Perrault and Zhang 2019). As far as identification is concerned, it is important to be aware that while anonymity can increase the quantity of participation, it can simultaneously lower the quality of the content (Towne and Herbsleb 2012).

Finally, researchers should also observe whether the institutions hosting and/or promoting the online forum were proactive in making the online forum as inclusive as possible. We should observe whether there were attempts to reach the categories of people who would not spontaneously participate in online political forums (for example, older people, the less educated, those with visual impairments, etc.). Researchers are invited to observe, amongst others, whether the online forum was advertised in other media, whether specific training was planned for users, or if participation was encouraged through vouchers, money, gaming, etc.

² See, for example, special EB (2020) 'Attitudes towards the Impact of Digitalisation on Daily Lives', available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm>.

Discursive Equality

The normative requirement of discursive equality is that participants should have equal opportunity to introduce and question any assertion and to express attitudes, desires, and needs. We suggest that it should be measured by first assessing the ‘distribution of voice’ in a conversation on the assumption that if only a small number of participants contribute in a large proportion, they dominate this debate. This idea of dominating the conversation is operationalized in a ‘participant contributions’ statistic. The distribution of the number of messages posted per participant may provide an indication that one group is dominating the conversation. This is not problematic, per se, as it is also a common experience offline that a minority of participants dominate a debate. However, it can be problematic if certain participants feel that their expression has been hindered by the dominant group. In certain cases, this can be deduced by reading the content of the forum itself (see empathy criterion), but ideally it should be measured through survey/interviews to find out whether participants feel that their views were suppressed (e.g. [Graham and Wright 2014](#)). In connection with the criterion of plurality, researchers are also invited to assess to what extent the active participants are representative of the internal and external variety of opinions (see plurality criterion).

Reciprocity

Reciprocity aims to assess whether participants listen and react to the comments formulated by other participants. If citizens do not listen to and interact with each other, there can be no deliberation, only monologue. The level of reciprocity should be measured by assessing, at a basic level, the proportion of postings that are part of a thread versus those that initiate a thread ([Schneider 1997](#)). This measurement, however, only provides an approximation of the level of reciprocity. It is indeed possible that a message in the same thread is not a reaction to the content of a preceding message. A message in a thread can just as easily be a monologue without any reference to preceding messages or the topic of the thread. For this reason, an in-depth evaluation of a message, which implies the reading of a message, is necessary in order to observe whether the message is a response to a past message contained in the forum. Here we suggest following the coding of authors like [Jensen \(2003\)](#), which uses the categories of ‘initiate’ (a message initiates a new debate), ‘reply’ (a message is a reply to a previous message), and ‘monologue’ (a message is not really part of a debate). But even a more refined approach based on reading the messages can be problematic insofar as the absence of genuine reciprocity does not necessarily mean a lack of deliberation and, inversely, the fact that a message is reciprocal does not necessarily imply that this message is deliberative.

This leads us to the question of interpreting the findings. What does it mean when the reciprocity level of a thread, forum, or news comment section is low? It can mean that participants do not listen to each other, but just state their opinions as well as frustrations: this is the typical dialogue of the deaf. The absence of reciprocity may also reveal a lack of interest in the topics discussed ([Bentivegna 1998](#)) or reflect a

general agreement about the topic discussed so that participants do not feel the need to react. Finally, a lack of reciprocity may also mean that (some) forum participants simply want to share information about a specific topic (see [Kies 2010](#), chapter 6). A lack of reciprocity can have a multiplicity of meanings. To reach a refined evaluation of it, I suggest that no deliberative value should be given if it reflects an absence of interest, tacit agreement, sharing of information, etc. A negative deliberative value should only be given when the lack of reciprocity discloses an absence of a disposition to listen to each other.

Justification

The normative requirement for justification is that the opinions and propositions should be accompanied by accessible justifications. This means that there can be no deliberation if citizens appeal only to the authority of revelation or if their justification is based on complex arguments that only a restricted intellectual elite would understand ([Gutmann and Thompson 2004](#), 4). With regard to the types of messages for which the level of justification should be assessed, we argue, like [Fuchs \(2006\)](#), that it makes sense to measure the presence of justification only for messages containing ‘opinions’ and ‘suggestions.’ These are, after all, the messages for which a justification is expected. There is a plethora of attempts to measure justification that are more or less elaborated and relevant (see [Kies 2010](#), 46–48). Our coding of justification is inspired by that of [Jensen \(2003\)](#). Accordingly, we should measure: (1) if an opinion/suggestion is justified; and (2) if the type of justification is ‘internal’ (based on personal viewpoints and values) or ‘external’ (based on facts and figures). However, we reject the normativity of Jensen, in that arguments based on ‘objective’ information are better than those based on personal experience. As suggested by the two-track model of [Habermas \(1996\)](#) and by other authors ([Mansbridge 1999](#); [Young 2000](#)), justifications based on personal experiences can be as useful as those based on facts for the promotion of deliberative values. Particularly in weak and informal public spaces, the presence of internal arguments (storytelling, testimony, etc.) can enrich the debates and allow citizens who feel uncomfortable with rational-critical debates to express themselves freely.

Researchers who are particularly interested in justification can also focus on the ‘level of justification.’ Here the coding schemes of Fuchs are also relevant. He measures ‘the complexity of arguments’ by distinguishing four degrees of argumentation: ‘one-dimensional message’ (no reason for holding an opinion); ‘simple message’ (one reason is communicated); ‘rather complex message’ (two reasons are communicated); ‘complex message’ (three or more reasons are communicated). The measurement of complexity of justification is optional. It should also be noted that its deliberative interpretation is particularly complex as an opinion does not necessarily need complex justifications in order to be sufficiently justified.

Criteria Related to the Deliberative Intentions of Participants

Reflexivity

Participants in a debate adopt a reflexive attitude if they critically examine their values, assumptions, and interests, as well as the larger social context. One of the defining features of reflexivity is ‘open-mindedness’. This means that deliberating actors (e.g. citizens or public officials) must be ready and willing to change their opinions and preferences if they are sincerely persuaded that their initial opinions or preferences are incorrect or inappropriate for addressing the collective problems. Approaches based on content analysis attempt to find instances of reflexivity by reading the content of messages sent (Jensen 2003; Fuchs 2006), particularly whether these messages express opinion or preference change. Such a measurement is, however, often meaningless insofar as it supposes that, in order to be deliberative, a debate should necessarily lead to persuasion, change of opinions or conflict resolution when in fact what the deliberative ideals require is the ‘readiness’ to change opinion if one is sincerely convinced by the arguments of someone else. An absence of opinion change should not be interpreted as non-deliberative behaviour if the concerned person is sincerely not convinced by another’s argument. Therefore, a different approach may be necessary to capture reflexivity as an internal process, and its manifestations may not always be expressed in an online forum.

One possible approach to uncover reflexivity’s internal dynamic is to combine content analysis with surveys and/or interviews. Surveys may also generate insight into the behaviour of ‘lurkers’, who are by far the most numerous users of the forum. Lurkers can also be questioned about the way they have been influenced by the online debates. I suggest that the questions should focus on whether the active and passive participants of the forums ‘felt better informed’ and ‘took a moment to reflect about disagreements’. There are several examples of how to formulate a questionnaire for the purposes of measuring reflexivity in different contexts (Jensen 2003; Hansard Society 2006; Fishkin 1995).

Empathy

The criterion of empathy can be defined as ‘*the extent participants take into account and are sensitive to other participants and positions, not only those immediately present in the forum*’ (Dahlberg 2004, 33). Alongside the criterion of sincerity, empathy is a cardinal indicator of deliberation, since all others derive more or less directly from it. Concretely, this means that if someone is genuinely concerned by the opinions and preoccupations of their fellow citizens, they will be more eager to interact with them (reciprocity), to justify their opinions (justification), and to change their mind if sincerely convinced by an argument (reflexivity). Since these criteria aim at the participants’ internal disposition—a proclivity for considering others’ opinions—its

measurement is complex and necessarily limited (e.g. [Neumann et al. 2015](#)). That being said, a partial measurement of empathy can be obtained by using several complementary methods:

- (1) Content analysis by counting cases of disrespect. These are cases such as personal attacks, dirty words, and xenophobic or homophobic declarations;
- (2) Survey/interview analysis by raising questions that seek to grasp whether participants entered into the debate with the intention of listening to others' arguments and also to make other participants aware of external positions (that they do not necessarily share);
- (3) Deductively observing the scores of the deliberative criteria of reflexivity and sincerity, as they are generally positively correlated with empathy. If we find that the levels of reflexivity and sincerity are high in a forum, then we can suppose that participants are sensitive to the opinions of others and willing to reach a consensus.

Sincerity

Sincerity requires that all participants undertake a sincere effort to make known all relevant information and their true intentions, interests, needs, and desires. While sincerity appears to be a fundamental criterion, both for measuring deliberation for a specific case study and in a systemic perspective of deliberation (more on this to follow), it is to date the most poorly empirically investigated because it is also the most difficult to grasp. The presence of sincerity can nevertheless be grasped through different approaches. The first approach is to perform a qualitative analysis based on 'consistency in speech, consistency in speech and action, and coherence' ([Chambers 1996](#), cited in [Dahlberg 2002](#), 34). An inductive approach could look for instances where participants' inconsistencies are exposed by other participants or it could seek out inconsistencies in speech and/or actions themselves. The second one is based on forum participants' self-reporting (passive or active) using interviews and survey analysis. Since it is unlikely that participants who were not sincere would respond sincerely to an interview or survey, the question should be formulated in an indirect and subtle way. Lastly, as the perception of sincerity is also likely to have an impact on the dynamic and deliberative quality of debates, active and passive users should also be asked about whether they believe that other participants in the online forum were sincere.

Criteria Related to the Deliberative Outcome of the Process

Plurality

The criterion of plurality aims to evaluate whether an online discussion hosts different and divergent opinions. It is a fundamental criterion for evaluating how successful a debate has been in hosting and confronting all the relevant opinions on a

specific topic. It is linked to inclusion and discursive equality as both are determinant factors in promoting plural debates. I argue that the ideologies of the online deliberation's host or organizer are the best variable to define the standard applied to the criterion of plurality. For example, we could expect more diversity of opinions in an online forum hosted by a mainstream and neutral newspaper than an online forum hosted by a partisan newspaper. I would therefore put a higher standard of plurality for the first than for the second.

A mixed-methods approach combining content analysis with survey should be privileged for assessing plurality. The content analysis of the web forum will allow us to assess the presence of different opinions on the issue at stake, while the survey analysis assesses the forum users' diversity by focusing on socio-demographic profiles (gender, age, education, occupation, etc.) and their political involvement and affiliation. The results of such surveys should, however, be carefully assessed since the socio-demographic homogeneity or diversity of a public does not necessarily imply that the debates will be homogeneous or plural (Best and Krueger 2005). In order to avoid such flaws, a method that combines content analysis with survey analysis is clearly recommended.

External Impact

A successful deliberative process should have an impact on broader public deliberations taking place outside the online forum. I argue that external impact is the best proxy for the weak–strong distinction in the two-track model. Researchers must identify and define the constraints and functions of an online discursive arena for it to have impact in the opinion- and decision-making process in the macropolitical sphere.

There are different methods through which to evaluate the external impact, depending on the type of forum analysed and the objective of the researcher. The external impact can be assessed:

- (1) By looking at whether there are concrete proposals of action. Jensen (2003) measures the external impact by assessing the presence of explicit signs that a sender is trying to extend discussions to an external agenda. He counts instances where participants attempt to 'attract the attention of a politician', 'propose political actions', or 'refer to external effect of a discussion';
- (2) By assessing whether participants in an online forum are influential outside the forum (Hangemann 2002; Coleman et al. 2002; Beierle 2002). We suppose that the more well-known the participants in the forum are (e.g. journalists, politicians, intellectuals, influencers), the more likely they are to have an external impact;
- (3) By assessing whether decisions taken outside the online forum were inspired by opinions/proposals discussed in the online forum. This measurement is particularly common for discursive e-consultation processes. Such studies generally assess to what extent suggestions coming from the forum were

considered in the final drafts of policy proposals and whether participation in the forum led to more positive opinions of the institutions that hosted the forum (Beierle 2002; Coleman et al. 2002; Hansard Society 2006; Kies and Nanz 2013).

The evaluative standards applied to the external impact should be adapted to the contexts in which the forum takes place. For example, the external impact requirements should be more demanding for an institutional e-consultation process, than for an online forum without any institutional affiliations. This is because in a genuine institutional consultation process, the decision makers and/or the administration are bound to take into consideration the opinions and suggestions emerging from the online public.

Illustrative Studies Referring to ODM

There are several studies referring to the ODM to evaluate the quality of deliberation in different contexts. These can serve as concrete references for any researcher planning to use the ODM for their own research. For example, the ODM has been largely used to evaluate the level of deliberation of the Italian Partito Radicale (Kies 2010, 117–142; Kies 2009), to compare the deliberative processes used in voting for proposals emerging from the online platform Plaza Podemos and the online development of the electoral programme of Barcelona En Comú (Bravo and Sáez 2016), and to evaluate the most commented on citizens' proposal discussed on the Barcelona government's platform Decidim (Bravo et al. 2019). The ODM has also been largely used to compare two Slovenian online proposal portals: one emerging from the government and the other emerging from the citizen, with the objective of exploring whether the weak versus strong nature of the platform influences the quality of deliberation (Črnič and Prodnik 2015).

Other interesting studies refer to the ODM to define and operationalize a limited number of deliberative criteria. This is the case with several experimental pieces of research that explore how certain factors affect the quality of deliberation, such as anonymity (Berg 2016), temporality (Strandberg and Berg 2015), and the effect of antisocial behaviours (Smith et al. 2012). The ODM is also a source of inspiration to evaluate the deliberativeness of interaction on social media. For example, it has been used to evaluate YouTube comments in respect of LGBTQ rights (Oliveira et al. 2014), the Facebook and YouTube channels of the White House (Halpern and Gibbs 2013), as well as user-generated political commentary on candidates' Facebook pages during the 2008 and 2012 US Presidential elections (Camaj and Santana 2016). Finally, the ODM was used to review the deliberative quality of news website forums (Quinlan

et al. 2015), and of consultative debates on different topics and at different levels: from local (Sampaio et al. 2011) to European (Karlsson 2012; Kies and Wojcik 2011; Kies et al. 2013).

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to provide a synthetic overview of the ODM. It is important to underline the criteria it contains as well as their operationalization, remain open for discussion and improvement. Indeed, it is common to see research that utilizes the ODM, or other methods, as a starting point to develop their own methodology of investigation. This speaks to the fact that we are still far from having an uncontroversial method of investigation. In particular, the criteria aiming at assessing the deliberative attitudes of participants (i.e. reflexivity, sincerity, empathy) could be improved by referring to the existing methods for assessing socio-psychological behaviours (e.g. Neumann et al. 2015).

Potential improvements to the ODM may also emerge from the foreseeable shift from human coding to machine coding. The rapid growth in the usage of opinion mining and sentiment analysis (Pirani et al. 2017) is likely to evolve in the near future into instruments that can automatically measure the deliberativeness of a web forum. Such an evolution is to be welcomed, as it will allow for real-time measurement of deliberation in different contexts. But it also raises important questions. Outcomes may be misleading as automatic coding, even with the support of Artificial Intelligence, is unable to grasp certain linguistic nuances or expressions and is unable to provide contextual interpretations of the deliberative scores. More importantly, the vast amount of data that will be freely available through web-scraping could also be (ab)used for economic or political purposes, as is the case for the personal data that Internet users leave for free (Zuboff 2019). One should be aware of these dangers and elaborate guidelines and rules that can guarantee that online discussion forums are protected from such interferences.

Another major challenge will be to adapt these criteria to the changing online discursive environment. While until recently the usage of video-conference platforms tended to be limited to workplaces, since late 2019, in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, the usage of video-conferencing platforms (e.g. Zoom, Webex) has boomed in all sectors of life, leading to a hybridization of discursive exchanges—combining video, audio, and written exchanges. This major shift is not about to stop or reverse, and as such it will require new methods to evaluate the level of online deliberation, combining, for example, content analysis with body language and voice intonations. This will certainly enrich the possibilities for assessing online deliberation, but it is not likely to simplify the process. In any case, no matter how fast and how

profoundly the online discursive means and methodologies evolve, the ideal deliberative theory of Habermas and its followers remains a key reference point to preserve online public spaces from the current risks of colonization by economic and political interests.

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Experimental Methods

Kimmo Grönlund and Kaisa Herne

Early literature on deliberative democracy is largely normative. That is, it describes an ideal model of democracy. However, more recent research has also engaged in empirically testing the possibilities of achieving deliberation in actual political discourse and decision-making. One of the empirical methods in the deliberative democracy literature is experimentation. While experimentation in political science is by no means a novel invention (Gosnell 1926), it has seen a rapid rise over the last few decades (Morton and Williams 2010). At first sight, it might seem problematic to test something that is considered to present a normative model. However, experimentation on deliberative democracy aims at *testing the consequences of institutions that include deliberation*, and thereby providing a contribution to the *design of democratic institutions*. More broadly, like any normative theory, deliberative democracy has empirical elements, it makes certain claims about what would happen if ideal-type discussion were to take place, and such claims can be tested.

Experiments in deliberative democracy have mainly concerned deliberative *mini-publics*, that is, more or less representative samples of the public deliberating on specific political issues. When we talk about deliberation or deliberative discussion, we refer to organized discussion that meets at least some minimum requirements, such as facilitated discussion that takes place in small groups, and that is guided by discursive rules that emphasize respect for others, listening to others, and justification of one's views (e.g. Grönlund et al. 2015). The main questions addressed in experiments have been whether and to what extent deliberative mini-publics achieve the kinds of outcomes that deliberative discussion is supposed to produce. Are opinions changed? Are they changed into a more tolerant direction? Is trust increased? Is the legitimacy and acceptance of decisions increased? In other words, would introducing the deliberative element into democratic institutions make democracies stronger?

The chapter proceeds as follows. We first introduce the main characteristics of an experiment. Thereafter, we present the main object of experimental study in deliberative democracy, that is, deliberative mini-publics. That section takes up the strengths and challenges of engaging lay citizens in experiments, and specifically addresses data generation and analytical methods related to citizen deliberation. Finally, we

discuss the interpretations that can be made in relation to the theory of deliberative democracy based on experiments, and address some limitations of the experimental method.

What Is an Experiment?

The reason for using experiments is that they provide a control of variables not available through naturally occurring data, and that this control makes it possible to detect causal mechanisms. For example, if we want to know how participation in a mini-public influences individual opinions, then organizing an experiment where some of the subjects participate in a mini-public, whereas others do not, allows for a comparison between these two groups. By this design, we are able to measure whether and how taking part in a mini-public influences opinions. Of course, real-world cases in which some people participate and others do not can also be observed. However, only in an experiment can we hold everything else between the two groups—those who deliberate and those who do not—constant, and thereby be confident that observed differences between the groups are due to experimental manipulation and not some other differences between the groups.

An experiment is a controlled study of a *causal relationship*. By experimentation we can examine the influence of an independent variable on one or several dependent variables. In experiments, independent variables are those variables that are manipulated. They could also be called predictor variables. Dependent variables, in turn, are not manipulated. They are outcome variables whose values depend on the manipulated, that is, independent, variables. To take an example, a mini-public experiment, [Setälä et al. \(2010\)](#) manipulated the small group decision-making method by using either a secret ballot or a consensual statement. In this study, the decision-making method was the independent variable and opinion formation the dependent variable. What distinguishes an experiment from other types of research that looks into causal relationships is the *manipulation* or *treatment* of an independent variable. An ideal experiment holds $n-1$ independent variables constant and manipulates only one. When other variables are held constant, we are able to say that any variation in the dependent variable is due to variation in the manipulated independent variable. Controlled variation is the key for detecting cause–effect relations.

For example, if we are interested in the influence of deliberative discussion on opinion change, we give a part of our subjects the *treatment*, that is, have them discuss with each other in conditions that approximate those of ideal deliberative discussion. Another part of the subjects, the *control group*, does not discuss under ideal deliberative conditions. We then measure participants' opinions *pre* and *post* taking part in deliberative discussion (the treatment group) or engaging in some other activity but not deliberating (the control group).

In the case of deliberation, the control group can take several forms: it can simply fill in the *pre* and *post* surveys with a certain time lag between the two surveys

(see Grönlund et al. 2015), or it can engage in free discussion without the elements of deliberative discussion (cf. Strandberg et al. 2019). The control group might also engage in some other activity, for example, writing down their ideas about the discussed topic individually. Since the treatment group is compared to the control group, the point of comparison varies depending on what the control group does. For example, if the control group engages in free discussion and the treatment group engages in deliberative discussion, we can detect the difference between these two types of discussions—what is the added value of discussion being deliberative? On the other hand, if the control group writes down their thoughts individually while the treatment group engages in deliberative discussion, we can detect the difference between deliberative discussion and individual reflection. Sometimes experimental designs lack the possibility of a control group and different treatments serve as one another's controls. For example, in the aforementioned study on the influence of the decision-making method on participants' opinion formation in a mini-public, the two treatment conditions were considered one another's controls (Setälä et al. 2010).

In addition to using some kind of treatment, a random assignment to treatment and control groups is crucial to experiments. Randomization is needed because it rules out systematic variation between treatment and control group participants. Without randomization we cannot be sure whether observed differences are due to the experimental treatment or to systematic variation between the participants in the treatment and control groups. It is noteworthy that participants in face-to-face mini-public experiments have to show up at a certain place and invest their time, as well as other resources, in deliberative discussion. It is obvious that this investment can influence the type of people who are likely to attend. For this reason, we cannot rule out systematic variation if randomization to treatment and control groups is done amongst all those invited to take part. A better strategy is to randomize amongst those who are *willing* to participate, or better still, if possible, amongst those who *show up*. The reason is that those who are invited, those who are willing to participate, and those who show up might represent slightly different types of groups. This means that we cannot be sure whether the observed outcome variation occurs because of our treatment or rather because of the differences between the types of people (not) willing to participate.

In addition to the control of variables, a clear advantage of experiments is that they can be *replicated*. Replication of research is not easily available through naturally occurring data. However, replication is crucial because it increases the reliability of observed results. For example, if we obtain similar results from mini-public experiments organized in different countries, we can be more confident about the generalizability of the results.

In social sciences, three different types of experiments can be separated. These types can roughly be characterized according to a scale from more control to less control, and from less external validity to more external validity. Laboratory experiments allow for most control but are often criticized for a lack of external validity. The critique usually stems from the use of student subjects and conditions that lack

similarity with real-world circumstances. For this reason, there has been a call for more realistic field experiments conducted in participants' natural environments. While field experiments bring about certain advantages, the drawback is that they cannot achieve the same degree of control as laboratory experiments. Lab-in-the-field experiments fall between pure field and pure laboratory experiments and are based on an idea of increasing external validity, for example by bringing experiments into natural locations without losing much of the control of variables. Mini-public experiments based on a random sample of the population and taking place either online or face to face commonly fall into the category of lab-in-the-field experiments. However, drawing the line between different types of experiments is not unambiguous.

While randomization is commonly seen as essential to experimentation, there are experiments that lack random assignment. In *quasi experiments*, subjects are not randomized into treatment and control groups. There are two types of quasi experiments, depending on whether the experimenter has control over the assignment of subjects into treatment and control conditions. In naturally occurring experiments, the experimenter has no control over the assignment of experimental subjects into treatment and control groups, but these groups are formed in a natural process. An example is a study which compares Brazilian municipalities that use or do not use participatory budgeting (Touchton and Wampler 2014). Naturally occurring experiments have the lowest level of control over variables, but they provide real-world cases that resemble experiments. When the experimenter has control over the assignment in a quasi-experimental design, subjects are allocated into treatment and control conditions based on a certain characteristic.

Experiments and Deliberative Democracy

Experimental research is usually motivated by a willingness to test theories. Based on the theory or theories, specific hypotheses are formulated. These are then tested with an appropriate experimental design. Theories are challenged or given support depending on the results of the experiment. However, in the case of deliberative democracy, the relationship between theory and empirical research is rather atypical because deliberative theory is a normative characterization of ideal states of affairs. While normative theories cannot be tested as such, they involve empirical claims that can be tested, and this is what experiments on deliberative democracy seek to achieve (Setälä and Herne 2014).

It is also notable that experiments are closely related to the central concepts of deliberative democratic theorizing. Experiments in deliberative democracy study the consequences of taking part in *deliberative discourse*. They often study how *opinions change* during deliberation, for example whether they become more similar or whether a meta-level consensus is achieved (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006). Many

experiments also measure different *civic virtues* central to deliberative democracy, for example social and political trust, political efficacy, political knowledge, and readiness to participate in politics. Moreover, many experiments touch upon the *legitimacy* of decisions and procedures by asking participants how they conceive the decision-making processes and decisions made in them.

The usual motivation for experimentation is to test a given theoretical model. However, in the case of deliberative democracy, the motivation for experimentation can also be a study of discursive democratic innovations not yet used in real-world democratic systems. Via experiments, we can study the potential consequences of certain ways of organizing democratic participation, and, on the basis of the results, decide whether these ways should be put to use to improve the quality of democracy. Experiments can thereby contribute to the design of democratic institutions.

The focus of this chapter is on experiments with *deliberative mini-publics*. The reason for this is simple: experimental research on deliberative democracy has so far mainly concerned mini-publics. The reason for the popularity of mini-public experiments is likely their usefulness to test issues, such as opinion change, discussion dynamics, as well as various ‘side effects’ of deliberation, for example, political and social trust, political knowledge, and political efficacy (Grönlund et al. 2010; Grönlund 2016).

One factor that varies between different mini-publics is size, that is, the number of participants. Even though all mini-publics have the goal of being representative in the sense of representing different viewpoints amongst the public, most mini-publics fall short of being representative in a statistical sense and none of them are representative in the electoral sense (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). The best-known models for organizing mini-publics are Citizens’ Juries (12–26 participants), Consensus Conferences (10–50 participants), Citizen Assemblies (50–160 participants), and Deliberative Polling (100–500 participants) (Breckon et al. 2019). Of these models, the most widely implemented mini-public is the Deliberative Poll™, developed by James Fishkin (1991). Deliberative Polls have by now been organized over 100 times in twenty-eight countries (Fishkin 2018). The Deliberative Poll model has become so widely known that Jane Mansbridge (2010) has dubbed it the ‘gold standard’ of how to organize deliberative mini-publics.

In many cases, Deliberative Polls and other mini-publics involve policymakers (Grönlund et al. 2014, 1). Involving external actors, such as national, regional, or local governments, is good if your aim is to make deliberative democracy ‘bite’, that is, to connect it with the democratic system. Yet, from a scientific viewpoint, it is likely to decrease the possibilities to design experimental manipulations freely. Since the scientific aim of most deliberative mini-publics is to study how the participants are affected by deliberation, this may decrease the internal validity of the mini-public as an experiment. Thus, for a researcher there is a trade-off between choosing to stimulate public debate (or even to have a real impact on democratic decision-making) on the one hand, and designing a coherent controlled experiment on the other. This

is something that the researcher should decide early in the planning process. By the time external actors are invited, it might be too late. Sometimes external actors are necessary for the simple reason that the researcher needs funding for her experiment.

In mini-publics, deliberation normally takes place in *small groups*; it is guided by *discussion rules*, and facilitated by a *trained moderator* (e.g. Grönlund et al. 2015). The rules emphasize inclusiveness, equality, and respect for others, as well as listening and being open to others' views. The recruitment of participants can vary. For experimental purposes, a convenience sample (of students) can be appropriate, but in order to increase external validity, a representative sample of the population is better. Sometimes open calls through media and advertising campaigns are used, but this, of course, might create a bias amongst participants because of self-selection. Before discussing, participants can be given balanced information about the topic, and they may hear and pose questions to an expert panel (expert panels are always part of the Deliberative Poll). Participants usually fill in a survey before and after taking part in deliberation. These *pre* and *post* surveys are then used to study potential changes in different outcome measurements, such as opinions. Small group discussions are also commonly recorded and transcribed and can thereby also be analysed.

Example: An Experimental Study of Enclave Deliberation and Group Polarization

In this section, we describe what a *controlled experiment in citizen deliberation* might look like. In other words, we look at an experiment that was fully funded and designed by academics and did not have a direct connection to a political process. We organized this experiment in 2012 (Grönlund et al. 2015). We were able to cover the costs through project funding from the Academy of Finland (project no. 251222), and could therefore organize it as a controlled lab-in-the-field experiment. In designing the experiment, we were inspired by the concern, most notably expressed by Cass Sunstein (2002, 2007, 2009), about the increased tendency to only discuss politics in like-minded groups. This 'enclave deliberation' may lead to group thinking with extreme views and an amplification of cognitive errors as a result. When like-minded people discuss among themselves, they reinforce each other's views which prevail in the group at the outset. After discussion, their views move in the direction of the initial bias. This phenomenon is called group polarization. Sunstein (2009, 3) defines group polarization as follows: 'members of a deliberating group usually end up at a more extreme position in the same general direction as their inclinations before deliberation began.' Like-minded discussion may also lead to an amplification of cognitive errors (Sunstein 2007, 80–95, 140–143), meaning that people's false beliefs are strengthened. When it comes to deliberation, the presence of conflicting viewpoints is often regarded as a necessary condition (Thompson 2008, 502). However, the term 'enclave deliberation' has been used to refer to any discussion amongst like-minded people (Sunstein 2002, 2007, 2009). We wanted to test how deliberative norms work

in like-minded groups. Our central research question was: ‘Can group polarization be avoided?’

The topic for the deliberative experiment was immigration. The participants’ opinions on immigration were measured before and after deliberation with a questionnaire. Based on their baseline views, respondents were divided into two enclaves. Those with negative attitudes to immigration formed a *con* enclave, and those with a positive view on immigration formed a *pro* enclave. Since the main research interest was enclave deliberation, we manipulated the group composition in order to compare deliberation in two types of groups: (1) groups with similar views on immigration; and (2) groups with diverse opinions on immigration. Thus, the participants were randomly assigned to like-minded groups, mixed groups, and a control group. The treatment groups deliberated, whereas the (pseudo) control group only filled in surveys at home.

First, we mailed out a short survey to a simple random sample of 12,000 adults in the region of Turku (Åbo). The response rate to this survey was 25 per cent. It consisted of fourteen items measuring attitudes on immigration. Since the design of the experiment required people with clear views on the immigration issue, we excluded moderates ($n = 631$), that is, those respondents whose opinions on immigration were close to the median value of the frequency distribution (see Grönlund et al. 2015 for a detailed description). Then, a second survey (T2), which also included an invitation to take part in a deliberation event, was sent out to 2601 people. Half of the invited sample consisted of *pro*- and the other half of anti-immigrants (*con*). We also clarified that only a part of those who volunteered could be included in the deliberation event and that the choice would be made by lot. Each participant in deliberation received a remuneration of 90 euros, whereas the control group received 15 euros.

Ultimately, 805 people volunteered, and we invited 366 people to take part in the deliberative experiment. The target sample was 256 participants, that is, thirty-two small groups of eight participants each. Alas, only 207 people showed up. Especially people in the *con* enclave tended to abstain at this final stage, even though there were no indications of this kind of a bias earlier. For the experiment, we randomly assigned people into treatment conditions and small groups within the *con* and *pro* enclaves. In the end, we were able to form ten *pro* like-minded groups, five *con* like-minded groups, and eleven mixed groups. Because of attrition at the last stage, and the need for balance between the enclaves, each mixed group consisted of exactly eight participants—four from both enclaves—whereas the group size was allowed to vary between seven and nine in the like-minded treatment. The pseudo control group consisted of 369 people. The deliberation event took place during the course of a weekend in the spring of 2012. Each participant took part during one day. The setup was identical. Both days started with a fifteen-item knowledge quiz, after which the participants were briefed in plenum about some basic and balanced facts related to immigration in Finland. The briefing was also given as a handout to the participants.

Deliberation took place in small groups and lasted for four hours, including a forty-five-minute lunch break. Trained moderators facilitated the discussions and made

sure that the discussion rules were followed. First, each participant put forward a theme related to the immigration issue. The discussion started with these issues and was free—the moderators interfered only if any of the group members dominated or completely withdrew from the discussion. After deliberation, each participant filled in a post-test survey.

The main result of the experiment was that all participants in the anti-immigration enclave became more liberal. This was especially true in the mixed treatment, where the groups consisted of four anti- and pro-immigrants each, but also in the like-minded groups consisting of participants with initially negative views on immigration. Within the pro-immigration enclave, participants in the mixed treatment did not change their preferences, whereas a slight polarization into a liberal direction could be traced in the pro like-minded groups. Especially those pro-immigration participants in like-minded groups who did not learn in the course of deliberation became polarized, that is, even more liberal in the post-deliberation measurement (Grönlund et al. 2015). The results support a central theoretical assumption in deliberative democracy, which claims that all opinions should not have an equal weight in the process of public reasoning. Reasonable arguments appealing to generalizable moral principles should be powerful, whereas arguments based on attitudes such as prejudice should be ‘laundered’ in the course of deliberation (Goodin 1986). Thus, our interpretation of the outcome of the experiment was that deliberation is different from free discussion. The deliberative package with information material and discussion rules emphasizing respect, equality, and reflection can be particularly useful if we want to prevent group polarization in like-minded groups (Grönlund et al. 2015).

The *data* that can be collected through a deliberative mini-public experiment are plentiful. First, survey instruments are good for tracing changes in opinions. Comparisons can be made in two ways: (1) within treatments, using the pre-test, post-test design and measuring the same individuals before and after deliberation; (2) a post-test-only strategy can be used by comparing treatment group(s) with a control group. Both methods have some weaknesses. Using the within treatments method, a phenomenon called ‘regression to the mean’ might be a problem. Regression to the mean is a phenomenon where measuring the same sample twice—such as in a pre-test, post-test design—tends to lead to regression towards the group’s natural mean upon the second measurement, creating an illusion of a treatment effect (Torgerson and Torgerson 2008, 10–15). Using the between treatments method, one must be certain that the randomization has succeeded, and that the treatment and control groups are not different in certain characteristics, such as education, age, or gender. In small samples, this might be an issue. Thus, if possible, a combination of within treatments and between treatments testing can reduce the risk of false findings, especially to reduce type I errors caused by regression to the mean.

Second, data can be generated to analyse the contents and dynamics of deliberation. For this, the discussions need to be at least audio recorded and transcribed. Such endeavours are often time-consuming, at least with rarer languages such as Finnish and Swedish, involving manual transcriptions and coding (Himmelroos 2012;

Himmelroos and Christensen 2014), but they can also be automated, as Kaiping Chen (2019, chapter 2) demonstrates. There is no clear-cut standard for content analysis of deliberation, but the most promising tool for measuring the ‘deliberativeness’ of discussions is the Discourse Quality Index (DQI), developed by Steenbergen et al. (2003), through an analysis of discussions in the British House of Commons. Another way of analysing deliberation in small groups is to look at the dynamics with the help of network analysis (Gerber 2014): who addresses whom and how? For analysing the dynamics of the behaviour in groups, video recording is another possibility, but the interference of cameras would, of course, present another treatment, which ideally should be controlled for (microphones are less conspicuous than cameras). In addition, the moderators can be surveyed or interviewed afterwards. We have used this method in order to trace social pressures at the small group level, and compared these surveys with similar survey questions to participants (Setälä et al. 2010).

Conclusion

Experiments on deliberative democracy most commonly study *micro-level phenomena*. A typical deliberative experiment asks what kinds of individual-level outcomes certain institutional arrangements have. For example, we can test whether deliberative discussion produces the types of outcomes it is claimed to produce, or study more specifically different ways to organize deliberative discussions and study their consequences. Apart from naturally occurring ones, experiments are not well suited to studying *macro-level phenomena* because control and experimental manipulation are hard to achieve at the macro level. However, naturally occurring experiments allow for a study of macro-level effects. An example is the use of democratic innovations in certain municipalities and not in others (e.g. Touchton and Wampler 2014). Comparing those municipalities, where democratic innovations are used to those where they are not, can also be done with regard to certain macro-level indicators, for example, voter turnout. In principle, it is also possible to study cross-country variation, but differences between democratic systems makes this even harder than comparing variation within a country at the local level.

Controlled experiments are harder to implement at the macro or even meso level. Therefore, experimental research is not likely to give answers to current issues on the systemic nature of deliberative democracy (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012). We are not able to experimentally manipulate the deliberativeness of a whole democratic system and test the consequences.

Although a large number of experiments with deliberative mini-publics have already been carried out, it is clear that there is room for more experimentation in the field. We separate four areas of interest where we see a need for further experiments, but it is likely that there are other relevant directions for future research. Controlled experiments are typically conducted within a certain context, whereas systematic comparative experimental research, for example, between countries, is lacking. Thus,

it would be important to obtain knowledge of the context dependency of experimental results, and to increase the external validity of the results. Second, there are a number of ways to organize mini-publics, and we lack comparative evidence on the influence of different types of mini-publics on the consequences of deliberation. Third, we also lack knowledge as to how certain individual-level psychological processes interact with participation in deliberative discussion (Mercier and Landemore 2012). We know that people tend to be biased in their information processing, that is, mainly seeking evidence that confirms their existing views (Lodge and Taber 2013), but we do not know whether taking part in deliberative discussion would alleviate these types of biases. And finally, while it seems to create certain problems, it also seems essential to run mini-public experiments that have connections to real-world political decision-making in order to be able to test how being part of a real decision-making process influences the consequences of deliberation, both amongst the participants and in the mini-public as a whole.

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Deliberative Field Experiments

Jon Kingzette and Michael Neblo

In recent years, scholars and practitioners of deliberation alike have begun conducting ‘field’ experiments. By field experiments, we mean to designate systematic attempts to understand the causal dynamics of deliberation by manipulating features of the system: (1) in naturalistic settings (rather than merely via surveys or in labs); (2) on real political issues (rather than merely hypothetical scenarios); and (3) engaging a broad cross-section of people, generally in a specific political jurisdiction potentially affected by pending political action (rather than merely whichever college sophomores are at hand). We typically conduct field experiments—as opposed to other types of experiments (on scenario experiments, see Werner and Muradova, Chapter 13 in this volume; on experimental methods, see Grönlund and Herne, Chapter 11 in this volume)—to enhance the scientific generalizability and practical relevance of the research. That is to say, scientifically, well-executed field experiments enhance the external validity of the results, and practically, they can contribute to real politics (Neblo et al. 2017; Green et al. 2019; Esterling et al. 2022).

Below, we discuss the concept of a deliberative field experiment, how it relates to broader theories of deliberative democracy, how and when researchers can use deliberative research experiments, what types of research questions they help to answer, and how to manage trade-offs between internal and external validity. We also consider challenges associated with conducting deliberative field experiments including: (i) differential attrition; (ii) practical and ethical issues related to conducting research ‘in the wild’ of real politics; (iii) difficulty in manipulating (or even determining) the ‘dosage’ of the treatment; and (iv) difficulty in distinguishing the precise mechanisms behind effects.

A Conception of Deliberative Field Experiments

As with all experiments, assignment into treatment is foundational for all inferences in field experiments. However, unlike laboratory or survey experiments, field experiments attempt to ‘simulate as closely as possible the conditions under which a causal process occurs’ to maximize generalizability (Gerber and Green 2011, 2). In the case of deliberative field experiments, the causal process that researchers aim to capture

is *how people make collective recommendations (and occasionally decisions) on political issues when they are given an opportunity to deliberate the issues with each other.* This conception of deliberative field experiments reveals four ways to delimit its boundaries vis-à-vis other types of experiments and non-experimental research on deliberation.

First, deliberative events must involve assignment into treatment and analyses that examine the impact of treatment to count as deliberative field experiments. This is important to emphasize because many well-known ‘experiments in deliberation’, used in the colloquial sense, are not experiments in the analytical sense used here. For example, there has been excellent research on the Oregon Citizens’ Initiative Review (e.g. [Knobloch et al. 2013](#)), but the main process employed by the Review does not involve constructing a control group nor does it involve measuring pre-discussion attitudes necessary for a repeated measures experiment. In short, it is very much in the field but not an experiment in the strict scientific sense.

Second, by *how people make collective recommendations*, we mean that when people participate in a deliberative event, they must expect the output to be (at least) considered by decision makers for it to be a deliberative field experiment. This separates deliberative field experiments from studies of what [Mansbridge \(1999\)](#) labels ‘everyday political talk’ (e.g. [Cramer Walsh 2004](#); [Mutz 2006](#)), because outputs of ordinary political conversations are not expected to be considered by decision makers. To be clear, we believe that educational forums and everyday political talk are important elements of a civic culture. They are just not the object of study in deliberative *field* experiments.

Third, by using the phrase *on political issues*, we mean that discussions must be on a real, pending political issue for them to constitute a deliberative field experiment. While we do not have the space here to dwell on what exactly we mean by ‘political’, one barometer for assessing whether a discussion covers a real-world issue is by determining whether some ‘public’ not participating in the experiment could potentially have some knowledge of the issue. For example, in a study investigating moderator effects, [Spada and Vreeland \(2013\)](#) conducted a deliberative experiment in a college course in which students deliberated on the slate of course requirements for the class. On our conception, this is not a deliberative field experiment because no one outside the class would have any knowledge of the issue.

Fourth, a deliberative experiment must occur in a naturalistic setting for it to be a field experiment. This easily disqualifies laboratory and survey experiments, but it does leave some ambiguity about what counts as ‘naturalistic’. Indeed, this leads to an important aspect of deliberative field experiments which makes them distinct from most other field experiments. Most scholars who conduct deliberative field experiments are typically interested in seeing what happens when people participate in deliberative events that are explicitly designed to elicit good outcomes ([Goold et al. 2012](#)). Akin to a drug trial, the hope is that deliberative field experiments create a healthier civic culture compared to the status quo. To achieve this goal, scholars

use a variety of tools, such as inviting expert panellists to provide information to participants (Fishkin 2018), providing written educational resources (Carman et al. 2015), or inviting a representative sample of constituents to a town hall with legislators (Minozzi et al. 2015). In the next section, we review theoretical reasons for this, but there is also a more fundamental ethical consideration. Because outputs from deliberative field experiments aim to inform decision-making on political issues, there is an ethical obligation to strive for high-quality deliberation, even while recognizing that there will always be shortcomings.

This is important because it changes how external validity ought to be assessed. Whether a process used in an experiment mimics aspects of political conversations as they typically occur is beside the point. Instead, the external validity of deliberative field experiments should be assessed based upon the extent to which the experimental environment is suited for answering a specific research question. For example, if a research question asks how deliberating in a group of co-partisans on a highly polarized policy issue influences affective polarization, then a study ought to ensure that co-partisans are indeed discussing a highly polarized issue with one another (in the treatment group). Moreover, because results may be contingent on the specific issue being discussed, researchers studying this question would enhance the generalizability of the study if they randomly assigned participants to discuss one of several highly polarized issues, instead of only one. Researchers would also enhance external validity if they studied this question amongst members of multiple political parties instead of one, etc.

While this example is necessarily limited, our hope is that it shows that achieving high external validity in deliberative field experiments is still challenging, even using these standards. Additionally, we urge caution in interpreting the results of a single deliberative field experiment. A study showing that Republicans' levels of affective polarization increase after deliberating about immigration policy does not definitely demonstrate how discussing any highly polarized issue influences affective polarization. In short, deliberative field experiments aim to provide a space to observe politics as it could be with innovations or reforms, not politics as it is under status quo conditions.

Deliberative Field Experiments and Conceptions of Deliberative Democracy

Field experiments are well suited for studying how attitudes and behaviours are impacted when people deliberate in spaces curated to foster positive outcomes. This makes them excellent tools for studying conceptions of deliberative democracy (Bächtiger et al. 2010; Neblo 2007), which often fuse descriptive theories about how politics actually works and normative theories about how politics ought to work (Chambers 2003; Gutmann and Thompson 1998; Habermas 1996; Neblo 2015).

For example, a central feature of [Gutmann and Thompson's \(1998\)](#) normative theory is that for a conversation about public policy to be truly deliberative, all parties to the conversation need to display mutual respect, listen to each other, and refrain from using arguments based upon self-interest. Additionally, these conversations should be inclusive of all stakeholders. Deliberative field experiments are capable of testing how incorporating these features into a deliberative environment influences citizens' attitudes. [Price and Cappella \(2002\)](#) did just this, showing how online deliberations can increase social trust and political engagement.

Similarly, [Neblo, Esterling, and Lazer \(2018\)](#) develop a variant on standard accounts of deliberative democracy tailored to the representational needs of modern, mass polities. The concept of 'directly representative democracy' hinges on the notion that elected representatives and their constituents should interact with each other on the issues in two ways. The first is ongoing republican consultation, which involves representatives seeking input from their constituents on public policies. The second is ongoing deliberative accountability, which includes representatives providing explanations for their policymaking activity to constituents. After laying the theoretical groundwork, their experiments then generate data on how citizens' attitudes change when representatives engage in these activities through online Deliberative Town Halls.

These are just two examples of how deliberative field experiments respond to theories of deliberative democracy. However, they are used to study many more phenomena ([Kielty et al. 2021](#); [Minozzi et al. 2022](#)). In the next section, we review a larger swathe of research questions that deliberative field experiments have aimed to address.

What Kinds of Questions Can Deliberative Field Experiments Answer?

In deliberative field experiments, scholars manipulate several aspects of the deliberative environment ([Gastil 2018](#), 277). These manipulations often include varying 'inputs'—for example, whether and how participants receive information about the issue ([Carman et al. 2015](#); [Neblo et al. 2018](#)). Researchers also manipulate attributes of the deliberative process itself such as the composition of discussion groups. For example, [Caluwaerts and Reuchamps \(2014\)](#) randomize whether participants are placed in homogeneous or heterogeneous discussion groups based on language, [Esterling et al. \(2015\)](#) use a natural experiment in which placement into discussion groups was random to study how heterogeneity of opinion influences satisfaction with the forum, and [Humphreys et al. \(2006\)](#) examine a deliberative event in which discussion leaders were randomly assigned. These articles respond to findings that homogeneous discussion groups tend to increase polarization ([Sunstein 2002](#)) as well as concerns about people with more power or knowledge ([Sanders 1997](#)) causing opinions to change in their preferred direction during deliberation.

While the above examples all involve manipulating specific aspects of the deliberative environment, some scholars study the total effects of attending a deliberative event. For example, [Luskin, Fishkin, and Jowell \(2002, 459–460\)](#) describe deliberative polling as a ‘grand treatment’ that involves participants anticipating the event, reading an issue brief with information about the issue they will discuss, engaging in small group discussions with other participants, hearing experts and politicians answer questions about the issue, and socializing with other participants outside the confines of official study activities (since deliberative polling typically involves bringing participants together from all over a country to one hotel). The goal of this process is to observe public opinion on an issue when people are informed about it and have an opportunity to deliberate on it with fellow citizens. As [Fishkin \(2018\)](#) reviews, deliberative polling has now occurred all over the world, and has also taken place in different types of political jurisdictions, but in each case the conveners have taken pains to create ‘on ramps’ into real political decision-making.

In short, scholars have conducted deliberative field experiments to study particular parts of deliberation and to examine the total effects of bringing ordinary people together to deliberate on real policy matters. We now turn to discussing the process of conducting a deliberative field experiment and the challenges of doing so. Our hope is that these sections function as a practical guide for scholars considering deliberative field experiments in addition to providing a brief overview of the process.

The Process of Deliberative Field Experiments

The process of conducting deliberative field experiments varies widely depending on whether deliberations are online (e.g. [Neblo et al. 2018](#); [Nyerges and Aguirre 2011](#); [Price and Cappella 2002](#)), face to face (e.g. [Luskin et al. 2002](#)), or both (e.g. [Carman et al. 2015](#); [Luskin et al. 2004](#); [Vlahos et al. 2021](#)), how informational materials are provided to participants, whether experts are involved in the deliberative process, and how many different discussion groups are created. However, as noted previously, features shared by all deliberative field experiments include the results of the forum somehow being available to relevant decision makers, the discussion being focused on a real political issue, and the experiment designed explicitly to achieve good outcomes. Additionally, though the particulars are different for each field experiment, we can speak in general terms about the process required for them.

First, researchers conducting deliberative field experiments need to recruit participants into their study ([Neblo et al. 2010](#)). The population from which participants are drawn depends on what decisions are being informed by the results of the forum and where those decisions are being made. Most existing research has involved studying people in a well-defined political constituency, which makes participants constitute a mini-public. As [Warren and Gastil \(2015, 567\)](#) write of mini-publics:

These bodies are comprised of anywhere from 20 to 200 or more ordinary citizens selected (rather than elected or self-selected) through near-random or stratified sampling. Once they are assembled, the citizen participants study an issue, deliberate, then provide advice on a policy issue or proposal to broader publics, to elected bodies, or to executive agencies. Minipublics are typically created or underwritten by an authoritative body, such as legislature, agency, or city council, and they supplement more familiar political processes.

As is alluded to in this passage, a goal of this stage is typically to recruit a sample of participants who are representative of the whole constituency on features such as age, ethnicity, gender, education, income, etc. This is often accomplished through random sampling.

Second, researchers then need to randomly assign participants to experimental conditions. In deliberative field experiments this often includes multiple treatment groups distinguished by varying features of the deliberative environment (Carman et al. 2015). For example, Neblo et al. (2018) randomize subjects into control, information-only, and full deliberation conditions to distinguish between information effects and deliberation effects per se. However, some researchers use repeated measures designs to assess the effects of deliberation. For example, instead of creating a control group or multiple treatment groups as a basis of comparison, Luskin et al. (2002) compare participants' attitudes after the deliberative event to the same participants' attitudes prior to the event.

There are advantages and disadvantages to using each design. The main strength of creating a control group or multiple treatment groups is that any significant differences between groups can be attributed to the effects of the deliberative event, as long as groups are balanced on covariates (Gerber and Green 2011, 7–8). Moreover, by using multiple treatment groups, researchers are able to distinguish the causal effects of interpersonal deliberation itself from the effects of other aspects of deliberative forums such as providing information to participants (Carman et al. 2015; Esterling et al. 2011b). The major disadvantage of using a between-subjects design is that it may be difficult to balance on covariates, because relevant covariates when studying political phenomena include demographic variables such as race, gender, age, and education as well as political variables such as political interest, ideology, and partisanship (Kingzette 2021, 76).

The main strength of using a within-subject design is that it ensures covariate balance on these variables, meaning that any outcome differences cannot be attributed to differences in the composition of the samples. An additional strength is that within-subject designs increase statistical power by effectively doubling sample size. However, using repeated measures could lead to problems of internal validity, as it is difficult to know if changes in participants' attitudes over time are due to the deliberative event itself, other events occurring in the broader political landscape, or response instability. An additional potential problem with within-subject designs is that they make it difficult to distinguish mechanisms of attitude change in experiments in

which there are multiple components such as expert panellists, informational packets, and deliberation itself. However, scholars can pre-emptively address this problem by surveying participants before they engage in each step of the process (Farrar et al. 2010; Hansen and Andersen 2004; Neblo et al. 2012).

One option is also to use a between-subjects and within-subject design simultaneously. This would involve creating a treatment and control group, but also measuring the attitudes of those in the treatment group at multiple times in the process. In a study of deliberative polling in the EU, Sanders (2012) was able to make between-subjects comparisons to confirm the causal effects of the event, but was also able to use within-subject comparisons to test potential mechanisms, finding that none of the proposed mechanisms (sampling bias, increased political knowledge, discussion quality, small group social conformity, and the influence of other actors) satisfactorily explain the attitude changes. While the best from an analytic point of view, the major disadvantage to this strategy is that it requires a large sample size and makes data collection more complex.

Third, after assigning participants to conditions, researchers will need to invite participants to attend the deliberative event(s) and make these events happen. At this stage in the process, there are few commonalities across studies, but we believe it worth mentioning that these events often take vast resources. For example, to conduct online Deliberative Town Hall events with members of Congress about a dozen times a year has required the assistance of several researchers, graduate students, and undergraduate students.

Fourth, sometime after the event itself, researchers collect data from participants, as well as people in any control groups. This usually includes a survey that gathers participants' attitudes, such as their opinions on the policy discussed in the forum, knowledge on the topic discussed, political efficacy, and reasoning behind their own opinions as well as those who disagree with them, and lagged effects of the treatment (Lazer et al. 2008; Lazer et al. 2015). Note that within-subject designs also require data collection from participants before the deliberative event, and often during the event as well.

Pitfalls of Deliberative Field Experiments and How to Address Them

At each stage of completing a deliberative field experiment, there are challenges that can threaten internal and external validity. When recruiting participants for a deliberative field experiment, one significant challenge is achieving representativeness. The reason why this is such a significant challenge is that there may be attrition between initial recruitment and the event itself (Karjalainen and Rapeli 2015), which represents a non-compliance problem. If non-compliance is correlated with any variables a researcher wants to balance on, then this can cause problems for inferring causal relationships by comparing averages across experimental conditions

(Esterling et al. 2011a). This sort of differential non-compliance can be addressed in several ways. One option is to use large monetary incentives to strongly encourage all participants in treatment groups to participate in the deliberative event. Another option is to oversample constituents who are less likely to comply with treatment in the recruitment and randomization stages, so the sample of people who attend the deliberative event is approximately representative, even if those initially recruited are not. A final option is to accept differential non-compliance, but then use methods of analysis that allow one to identify average treatment effects, even in the case of differential non-compliance (Esterling et al. 2011a).

A related challenge at the recruitment stage is recruiting a sizeable number of constituents into the study. Gathering enough participants is necessary to yield acceptable levels of statistical power to make inferences, but it is also often required for holding a successful event. From our limited observations, this challenge seems to have increased over the last several years, at least in the United States—survey response rates have plummeted (Keeter et al. 2017), people try to avoid members of the opposing party (Iyengar et al. 2019; Lelkes and Westwood 2017; Mason 2018), and trust in government institutions is at an all-time low (Pew Research Center 2019). One solution to this challenge is to provide financial incentives to participate or partner with research firms capable of recruiting large numbers of participants. Perhaps a simpler solution, however, is to identify the practices of deliberative field experiments that draw more constituents. For example, if researchers are recruiting through email, what subject lines and messages work the best? While these questions related to the marketing of deliberative events may not be of chief theoretical interest to most deliberative scholars, answering them may greatly assist in recruiting citizens into these studies. An additional way to address this problem is to use a within-subject design, which doubles statistical power, compared to a between-subjects design with the same number of participants. In some of our own research, we have turned to using a within-subject design precisely for this reason.

In the randomization stage of a deliberative field experiment, one challenge will be to decide whether to use a between-subjects design, within-subject design, or both at the outset. Depending on which design a researcher uses, there are several related challenges. For researchers using between-subjects designs, perhaps the most difficult aspect of randomization procedures is to achieve balance on covariates. One way to do this is to use block randomization. This involves creating several strata based upon combinations of covariates. For example, if it is important that treatment groups be balanced on age and education, we might create six groups of people who are: (1) college educated and between 18 and 40 years old; (2) non-college educated and between 18 and 40 years old; (3) college educated and between 40 and 65 years old; (4) non-college educated and between 40 and 65 years old; (5) college educated and over 65 years old; and (6) non-college educated and over 65 years old. Then, *within* each of those groups, we would use a randomization procedure to assign participants to experimental conditions. This process helps to achieve balance on covariates when sample sizes are not sufficiently large to guarantee balance using

simple randomization techniques. Alternatively, researchers can correct for covariate imbalances by controlling for these covariates in statistical models.

If researchers use a within-subject design, randomization will not be required, as every participant is in both a control and a treatment group. However, as mentioned previously, the central challenge of using this approach is that it is impossible to know with certainty whether changes in participants' attitudes from before and after the deliberative forum are due to the forum itself or other events in the broader political landscape. To mitigate against the concern that other factors cause pre-post changes, a couple of steps can be taken. First, holding deliberations on issues that are less salient makes it less plausible that external events change people's attitudes, and thus more plausible that the deliberative event causes any observed changes. Second, surveying participants closely before and after the deliberative event lessens the likelihood that observed changes are due to external events (Abernathy et al. 2019).

The stage of deliberative field experiments in which researchers actually hold deliberative events is likely the most arduous part of the entire process. It can involve ensuring participants find the location of the event, organizing multiple in-person or online sessions, bringing on moderators to lead discussion groups, inviting experts to speak on panels, ensuring technology is operating properly, and many other substantial logistical hurdles. Depending on the size and scope of the experiment and the experience level of the researchers, the experiment might require a project manager or consultation with others who have successfully conducted such events in the past.

After the deliberative event is over, participants will typically need to complete a post-survey. Just as in the transition between initial recruitment and attending a deliberative event, there is often attrition between the deliberative event and the post-survey. Indeed, in one ongoing study, we are finding that there is higher attrition in this stage of the process than between initial recruitment and the events, likely because in our initial recruitment strategy, we only invite people who are interested and able to attend the respective town hall to participate—people attend the online town hall to hear from their member of Congress, not to complete a (second) survey.

If this attrition is correlated with relevant covariates, it could cause problems for external validity, as the study population will no longer be representative of the broader constituency. If this attrition is correlated with relevant covariates *and* experimental conditions, there is a deeper problem of internal validity, as treatment and control groups will no longer be directly comparable. One way to address this issue is to use weighting, a process that helps correct for unrepresentative samples by giving more weight to responses from under-sampled subgroups and less weight to responses from over-sampled subgroups. Alternatively, differential attrition at this stage can be handled through principal stratification methods (Frangakis and Rubin 2002; Horiuchi et al. 2007), though in this case 'compliance type' would indicate whether someone is predicted to attrit from the study between the deliberative event and data collection instead of whether someone is predicted to attend the session itself (i.e. 'compliance type' would not actually be compliance with treatment). Matching methods could also be used, which would involve comparing similar

participants across experimental conditions and then aggregating to identify treatment effects (Imbens 2015). However, all of these methods work best when there are high numbers of participants in each experimental condition. For studies with fewer participants, differential attrition can represent a serious threat to valid inference.

Finally, we should also note that deliberative field experiments typically (if not always) violate the stable unit treatment value assumption (SUTVA), particularly dosage and spillover effects. SUTVA is violated if there is unmeasured variation in the dosage of the treatment and if one person's treatment affects another's. If we interpret deliberation as the treatment in such field experiments, then this assumption is almost never cleanly met. The whole point is that deliberating groups jointly create their own deliberative quality (dosage). Researchers have less experimental control because deliberative field experiments—by definition—are conducted 'in the wild'. For example, a participant in an online Deliberative Town Hall could be recorded as staying online the whole time but could be responding to emails instead of actually listening. There is no method for researchers to induce all participants to listen, and attention is difficult to measure. In addition, for all deliberative field experiments with a discussion group component, the different discussion groups introduce variation in the dosage of the treatment. While we can measure some aspects of these group dynamics (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Neblo et al. 2012) it is infeasible to capture all potential variations. Thus, while we applaud efforts to remediate violations of SUTVA in deliberative field experiments insofar as this is possible, we also want to make clear that at a certain point, this problem is intractable within this particular genre. The only way to manage the problem at a fundamental level is to combine results from a deliberative field experiment with those from a more controlled experiment—for example, one in which all but one of the 'deliberators' is really a confederate of the researcher with a script to follow. Even without combining different kinds of experiments, at least in some cases, the increased scientific generalizability and practical benefits of deliberative field experiments outweigh the decrease in internal validity compared to other study designs.

Conclusion

We have endeavoured to provide a conception of deliberative field experiments, summarize the types of research questions they are used to study, and review the processes and challenges of conducting them. We hope that the chapter will also function as a guide for scholars considering deliberative field experiments in thinking through theoretical, analytical, and practical issues. In closing, we only want to add that conducting deliberative field experiments can be very challenging, but also incredibly rewarding both in terms of scientific insight and in facilitating democratic innovation and reform.

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13

Scenario Experiments

Hannah Werner and Lala Muradova

The systemic turn in deliberative democratic theory ([Mansbridge et al. 2012](#)) has expanded not only the breadth of research questions on deliberation, but also the methodological repertoire with which they can be studied. In this chapter, we present scenario experiments as a method that is suitable to study deliberation at two different poles of the spectrum: micro processing in deliberation and macro effects of deliberative events on the wider public. In scenario experiments, people read a text or they hear and watch a video (a vignette), which is embedded within a survey. The vignette typically describes realistic deliberative processes using real examples and issues. At the same time, scenario experiments enable researchers to manipulate the variables of interest and precisely and randomly allocate respondents to treatment groups, which strengthens causal inference.

It is not the goal of this chapter to provide a comprehensive introduction to the experimental method (for this purpose, see Chapter 11 by Grönlund and Herne) or scenario experiments in general because several excellent handbooks are already available (e.g. [Druckman et al. 2011](#); [Mutz 2011](#)). Rather, our goal is to carve out its advantages for the study of deliberative processes. Scenario experiments cannot capture the complex interpersonal processes underlying a democratic deliberation, but they can be used as a complementary and powerful tool to study the processes which are either overlooked or impossible to disentangle by only studying real-world deliberation cases, especially when we look at the micro mechanism of internal deliberation and at the macro effects of deliberative events. In the following, we will briefly introduce vignette experiments, and then discuss how they can facilitate deliberation research. We then present innovations in the field of experimental research that can be useful for deliberation research. Lastly, we present recent examples of scenario experiments in deliberation research and end with a discussion of its limitations.

Scenario Experiments: A Brief Introduction

Scenario experiments, also called vignette experiments, are a subcategory of survey experiments. In general, survey experiments represent a marriage between two methods that are deeply rooted in the canon of the socio-scientific methods: large-N survey studies (see Chapter 14 by Gastil) and (previously mostly laboratory)

experiments (see Chapter 11 by Grönlund and Herne). The *survey* in ‘survey experiment’ refers to the use of survey sampling techniques to produce a large and heterogeneous sample (ideally representative of the target population, but not necessarily, since the causal inference is drawn from random allocation to treatment groups) on which the experiment is conducted. As Diana Mutz puts it, ‘it is the only kind of research design capable of simply and straightforwardly estimating population average treatment effects without complex statistical machinations’ (2011, 20). This is typically done through the use of online survey programming tools, such as Qualtrics. *Experiment* refers to the type of design where participants are randomly assigned to different treatment groups that vary on the independent variable (e.g. a citizens’ assembly is/is not convened to discuss a policy issue prior to a referendum). This clarification is important because it is different from the common use of the word ‘experiment’ in the deliberative field, where we often speak of a ‘deliberative experiment’ when talking about the (novel) implementation of a deliberative process (Gastil 2018). Likewise, the deliberative interventions initiated by researchers that include a pre- and post-design are thus not always experiments if they do not include random assignment to a treatment and a control group, or where the experimenter does not have full control over the manipulation (for a related discussion see Chapter 11 by Grönlund and Herne; see also Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2011). In recent years, survey experiments have become immensely popular in political science due to the possibility of programming them digitally, resulting in almost infinite possibilities for design with regard to the amounts and combinations of treatments or presentations of stimuli, and of filling in the surveys online, hence minimizing the costs of data collection and enabling a wider reach (Mullinix et al. 2015; Mutz 2011).

Scenario experiments are based on a particular type of experimental stimulus. Respondents are typically asked to imagine a hypothetical scenario. Often, these scenarios are described in short paragraphs of text (for alternative presentations, see the innovation section of this chapter). In deliberation research, this could be the description of a deliberative mini-public or a specific element thereof. Afterwards, respondents are asked questions about their perceptions of the described scenario, possibly including preferences, policy opinions, or assessments of legitimacy.

What Scenario Experiments Can Do for Deliberation Research

Deliberative democrats may be sceptical when considering the application of online-administered experiments to study deliberative processes. They may refer to a potential mismatch between methodological assumptions underlying scenario experiments and normative theories of deliberation. Scenario experiments require a high level of experimental control with small manipulations of specific contexts that individuals are exposed to. One might argue that deliberation is not what happens in

isolation but *between* people, in interaction with others (Dryzek et al. 2019). Online surveys with experimental stimuli, one might presume, can hardly create the same experience as an actual small-group deliberation. As Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2011) correctly suggest, experiments ‘may be particularly vulnerable to the disagreements between theorists and empiricists to the extent that their heightened levels of control bring more stylized and more artificial operationalizations of complex and multifaceted theoretical concepts’ (267). We agree that scenario experiments are not always suited to study *interpersonal* deliberation as a complex communicative and social phenomenon.¹ But we want to make the case that scenario experiments can advance our knowledge about specific elements of the deliberative processes, particularly when studying micro mechanisms of deliberation (see section on zooming in) or their connection to other spheres (see section on scaling up). Meanwhile, for those studying deliberative systems, scenario experiments can provide insights into causal relationships for isolated elements of a deliberative system, which should ideally be complemented with other methods, for instance, small-n methods that are more authentic and can account for the interconnectedness of elements.

We identify two potential families of research questions that we consider crucial to our understanding of deliberation and deliberative systems and for the study of which scenario experiments are ideally suited.

Research Area 1: Zooming In

First, even though theorists and qualitative researchers rightly note that deliberation is more than the sum of its parts, understanding the role each individual factor plays in enhancing deliberative outcomes is crucial (Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2011; Mutz 2011). This is particularly important for a systemic understanding of deliberation. Most scholars have moved away from considering only those interactions that fulfil high normative ideals as deliberative and towards embracing more *less-than-perfect* forms of deliberation. The argument is that these forms of deliberation, although imperfect on their own, could altogether contribute to larger deliberative systems. Thereby, gaining an understanding of causal inference in terms of the role of individual characteristics of deliberation has become a crucial task. This is especially the case for the study of individual cognitive processes in deliberation, sometimes referred to as *deliberation within* or reflection (Goodin 2003; Muradova 2020). Thus, tracing back the assumptions and goals of deliberative theory to micro processes of cognition has brought deliberation research ever closer to political psychology (see also Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2018; Muradova 2021; Myers and Mendelberg 2013). We consider scenario experiments as relevant tools for research because they enable: (a) more exact and controlled manipulation of key features; (b) cleaner causal

¹ Experimental designs do not, however, preclude us from recreating this kind of deliberation in subjects’ imagination, via scenarios (we discuss this more in the sections that follow).

inferences about their effects; and importantly (c) data collection across a heterogeneous group of respondents who go beyond the usual suspects who may participate in deliberative mini-publics. For example, if we want to study whether personal narratives within interpersonal deliberative settings can foster more engagement amongst underrepresented groups, for example citizens with lower levels of formal education or women, we can use scenario experiments. Although the scenario experiment in this case would not entirely approximate the real-world deliberation, it can give us some idea about the role and effect of these communicative elements for citizens' political reasoning and deliberation.

Research Area 2: Scaling Up

A second area of research question relates to recent expansions of the focus from what happens inside the deliberative minipublics to the embeddedness of such forums in the wider democratic system (e.g. Curato and Böker 2016; Fung 2015; Lafont 2017; Niemeyer and Jennstal 2018). Upscaling of deliberative events is a crucial task for deliberation scholars and practitioners. Since deliberative forums are typically rather small-scale, it is not enough to study whether they can have effects for the handful of people that are involved directly in these processes. To understand the role that deliberative events can play in democracies at large, their potential to affect the broader public is pertinent. Two linkages are of importance.

Deliberative forums can impact the wider public by shaping citizens' policy decisions by either motivating citizens to become interested in the issue and to get informed about it or by directly informing their preferences (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). Following Warren's (2017) account of a problem-based approach to democratic theory, a core function that can be fulfilled through deliberation is collective will formation. This alludes to deliberation in a broader sense than deliberative mini-publics, but it is still consequential for the role that mini-publics might play: stimulate collective will formation, not only amongst the participants but also the wider public (see Gastil 2018; Gastil et al. 2016; Ingham and Levin 2018; Suiter et al. 2020a). The case of the Irish Citizens' Assembly and its role in shaping public preferences with regard to the issue of abortion is an excellent example (Suiter 2018). For instance, research has found that statements from the Citizens' Initiative Review, presented in the context of a scenario experiment to the subjects, substantially improved knowledge about the issue (Gastil et al. 2016).

Deliberative forums are also often expected to foster perceived legitimacy of authorities and decisions that result from deliberative consultation. Again, while the legitimacy perceptions of the participants of the mini-publics are worth investigating, the bigger challenge is to boost perceived legitimacy amongst citizens who did not personally participate in these processes, who are mere *observers* of the process (Curato and Böker 2016; Goodin and Dryzek 2006; Pow et al. 2020).

For the study of both these outcome variables of interest, we make the case that scenario experiments are suitable. They provide information cues that mimic

information that citizens would encounter in the real world about the existence, procedural character, and outcome of a deliberative forum. At the same time, they allow for the exact manipulation of the type and content of information and the conditions under which the desired effects on policy opinions and legitimacy beliefs can occur.

Using Scenario Experiments in Deliberation Research

We identify five advantages of scenario experiments in complementing the existing methodological canon in deliberation research. The obvious advantage of any experimental approach is that it enables inferences about causal relationships. Since this major advantage is already discussed elsewhere (e.g. [Mutz 2011](#)), we will not address it here and will instead focus specifically on the advantages of scenario experiments.

Disentangling the Relative Role of Individual Design and Context Factors

While laboratory or field experiments have many other advantages, they usually constrain the number of independent variables that can be studied in conjunction. This has to do primarily with efforts related to introducing new treatments and, probably more importantly, with small sample sizes that are typical of ‘offline’ experiments. Survey experiments, in contrast, allow for the manipulation of a range of specific design and contextual factors of the deliberative process. This not only increases our knowledge of the individual role of these factors in achieving deliberative outcomes, but also further provides insights into their *combined effects* ([Mutz 2011](#)). Scenario experiments enable us to study a new range of research questions. For instance, is it more important for citizens’ perceptions of legitimacy that deliberative forums are demographically representative on the national level rather than on the local level? Or are different designs desirable depending on the conflictual nature of the policy issue in question?

Increasing Experimental Realism

A challenge to all experimental studies is achieving high levels of external validity. The same holds true for experiments on deliberation. Often, laboratory experiments create highly abstract decision-making situations, such as the division of money between members of a group, that are in many ways detached from actual political processes in the real world (see, for instance, [Dickson et al. 2008](#); [Sulkin and Simon 2001](#)). Other times, laboratory experiments involve citizens discussing a policy issue in small groups ([Muradova 2020](#)), but the results of these discussions are not

connected to realistic policymaking. Scenario experiments can depict processes that mimic policy decision-making processes in the real world. The freedom and flexibility of the method allows for modelling of scenarios that directly connect to processes and policy debates in the region or community under study. Issues can be selected based on ongoing public debates at the time of data collection or on real recommendations made by an existing deliberative organ (see, for example, [Suiter et al. 2020a](#)). Lastly, online survey tools allow for individual adaptations of the scenario, for instance, by inserting the name of the respondent's municipality into the text.

When thinking particularly about the emerging research agenda on the macro effects of small-scale deliberation processes, scenario experiments can realistically convey similar amounts and types of information as citizens would receive in the real world. Stimuli could, for instance, take the form of media coverage, such as newspaper articles or television clips (see, for example, [Suiter et al. 2020b](#)).

Going beyond the Usual Suspects: Representative Samples

A key advantage of survey experiments, as outlined above, is the combination of causal inference methods with diverse and heterogeneous sampling techniques. The opportunity to study the relationships of interest amongst representative or at least heterogeneous samples of the population holds two key advantages for deliberation research. First, a prominent concern amongst deliberative democrats and their critics is that deliberation and deliberative forums are primarily appealing to a specific set of people—those who are already highly interested in politics, hold high levels of formal education and socioeconomic status, and belong to ethnic and cultural majorities in society.² Since these groups already have access to political power through representation, providing them with extra channels for policy input may actually be a bad idea, so the argument goes. Irrespective of whether this critique actually holds empirically (for counterexamples, see [Neblo et al. 2010](#)), scholars should take these concerns seriously when studying deliberation. Studying participants' views, experiences, and preferences alone will give us only an incomplete picture of deliberation. Following Karpowitz and Mendelberg's (2011, 268) recommendation that 'how those who were not part of the discussion understand deliberating groups is a topic worth considerable additional study', we emphasize here that survey experiments facilitate the study of people who would not usually turn out to a deliberative event (as well as those who would). By posing an extremely low barrier for participation (fast, practical, flexible), survey experiments can enable us to study groups that usually refrain from all things political.³ However, one must be sensitive to other types of

² Alternatively, other groups of people, although not necessarily unwilling to participate in these processes, may be faced with other, structural inequalities.

³ Of course, the actual representativeness of the sample depends on the sampling technique, which in turn depends on the agency that recruits respondents. This can range from market research companies (cheap, but they usually sample from their own pre-recruited subject pool and not from the whole

exclusion that may occur through this method, such as Internet access that may be less available to older people or in regions of the world where access is more restricted.

Second, the opportunity to obtain representative samples of the population allows for the study of heterogeneous effects across subgroups. One strand of literature within deliberative theory points out the potentially exclusionary and elitist nature of 'rational arguments'. To remain inclusive of all groups in society, the acknowledgement of other types of communication styles was called for, such as personal stories, narratives, or other forms of emotional speech, as part of the repertoire of legitimate reasoning techniques (e.g. see Sanders 1997; Young 1996 for the initial critique; Bächtiger et al. 2010 for a recent perspective). These theoretical debates can be enriched and complemented by survey experimental research. For instance, it could be tested whether certain types of reasoning indeed speak to different demographic groups better and thus can serve as measures to make deliberation attractive to, and useful for, everyone. Accordingly, survey experiments can be important tools in studying how to overcome inequalities in deliberation.

Thinking about Statistical Power

A common although little-discussed problem in quantitative deliberation research is that of statistical power. Simply put, power describes the probability of obtaining significance values that reject the null hypothesis (below the chosen alpha level, for instance .05) when the alternative hypothesis is true. Thus, the more power a study has, the less likely it becomes to falsely accept the null hypothesis (to make a Type II error). Power is a function of the *size* of the effect and the *sample size* of the study. This means, particularly when studying small effects, that sufficiently large sample sizes are required to detect these effects. Indeed, as in most social science research, deliberation research usually yields small effects. At the same time, actual deliberative events often involve only a small number of people, hence they struggle to achieve sufficient levels of power (usually considered above 80 per cent). Survey experiments with bigger samples and enough power thus provide the opportunity to obtain valid and reliable estimates of causal relationships.

Last but Not Least: Costs

While there is great value in conducting real-life deliberative experiments, they are also immensely costly. Survey experiments cost only a fraction (depending on the sampling method), both in terms of the price of data collection itself and of time and

population) to panels set up for research practices, such as TESS at the University of Pennsylvania (more expensive or application based, but often use probability samples drawn from registry data).

personnel. This has two important implications for deliberation research. The first relates to the questionable generalizability of findings obtained from countries with high research resources, the so-called WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic) countries. By developing low-cost tools to conduct deliberation research, we can open the doors to scholars working in countries with limited resources (e.g. in the Global South but also Southern and Eastern Europe). In this vein, low-cost survey experiments also facilitate comparative research projects, with the same experiments being run in several regions of the world, which are to date rare in deliberative research. Second, as outlined by [Mutz \(2011\)](#), the affordability of survey experiments makes it possible to spread resources across several studies, opening up avenues for replication and follow-ups on interesting research findings. As such, they can contribute greatly to cumulative and reliable knowledge creation in deliberation research.

Illustrative Examples

In this section, we showcase some examples of how survey experiments have been used in the study of deliberation.

Micro Processes in Deliberation

[Strickler \(2018\)](#) conducted two scenario experiments (one online and another telephone-based) to examine the extent to which individuals' adherence to deliberative discursive norms is conditioned by their partisanship. More specifically, he tested the effect of partisan social identities on citizens' attitudes to reciprocity when exposed to disagreement. Subjects in his scenario experiment were first asked about the extent and dimensions of their partisan attachment. Further, individuals were asked to indicate their position on two policy issues—immigration and civil liberties. The subjects were exposed to a counterargument, which was attributed to either a Democrat, a Republican, or a person without a party identifier. After the stimuli, respondents were asked to answer a set of questions tapping into the concept of reciprocity. The results of the research indicate that party cues moderate the relationship between disagreement and citizens' attitude of reciprocity. In other words, subjects in the experiments were more likely to consider in-party disagreement with an open mind while they were less likely to do so for out-party disagreement. Thereby, by researching two crucial components of deliberation—exposure to disagreement and reciprocity—with the help of a scenario experiment, the author could examine one of the conditions under which citizens are more (or less) willing to adhere to deliberative discursive ideals.

The Effects of Deliberative Mini-publics on Opinion Formation amongst the Broader Public

Ingham and Levin (2018) conducted scenario experiments in the United States to investigate whether knowledge of deliberation outcomes can stimulate citizens to update their opinions on policy issues. Their experiment was included in a national-representative online survey. Participants first read a short introductory text about the potential changes to social security on different issues. Afterwards, they were randomly assigned to one of the issues and received either no text (control group) or different texts that described the occurrence of a citizen assembly, resulting in different recommendations and different reactions by a congressional panel. The respondents were then questioned on their opinions on the policy proposals. The authors find that, while information cues about a mini-public and their recommendation can increase support for the policy proposal, this is not the case for all issues. Further, it seems that hearing about the advice by a mini-public prompts people to doubt their initial policy preferences by increasing their uncertainty about the policies. This experimental approach allowed the authors to study citizens' reactions to a simple deliberative cue under different conditions. By including two different policy issues in the design, they were able to detect differences in effects, depending on the issue at hand.

The Effects of Deliberative Mini-publics on the Legitimacy Perceptions of the Broader Public

Boulianne (2018) similarly studied the macro impacts of small-scale deliberation processes, also focusing on perceptions of legitimacy. She conducted two scenario experiments that were connected to real ongoing deliberative processes in Edmonton (climate change) and Alberta (energy efficiency) in Canada, that had received little media attention. Both experiments had two conditions: a control condition in which respondents did not receive any information, and a treatment condition in which respondents read a short text. The vignettes described the mini-publics' processes and policy recommendations. After reading the paragraph, respondents were questioned about their policy preferences, trust in government in the respective policy areas, and political efficacy. The findings differ between the two studies, which can be due to several factors, such as the different policy issues or other features of the process. This study illustrates the trade-offs that scholars face when designing scenario experiments. While using a real case increases external validity, it also constrains the freedom to manipulate elements of the process or the recommendations of deliberative minipublics, which would consequently help uncover a more precise understanding of the mechanisms.

Innovations in Survey Experimental Research

Survey experimental research is an exciting field with many innovations in the design, fielding, and analysis of experiments. Some of these innovations are fruitful for deliberation research. First, as the previous examples have shown, the challenge in web-based experiments is the design of clear and realistic stimuli that explain often-unknown deliberative processes to respondents while maintaining a high level of attention and engagement. One potential solution to this is to present the stimuli with the help of audio-visual material rather than text (for an example, see [Werner and Marien 2020](#); [Suiter et al. 2020b](#)). This can improve citizen engagement with the content, increase attention, and clarify and emphasize the important pieces of information.⁴ This mode can also approximate the real-world information flow for many people, who mostly find out about local and national events by watching television. One straightforward and comparatively cost-efficient approach is to create animated movies with voice-over text. Multiple tools to create such movies are available online and require only basic knowledge of image and sound editing. While we consider this a fruitful innovation for deliberation research, studies that compare the effects of texts and audio-visual material are needed.

Second, the increasing use of *conjoint experiments* expands the possibilities for designing scenario experiments ([Hainmueller et al. 2014](#)). Conjointly simultaneously test multiple factors, resulting in a number of conditions (often above 100), which is unthinkable in standard (laboratory) experiments. Since the factors are orthogonal to each other, their independent effect can be assessed across all other independent variables, which can help ensure generalizability. There are two ways in which conjointly can be useful for the study of deliberation. First, they allow for the simultaneous study of multiple elements that characterize deliberative processes, such as the composition of the participant group, effective influence, the structure of the assembly, the role of politicians in the process, and so on. Second, conjointly can increase generalizability because they investigate one or a few variables of interest while taking contextual factors into account. Hence, the individual effect of, say, the participant recruitment method for deliberative events could be tested across contextual factors, such as different levels of government or policy issues. First studies such as [Christensen \(2020\)](#) or [Goldberg and Bächtiger \(2022\)](#) made use of conjoint analysis to study citizens' preferences for different design components of a participatory process.

Challenges of Scenario Experiments

So far, we have demonstrated the advantages of scenario experiments. We conclude our chapter by discussing some of its limitations. First, external validity and

⁴ Some may argue that this type of exposure makes it difficult to make a cleaner causal claim, due to the impossibility of controlling for the effect of different visual cues.

generalizability must be assessed critically with every scenario experiment. Even if experimental stimuli are designed in a realistic fashion, they are still presented in the context of a survey and hence detached from everyday political life (Barabas and Jerit 2010). To date we lack reliable systematic knowledge about whether and under which conditions the results obtained with scenario experiments match findings from real cases, particularly because it is unclear what the benchmark would be (e.g. comparing the findings to a cross-sectional survey study might be inconclusive since none of the two studies can credibly claim to hold authority over ‘true’ effects). Existing research remains ambiguous about the generalizability of scenario experiments, with some studies finding supporting evidence (e.g. Hainmueller et al. 2015; Mullinix et al. 2015) and others drawing more pessimistic conclusions (Barabas and Jerit 2010).

A second concern is that some scenario experiments may fail to meet the *information equivalence* assumption, crucial for experiments, designed with the aim of studying the real-world effects of some factor or attribute, presented as an informational piece. In other words, it is assumed that when reading about the vignette, citizens’ beliefs about background characteristics of the *treatment* are not affected. This is an important assumption, particularly for experiments aimed at examining *epistemic* effects, that is, ‘the effects of changing subjects’ beliefs about some factor of interest, holding constant beliefs about background features of the scenario (background beliefs)’ (Dafoe et al. 2018, 400). This is less of a problem when studying informational effects where the experimental treatment and the naturally occurring treatment are very similar (as is the case with the macro-research questions described previously). To the extent that this assumption holds true (citizens think about a group of *different* people coming together to talk about an important issue in an open, equal, and tolerant environment, when reading about the word *deliberation*), we are talking about the real effects. To the extent that it does not (citizens shift their beliefs, for instance, because they thought of a group of highly educated, middle-aged, male citizens coming together to show off how smart they are), the effect obtained can be easily attributable to some other aspect of the manipulation. Accordingly, the internal validity of the experiment can be questioned. Several strategies have been proposed to ensure information equivalence, such as manipulation checks (see Dafoe et al. 2018). In addition to these suggestions, we propose another strategy, perhaps more relevant to deliberation research. We believe scenario experiments can embed a short definition of the treatment—the concept we are trying to manipulate in the experiment—within the vignette. For example, if our treatment is a mini-public as a decision-making body, we could provide the respondents with a short definition of what a mini-public is and what it entails. In this way, we can prevent them from updating their beliefs about the term ‘mini-public’ and keep the definition constant in their reasoning.

Despite the above-mentioned challenges, scenario experiments provide us with unique opportunities to disentangle and test the effects of different *types*, *dimensions*, and *components* of public deliberation under different conditions and contexts amongst larger and more heterogeneous populations. The lessons learned from

these experiments contribute not only to the advancement of deliberation research, but also to the innovation of institutional design to improve the functioning of democracies.

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Survey Methods

John Gastil

Social scientific surveys are essential in research on deliberation because they provide the most reliable means of measuring and aggregating public attitudes. Deliberative theory addresses the development of public judgement, the wax and wane of democratic legitimacy, and the public's willingness to weigh opposing views. Surveys are essential to measuring all of these.

Surveys have been used effectively to both challenge and buttress the premises of deliberative democracy. For example, [Hibbing and Theiss-Morse \(2002\)](#) used survey data to show that Americans want government to act on their behalf, rather than asking them to deliberate on complicated issues. This finding bolstered scepticism about deliberation until a more precise study of public attitudes found that people were willing to engage when given a realistic expectation of having influence ([Neblo et al. 2010](#); [Neblo et al. 2018](#)).

Survey methods also provide the foundation for the most recognizable reform inspired by deliberative democratic theory. 'Mini-publics' gather a randomly selected microcosm of the public to study and comment on policy questions, and they typically use survey methods to recruit their participants. For many mini-publics, surveys also measure opinion shifts within the deliberative body ([Fishkin 2018](#)) or trace their wider influence on the public at large ([Már and Gastil 2019](#)).

In this chapter, I will examine these and other uses of surveys as a research tool by deliberation scholars and practitioners. I begin by reviewing the basic theoretical assumptions of this method, then review methods of data collection and analysis. Afterwards, I provide strong examples of surveys conducted with the participants in deliberative events, followed by studies that survey larger populations. In the conclusion, I consider how surveys might help advance the theory and practice of deliberation in the future.

What Surveys Assume, Reasonably and Otherwise

Broadly defined, a survey asks a respondent to answer a series of questions then repeats that process across a large enough number of people so that one can generalize its findings to an even larger population. To make this aggregation possible,

most survey questions are closed-ended, which means that respondents must choose their responses from a list provided.

Although many of the assumptions underlying surveys have been challenged for reasons that are important to deliberative theory, researchers have found ways to mitigate these problems.¹ First, deliberation requires the inclusion of diverse voices, and critics worry that surveys produce biased population samples or cause people holding unpopular views to censor themselves when responding. Indeed, surveys must attend to both hazards of random sampling and social desirability bias, but these can be managed by setting response quotas for (or even oversampling) historically marginalized social groups and through careful question phrasing that invites unpopular responses and reassures respondents of their anonymity.

A more fundamental assumption in surveys is that people hold real attitudes and can express them cogently by responding to survey questions. In fact, researchers have found that people sometimes express opinions when they have none. These 'non-attitudes' are given to satisfy the interviewer's request for an answer, or they can reflect inattentiveness to the survey itself (Alvarez et al. 2019; Saris and Sniderman 2004). Thus, a respondent might oppose a non-existent law or express a view about something they do not grasp, such as nanotechnology. Even genuine responses to a policy attitude question constitute a reaction to particular words, rather than to the objects those words are meant to represent. Thus, respondents may identify themselves as 'conservative' or 'liberal' to express their feelings about those exact words, rather than any underlying ideology those words purport to measure.

Surveys address these problems in several ways. For example, to reduce the weight of particular words in a survey, researchers use multi-item scales and require reasonably consistent responses to make inferences about respondents' underlying attitudes. To capture elusive non-attitudes, researchers often preface questions to emphasize this option (e.g. 'or do you have no opinion one way or the other?').

More generally, researchers can understand their surveys as a conversation between respondent and interviewer rather than a direct measurement of attitudes. In this view, a person's response to survey items amounts to a quasi-public statement of what they believe, which often translates into behaviours, such as voting in elections. After all, voters sometimes back a populist candidate or vote for a referendum to 'send a message', even though they do not support the policies the candidate or referendum represents.

Finally, surveys assume the validity of subjective assessments that respondents provide about their experiences, such as when they must rate the quality of a deliberative process in which they participated. These subjective accounts, however, do not always accord with objective measures or content analyses of the same deliberative events (Gastil et al. 2012). Some forms of recollection are less problematic than others, but the most defensible position is that subjectivity is important. After all, who is in a

¹ For a balanced critique of the survey enterprise and its history, see Herbst (1993). For a detailed description of survey methods, see Dillman et al. (2009).

better position to report on whether a respondent felt respected or silenced during a deliberation—the participant or a neutral third party? It may be useful to have multiple measurement methods, but in cases such as these, participants' subjective accounts matter.

Survey Data Collection and Analysis

When studying public deliberation, it is easiest to separate surveys into two varieties—surveys of specific deliberative bodies and broader public surveys. These two types of survey present different challenges and call for different methods of data collection.

Sampling Methods

For deliberative bodies of citizens such as mini-publics and juries, one can aspire to and achieve exceptionally high survey response rates (e.g. 70 per cent and higher). After all, the population that one aspires to survey has already self-selected as being responsive, whether to a jury summons or a less formal invitation. Surveys of participants in deliberative events are typically conducted on paper or with online applications (via mobile devices, laptops, etc.), but mail, phone, or Internet surveys may precede or follow such events.

For broader surveys, attaining higher response rates presents a greater challenge, and obtaining a statistically representative sample of a diffuse population can be costly. Even for the venerable Pew Research Center, phone response rates have collapsed—all the way down to 6 per cent in 2018 (Kennedy and Hartig 2019). Turning to online surveys can still provide broadly representative samples, but only when paying the higher price required to access professionally maintained panels of respondents. More common are 'nonprobability samples' of online respondents, provided through a lower-cost commercial vendor. Even when one must use demographic quotas to align a survey sample with a population's census parameters, such samples are useful for survey experiments, which benefit from diverse samples without requiring representative ones.

Measurement

Surveys used in deliberation research typically measure demographics, policy attitudes, policy-relevant knowledge, political orientations, and other variables relevant to hypotheses, such as personality traits, previous political experiences, etc. Surveys of participants in deliberative events also often include retrospective assessments of the deliberative experience itself. None of these question sets are standardized within

the deliberation literature, and researchers commonly turn to other literatures for specific survey items.

A vexing problem for survey researchers studying deliberative events concerns the measure of deliberation itself. This should not surprise those familiar with the multiplicity of theoretical definitions for the term ‘deliberation’ (Bächtiger et al. 2018). In practice, survey measures of deliberative experience generally have measured two aspects—the rigor of a deliberative body’s policy analysis and the democratic social quality of its discussions.

The 2009 Australian Citizens’ Parliament provides a useful example because it used both observer ratings and survey measures (Gastil 2013). On the two main days of the process, trained observers rated the analytic rigor of the process somewhat favourably (5–5.6 on a scale from 1–9) and gave higher ratings to its democratic social process (6.2–6.9 on the same scale range). This finding generally accorded with participants’ assessments: 76 per cent of respondents said that their fellow citizens ‘stated positions without justifying them’ only ‘occasionally’ or ‘never’, and 85 per cent felt that other participants treated them with respect ‘almost always’.

There also exists a diversity of approaches to measuring the policy knowledge and attitude changes that occur as a result of deliberation. The most straightforward approach uses single-item measures before and after deliberation to track change, but repeated measures at different stages of a deliberation can illuminate more clearly when participants shift their beliefs (Farrar et al. 2010). Multi-item measures of policy attitudes can also reveal the degree to which participants have adopted more coherent clusters of attitudes as a result of deliberating (Gastil and Dillard 1999; Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007). A more demanding approach codes the content of open-ended responses to measure the full repertoire of arguments that a participant develops on an issue (Cappella et al. 2002), which can show how deliberation helps people consider multiple perspectives.

Unit of Analysis and Statistical Power

Surveys of deliberative bodies face a challenge common to all studies of human groups—the tension between the individual and the group as the focal unit of analysis. For example, a public opinion researcher might draw a sample of 400 individuals to create a large sample with enough ‘statistical power’ to detect even small differences in attitudes amongst respondents (Cohen 1988). If a sample is too small, it cannot reliably test hypotheses because any failure to produce a statistically significant result could be explained by the study’s inadequate sample size.

Deliberation scholars employing surveys often work with large samples of individuals, but these respondents are rarely independent observations. Instead, the respondents to these surveys are often interacting with each other in smaller groups. For example, recent studies of deliberative events have attempted to disaggregate the effects of individual differences versus group/network-level differences in

participants' experiences (Bonito et al. 2014; Christensen et al. 2016; Farrar et al. 2010; Suiter et al. 2014; Tucker and Gastil 2013). Deliberative events are often singular affairs, as in the case of a mini-public where the sample size is one (i.e. one mini-public). Studies measuring group-level effects typically resort to comparing breakout sessions within such events. This often results in a modest group-level sample size (e.g. 150 people broken into groups of 5 has a group-level $N = 30$).

To appreciate the severity of this problem, consider the cautionary tale of the most ambitious randomized controlled trial in this field of study (Carman et al. 2015). A team of investigators sought to measure the impact of four alternative deliberative methods on public knowledge and attitudes towards evidence-based medicine. Nearly a thousand study participants participated in seventy-six twelve-person groups across the US, with another 377 in a control group that read materials without discussion. Survey measures showed results generally in the predicted direction, but with small to moderate effect sizes observed at the group level of analysis, few of the observed differences reached statistical significance.

As a general guideline for comparative studies using group-level analyses, researchers need to have fifty groups for each deliberative method. This provides sufficient statistical power so long as the researcher posits directional hypotheses and expects a moderate effect size, such as when predicting that Method A will outperform Method B on some survey metric.² If the expected effect sizes are smaller, the necessary sample size doubles or triples, and non-directional research questions require even larger samples. To date, no large-scale comparative study has met this standard for adequate statistical power at the group level of analysis. These demanding guidelines for group-level sample size often lead researchers to study smaller laboratory groups that meet only briefly (Gastil et al. 2008; Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014). Unfortunately, it can be difficult to generalize from these groups to more intensive mini-publics that have professional facilitators and more meaningful political contexts.

Panellist Survey Examples

To appreciate the variety of survey purposes and methods, the remainder of this chapter provides examples of studies focused on either (a) the participants in deliberative events ('deliberative panellists') or (b) wider publics. When studying panellists, the three most common approaches are to conduct a survey before, during, after, or long after a process. Surveys taken beforehand establish a baseline, whereas those taken after a deliberation either look for change over time or comparisons across groups. Surveys during an event can measure unfolding processes, whereas those taken long after a process concludes can assess long-term impacts or panellist reflections.

² For details on how to make such power calculations, see Cohen (1988).

End-of-Process

Even those researchers who have access to a deliberative panel before it begins its work sometimes hesitate to record baseline measures of attitudinal variables for fear of anchoring panellists to those pre-deliberation beliefs. This worry is more than theoretical. [Baccaro et al. \(2016\)](#) found that students in deliberations on immigrant civil liberties were less inclined to change their opinions if they stated their views on a pre-deliberation questionnaire. This baseline survey was taken just before deliberation began, but that practice is common for low-budget processes that do not attempt to collect random samples of participants far in advance of a deliberative event ([Gastil and Dillard 1999](#)).

The Citizens' Juries process represents a mini-public that eschews baseline surveys ([Crosby and Nethercutt 2005](#)) out of a concern for anchoring attitudes. It provided the blueprint for the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review, which uses a stratified sample of twenty to twenty-four citizens to analyse a ballot measure and write a one-page voting aid that gets distributed to the full electorate. The absence of a pre-deliberation attitude measure has forced researchers to ask panellists to report their initial opinions retrospectively at the end of their multi-day deliberations ([Gastil et al. 2015](#)), which raises concerns about the validity of any self-reported attitude changes.

In experimental settings, however, post-only measurement has a strong justification when random assignment permits the assumption of equivalent pre-deliberation scores for participants in control and treatment groups. A recent study on the behavioural impact of deliberative discussion took this approach and found no significant effects of discussing public assistance programmes on subsequent willingness to take political action ([Myers et al. 2018](#)). In cases such as this, which combine careful design with ample statistical power, the omission of a pre-deliberation measure of the dependent variable strengthens causal inference because it removes the risk of the initial measurement biasing results.

Pre- and Post-Deliberation

More commonly, researchers take baseline measures of attitudes before and after a deliberative process. This is the hallmark of Deliberative Polling ([Fishkin 2018](#)), but it is also common practice in experimental forms and other mini-publics ([Grönlund et al. 2009](#)). The greatest challenge in a pre- and post-deliberation survey method is the risk that the content of the deliberation will veer far afield from the particular questions asked during the survey. This is the most straightforward explanation for why so many participants' opinions do not change, even after participating in multi-day discussions ([Merkle 1996](#)). In cases where the deliberative topic and discussion were closely aligned, as in the case of Texas polls on state energy policy, Deliberative Polls have produced dramatic shifts in opinion ([Fishkin 2009](#)).

As more research accumulates, it may turn out that the direction of aggregate change in deliberative events follows a pattern that transcends issue and context. For example, looking across the poll items that the Center for Deliberative Democracy reported as showing significant change, deliberating appears to promote more cosmopolitan (versus nationalist) attitudes (Gastil et al. 2010). A more recent study of an EU-wide deliberative poll found similar directional shifts amongst participants as compared with a parallel control group (Sanders 2012).

Repeated Measures Mid-Process

To measure how participants experience a deliberative event, some studies employ multiple measures at different intervals during the process. The aforementioned Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review includes a survey at the end of each day that includes roughly one dozen items concerning that day's deliberations. This permits researchers to see how the participant experience might ebb and flow over the course of a process. Each day at the Review, for example, the panellists answered this question: 'How important a role did you play in today's panel discussion?' Over the course of four days, the average response on a scale that ranged from 1–5 increased from roughly 3 ('Moderately important') to 4 ('Very important') for all five of the Reviews held in 2014 (Gastil et al. 2015). Similar approaches have measured longer-term deliberative dynamics that stretched across successive weeks or months, rather than merely consecutive days (Blais et al. 2008; Karpowitz and Raphael 2014).

Longitudinal Effects

Other panellist surveys take a longitudinal approach but stretch their survey over a longer period of time to see the long-term impacts of participating in deliberation. A representative example is a study on climate change policy in Edmonton, Alberta (Boulianne 2018). Between their initial selection in September 2012, and a follow-up survey six months later, deliberative panellists showed an increase in their general political trust and their internal political efficacy. When a final follow-up was conducted two years later, however, both effects had disappeared. By contrast, domain-specific trust (municipal policymaking on climate change) and a perception of system responsiveness showed a significant increase only in that final follow-up survey.

Retrospective Change and Causal Attribution

A less common survey method asks participants to look back on their deliberative experience to discern whether they believe the deliberation changed them. A study

using this approach to study both the Australian Citizens' Parliament and the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review found a consistent pattern across these two distinct mini-publics (Knobloch and Gastil 2015). In surveys conducted a full year after deliberation, participants reported changes in their attitudes towards deliberation (e.g. were more inclined to agree that 'people from different parties can have civil, respectful conversations'). When participants were asked if 'attending the [Parliament or Review] has caused you to change the frequency with which you do the following activities', large percentages reported that deliberation made them more active in many ways, except for conventional political participation (e.g. 'going to political meetings' or 'volunteering for parties or candidates').

Public Survey Examples

Theories of deliberative democracy encompass far more than forums and mini-publics, with a renewed emphasis on the more systemic level of analysis (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012). To understand system-level dynamics, deliberation researchers can survey large populations and trace changing deliberative norms, attitudes, and behaviours. Large-scale survey experiments can offer insight into how the public uses information to form opinions and make voting choices. Some of these surveys link discrete deliberative forums and large-scale elections to understand how people use the information provided by mini-publics when taking policy positions of their own (Warren and Gastil 2015).

Population Trends

Population surveys can supplement existing political surveys to ask respondents about deliberative experiences and attitudes that are not measured in conventional survey designs. Jacobs et al. (2009) did this with a comprehensive survey of adult US residents. The investigators argued that taking deliberative theory seriously requires discerning what percentage of people attend public meetings (25 per cent) or engage in any kind of 'discursive participation', including political conversations (81 per cent). Their survey delved into the details of these encounters to understand people's motivations and experiences of deliberation, and it set the stage for future research to record variations in survey responses over time and across nations.

Awareness and Assessment

Surveys can also determine the impact of mini-public deliberation on broader publics. This was clearest in the case of the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly,

which recommended that the province change from a first-past-the-post voting system to a variant of single-transferrable-vote (STV). A survey found that the ‘STV’ terminology was alien to the average British Columbian. Thus, voters’ assessments of the proposal depended partly on learning about the Citizens’ Assembly’s deliberations and trusting the judgement of its members (Cutler et al. 2008). Amongst those who knew nothing about STV, 58 per cent supported the proposed voting system *if they knew about the deliberative Assembly* that recommended it. By contrast, only 51 per cent of those unaware of the Assembly’s role supported the proposal. After all, nearly two-thirds of respondents (65 per cent) agreed with the statement, ‘Because the Citizens’ Assembly members are people like me, I trust their judgment’.

Influence aside, it is useful to know what proportion of the public knew anything about the Assembly: In the year leading up to the election, public awareness rose from a low of 40 per cent to more than 55 per cent (Cutler et al. 2008). By comparison, telephone surveys of Oregon voters from 2010 to 2016 show that its awareness of the Citizens’ Initiative Review process held every other year in that state rose from 40 per cent in 2010 to 52 per cent in 2012. It rose to 56 per cent in 2016—but no higher (Gastil et al. 2017). More detailed analyses make clear that much of this awareness lacks detailed understanding about the deliberative process and that voter trust may be conditional on having such knowledge (Gastil et al. 2018).

Survey Experiments

Whereas the British Columbia case traced voter awareness and attitudes towards a mini-public, other studies have used survey experiments to estimate more directly the impact of information about these deliberative bodies. These surveys provide a randomly selected subset of respondents with snippets of information about a mini-public’s process and its findings; they then use statistical comparisons to discern whether those exposed to this information answer subsequent questions differently than those respondents not provided with such information. Learning a mini-public’s findings can alter people’s policy views, depending on the issue and audience (Boulianne 2017; Ingham and Levin 2018a, 2018b; Már and Gastil 2019). A similar design found that more detailed information about the Citizens’ Initiative Review could alter not only policy attitudes but also voting choices (Gastil et al. 2018).

Conclusion

Looking forward, survey methods will continue to aid deliberation researchers in the coming years, and knowledge in this field will advance more rapidly if future research improves on previous efforts in several respects. More consistent measures of deliberation across different discrete events will make comparisons more meaningful, as will

the inclusion of a standard set of input and output measures. The survey attached to the Participedia online archive aspires to meet this aim, but it has yet to become a standard assessment tool. Cross-validation of deliberative surveys with observational and content analytic methods will bolster confidence in the utility of survey measures. If incorporated into randomized controlled trials (Carman et al. 2015) with necessary statistical power at the group level of analysis, such research could clarify precisely what aspects of deliberation connect to which outcomes (Gastil et al. 2017).

Finally, surveys can do more to inform systemic theories of deliberation. For example, researchers can trace feedback loops from convening specific deliberative events back to public trust in government (Boulianne 2018). More broadly, does the institutionalization of mini-publics change how citizens and public officials behave or view each other? A cross-national survey of legal experts, for example, found an association between governmental effectiveness and the use of lay participation in the judicial branch, such as through criminal juries (Voigt 2009). Hopefully, future surveys of citizens, civic leaders, and public officials will tell us more about how the introduction (or erosion) of deliberative practices influences complex democratic systems.

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Social Network Analysis

Eduardo M. da Silva, Antônio Carlos A. Ribeiro, and Silvio S. Higgins

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is a toolkit, widely used in the social sciences, to model the interdependence of the components that make up a social system. The main advantage of this approach is the visual representation of the flows that are present in social exchanges: be these markets or deliberative processes. This approach can be employed if the relational nature of the phenomenon is available to systematic observation ([Lazega and Higgins 2014](#)).

In this chapter, we outline how SNA can be used in the study of deliberative processes. Overcoming the old dichotomy that considers agents and structures as separable entities, SNA assumes that agents and structural contexts are combinatory effects of social processes ([Granovetter 1985](#); [White 2008](#)). In this way, it provides a lens for the identification and examination of such processes, allowing the measurement or modelling of their effects on collective life, including the processes of group formation through solidarities and exclusions, collective learning and socialization, emergence of influential leaders, political coalitions, belief formation, social controls and conflict control and, last but not least, the processes of regulation and institutionalization ([Lazega 2012](#)).

There are many ways scholars of deliberative democracy can utilize SNA in their research. For example, SNA can help us to identify the central and peripheral actors of a debate taking place in a deliberative arena like parliament, or the public sphere. It shows us which actors have the opportunity to influence the decisions inside a particular arena. As such, it helps us to investigate the normative assumptions of deliberative theory, such as the participatory equality or deliberative equality of participants. Utilizing SNA, researchers can measure the deliberative inequalities of power and influence. They can also study the deliberative systems and investigate whether and how a deliberative system works, whether different components of the system relate to each other, whether and how discourses and ideas flow from one site to another, and the extent to which some clusters of discourses are isolated from the rest of the system.

In this chapter, we first present types of networks and some metrics used in SNA. In the second section, some articles are introduced as examples of SNA application in the study of deliberative processes. In the third section, we focus on two-mode

networks, presenting a case that used SNA to measure the pathologies of deliberative systems. Lastly, the conclusion presents a synthesis of SNA contributions and limitations to the study of deliberation.

Types of Networks and Metrics in SNA

We have selected four cases as good examples showing how SNA can help operationalize some of the key questions in deliberative democracy research. This selection follows several methodological criteria that a beginner in SNA should take into account. First, we present the examples of studies that work with one-mode deliberation networks. This type of network structure is characterized by the adjacency or relationship between agents of the same nature (people, groups, political parties, etc.) (Figure 15.1). This is followed by the presentation of a study that analyses a two-mode deliberation network. This type of structure is characterized by the incidence of an agent of one ontological level, ordinarily people or social groups, with an event that constitutes an occasion for interaction, such as an assembly, a discussion forum, or a ritual celebration. In Figure 15.2, the mode of events is represented by squares and the mode of actors by circles.

In each demonstrative case, we use several criteria for a cross-sectional analysis: (1) the deliberative problem under study; (2) the operationalization of the problem in terms of a set of structural variables measurable through a graph (i.e. the visual representation of a deliberative interaction network); and (3) the type of data and methodology of collection.

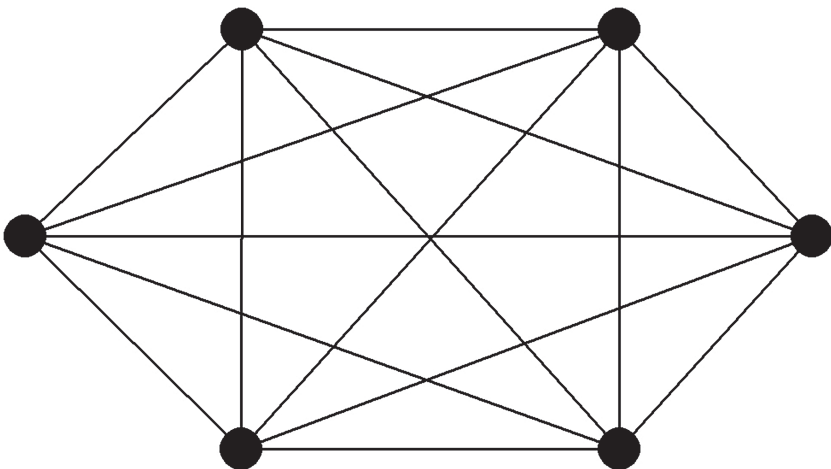


Figure 15.1 One-mode Network

Note: Legend: circles = actors.

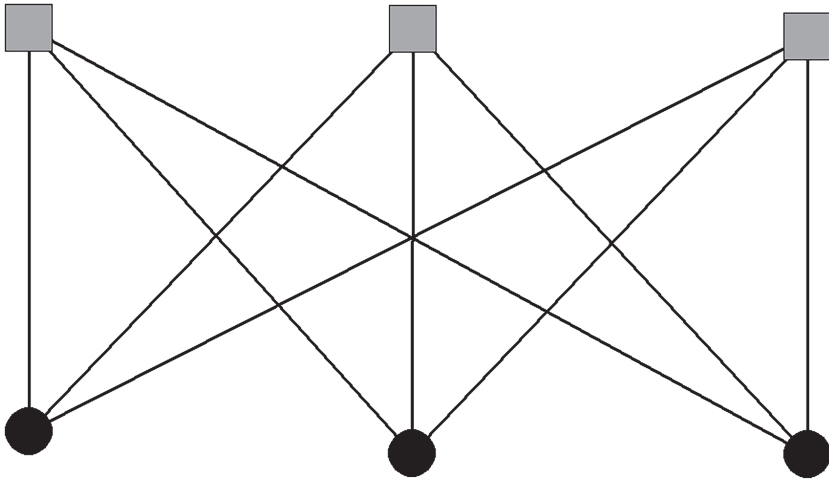


Figure 15.2 Two-mode Network
 Note: Legend: squares = events; circles = actors.

There are three basic dimensions that describe a network structure, and each dimension requires a different kind of metrics for their operationalization (see Table 15.1).

Network cohesion designates the connectivity of the social system, that is, the extent to which all agents are connected to each other. It is usually used to investigate the connectivity of members with each other in a social setting. For example, a low density means that members of a social system are not engaged in social exchanges. Focusing on network cohesion, Resende (2018) studied the participation of private and civil society representatives in all thematic commissions of Brazilian Congress and compared the models of core and periphery using the densities of two-mode matrices as criteria of differentiation.

Actor centrality expresses the relative importance of actors in terms of their status and influence over the entire system. For example, this is representative of power understood as balanced or unbalanced recognition between social actors (Blau 1964).

Table 15.1 Dimensions and Metrics of Social Networks

Dimensions	Metrics
1. Network cohesion	Density, Distance
2. Actor centrality	Nodal degree (in or out), Ego-node, Ego-net
3. Cohesive subgroups	Clique, Islands

Source: elaborated by the authors.

As such, it is relevant for studies on participatory institutions or mini-publics because it allows us to identify the central actors within these deliberative arenas.

‘Cohesive subgroup’ refers to connectivity across the network. In empirical research it is used to identify the formation of coalitions or other kinds of solidarities between its members. Investigations can show the strength and scope of the connections within subgroups in a given network, and this is relevant to the comprehension of power relations and the capacity to act. [Joschko and Glaser \(2019\)](#) provide an interesting illustration of the study of a cohesive subgroup when they investigate Twitter discussions in Germany to map actors who strongly supported quotas of representation for women. These dimensions and metrics describe one-mode and two-mode networks.

The first step, for anyone interested in learning about and applying SNA in their research, involves familiarization with the metrics used in this type of analysis. It is possible to define eight types of metrics:

- (1) Density: the ratio between observed relationships and the possible total; since it is a proportion, the scale ranges from 0 to 1.
- (2) Distance: the number of relationships between two nodes in a network.
- (3) Ego-node: an actor that is taken as a reference point in the analysis of a set of relations; it constitutes the centre of a partially analysed network, as consequence from any ego-node we can estimate the out- and in-degree which argue to be defined below (See number 5 and 6).
- (4) Ego-net: a sub-graph that takes an ego-node as a reference point, including the relations with all its peers and the relations of the peers to each other.
- (5) In-degree: the total of arcs, or oriented arrows, entering in a node; this is a metric of an actor’s popularity.
- (6) Out-degree: the total of arcs, or oriented arrows, exiting a node; this is a metric of actor’s initiative.
- (7) Clique: this is a subgroup, within a network, identified by the total adjacency between nodes; the minimum size of a clique is a triad where all actors are related to each other.
- (8) Island analyses: this technique considers the intensity of the relationships between the arenas that compose a subsystem in order to identify parts of the network connected by stronger inner ties than the ties outside the subgroup, called islands.

This section presented the difference between one-mode and two-modes networks, introducing a few relevant metrics used in SNA. Such metrics are important for the comprehension of the selected examples in the following two sections. We will start with a few examples of studies employing one-mode network analysis in the study of deliberation. We will then move to an investigation employing two-mode network analysis.

One-mode Network Analysis in Deliberative Democracy Research

One-mode network analysis can be useful to deliberative scholars wanting to map relationships between agents across deliberative systems, indicating the structure of the system and the role played by different actors. They can be particularly useful for deliberative scholars seeking to identify the main actors of a given arena, for example a parliament or a social media site such as Twitter, based on the degree of centrality of actors and/or groups in these arenas. One-mode network analysis enables researchers to examine the strength of the ties between different actors and/or groups which then might help with the comprehension of deliberative processes. It is possible to identify the strength of the ties between the actors whose support the executive proposes inside the parliament. In order to do this, we can see the position of the actors inside the network, and the strength of the ties established between them with regard to some specific subject matter. The examples below illustrate how one-mode network analysis can be employed for the study of deliberation.

The first example presents one of the first efforts to use SNA to study deliberative process. Manlio Cinalli and Ian O’Flynn (2014) applied SNA to study the political deliberation process in relation to the integration of Muslims living in the United Kingdom. The research question investigated was as follows: if Muslim communities adequately enter into the process of political deliberation, do they raise their chances of integrating into the community of rights and obligations? Data was extracted from a selection of articles published in *The Guardian* and *Times* newspapers, representing Labour and Conservative views on the issue of Muslim integration in the UK.

The study was operationalized by two analytical dimensions: (1) claims making analysis; and (2) political integration in relational terms. The first dimension analysed the content of the newspaper articles with three deliberative metrics, namely: (a) acceptable language; (b) supporting arguments; and (c) appeals to the general interest. The second dimension was relational and sought to measure the ties of support and the ties of dissent from other groups towards Muslims. The SNA metrics used were the following: (a) density; (b) distance; (c) ego-node; (d) out-degree; (e) in-degree; (f) ‘cliques.’ Figure 15.3 indicates an extensive presence of relationships of mutual support in the field. If we assume Muslims as an ego-node, we can observe that they are immediately supported, that is, it is at distance $d = 1$, by government, civil society organizations, and executive agencies. By contrast, Muslims are not directly supported by pro-minority actors and political parties, that is, it is at distance $d > 1$ (Cinalli and O’Flynn 2014).

The second example of one-mode analysis is the study of deliberative systems in a large scale in the United States of America. Using this kind of analysis, Barvosa (2018) analysed how public opinion in the US became broadly supportive of the rights of LGBT people. The data was generated in an online search on the topic between 2007 and 2015. Different kinds of documents were gathered, such as videos, music, films,

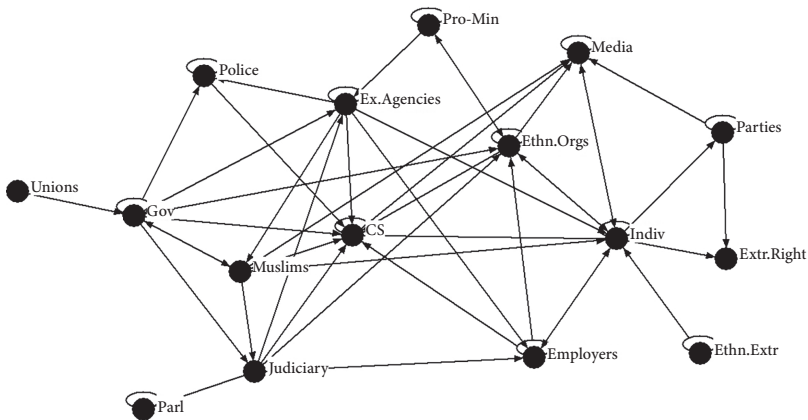


Figure 15.3 Ties of Support

Note: Density=0.23.

Source: Cinalli and O'Flynn (2014, 441).

and news in the media. The methodology consisted of a qualitative analysis of the documents. Three structural factors of the deliberative system were operationalized: (a) deliberative entrepreneurs; (b) deliberative packages; (c) precipitating events. The ego-node metric was used to demonstrate how deliberative entrepreneurs' actions enabled outreach, on an effectively national scale, for the advocacy of LGBT people's rights. These entrepreneurs carried out actions of dissemination because they were embedded in a wide network of LGBT actors and leaders, dispersed over the US territory.

Finally, the third example of one-mode analysis is the research about the relationship between the representative claim expressed in parliament and its validation in public opinion (Twitter) using Social Network Analysis. Joschko and Glaser (2019) studied, from the point of view of representation, the quotas for women in the German parliament. Two main questions were posed: (1) Who are the central actors on the issue of quotas for women in the German parliament? and (2) How are the speeches made in parliament validated on Twitter? The data source was the parliament's tachygraphic notes, by means of which it was possible to analyse and categorize the speeches, given by parliamentarians, in favour of, against, and neutral with regard to quotas for women. Then, the Twitter debate was analysed to identify the central actors in the discussion. SNA was used to measure the validation of those speeches by public opinion. To do so, the network of tweets that were focused on quotas was reconstructed. Through the island analysis¹ technique, the network sectors with actors more densely connected to the discussion about quotas were identified.

¹ Island analyses: this technique considers the intensity of the relationships between the arenas that compose a subsystem in order to identify parts of the network connected by stronger inner ties than the ties outside the subgroup, called islands.

Two-mode Network Analysis in Deliberative Democracy Research

Two-mode networks are particularly appropriate for the study of deliberative systems, because they allow us to identify which actors are involved in the discussion of issues carried out in specific deliberative arenas. Amongst the many possibilities of employing two-mode networks (such as the study of networks formed in parliaments), we will present a particular application of a method called Affiliation Network Analysis. In this technique, it is assumed that actors, whether individuals or groups, operate with an intrinsic mechanism of networks, coupling and decoupling (White 2008). That is, the co-participation of agents connects events, and, inversely, taking part in the same events connects agents. By co-participation, we refer to the same actor being present in two or more different arenas. Co-occurrence is the presence of two or more actors in the same arena. This approach offers a valuable methodological innovation for the empirical study of political coalitions in deliberative systems. In what follows, we explain this methodological approach through an example of how it can be used in practice.

We argue that two-mode networks can be used to diagnose pathologies that hinder a functional deliberative system. Deliberative systems are described as dysfunctional when, amongst others, they are unresponsive to a diversity of discourses or when they prohibit new discourses from emerging (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012). SNA can meet the challenge of understanding the precise character of these dysfunctions. Below we outline some pathologies that can be identified using this method. In each pathology, we suggest more specific tools (Da Silva and Ribeiro, 2016a; Da Silva, Ribeiro and Soares, 2016b; Da Silva and Ribeiro, 2017).

Tight Coupling within the Deliberative System

These are situations in which parts of the system are so strongly connected to one another that it is difficult to make way for dissenting views or prompt reflexivity. According to the two-mode approach, when considering members' simultaneous participation in different arenas, the contexts in which the areas of the system share a large number of members, with a high degree of overlap, indicate greater approximation between the arenas. An extreme case of this pathology would be a system in which all the arenas are composed of the same members. Tight coupling within the deliberative system can be examined by evaluating the degree of network integration through the analysis of density, proximity, and distance between the actors.

Decoupling within the Deliberative System

This is the opposite of tight coupling. Decoupling refers to the degree of dissociation amongst different parts of the system, which, in turn, hinders ideas, proposals, or

reasons from travelling from one part to another. SNA can be used to determine this by subgroup analysis. Techniques of analysis of subgroups in social networks allow us to identify such subsets of connected deliberative areas. The different techniques are distinguished from each other based on the criteria used to delimit the subgroups, namely: (1) the mutuality of ties which identifies parts of the network in which all actors in a subgroup have ties between them; (2) the accessibility of members, which locates parts of the network where the members of subgroups are at a distance n from the others²; (3) the frequency of ties between members, which focuses on subgroups in which the actors have an x proportion of their changes within the subgroup; (4) the relative frequency of ties between members and non-members, whereby subgroups are identified according to the intensity of the ties between their members.

Institutional Domination

This is a situation in which one part of the system exercises mastery over the others. From the point of view of Social Network Analysis, this situation can be detected by analysing centrality measures. The node degree is the basic metric that allows for the identification of hierarchies in a network structure. For example, it is possible to detect how popular an actor is by measuring the number of arcs that arrive at her/him. It is also possible to detect her/his entrepreneur level by measuring the number of arcs that depart from her/him. Through these techniques it is possible to identify several aspects that reveal positions with the potential to influence the exchange of resources in a network. Network analysis tools allow one to identify powerful actors in a network as those with a greater number of direct relationships with other actors, or as those who act more often as intermediaries between other actors or connect to their peers over shorter distances.

The analysis of the above-mentioned pathologies can be done through the investigation of participation in different arenas of discussion. Data can be collected from attendance lists at meetings, in minutes, news articles, and other documents. Once collected, this information can be organized in an incidence matrix³ in which any actor, named formally as n , and any event m is coded and classified based on co-participation and co-occurrence criteria. Actors can be people or organizations. Events are occurrences that connect actors. Co-participation refers to events in which two or more agents play a part, while co-occurrence refers to actors sharing two or more events. Software programs such as Pajek and Ucinet can help to analyse the

² We can think of this distance as the maximum number of intermediaries that two actors in the same group need to interact, defined by $n-1$.

³ In the case of one-mode matrices, being incident means that two actors have a relationship with each other. This is expressed in the structure of a matrix by marking a binary or scale value, in vertices where the line of actor n with an actor j is located. In the case of two-mode matrices, the incidence means the participation or presence of an actor in an event. The registration of the observed incidence follows the same logic as in the one-mode matrix.

data and generate graphs, visually representing co-participation and co-occurrence. In doing so, we focus mainly on how actors and events are related.

In what follows, we present our operationalization of the two-mode network approach to diagnose systemic pathologies in a specific case. We have investigated a system of participatory arenas in the municipality of Belo Horizonte (Brazil). The first step of the research was identifying the deliberative arenas. We focused on one type of participatory arena, which is central in Brazil: councils. Since the early 1990s, councils have been the main Participatory Institutions (IPs) in the country, hosting deliberations to define strategic policy guidelines (Avritzer 2009; Avritzer and Souza 2013). Councils are participatory innovations that were first introduced in 1988 by the Brazilian Constitution and by ordinary laws, which regulated specific articles of the Magna Carta. The Brazilian political system requires states and municipalities to create councils on key policy areas such as health, social work, and youth issues. Part of their deliberations concerns how funds from the federal government are used. Members of the councils are selected based on elections amongst members from NGOs, which are responsible for representing civil society. The President, governors, and mayors appoint the counsellors who represent the government. In general, councils have around thirty members. The meetings are open to members of the public who can comment during the deliberation process, although they cannot vote in the final decision-making process.

Figure 15.4 illustrates the application of the two-mode approach in the system of councils in the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

From the point of view of connectivity, it can be observed that different arenas (squares) vary in size (number of actors participating), but that, in general, the system tends to connect almost completely, which is represented by ties (lines) amongst the

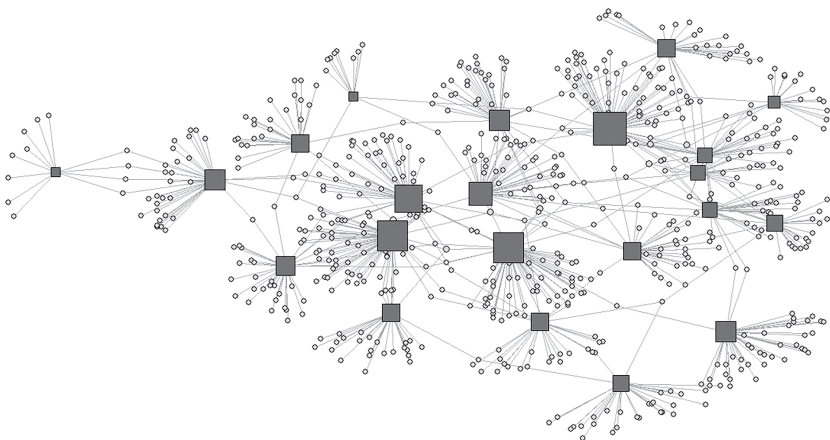


Figure 15.4 Two-mode Network, Municipal Councils Subsystem of Belo Horizonte

Note: Legend: square = councils; circle = actors participating.

different circles in the diagrams. Figure 15.4 shows the deliberative system in the form of a two-mode network, which allows us to see the role of the actors (circles) in the connection of the arenas. The lines in the figure show the affiliation relationship between actors and deliberative arenas.

The system is fully integrated. We note the presence of more central arenas in the system because they share more counsellors. These counsellors exert influence in multiple arenas and may thus, hypothetically, dominate the process. Our analysis of municipal council subsystems in Belo Horizonte revealed that five councils in the middle of the figure could dominate deliberative process; however, we also noted that there is no isolated arena. This might suggest interactions amongst deliberative arenas that favour the transit of ideas, values, and decisions despite some institutions being more central than others.

In order to understand what leads to the emergence of systemic pathologies, it is necessary to investigate the ties between deliberative arenas. Figure 15.5 shows the connection between the systems arenas. SNA software offers algorithms that allow one to transform two-mode networks into one-mode networks. This is a resource for manipulating the original data which allows one to visualize the same information in a new way. A two-mode network can give rise to two one-mode networks: (1) a network of actors, represented in dots, and linked by lines that represent the number of events that participate together; and (2) a network of events, represented by dots, and linked by lines that represent the number of actors they share. The figure below is a network of events, since the deliberative arena is where the actors meet to deliberate. The different widths and shading of the lines (light grey to black) refer to the strength of the tie between the arenas, considering the number of actors they share.

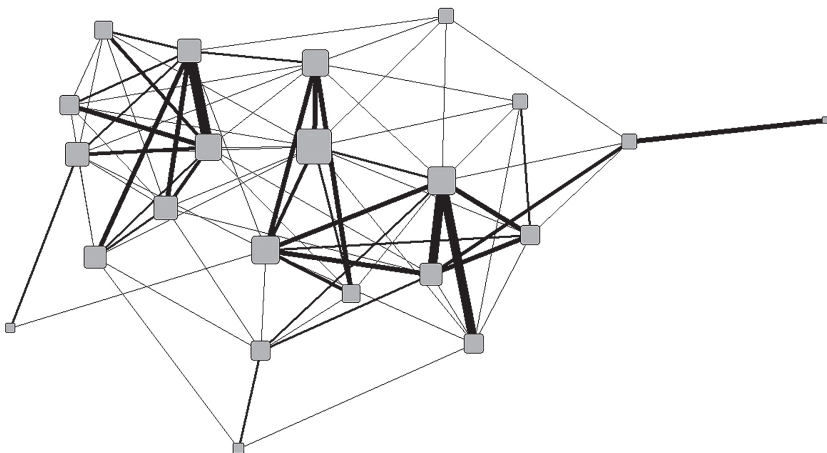


Figure 15.5 One-mode Network, Municipal Councils Subsystem of Belo Horizonte

Our analysis suggests a trend towards minimal *institutional domination* in the system. The centrality of the arenas is relatively well distributed: degree centralization = 0.352. This metric indicates the propensity of an actor in the network to centralize power. The closer to 1, the more the network structure is organized around a single central actor. The closer to 0, the greater the number of central actors. This suggests that the system is decentralized, thus making institutional domination difficult. Based on this, we can assume that there is a flow of communication between the arenas by facilitating the *transmission* of ideas from one space to another.

This flow of communication varies depending on the positions of each arena inside the network. The observation of peripheral and central positions of actors within a network is a spatial measurement to determine domination. Central positions are occupied by arenas that have many relationships with other arenas, while peripheral positions are occupied by arenas with little or no relationships with other arenas. Central arenas are more likely to exercise institutional domination. In the figure above, it is possible to differentiate the condition of the arenas by comparing the size of the points.

As noted above, the arenas are connected by ties of different intensities. Arenas that share more counsellors are more likely to be connected by a flow of information. Note, for example, the presence of the three strongest relationships between the deliberative arenas (black line). In the case of the municipal system, the proportion of ties with a value greater than 1 is most common and represents 42.5 per cent of observed ties. This indicates that almost half of the relationships between the arenas of the system share at least two actors.

SNA also enables us to undertake a *subgroups analysis* based on the intensity of the connection between the arenas (Wasserman and Faust 2009; Nooy et al. 2011; Higgins and Ribeiro 2018). This strategy allows for an evaluation of *tight coupling* and *decoupling* situations, as it reveals the existence of subgroups, as well as the intensity of the connections between arenas and the subsystem. In our research, we have analysed subgroups based on islands analysis. This technique considers the intensity of the relationships between the arenas that compose a subsystem in order to identify parts of the network connected by stronger inner ties than the ties outside the subgroup, called islands. The researcher must stipulate the minimum and maximum size of the islands to define the number of actors to be included in the subgroups. The maximum number is only completed when all the actors that are connected to the group by lesser intensity do not exceed nine actors. If this occurs, the number of arenas closest to the defined maximum for the subgroup, and connected by the same intensity of the island, will then be selected.

Figure 15.6 shows the islands analysis performed for the system of councils in Belo Horizonte. The transmission of communication between arenas is more likely to occur between islands. The size of the circles shows the degree of connection of one council with all the others. Larger circles represent, therefore, councils that share more counsellors within the subsystem. The intensity of these ties is indicated by the

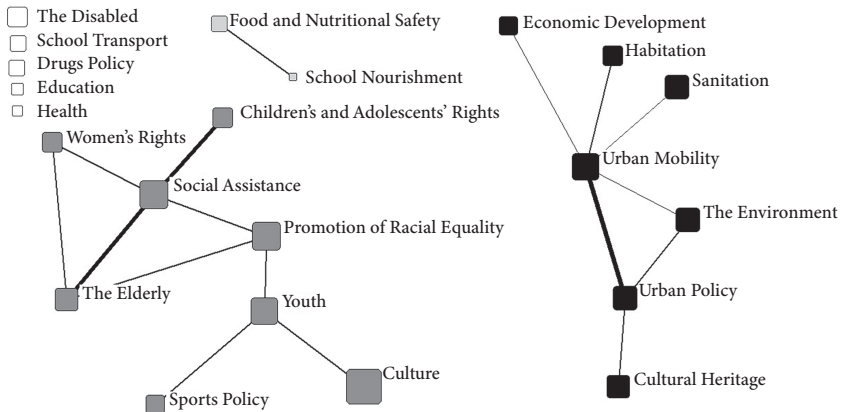


Figure 15.6 Islands in the Deliberative Subsystem of the Belo Horizonte Policy Councils

Source: Developed by authors based on data from Belo Horizonte City Hall.

Note: Key: white = disconnected councils; gray = island of councils related to the theme of food; dark gray = island of urban policies; soft gray = island of policies of human rights and social policies.

widths and colour intensity of the lines in the grey scale. Wider and darker lines represent strong connections.

In this study, we identified three islands. There is a small island with two councils (grey), made up of the municipal councils of food and nutritional safety and the school nourishment council. The relationship between the two policies is evident. These councils share four counsellors. In this subgroup, the size of the squares shows that the first arena is more connected to the subsystem, albeit weakly, since it shares few members with other arenas of the subsystem.

A second island is found on the right of the figure in dark grey. It is composed of councils generally associated with urban policies. It brings together the municipal councils for economic development, housing, sanitation, urban mobility, environment, urban policy, and cultural heritage. A striking feature of this island is the central position that the urban mobility council occupies, which shares the most members with other councils within this subgroup.

The third island of the subsystem is formed by a set of councils linked to human rights policies and social policies (soft grey). The presence of a sector organized around the youth council on this island could reflect a conception of youth policy, which directly involves sport, culture, and the promotion of racial equality policies. On the other hand, the councils on human rights policies are organized around the municipal council of social assistance, where a strong relationship was observed between it and the municipal councils of rights of the child, of the adolescent, and of the elderly.

Five weakly connected municipal arenas (white) in the deliberative subsystem can also be observed. In this case, the arenas appear isolated, as no strong ties with other

arenas have been identified. This means that despite sharing counsellors with other parts of the subsystem, the number of shared members was not sufficient for the arenas marked in grey to integrate any of the identified islands or to compose new islands.

Island analysis is useful for investigating the structures that are hidden at first glance. In the illustrated case, it helped us to reveal that despite the general connectivity that was initially apparent, Belo Horizonte's deliberative system of councils is structurally vulnerable to the pathologies of decoupling and institutional domination. The system was divided into three subgroups, in addition to the presence of isolated arenas. And it was possible to identify arenas centralizing the relationships within the islands. As such, it is necessary to study the groups inside the network because some deliberative assumptions might not be present in some arenas.

Conclusion

In this chapter we sought to illustrate how SNA techniques can help us in the empirical study of deliberative democracy. We differentiated between different forms of network analysis—one-mode networks and two-mode networks—which researchers can draw on to investigate issues at the heart of the deliberative agenda, including asymmetries, domination, brokerage, and insulated discussions. Our two-mode network research on councils in the municipality of Belo Horizonte (Brazil) sought to show how the approach allows us to comprehend whether and how different subsystems are connected, while also diagnosing pathologies that may hinder the flow of ideas and proposals across a system. Introducing key dimensions and metrics used in SNA, the chapter also illustrated how network graphs can help in the characterization of systems, providing visual cues to the comprehension of discursive processes.

It is also important to acknowledge some of the limitations of the SNA method. One limitation of SNA, as applied to deliberative systems, has to do with the difficulty of operationalizing human interactions mediated by discourse, because discourses are not physical objects moving from one entity to another. Human communication is a complex process, and one does not express or receive messages in the same way that one buys and sells goods. Mapping these abstract and multidimensional processes can be tricky, which will pose some challenges to deliberative scholars using SNA.

Further Reading

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Big Data Analysis

Núria Franco-Guillén, Sebastian De Laile, and John Parkinson

Scholars of deliberative democracy are faced with the challenge of researching an overwhelming abundance of complex, system-wide communication, following the systemic turn (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012). Deliberative systems cover a wide range of practices that may not be deliberative if assessed in isolation, but which may serve deliberative functions when viewed in relation to their interactions with other parts of the system, including ‘everyday talk’ around kitchen tables and other informal settings (Mansbridge 1999; Neblo 2015). The challenges of researching such systemic communication are enormous (Fleuß et al. 2018), and most of the methodological strategies deployed so far are unsatisfactory.

Big data analysis can help researchers access and make sense of a mass of communicative detail. Big data is sometimes defined as data that is too large for a user-level computer to process; but for the social sciences a better definition is that it combines high-volume, fast-paced production, and loosely structured natural language. This is exactly the kind of data that deliberative systems scholars are interested in: the millions of everyday interactions produced in the online public sphere.

In what follows, we outline the key issues and choices that need to be made with big data analysis. We do not simply describe those choices in general terms, partly because much depends on the aims of the research, and partly because it is a new and rapidly changing field, with little agreement on how to do it or prior application in deliberative studies. New possibilities and applications are being invented daily. Instead, we offer guidance on how to deal with common challenges in big data analysis by sharing insights from our own research. That research generated and compared two big databases on two ‘national conversations’: the first comprising a million online interactions over two years before and just after the Scottish independence referendum of 2014; the second 100,000 interactions on a campaign to ‘Recognise’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian constitution.¹ The cases were explicit attempts to generate mass public deliberation.

The chapter begins by situating big data analysis in the context of existing methods of deliberative systems research. We then discuss data collection and analysis by revealing the steps we took and the choices we made, including the presentation and

¹ For details on the Scottish independence debate, see Keating and McEwen (2017) and Parkinson et al. (2020); for a discussion of the Recognise campaign from an agonist perspective, see Maddison (2017).

analysis of results. The discussion reveals much about the pros and cons of working with big data sets, but also the insights that can be gained.

Big Data and Deliberative Systems Research

Deliberative systems theory emphasizes the importance of myriad venues of recognizably political conversation in the informal public sphere, where citizens engage and act critically with each other (Dryzek 2010), but also share narratives of everyday experience of collective life (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019). This is the ‘pool of perspectives’ (Bohman 2012) which helps ground and legitimate formal deliberation (Parkinson 2006).

The problem is that our ability to examine that pool of perspectives is limited because of the classic breadth/depth trade-off: sacrificing communicative detail for the sake of a structural overview, or vice versa. There are several ways of handling this in the deliberative literature. The first and dominant strategy is to focus on communication within and between one or two mini-publics and a formal institution or decision moment (e.g. Boswell et al. 2016), a strategy that tends to focus on ‘deliberation’ rather than the more dispersed, emergent quality suggested by Mansbridge et al. (2012). The second strategy is the opposite: focus on the big picture of institutional networks and draw inferences about communication based on those linkages (e.g. Cinalli and O’Flynn 2014). The third strategy focuses on discourses as coordinators of, and resources wielded by, people in collective action (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014) but does not capture everyday informal talk, and uses methods that are less inductive than might appear (Parkinson et al. 2020).

Big data techniques allow researchers to reconcile the breadth/depth trade-off to some extent. While they have been used to analyze deliberative qualities within a particular forum (Hudson 2018), they can be used to analyze everyday, public talk about recognizably political issues (Mansbridge 1999; Neblo 2015) across multiple venues on a scale well beyond the ability of other techniques to manage—into the millions of individual communicative acts across thousands of forums—while at the same time reducing the amount of deductive researcher intervention. The results are patterns of communication that are not immediately obvious to human analysts. The tools are not a panacea: they require careful planning, still-rare technical expertise, and, while some tools are more inductive than most of the alternatives, still entail researcher choices and interpretation at every step. But they open up the possibility of ‘reading’ dispersed public conversations in ways that are simply impossible without them.

Turning the broad, normative, deliberative systems criteria into a set of evaluative and empirical cues is not a straightforward task. We followed guidelines set out in Bächtiger and Parkinson (2019, 133–137) for assessing the deliberative quality of a system in a ‘summative’, dispersed, emergent sense, as opposed to the ‘additive’ approach which looks for moments of deliberation more or less narrowly defined. Two issues stand out.

First, the ideal unit of analysis is ‘memes’, understood as units of meaning that are larger than individual words but are much more fine-grained than ‘discourse.’² This must not be confused with ‘memes’ as colloquially used today, which refer to often humorous images and text spread online. Instead, we refer to memes as clusters of words that regularly appear together on a given issue in a given context, relative to the ‘norms of appropriateness’ of that setting (John 1999). As will be seen shortly, our methods identify clusters of words that approximate the memetic ideal, running from 50 to 70 clusters in our cases.

Second, we focus on the deliberative *inclusion* criterion rather than reasoning—we are looking at the degree of sharing of perspectives ‘in the wild’, which is much broader than the requirement that those perspectives and claims be weighed and connected with reasons. We do not think that this thematic inclusion criterion is all there is to deliberative quality. But we do think it is a necessary condition, and big data methods give us a unique way of coming to grips with it.

Data Gathering

Our case selection started by conducting a simple online search for use of the ‘national conversation’ label, something we had already come across in Scotland, but which we found in widespread use in the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia. Preliminary archival research and informal conversations with actors involved soon led to us focusing on two contrasting cases: a rich, detailed, multi-venue, grassroots conversation in the Scottish independence debate, but a relatively thin conversation on Indigenous recognition in Australia, in which symbol dominated substance.

Next, we listed a wide variety of potential data sources in the public sphere: social media; traditional broadcast and print media; official government information sources, including Hansard but also press releases, policy papers, party communications, and speeches; blogs including small independent multi-authored and edited outlets like *Bella Caledonia* and *Indigenous X*; and public forums like Reddit, as well as forums that were not obviously political but nonetheless featured recognizably political discussions. In the UK, the latter was easy: the parenting network Mumsnet and the entertainment news site Digital Spy both featured threads on Scottish independence that lasted for the entire duration of the debate.³ Australia lacks such forums: Facebook dominates social media in Australia to the extent that member discussion forums tend to focus on specialist topics and attract relatively few participants (see <https://gs.statcounter.com>).

² Coined by Dawkins (1976) to refer to units of information in evolutionary processes, the concept of a ‘meme’ is a staple of linguistics and semiotics, but has passed into everyday language as combinations of images and words that are playfully adapted to contexts and issues.

³ For discussions of Mumsnet as a public space, see Gamble (2010) and Pedersen (2020).

The next step is gathering the data. To do this, one creates small, autonomous computer programs called ‘crawlers’ which look for and download, or ‘scrape’, textual data from the World Wide Web, using keywords and time, location, and other parameters chosen by the researchers. We created our tools in the R statistical computing environment (Munzert et al. 2014); many others use Python, and there are alternatives. But different websites have different rules—Application Programming Interfaces (APIs)—which control access, and one often has to contact sources for permission, and pay to access their sites in this way, not to mention data protection laws that limit the extent to which individuals’ opinions and contributions can be collected and reproduced. Most research that relies on web scraping is, therefore, conducted on a single platform because it is too time-consuming and expensive to have to go to many different platforms and ask permission. We avoided most of the cost and some of the API complications by only scraping data from public posts on publicly available sources, guided by our ethical protocol and relevant data protection legislation.

Because our research focused on the inclusion criterion, we also needed to check whether different perspectives were equally likely to be present in the data. For example, in the Scottish case it was much easier to get information from pro-independence sources than pro-Union. We were given numerous explanations for this, but controlling potential Yes bias in the data was one reason for including Mumsnet and Digital Spy: everyday citizens’ fears and concerns were expressed more readily in the relatively safe spaces of members’ forums, much less readily in the ‘hot’ and expressly political public space of Reddit and Facebook campaign pages (Wojcieszak and Mutz 2009). In the Australian case, the main issue was the sheer fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make up 3.3 per cent of the population, which could have meant the near-complete submersion of Indigenous perspectives in the database. Our solution was to over-sample Indigenous sources, leading to a database that was 22 per cent Indigenous, defined as being clearly owned, controlled, and/or written by people who identified and were recognized as Indigenous.⁴

The final consideration is the time period. Such debates do not have uncomplicated start and end points. In the Scottish case we had a ‘focusing event’, the referendum on 18 September 2014, while prior qualitative research and a simple ‘frequency of mentions’ count led us to think that the ‘real’ debate only started with agreement in October 2012 on legislation allowing the referendum to go ahead. So, we chose our starting point as the month before, giving us two full years of discussion before the referendum. We set our end point three months after, which captures the report of a commission set up to recommend further devolution of powers to Scotland following the referendum.

⁴ The research on First Nations communication was guided by a group of Indigenous activists, academics, public servants, and elders. We thank them for their support and guidance. More detail is on the project blog at <http://natconvblog.wordpress.com>.

In the Australian case, we were tracking a debate live instead of retrospectively, which came with both advantages and disadvantages. Live data is often easier to access with all its links and other metadata in place, whereas archiving often strips out that detail; some sites' APIs are less restrictive live, for others the reverse is true; and we were more at the mercy of events. There was no agreed date for a referendum and no question; and there were two separate processes set up under different governments, one to generate general awareness and support for the principle of recognition, the other to consult widely and recommend a proposal to be put to a referendum. The eventual proposal was encapsulated in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, released on 26 May 2017,⁵ and this became the focal point of the Australian database.

There is much else that could be said about sources and data gathering, but the key points are these: online research requires access to websites that are designed and built in different ways, with different levels of public access, sometimes in different regulatory regimes, cultures, and power relations, all of which require different access strategies. Using a single data source removes a lot of the complexity but, for deliberative systems research, leaves aside key questions about the spread of themes around the public sphere, and may erase important differences in respect and standing between dominant and subaltern groups. Furthermore, there are choices to be made about where to put one's start and finish lines in the ever-flowing stream of public conversation; and whether to follow live debates, or work with historical data, or both.

Tool Selection and Data Preparation

To be usable, raw data needs to be prepared—'cleaned'—to eliminate a number of known sources of error (Lucas et al. 2017). However, it is also the case that questions of gathering and preparation are bound up with questions of how to analyse the data: different analytic tools require different preparation approaches. So, we start with the tool selection issues.⁶

Our tool selection was driven by three main considerations: (1) the scale, multiple-origin, and heterogeneous nature of the data; (2) our desire to stay as inductive and context-sensitive as possible to avoid imposing our thematic preconceptions, remaining as true as possible to the memetic ideal; and (3) availability of training, advice, and support. The first two considerations meant that we rejected simple 'word counting' methods, like content or sentiment analysis, which strip out most context; and what Grimmer and Stewart (2013, 273–280) call deductive 'categorization' methods, using predetermined dictionaries or supervised machine learning. Instead, we

⁵ See <https://ulurustatement.org/> (accessed 23 February 2021).

⁶ The project's ethical protocol and further details of the data search, cleaning, and analysis work are available from <https://natconvblog.wordpress.com>.

looked at more inductive, automated ‘clustering’ methods. All three criteria were met by Structural Topic Modelling (STM), a package of the R statistical computing environment, which applies probability tests for the discovery of topics within a corpus of text.⁷ STM sorts words into topics, defined by groups of words that tend to co-occur according to four different probability tests.⁸

Topic modelling has two major advantages over other techniques of textual analysis: it quickly handles very large corpora; and it does not apply predetermined coding or selection frames and thus uncovers ‘latent topics’, themes in the corpus that are not immediately obvious to human readers. And while it treats documents as ‘bags of words’, regardless of syntax or context, it maintains the links between a given topic and the original source documents that are most likely to feature that topic. So, researchers can always ‘drill down’ to the original source data with its contextual features still in place.

One non-inductive feature of STM is that researchers need to make a judgement about the number of word clusters or ‘topics’ that the software reveals *before* running the analysis—in STM speak this is called a ‘topic model’. One approach is to find a model that balances two traits, called exclusivity and semantic coherence (Rothschild et al. 2019), but the heterogeneity of our data produced almost identical trade-offs for every model; so we could not use this method. Instead, we had to use researcher judgement based on prior research and topic correlations: we ran a number of models and compared them to find one for each case that was fine-grained enough to disaggregate themes that we knew from interviews had different meanings in context, but not *so* fine-grained that everything correlated with everything else.

Model selection was an iterative process that went hand in hand with data preparation. First, we filtered out usernames and ‘stop words’ (mainly common prepositions and conjunctions) that would generate irrelevant or meaningless topics. Second, the sheer scale of Facebook data, and forum users’ tendency to cut and paste sections of others’ comments before responding to them, could have obscured minority perspectives, including sources like parliamentary debates. We dealt with this by eliminating duplicate posts, aggregating text by the same author, and limiting the Facebook data to ‘interactions’, defined as a single post with at least one response, of at least 100 characters in length. Eventually, we were able to obtain workable models with clear topics and graphical representations: seventy topics in the Scottish case, sixty in the Australian.

⁷ We thank Michael Jensen for introducing us to STM. See <https://www.structuraltopicmodel.com> for extensive resources on the method and its application, including a list of publications that use the method. Like other topic modelling tools, STM uses Bayesian probabilistic modelling to derive its word associations (Lucas et al. 2017; Roberts et al. 2014). The data gathering, cleaning, and analysis was done in the R Studio environment (www.rstudio.com), aided by a web-based data visualization tool called Stminsights, <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/stminsights/vignettes/intro.html>.

⁸ Compare Hudson (2018) who uses a closely related tool, Latent Dirichlet Modelling, but on smaller, homogenous data sources.

Results and Their Representation

STM reveals its descriptive power through results and their graphic representation, revealing surprising patterns that go beyond the mere confirmation or rejection of prior hypotheses. The main output of a topic model is a table of word correlations, the words grouped into ‘topics’ which are defined by four probability tests:

1. Probability: the highest probability words associated with a topic.
2. FREX: words weighted by their overall frequency and exclusivity to the topic.
3. Lift: a weighting that divides probability by frequency in other topics.
4. Score: the log frequency of the word in the topic divided by the log frequency of the word in other topics.

For reasons of space, we have not included the topic tables here, but they can be found on the project’s blog at <http://natconvblog.wordpress.com>—the tables include short extracts of original text to illustrate. Figure 16.1 below shows the overall topic proportions for the Scottish case—again, the Australian figures can be found online.

The topic proportions give an overview of what is being discussed. The STM software randomly assigns topic numbers (square brackets in the figures) and lets the topic words themselves do the talking; but that can be frustrating for visual representation and writing up the analysis, so the topic labels were created by the research team as a convenient shorthand. However, it is important not to over-rely on those labels, but to refer back to the word clusters and, in most cases, the source texts that are most associated with a given topic.

As well as showing the overall topic proportions, one can also examine topics correlations, and Figure 16.2 is a visual representation of those correlations in the Scottish model.

Bringing together the topics based on probabilistic word associations, their proportions in the databases, and their correlations, starts to generate insight into the nature of mass public communication on constitutional matters. We illustrate this with what is perhaps *the* discovery of the research for deliberative democracy scholars: the importance of the ‘meta-conversation’.

The Meta-conversation

The meta-conversation concerns the degree to which citizens held each other to account for upholding norms of democratic debate: particularly giving reasons and evidence, calling out abuse, offering tokens of understanding or listening, and demanding respect. An alternative label is meta-deliberation (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014), but we examine features of a well-functioning deliberative system that are not necessarily deliberation per se, and use the ‘meta-conversation’ label to keep that distinction clear.

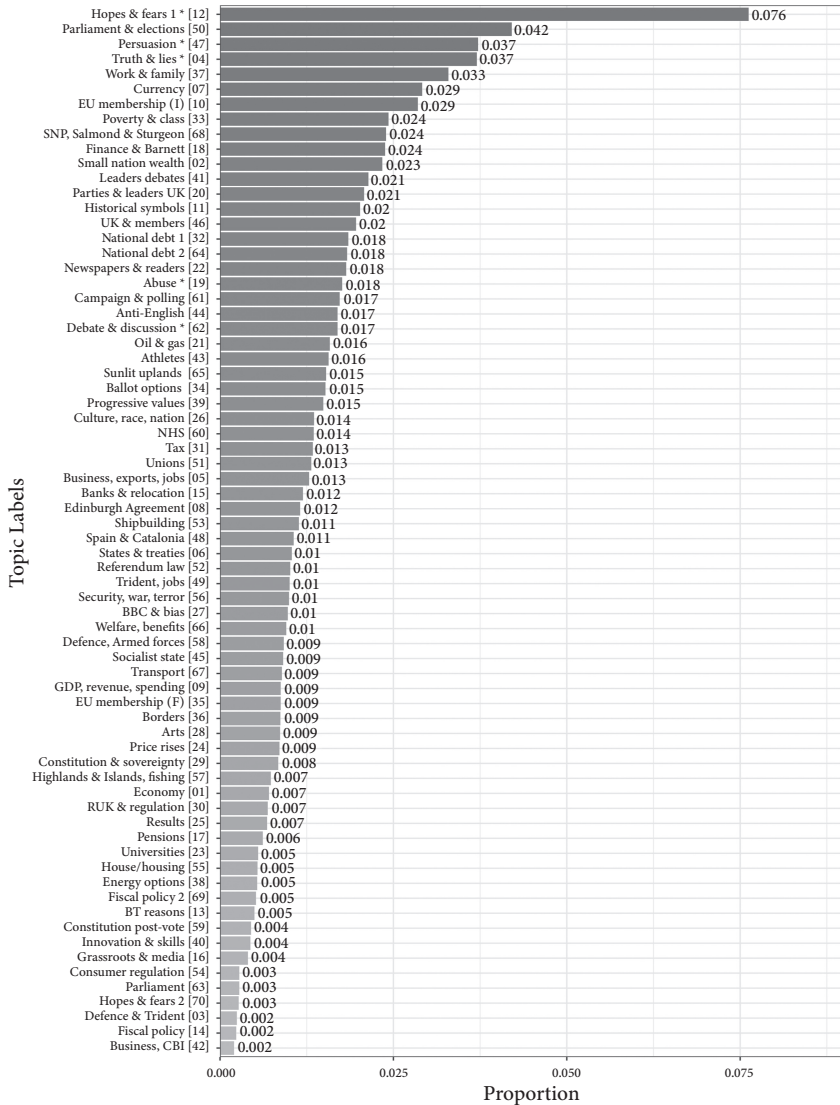


Figure 16.1 Topic Proportions, Scotland

Note: The x axis scale is decimal: 0.075 = 7.5% of the database. On the y axis, the number in square brackets is the machine-assigned topic number, for ease of reference to the online topic tables. Meta-conversation topics are marked with an asterisk.

What is striking is how important this is across the three models, and how much it varies. In the Scottish model, the most frequent topic, comprising 7.6 per cent of the sample, is something we labelled ‘Hopes & Fears 1’. It is a very general topic that focuses on hopes and fears for which side will win, the prospects of changing others’ minds, and complaints about fearmongering. It is strongly correlated with

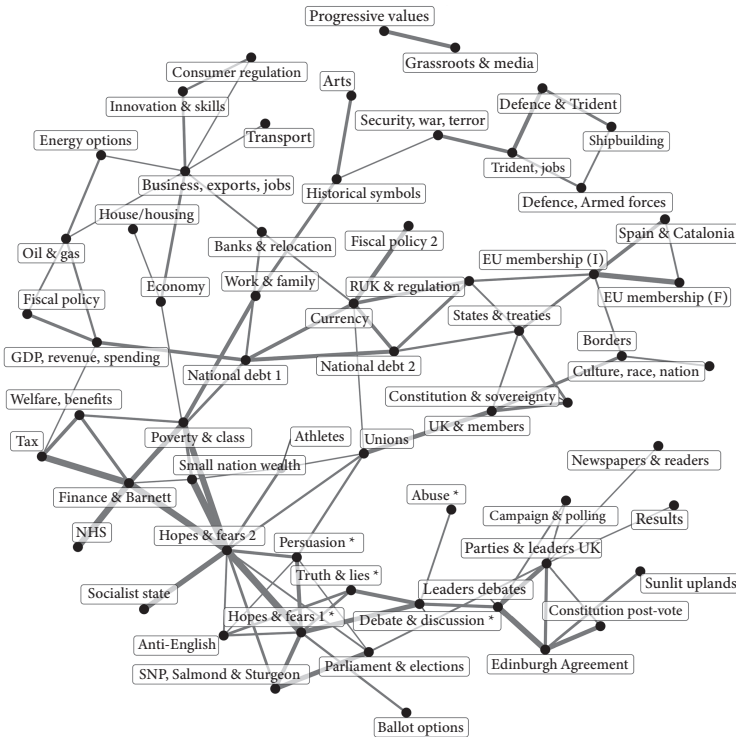


Figure 16.2 Topic Correlations Plot, Scotland

Note: The width of the line represents the strength of the correlation where strong is $c > 0.15$; moderate, $0.1 < c < 0.15$; and weak $0.05 < c < 0.1$. Any correlation below 0.05 is excluded.

topic 62 ($c = 0.15$), about the quality of debate and discussion between fellow citizens; strongly ($c = 0.13$) correlated with topic 47 about persuasion and arguments for self-government; and moderately correlated with topic 4 containing allegations and assertions about truthfulness and lies.

The Australian meta-conversation had a different, more polarized tone. The biggest topic, at 6.3 per cent of the database, is one we labelled ‘Facts & Rubbish’ and while it does include appeals to the ‘facts’ or requests for evidence, it largely features polarized shouting and personal attacks. But it was not all mud-slinging: the strongly correlated ‘Talk & Listen’ topic featured invitations to listen and expressions of gratitude—it is kinder, gentler, with longer contributions, and appears on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sites. Even a topic like ‘Black & White’, which featured strongly worded accusations of racism, nonetheless tended to specify exactly how someone had offended rather than just slinging the accusation.

The overall finding is that ordinary citizens can and often do hold each other to deliberative standards of argument, evidence, listening, and respect in relatively unmoderated, mass public conversation, and not just in the protected, designed

spaces of deliberative mini-publics, albeit with differences depending on context. We did not expect to find this. We did not go looking for it and would not have found it if we had started with a method that relied on pre-analytic coding or normative data selection frames. STM allowed us to cast a wide empirical net and then make sense of what we caught.

Data Moderators: Mapping Topics across Cleavages and over Time

So far, we have presented static views of the databases over twenty-seven months. STM also allows researchers to show the dynamics of topics, their rise and fall over time. One can also code data in STM and show how different variables rise and fall, but one does so *after* data collection and not before, creating data ‘moderators’ either by using the metadata of the source, or manually, which is what we did.

In Scotland, the sources were grouped into ‘Yes’, pro-independence sites and ‘No’, anti-independence ones, only if they clearly declared themselves to be in one camp or the other, and generally this was straightforward. We created a neutral category covering everyone else, on the view that allegedly neutral sites would reveal their leanings through the topic associations. This turned out not to be the case in Scotland—contrary to expectations, we found that Yes and No were largely having the same conversation on the same topics. What mattered more was the formal/informal divide. We operationalized this as the degree to which the content of a site is produced largely by citizens themselves in blogs, user forums, and social media; or via political mediators in government, the traditional media, academia and think tanks, and the websites of the two official campaigning organizations. We found a clear tendency for the formal conversation to portray independence purely in terms of Gross Domestic Product and similar indicators, whereas the grassroots conversation was about whether an independent Scotland was more or less likely to be a kinder, more egalitarian place once welfare and health policy was no longer set in Westminster. Figure 16.3 shows this formal/informal divide on a topic about the impacts of post-Global Financial Crisis austerity measures and social class, which rose in importance in informal discussions as the referendum neared but which largely fell off the formal radar.

In the Australian case, we produced a separate model of fifty topics for Indigenous-owned sites only, in order to test whether the word clusters that Indigenous peoples used were included in the general conversation. If one just looks at the topic labels, one can see that there was a broad kind of thematic inclusion going on with only three, relatively minor issues not covered at all. However, we found striking differences at the memetic level, particularly concerning the everyday experience of racism and colonization, and common representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For example, we compared topics in each model that relate to the removal of

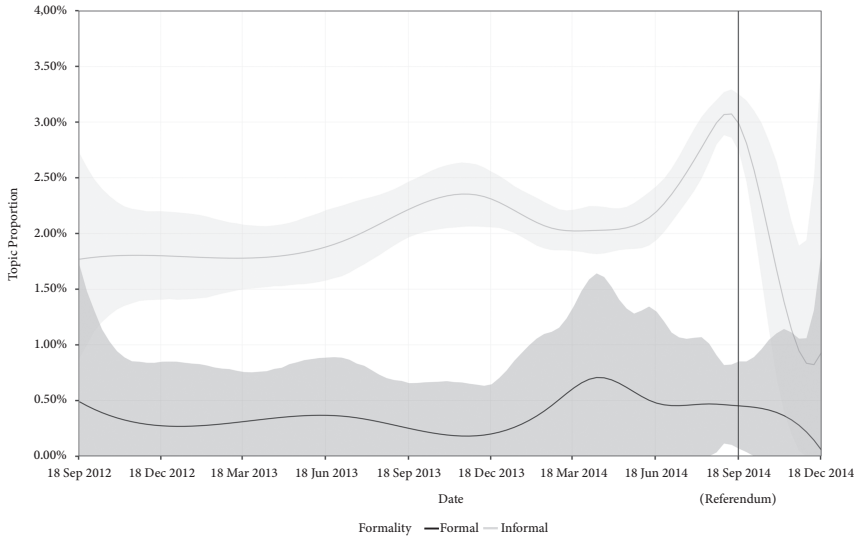


Figure 16.3 Scotland Topic 33, Poverty, Austerity, and Class, by Formality over Time

Indigenous children from their families, part of assimilation policies in the 1950s and 1960s, and child protection policies now (see Figures 16.4a and 16.4b). Both the general and the Indigenous models mention these, but the former is largely concerned with *historical* child removals, the latter with *present* ones as well. The same feature appears in other topics: non-Indigenous people were more likely to argue about whether Australia should ‘acknowledge history’ or ‘move on’; Indigenous people say that colonization happens *now*, and that the strong settler tendency to place these things in the past denies reality and responsibility. Conservative groups accuse First

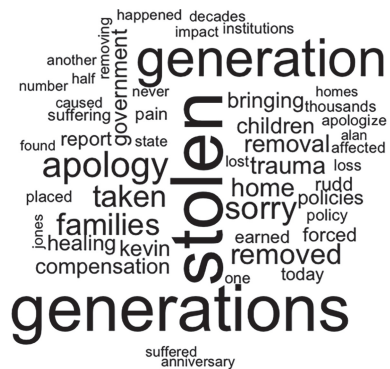


Figure 16.4a Word Cloud of General Topic 17 (Stolen Generations)

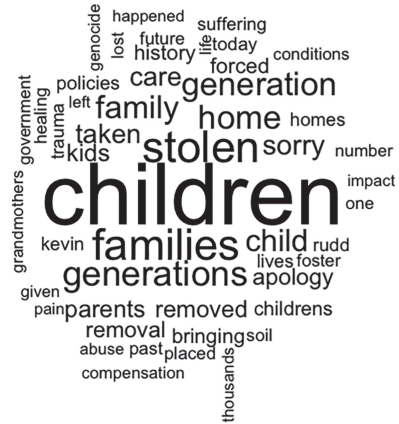


Figure 16.4b Word Cloud of General Topic 21 (Children)

Note: Almost all the verbs in the former are in the past tense; the latter encompasses past, present, and future.

Nations of ‘living in the past’, but on these issues it is *they* who focus on history and use the past tense.

Of course, one could reveal broad patterns using discourse analysis, and one could identify the past/present tendencies by conducting qualitative textual analysis. And we still needed to understand the context to get at what the data was telling us—the data did not speak for itself. What big data tools produced was relatively fine-grained, inductive detail at scale, circumventing the breadth/depth trade-off.

Conclusion

Big data techniques like STM allow deliberative systems researchers to extract qualitative detail at scale, while retaining direct access to the source data, language produced by real actors in real time. This allows them to track ‘kitchen table’ ideas over time and across major cleavages. There are many choices to make at every stage, so trade-offs and researcher intervention do not go away, and other research is still necessary to get at what the data *means* in many cases; but the current state of the art allows us to get some insight into everyday talk at a scale that has been simply impossible before. This is also a rapidly evolving field, in a rapidly evolving regulatory and commercial context. Yet, even at the beginning of this revolution, we have generated concrete evidence of people holding each other to deliberative standards in the wild public sphere, and revealed important insights about the nature of the discussion and cleavages in such debates that suggest that the summative—distributed, emergent—view of deliberative systems is not as far-fetched as it might appear (Owen and Smith 2015). New developments will open up more possibilities for thinking about deliberative and democratic norms and practices at scale.

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Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Matt Ryan

Efforts to bring deliberative democracy to life are sometimes successful, but not always. What accounts for successes and failures in deliberative practice? How can we know what works so that we can better design deliberation? How can we know what contexts are conducive to deliberation?

To answer these questions, we need to compare different cases. But if we are comparing many cases and at the same time taking their complexity and quality seriously, analysing all that information at once is a challenge. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) provides an approach and some tools to help us navigate that challenge.

QCA is a method for investigating multiple cases through logical and sequential comparison of various explanatory factors. In undertaking QCA, researchers establish which groups of conditions always (or almost always) occur (or do not) in accordance with whatever is to be explained. The QCA procedure helps establish which conditions are necessary to include in explanations. The logical approach to comparison helps researchers avoid including superfluous factors in explanations, and helps researchers discover which alternative combinations of conditions are sufficient for the outcome they wish to explain.

The QCA approach is considered qualitative because it takes the problem of constructing conceptual boundaries in social research seriously. It is often characterized by labour-intensive iteration between evidence and theory. The method requires transparency in recording and communicating the researcher's interpretation of what is at stake in measuring social phenomena. This is useful when working with emerging or contested concepts. Deliberative critiques of democracy emerged to challenge established conceptions of what democracy is. Established ways of observing and measuring democracy may therefore not be appropriate for recording and measuring deliberative democracy. Nevertheless, researchers need to establish valid ways of recording what happens in the world that can be easily communicated and open to scrutiny by others.

QCA and Deliberative Democracy

QCA can help us understand the conditions for good and bad deliberation. QCA extends the evidence base for logical comparison across a larger number of cases.

Often, the scholarship on deliberative democracy uses research designs which typically focus on one or two cases. QCA is a method which can allow for comparison across a larger number of cases. QCA maps the constellations of attributes witnessed in a phenomenon like democratic deliberation (and the absence of democratic deliberation) to identify what is known and what remains unknown. For example, we might want to explain why some governments choose deliberative approaches to confronting climate change and others take non-deliberative, for example, technocratic, autocratic, or laissez-faire approaches. We might hypothesize that alternate combinations of different factors explain political choices: say, the presence/absence of democratic commitments amongst leaders; agreement amongst advisory bodies about an immediate and significant threat to life; strong public opinion for/against climate mitigation and organized mobilization for action amongst influential social movements. There are eight possible combinations of the presence or absence of each of these three conditions that can be represented in a ‘truth table’ (see Table 17.1). Different combinations of factors may act in different directions. For example, where the elite actors know themselves to be at odds with mass public opinion, they may veto engagement (rows 4 and 5 in Table 17.1). Yet in another scenario where these broad groups hold slightly different combinations of commitments or resources, it might consistently create the conditions where deliberative strategies are preferred (rows 1, 2, and 3 in Table 17.1). The comparative approach will search for information from cases in the real world and ask how consistently deliberation is the political choice pursued for each of these possible logical combinations in turn. We might find that not all our cases with the same combination of conditions agree on whether they use deliberative politics or not, and in those contexts, evidence is contradictory

Table 17.1 Hypothetical Simple Truth Table: Comparing Conditions for Deliberative Approaches to Climate Policy

Row #	Leadership committed to democracy	Advisers agree on/declare immediate threat to life/climate emergency	Majority of public opinion and civil society organizers support mitigation	Approach to climate policy	Number of cases observed in the study with this combination
1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Deliberative	3
2	Yes	No	Yes	Deliberative	3
3	No	Yes	Yes	Deliberative	2
4	Yes	Yes	No	Non-deliberative	6
5	No	No	Yes	Non-deliberative	5
6	No	Yes	No	unknown	0
7	Yes	No	No	Inconsistent	2
8	No	No	No	Non-deliberative	10

(row 7 in Table 17.1). The truth table will also highlight whether some of those combinations are less well documented than others in empirical work (we find no examples in this hypothetical study of the combination of conditions represented by row 6 of Table 17.1).

To take another example, one of the most important but least understood questions in deliberative democracy asks when and how different designs or sequences of deliberative forums affect policymaking. Almost everyone thinks that answering this question is important, but very few have been able to study it well because it is hard to do so. In my work with Thamy Pogrebinschi (Pogrebinschi and Ryan 2018), we offer a way to respond to this question using QCA. We analyse National Public Policy Conferences (NPPCs) in Brazil to find out what combinations of institutional design choices are associated with federal legislators proposing bills and passing laws congruent with recommendations of the deliberative processes. NPPCs are participatory processes that sequence several mini-publics from municipal to state and federal level in order to recommend changes in specific areas of policy. Our analysis shows that, depending on the combination of a range of factors, such as the institutionalization of deliberation in a policy area, or the level of civil society influence in organizing a process, Brazilian legislators have set agendas and passed legislation congruent with deliberative recommendations. Legislators have responded to events that have mobilized many participants in several deliberations, and alternatively events that have mobilized a smaller number of select groups (e.g. Indigenous peoples) in deliberative processes.

Elsewhere I have used QCA to update the literature on how citizen control of decision-making is achieved in participatory budgeting (Ryan and Smith 2012; Ryan 2021). Previous research had considered conditions, such as significant financial capacities and civil society influence, necessary for citizen control of processes. Comparison across thirty cases of participatory budgeting using QCA showed that even when these conditions were absent, it is possible to identify alternate paths to citizen control of policy. Where political leaders were significantly committed to participatory politics, and bureaucratic support for participation was also substantial, those conditions in combination were sufficient for citizen control. Such findings can give scholars and practitioners a greater confidence and justification for implementing participatory and deliberative projects in diverse contexts.

Conducting QCA

QCA involves five main steps: (1) formulating combinatorial hypotheses; (2) obtaining and processing data by calibrating sets representing conditions; (3) analysing necessary conditions; (4) generating a truth table to analyse sufficient conditions; and (5) Boolean minimization to identify minimal solutions. The method can often introduce terminology that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Also, these steps are not necessarily undertaken in a linear manner. It is therefore useful to first outline

what QCA can be useful for, what kinds of research questions it can help to answer, particularly in relation to deliberative democracy, and what its limitations might be. Here, I will set out how the data is generated and processed using QCA, before finally elaborating on the steps by way of an example.

QCA emerged as an extension of the ‘comparative method’ in social sciences (Ragin 1987). Comparative approaches were classically used in explanations of large-scale macro-historical political processes—nation-state formation, or democratization and revolutions (see, for example, Skocpol 1979). The comparative method came to be distinguished from experimental, statistical, and case-study approaches, amongst others. These approaches were often portrayed as part of a hierarchy where each alternative method mimics the logic of the experiment and the choice of which mimicking method is appropriate is mostly decided by what data is available (Lijphart 1971). In this hierarchy, research designs with smaller numbers of cases might be thought of as less powerful but often more practical, though this is a simplification that has been variously challenged and debated. The comparative method came to denote the comparison of a relatively small number of cases, often based on the logic outlined in John Stuart Mill’s philosophies of scientific inquiry (Mill 1950).

Charles Ragin’s *The Comparative Method* (1987) is credited with introducing QCA in the social sciences. Ragin extended the comparative method by identifying a mathematical algebra which could be applied to formalize some of its assumptions. He revealed a correspondence between the assumptions made by many small-N comparativists (where N stands for number of observations), and the mathematics of Boolean algebra and set theory (see Ragin 1987, 2000). Ragin continues a tradition of juxtaposing the comparative or case-based (including QCA) methods with statistical methods. While the differences between the two can be unhelpfully overblown at times, it is a useful starting point for understanding what QCA can and cannot do. QCA is a method for identifying combinations of conditions associated with the presence or absence of an outcome. It identifies necessary and sufficient conditions for an outcome of interest. As a research method, QCA is usually contrasted with correlational approaches which identify the net-effect of independent variables with respect to dependent variables (Thiem et al. 2016).

To take a simplified example, assume we are interested in finding out something about the relationship between facilitation and the quality of deliberation in political forums. If we want to know whether increasing the number of facilitators increases the average deliberative quality across cases, a regression analysis would be an appropriate method of inquiry. It would help to identify correlations amongst variables (potentially controlling for certain factors). However, if we want to know whether a certain ratio of facilitators to participants is required for deliberative quality in the presence or absence of some other conditions—say, stratified random selection and/or long vs. short processes—the latter question lends itself to set-theoretic analysis using QCA. The key difference between the two methods rounds on deciding

if we are asking questions about whether more of x leads to more or less of y or whether x is necessary or sufficient for y . QCA cannot answer the former, but it can give good answers to the latter question.

Methodological and Theoretical Assumptions

QCA encourages researchers to think about when variations in quantity amount to variations in quality. Scholars using QCA need to be clear about what observation would demarcate, for example, deliberation from non-deliberation or facilitation from non-facilitation. To help understanding, it might be useful to contrast QCA with experimental methods. In a classic randomized controlled trial, ideally all assumptions should be registered; then tests are carried out; and then implications for theory are discussed. The idea is that theory and testing are very clearly separated to reduce biases in tests of a hypothesis. QCA scholars are often more comfortable with reporting changes in the conceptual boundaries they are working with during empirical research and analysis. Almost all research approaches must accommodate those practices to some degree. Even more formalized approaches aimed at testing highly specified propositions will successively pilot and standardize measures and engage in theory-informed investigations of the distributions of data to identify the most appropriate ways to test their assumptions.

While standardization is important, and care needs to be taken with any conceptual adaptation, the QCA method allows for a more regular iteration between theory building and testing in the course of research. When we are in the field or working with data, we may find that we better understand what deliberation is, or what differentiates good from bad facilitation than we did before and must adapt our measures and theories to an extent as we go along. QCA researchers are comfortable with constructing both their populations of cases and the concepts they are testing as they go. On the face of it, it might be supposed that this can lead to the worst excesses of social science's cardinal sins: namely accommodating theories to fit existing biases. This is an important consideration. In reality, the QCA process accounts for any changes in a way that requires researchers to be transparent about their reflections and choices, and QCA provides tools for presenting assumptions openly and concisely. This process of refining some aspects of theory based on empirical information and vice versa may happen several times in different ways in the course of QCA.

It is important to emphasize that this juxtaposition of QCA with other methods requires some simplification. Most trials are clear that they involve pilots and replications, and all scientific inquiry iterates between theory and data. Nevertheless, QCA introduces unique techniques to facilitate that iterative work. Much of the work is centred on the process of calibration of sets. Sets are distinct collections of objects (e.g. members of the set of nation-states include Australia and Ireland but not London or Florence). Calibration is the name for the scientific

process of standardizing an instrument for measuring something (think of how each thermometer is calibrated to give a standard measure of temperature). QCA researchers transform variables and observations into sets with membership criteria, distinguishing which cases are members of a set, and not members of a set. For example, following the ideal/normative conception of deliberation, we might say that cases of deliberation are ones where decision-making is supported by public reason-giving following the free and unencumbered exchange of ideas. Cases of non-deliberation are those where these conditions are absent. So far so good: that crisp dichotomization is no different from what we might expect in a theory that wishes to utilize some measure of a qualitative or categorical variable. However, when we go out in the field, we might find that deliberation in the empirical world is not so easy to discern as it seemed in our heads. How do you know unencumbered decision-making when you see it? Our rationalities are differently bounded for a start. What counts as a reason or reason-giving?

We may need to be more precise and adapt our conceptual theories in order to categorize cases. What counts as reason-giving continues to trouble scholars of deliberative democracy and is a hallmark of their ongoing engagement with the empirical world. QCA provides some tools for systematizing this process of refining both theory and measurement.

Ragin borrows the idea of ‘fuzzy set’ membership from computer science, to show that cases can have different degrees of membership in a set. To construct or calibrate a set of deliberation, we would need to specify what distinguishes cases that are deliberation from cases that are definitely not deliberation; and then also specify what distinguishes the cases in between that are closer to deliberation from those cases that are closer to non-deliberation. In fuzzy sets, cases’ membership in a set varies between a score of 1 representing full membership, and 0 representing full non-membership. An important measure of quality is a ‘crossover point’ of 0.5 membership which represents the point of maximum ambiguity about whether a case is deliberative or not. While fuzzy sets may draw on quantitative measurements, they include at least these three qualitative or conceptual ‘breakpoints’ which distinguish the assumed quality of a phenomenon (see [Ragin 2000](#) for an in-depth explanation). To take a stylized example, imagine set membership scores in the set ‘deliberative forum’. We might expect that a case of a well-run mini-public is classified fully in the set (score of 1), riots are fully out (score of 0). What about parliaments in liberal democracies? We might think that these are mostly but not fully deliberative forums. They might end up with a set membership score of 0.9 or 0.8 in the set, depending on how the set has been calibrated to reflect descriptions of what deliberation is. The researcher will need to carefully calibrate their set such that scores accurately reflect observations. Any number of empirical observations might actually suggest that parliaments are more deliberative than mini-publics, or that elected politicians are better deliberators than citizens in mini-publics, such that recalibration is appropriate. As long as researchers are transparent about how and why they construct their measures, and the measures describe well the relationships amongst observations in the world, the technique is scientifically robust.

The second major assumption of QCA approaches is that they treat cases as *configurations* of key attributes. In this sense those who undertake QCA are less interested in isolating the ‘independent’ effect of a variable than in understanding which minimal configurations of explanatory conditions are subsets or supersets of an outcome condition. Subsets of supersets are observed when all the conditions in the subset are also elements of the larger superset. It is this search for subset–superset relationships that tests and reveals necessity and sufficiency (see [Schneider and Wagemann 2012](#) for an excellent explanation).

For example, imagine a researcher wants to understand what conditions are sufficient for good deliberation, and they theorize that some combination of government support for a process, professional facilitation that is independent from government, and a representative selection of participants, will explain good deliberation. The researcher might first calibrate a set of ‘good deliberation’ and seek to explain it by understanding its relationship with the sets of ‘independent facilitation’, ‘representative selection of participants’, and ‘government-commissioned process’. The researcher will then collect their data and perhaps engage in some of the iteration outlined earlier. Observations should vary across cases (it will tell us something about our conceptualization being quite open or narrow if they do not). If we find across all cases that whenever we observe a combination of representative selection in a government-commissioned process, good deliberation is never absent, we can then say there is evidence this combination of conditions is sufficient for good deliberation. This is visualized in Figure 17.1. Note that the area of overlap representing a combination of X1 and X3 is the only combination of the hypothesized explanatory factors that is a perfect subset of Y. The outcome (good deliberation) is

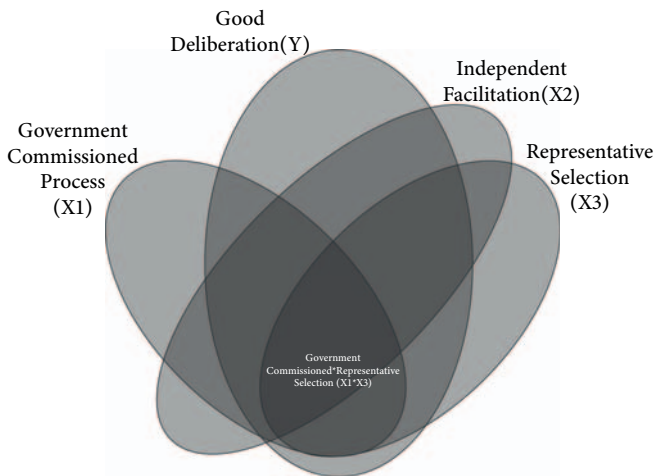


Figure 17.1 Venn Diagram

Note: The diagram is showing that a combination of ‘government commissioned processes’ with ‘representative selection’ is a subset of, and sufficient for, the outcome ‘good deliberation’. * Denotes intersection of conditions.

a superset of the combination of conditions. Mathematically we are simply saying that set scores in the causal combination $[X1*X3]$ are less than or equal to the potential outcome Y across all cases. From this we can make some modest generalizations (incorporating our knowledge of the field and cases) about whether we expect good deliberation in the presence of representative selection and government support for processes.

We might also find that the other hypothesized condition (independent facilitation) varies in its presence and absence such that there are examples of it being both present and absent across all possible combinations of conditions and outcomes. In such a scenario, the explanatory value of independent facilitation for good deliberation is now in question and we can eliminate it as a determinant of good deliberation at least in the context of descriptively representative government-commissioned processes.

That is not to say there are no other combinations of sufficient conditions of which independent facilitation may be an important component, but it means that we do not have evidence for them yet. There are multiple potential configurations of conditions that may explain an outcome. The Venn diagram in Figure 17.1 suggests that the conditions represented do not cover all of the good deliberation set. QCA tries to decipher the context in which conditions are explanatory of others and the contexts in which they are not. Numerous software programs are available which can quickly compute and summarize the multiple potential superset–subset relationships amongst (combinations of) conditions.

The distinctions in assumptions between QCA and other methods, both those typically considered ‘qualitative’ or ‘quantitative’, can be overblown. Sensitivity to conceptual concerns and how explanations interact are considered in all good research in different ways, and over-problematization of such issues can be debilitating. Nevertheless, QCA can be considered to come from a place that privileges the concerns outlined in this section over others to an important extent and focuses on understanding relationships of necessity and sufficiency. Potential users should be aware of these assumptions. The treatment of cases as complex wholes made up of combinations of conditions (which could represent different types of deliberation, for example), and theories about what is required for, or what contexts are sufficient to produce, deliberation are rife in the literature on deliberative democracy. Therefore, QCA’s methodological assumptions should lend help in dealing with many puzzles that researchers in the subfield face.

Data and Analysis

QCA does not preclude any type of data gathering. The key requirement is that data is transformed systematically and transparently into a set. A fuzzy set, as we have seen, is a set that allows for different degrees of membership. Researchers could rely on qualitative data—for example, by specifying membership scores in fuzzy sets ascribing to different verbal statements. Researchers can define what evidence would be

required for a case to be more or less in the set and assign case scores accordingly, based on the evidence. Users can also rely on quantitative data—for example if we had a continuous measure of the money spent on several mini-publics, we could calibrate the set of ‘well-resourced mini-public’ by specifying the three breakpoints at which (i) a low level of spending comes to mean ‘not well-resourced’ and all variation below that point is irrelevant to the concept of resourcing a process well; (ii) the spending point at which a mini-public is definitely well-resourced by our standards and any further spending is an irrelevant luxury; and (iii) the crossover point at which a case is more well-resourced than not. We can then ask a software program such as the several QCA packages freely available in R to apply a mathematical transformation to array all cases’ gradations in spending within this qualitative framework provided by our construction.

Several applications of QCA have also mixed more qualitative and quantitative evidence. There is no need for the same calibration approach to be used for all sets in an analysis. The key requirement is that the sets and measures are developed around the research question and they best represent and explain what the researcher is researching. Sets can even be systematically combined before analysis. For example, we may think two sets we have calibrated—let’s say ‘non-interference of privileged actors’ and ‘non-domination of speaking time’—add up to the higher-order set of cases of ‘unencumbered deliberation’, and we could calculate cases’ memberships in the latter set by considering it the union or intersection of the first two. These processes of combining set scores are described in depth in the texts recommended for further reading at the end of this chapter.

Once the researcher has created a data set that contains all the membership scores for cases in conditions, they can move on to the ‘analytic moment’ of QCA. The research will often tack between several analytic moments and calibrations or additions of cases and conditions, reinforcing the constructivist elements of QCA’s approach. The analysis, which is quickly performed by software these days, requires the researcher only to interpret the outputs of algorithms applied using software packages and to specify what levels of uncertainty they would like to tolerate. An example will be useful in explaining this process.

Example: Using QCA in Deliberative Democracy Research

Here I discuss how we used QCA to assess the impact of deliberative processes, and to explain the conditions that were necessary and sufficient for decision makers to respond to the recommendation of deliberative forums ([Pogrebinschi and Ryan 2018](#)). More specifically, we focused on how combinations of five institutional design characteristics were associated with legislators’ responses to the deliberative recommendations of NPPCs during the rule of Brazilian President Lula da Silva. We looked at whether these processes had been institutionalized or were new to the policy area;

the differences between redistributive policy areas and others; the authority of civil society organizations; the number of participants; and the number of forums.

We compared data from several sources from national statistics to coded records of conferences and legislative outputs (on the latter, see [Pogrebinschi and Samuels 2014](#)). We first identified those five influencing conditions that could combine to explain two different sorts of policy outputs we observed: whether a number of laws were passed congruent with recommendations of a conference, or whether a significant percentage of recommendations of a conference were congruent with bills introduced in the federal legislature. We outlined several configurative hypotheses to explain those outputs. For instance, we expected to see that where NPPCs had occurred several times in a policy area, mass participation of citizens in combination with strong roles for civil society groups in organizing processes would give legislators the confidence to respond to a large proportion of recommendations (hypothesis a). Equally, we thought that deliberative processes taking place in the context of redistributive policymaking where such processes are less established (opening up new areas to deliberative policymaking) would produce laws when participation from citizens and civil society was high (hypothesis b). We also hypothesized that more streamlined designs with fewer sequenced mini-publics would have an influence in the context of policy areas not classified as redistributive, or recognition that may favour a more in-depth deliberation on more niche or technical subjects (hypothesis c).

To test these assumptions, we calibrated seven fuzzy sets representing the conditions of interest and coded each case's membership in each set for thirty-one cases where we could find adequate data for each condition. We utilized various qualitative and quantitative data sources.

The next step and first stage of data analysis in QCA is to test for evidence of necessary conditions for the presence or absence of the policy outputs and outcomes we were interested in. That is, we asked if the outcomes were a subset of any of our conditions. This was an interesting question because there are some debates between those who favour participatory or deliberative models of democracy over whether mass participation or more streamlined deliberation will legitimate policy decisions. Our hunch was that either might lead to responses depending on contexts. Much like in statistical analyses, QCA software calculates measures of fit to allow researchers and readers of research to understand and interpret the consistency and strength of superset–subset relationships. For example, the *consistency* measure allows researchers to interpret the extent to which evidence from all cases supports a superset–subset relationship. Our tests showed that neither mass participation nor a more centralized deliberative design were subsets of policy outcomes, but that considering one or the other as substitutes (the union of the sets) was highly consistent with the necessity relationship. Neither condition is necessary alone, but one or the other is almost always necessary. The example shows how QCA's assumptions can accommodate explanations that allow for alternative and equally valuable explanations for an outcome, rather than seeing explanations as competing.

Following the standard analysis of necessity, the analysis of sufficiency has two basic steps: the construction of a ‘truth table’, which helps researchers analyse which combinations of conditions are consistent subsets of the outcome, and then a process of logical ‘Boolean minimization’, which employs an algorithm to help remove logically redundant elements of any explanation. The truth table is a useful visual tool for analysis because it groups cases into types according to which combinations of presence or absence of key conditions cases most closely ascribe to. An example of one of the truth tables for one of the outcomes from our research is reproduced below.

The table shows that despite the number of permutations for combinations of presence and absence of the five influencing conditions (thirty-two possible combinations of presence/absence with five conditions), several cases observe the same logical combination of conditions. What is presented is only a partial truth table. There are several other rows of potential combinations for which we have no good observations in the data that are left out here.

The truth table reflects a summary of a researcher’s data. The consistency (cons.) column, sometimes called the inclusion score, gives us a measure of the extent to which the sufficiency superset–subset relationship for the combination of conditions represented in each row holds across all cases. Sufficiency consistency is calculated by summing the minimum values of cases’ set memberships in a proposed causal condition and outcome, and then dividing that figure by the sum of cases’ set memberships in the causal condition (see [Schneider and Wagemann 2012](#)). With fuzzy sets, all cases will have partial membership in each row (though in the table cases are named in the one row which best describes their features).

The researcher then will have to decide on a threshold at which they can consider a combination sufficient for the outcome. Thresholds often range between 0.75 and 1 and need to be chosen and justified with reference to the researcher’s understanding of the cases and theory. Including some inconsistency effectively means researchers are happy with an answer that says a combination of conditions is ‘almost always sufficient’ for an outcome.

The truth table can often throw out some surprising results, revealing unusual combinations of conditions of cases, or challenging intuitions about what combinations ought to be considered sufficient for an outcome. Researchers may need to reconsider if they have made calibration/coding errors or are missing important explanatory variables, or why some apparently very different cases are logically inseparable according to the data. A process of iteration between earlier parts and later parts of the research process described in this chapter often ensues. If researchers are transparent in explaining how they reached the models they finally present, this poses no problems. What is clear is that these tools allow for researchers to systematize the process of theory refinement (both conceptual and explanatory) in interacting with their data.

The final stage of analysis is to remove any redundant factors from explanations using Boolean minimizations. This means looking at all the rows we consider sufficient (and possibly some of the rows for which we do not have good examples of

cases) and deciding if we can logically remove one or more conditions from any potential explanation of the outcome. The process is as described for the ‘independent facilitation’ example in a previous section. There are two advantages here: one is that we can use software to help show us neater parsimonious answers to research questions, excluding redundant factors; a second is that we can engage in analysis of counterfactual cases. Those rows of potential combinations of conditions with no good exemplar cases that are not shown in Table 17.2 but are of the type represented

Table 17.2 Truth Table

I	R	C	M	D	P	Cons.	Cases
1	0	1	1	0	1	1.000	Environment 2008
0	0	1	0	0	1	0.928	Aquaculture and fishing 2003
0	0	0	0	0	1	0.911	Aquaculture and fishing 2006, Science technology and innovation in health 2004
0	0	1	1	0	1	0.910	Environment 2003, Environment 2005, Public Security 2009, Sports 2004
1	0	1	1	1	1	0.898	Cities 2007
0	0	0	1	1	1	0.846	Culture 2005
0	0	1	1	1	0	0.792	Cities 2005
1	1	1	1	1	0	0.740	Health 2003, Health 2007, Social assistance 2005, Social assistance 2007
0	0	0	0	1	0	0.719	Sports 2006
0	1	1	1	1	0	0.688	Public Policies for women 2004
1	1	1	0	1	0	0.588	Health of Indigenous people 2005
0	1	0	1	1	0	0.563	Oral health 2004, Promotion of racial equality 2005
1	1	1	1	0	0	0.482	Food and nutritional safety 2007
1	1	0	0	0	0	0.445	Human rights 2008
0	1	0	1	0	0	0.390	Worker’s health 2005, Youth 2008
0	1	1	1	0	0	0.384	Public Policies for women 2007
0	1	0	0	0	0	0.363	Gays lesbians bisexuals transvestites and transsexuals 2008, Professional and technology education 2006
0	1	1	0	0	0	0.280	Rights of elderly 2006, Rights of people with disabilities 2008, Solidary economy 2006, Sustainable and solidary rural development 2008

Source: Adapted from Pogrebinski and Ryan (2018, appendix C).

Note: Table shows consistency (cons.) and outcome coded for outcome policy outputs (P).

I = institutionalized policy conference, R = redistributive policy, C = civil society control of organization, M = mass participation, D = decentralized institutional design. Cases are named after the policy area and year of the NPPC.

by row 6 in Table 17.1 are often called logical remainders. Using our theories, we can investigate the plausibility of assuming such a combination would co-occur with the outcome, and consider including those assumptions in the minimization. In this way assumptions about possible cases for which we do not have data are made explicit.

In Pogrebinschi and Ryan (2018) we found several sufficient conjunctions of conditions that explained our outcomes, which in some cases confirmed our assumptions, in others added nuance, or identified less obvious explanations that we and others had not considered. For example, we found that hypothesis (a) was only consistent within the scope of our non-redistributive policies. Whereas we found that for hypothesis (b) the influence of civil society organizations in organizing deliberation was less important than we had thought. When we went back to investigate the cases in the light of these findings, such interpretations allowed us to make better sense of what was going on in the cases. We found evidence for (c) to be somewhat inconclusive. QCA provided us with the tools to test and refine our theories in a systematic and enlightened way.

Conclusion

QCA has provided a considerable methodological advance in the social sciences and is a good tool for many tasks. I have shown that QCA has been useful for the study of deliberative democracy, but its potential in the area is far from realized. I appreciate I may have introduced a little jargon for those new to the method, but I hope that this short description is clear enough to whet the appetite for some who may feel it sounds like QCA is right for their purposes.

QCA still has limitations and its proponents have responded to several critiques in ways that have improved the method. There are also passionate debates amongst QCA methodologists. For example, QCA has only very blunt instruments for dealing with changes in conditions over time, although improvements are being worked on. QCA can be effectively combined with other methods, of course—for example with more formal within-case comparison or ethnography. Schneider and Rohlfing (2013) provide details on how best to select cases for follow-up studies.

Deliberative democracy's origin as a normative critique within democratic theory is important because this critical perspective and normative project has guided action with several cases of different deliberative democratic practices emerging. Set-theoretic statements about what conditions are required and what constellations of conditions together produce types of deliberation are common. Different designs and contexts have different results, and empirical research is needed to explain what is happening in practice and to reflect on those theories. QCA offers a useful approach, as well as tools and techniques for refining theories systematically in the light of observations.

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PART III
EXPLORING DELIBERATION

Ethnography

Nicole Curato and Nicole Doerr

In ethnography, argues Lisa Wedeen, there is ‘never nothing going on’ (Wedeen 2010, 255). Cancelled community forums, sharp dropout rates in mini-publics, and incorrectly completed questionnaires may be considered setbacks to understanding deliberative politics in action. For an ethnographer, however, these may signify everyday politics at work.

Ethnographers conduct research through ‘close-up, on-the-ground observation’ in ‘real time and space’ (Wacquant 2003, 5). They provide ‘thick descriptions’ of everyday politics from the perspective of those who experience them (Geertz 1973). Ethnography lays bare the microfoundations of politics. It recognizes that democracy is not just about institutions and political communication, but also esteem, desires, hidden injuries, emotions, and aspirations, which shape the meanings that people ascribe to collective decision-making (see Lauren et al. 2007). The challenge is to render routinized practices visible as well as moments of triumph and madness that constitute democratic life, with a view to offering plausible narratives that can ‘redefine and undermine, negate and create novel explanations about politics’ (Wedeen 2010, 260).

Recent years have seen an uptick in studies using ethnography to make sense of deliberative democracy. How participatory budgeting is experienced by disenfranchised citizens in Brazil (Baiocchi 2005), the precise ways in which disruptive communication addresses inequities in democratic deliberation in Paris, Frankfurt, Atlanta, and California (Doerr 2018), the frames people mobilize to challenge scientific discourse in a mini-public on biobanking in British Columbia (Walmsley 2009), and the anxieties of public engagement practitioners as deliberation becomes a commodity to be bought and sold in neoliberal America (Lee 2014) are just some examples of ethnography at work.

In this chapter, we take a close look at the role of ethnography in the study of deliberative practice. We characterize ethnography as both a perspective and a toolbox (Lauren et al. 2007, 4). In the first section, we focus on the use of ethnography as a perspective in deliberative democratic research. As a perspective, we argue that ethnography is a fitting methodology to fulfil critical theory’s task of rendering political power visible, particularly in its subtle and insidious forms. Moreover, we suggest that ethnography is responsive to recent developments in deliberative theory, particularly the increasing recognition of the role of passions, silences, and performativity

in what was originally portrayed as an overly rationalistic view of politics (Rollo 2017; Wessler 2018; Curato 2019).

In the second section, we describe ethnography as a toolbox, which offers a range of data-gathering and analytical techniques to make sense of public deliberation. Ethnography poses distinct challenges in respect of data integrity. The positionality of the researcher is front and centre in this approach, which raises issues about the extent to which the researcher can document observations from the field, while carrying one's pre-existing biases, theoretical assumptions, and personality traits. Ethnographic research can also stand in tension with deliberative democracy's normative commitments. Can the ethnographic virtue of suspending judgement, for example, be compatible with deliberative democracy's normative commitments of enabling respect, civility, and public spiritedness? We tease out these issues by presenting some concrete examples from research practice.

In the third section, we provide empirical examples to illustrate how ethnographic methods help to study the content, context, and outcome of deliberative practices based on an interdisciplinary set of approaches in political and social sciences and sociolinguistics. Here we focus particularly on the examples of studying 'inclusion', 'equality', and 'transparency' in deliberative practices and processes by drawing on the perspective and toolbox of ethnography.

Overall, our goal in this chapter is to provide a critical reflection on the uses of ethnographic research in the study of deliberative democracy. Our aim is not to extol the virtues of ethnography, but rather to put ethnography on the table as one of many approaches that can deepen our understanding of how deliberative democracy is experienced by ordinary citizens.

Ethnography as Perspective

As a perspective, ethnography holds the constructivist view that politics consists 'not of big structures and prescribed roles but of dynamic, contingent interaction among persons, households and small groups' (Tilly 2007, 409). It documents aspects of lived experiences to examine how and why agents think, act, and feel the way they do (Wacquant 2003). By immersing themselves in the lives of people under study, ethnographers can offer a situated perspective that contributes to scholarly debates (Wedeen 2010, 257).

In the context of deliberative democracy, ethnographers typically ask the broad question: how is deliberative democracy experienced by ordinary citizens? Ethnography recognizes that there is no 'natural' home for good deliberation—not the courts, not parliaments, nor citizen assemblies. Deliberation, following André Bächtiger and John Parkinson, is 'contingent', that is to say, it depends on goals and contexts. It is 'performative' for it mixes various forms of democratic communication to justify preferences. It is 'distributed' because deliberative norms do not take root in a single

location, but are dispersed over space and time (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019, 15). Deliberation can very well unfold in the public and in intimate spheres, as private discussions amongst friends and family shape our public reason (Tamura 2014). It can take place in both secular and religious settings, as in the case of churches serving a foundational role in African Americans' democratic notions of political discourse (see Brown 1994). Ethnography, in other words, keeps an eye on the unexpected spaces in which deliberative action can take root.

Deliberative norms are also the subject of ethnographic research. An ethnographic perspective embraces the view that 'there is no Platonic ideal of good deliberation.'

The ideals of which good deliberation is composed are rightly constantly subjected to critical scrutiny, examined for unintended implications, opened to revision, revised, and subjected again to further contest and future scrutiny.

(Bächtiger et al. 2018, 2)

In the introductory chapter of the *Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, the editors demonstrate the changing standards for good deliberation over the past half-century. The desirability of consensus is one example. Today, most deliberative theorists and practitioners recognize 'the nuances of the pluralist aspirations and dimensions of modern democracies' (Bächtiger et al. 2018, 4).

Ethnography is a fitting approach to scrutinize the various ways in which deliberative norms are constructed, performed, contested, renegotiated, and revised in relation to an issue or polity under study. Consider, for example, the ethnographic research of Caroline Lee (2014) on the micropolitics of deliberative democracy revealing the rise of a public engagement industry. By observing a series of conferences and meetings held for public engagement professionals, Lee characterizes how deliberative democracy consultants in the United States carefully craft deliberative forums as unique and special spaces which, in turn, appeals to the sponsors of these forums. While Lee does not mean to be dismissive of deliberative consultants' work, her work draws out the implications of 'deliberative capitalism' for deliberative practice. What her ethnographic work contributes to the scholarly conversation, however, is the precise description of the time, labour, and skills invested in making deliberative forums relevant for social transformation. And often, as she also observes when spending time with participants in these forums, these efforts result in little impact, because the 'larger political context is hostile to the empowering, destabilising, progressive bent of deliberative solutions' (Lee 2014, 199–200).

There are many lessons Lee's work offers, but what we wish to highlight in this chapter is the power of ethnography to connect micropolitical acts, such as the improvisations required to pitch the uniqueness of deliberative forums to sponsors, and the macropolitical context, such as a hostile political environment. This, we argue, allows deliberative democrats to understand the precise obstructions for institutions of representative democracy to move in a deliberative direction.

If ethnography imbibes the ethos of constructivism, does this mean that it does not accept any a priori 'truths' about deliberation? Take the case of Amartya Sen's (2003) claim that deliberation is a universal human capacity. One approach is to accept the universal validity of this claim, and to critically examine how differently this human capacity is expressed in different cultural contexts. The goal is not to romanticize cultures, but to lay bare the structures of power that account for the durability of existing political institutions. Edward LiPuma and Thomas A. Koelble's (2009) work on South Africa, for example, characterizes how consensus-oriented village-level deliberation resonates with the country's pre-colonial roots, and therefore makes deliberative democracy a more fitting form of democracy than the Western liberal version. However, the authors do not wax lyrical about this, and instead point out that traditional leadership structures are also composed of 'power-hungry patriarchs' who reappropriate the vocabulary of deliberation as a legitimizing device for rigid hierarchies (LiPuma and Koelble 2009, 201). By closely observing the behaviours of chiefs and councillors during village-level decision-making, LiPuma and Koelble were able to generate an evidence-based critical analysis of the quotidian manifestations of power that undermine norms of inclusiveness and reason-giving.

Another approach is to take a step back and interrogate what precise 'human capacity' deliberation entails. One consequence of deliberative democratic research's focus on 'what people say' (e.g. analysing transcripts of deliberative forums, pre- and post-deliberation surveys, etc.) is the disregard for analysing 'what people do'. The field's methodological partiality to words has the unintended consequence of downgrading non-linguistic forms of speech and presupposes that speech is a universal human capacity. Clearly, this is not the case. Deliberative communication is multimodal (Curato 2019). It is a visual, creative, embodied, and emotive process. Persons with speaking disabilities, or those who refuse to speak up for reasons of trauma or resistance, can offer justifications for their views, albeit in subtle and not easily detectable ways (Rollo 2017). Ethnography as a perspective enables us to respond to the challenge posed by Toby Rollo of overcoming the 'methodological subordination of deeds to speech', for this erases the contributions of those who are either unable or unwilling to exercise their voice in the public sphere (Rollo 2017, 588).

Ethnography as Toolbox

How exactly does ethnography capture aspects of public deliberation? What are the tools for data gathering and analysis available for ethnographers?

Ethnography entails 'immersion in the place and lives of people under study' (Wedeen 2010, 257). While research methods like experiments aim to neutralize the context, ethnography places context at the centre of the study to understand how realities can be explained by situational factors (Talpin 2012). Ethnographic methods often employ a combination of data-gathering techniques, including:

Living in the community being examined; learning a local language or dialect; participating in the daily life of the community through ordinary conversation and interaction; observing events (meetings, ceremonies, rituals, elections, protests); examining gossip, jokes, and other informal speech-acts for their underlying assumptions; recording data in field notes that attempt to produce daily accounts of social and political life.

(de Volo and Schatz 2004, 267)

All these techniques of data gathering are aimed at researchers attuning themselves to the rhythms of their subjects' lived experience. Research is conducted in everyday and seemingly mundane settings to understand 'ways of doing politics' as they happen and where they happen' (Baiocchi and Connor 2008, 144) instead of staged settings like, for example, in-depth interviews organized according to the researcher's time and outside the respondent's everyday routine (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003, 743). This is not to say that interviews cannot be part of ethnographic research. We underscore the centrality of researching in everyday settings to ethnography as a methodology to map recurrent patterns of interaction from the perspective of those who experience the social reality under study.

How do ethnographers analyse data? There are no hard and fast rules, but there are considerations worth bearing in mind. The first has to do with the subject of analysis. Ethnographers consider mundane aspects of everyday life as key sources of meaning. 'Contradiction, silences, and confusion' are angles for data analysis (Wolford 2006, 340) for these build the character of the communicative environment and speech norms in which deliberation takes place. Ethnographic analysis requires sensitivity to the nuances of meaning-making which are often inaccessible without an immersive method.

To achieve this, ethnographers engage in a rigorous process of transforming everyday observations into analysable data. This may take the form of writing field notes, recording reflections and observations in voice memos, taking and annotating photographs, and other memory devices that can chronicle significant ethnographic moments. Like transcripts being analysed for, let's say, a Discourse Quality Index, ethnographic data is categorized, interpreted, and connected using themes that address one's research questions. Victoria Sanford (2003) gives a helpful introduction for researchers to assume a self-reflective methodological perspective to their writing process. She suggests that academic writing constitutes a hegemonic translation process that slowly transforms ethnographic 'data' into Western scientific knowledge. For example, Doerr's work illustrates the limitations of exploring ethnographic data in multilingual group settings where the author had to rely on interpreters for Hungarian and Turkish (Doerr 2018). In this way, the recognition of one's own limitations in understanding the 'research subjects' and their languages and positionalities within global hierarchies of research and education is one of the starting points for a reflexive ethics of ethnography (Sanford 2003).

Analysing ethnographic data also entails managing the tensions between the ethnographic spirit of suspending judgement in grounded observations while remaining committed to the core aspirations of deliberative theory. Some ethnographers prefer to provide thick descriptions of lived realities without engaging in moral and political judgements (e.g. [Snow and Morrill 1995](#)), while critical ethnographers argue that the first responsibility of ethnographic research is to uncover the hidden or taken-for-granted practices, structures, and manifestations of power that shape lived experience (see [Madison 2011](#)). We argue that an ethnography of deliberative democracy is necessarily a critical ethnography, whereby researchers embrace an ethical responsibility to identify structures of power and injustice in the polity under study. Robust empirical methodologies are the foundation of enquiry, but these observations are oriented towards describing the relationship between ‘what is’ and ‘what could be’ ([Madison 2011](#), 5), rather than prescribing ‘what should be’. In this process, the values and ethical commitments of the ethnographer are not presented as detached from the empirical analysis; rather, they are placed in the foreground and opened up to critical scrutiny.

Illustrative Examples

Many studies illustrate how ethnography can help investigate and analyse public deliberation or deliberative group settings focusing on normative principles such as inclusivity, equality, and transparency within deliberative processes ([Mansbridge et al. 2015](#)). These principles are by no means the only important virtues in public deliberation, but we focus on each of these examples to demonstrate how these abstract virtues can be observed, documented, and analysed in ethnographic research.

Inclusion

Sociologists and critical discourse analysts have developed an elaborate body of interdisciplinary ethnographic methods to address the theoretical interest in empirical conditions that facilitate or impede the inclusivity of deliberative group settings. The advantage of these studies is that they provide different entry points in ways to study the *social norms* and *context settings* as well as *participants’ conceptions* of democracy structuring deliberative interaction ([della Porta 2005](#); [della Porta and Rucht 2009](#); [Polletta 2002, 2015](#)).

Inspired by feminist and critical theories, critical discourse analysts have developed innovative ethnographic approaches to understand how *social context* conditions the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion within public deliberation ([Young 1998](#); [Wodak 1996](#)). Within the broad field of critical discourse analysis (CDA),

critical historical discourse analysis (CHA) offers a way to combine ethnographic observations of non-verbal interaction with the fine-grained analysis of verbal utterances within public discourse based on sociolinguistic methods (Wodak 1996). This method has been applied to the study of online and offline settings, including a critical analysis of the broader institutional and social context and the discourses surrounding the immediate context of deliberation (Wodak and Wright 2006).

In another field, within the sociology of civic participation and social movements, sociologists have developed cross-national comparative approaches to studying the inclusivity of large-scale grassroots democratic forums (della Porta and Rucht 2009). One key difficulty that scholars needed to address in this field is how to compare a large-scale grassroots deliberative process as part of the European Social Forum, a counter public space organized by global justice activists across Europe (della Porta 2005). For example, an ethnographic study by Donatella della Porta and Rucht was focused on global justice activists engaged in deliberations in several European countries and taking place in meetings at the local, national, and European levels (della Porta and Rucht 2009). While all the various groups studied had, in principle, agreed to work together based on the ideal of discursive, communicative, deliberative, or consensus-based democracy, the place-specific norms and practices of consensus and decision-making varied considerably between radical, participatory, or even representative democratic conceptions (della Porta and Rucht 2009). Moreover, the understanding of what constitutes inclusive debates and consensus proposals also varied across countries and even within different movement cultures within each local assembly (Flesher 2015). Our normative focus on deliberation may restrict broader theoretical or methodological use of ethnography for the study of civic dialogue. For example, a normatively driven research agenda on a deliberative search for mutual understanding can marginalize questions posed by agonistic theories of democracy—though recent work shows the intersection between deliberative and radical democratic approaches (Ercan 2017).

Ethnographers of deliberative processes should make transparent their own standards of analysis while considering that these differ from participants' and organizers' norms of democracy. This is the main lesson of these studies. It is necessary to reflect on ethnographers' standards when interpreting research findings and the broader impact of research in dialogue with stakeholders.

Equality

The equality of participants in deliberative processes has received attention across a wide range of ethnographic studies in social and political sciences, media, communication, and cultural studies. In addition to political scientists, sociologists and scholars of culture in organizations have relied on ethnographic methods to develop empirical approaches to the study of deliberative forms of participation, civic engagement, and communication.

Faced with timely questions of inequality, political sociologists in the United States have developed ethnographic case studies to examine the promise of egalitarian deliberation and participation (Walker et al. 2015). This work comes out of an interdisciplinary tradition of ethnography inspired by feminist and sociological theorists revealing challenges of egalitarian group discussions and egalitarian dialogue, both within civil society as well as in institutions (Freeman 1972; Fraser 1990; Mansbridge 1983; Young 1998; Polletta 2002).

A first ethnographic approach to inequality is provided by studies in the fields of civil society and social movement networks, which were interested in observing and understanding power differences within ostensibly egalitarian group settings. This work illustrates how to observe multiple types of leadership and obvious or subtle power asymmetries in direct interaction amongst people in group processes of decision-making (della Porta and Mosca 2007). For example, power relationships that counter egalitarian ideals of discussion can be based on charisma, formal status hierarchies, informal social relations, including friendship or fellowship, or on ideological partisan affiliation (Polletta 2002; della Porta and Mosca 2007).

Another way to approach equality ethnographically has been developed by cultural sociologists interested in understanding whether and how social class differences impede the potential of egalitarian deliberation, focusing largely on American civil society groups (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Leondar-Wright 2014). Betsy Leondar-Wright (2014) shows the failure of egalitarian discussion and cooperation based on class-cultural differences creating internal divisions within progressive civic associations in the United States. Her observations show that, in order to have one's voice count equally during discussions, group members need to be familiar with implicit cultural codes. Even though formal norms of facilitation should, in principle, make sure that all group members are treated as equals, implicit cultural codes define whose voices are heard and whose are not. This resonates with earlier work of the limits of 'free spaces' in movements (Freeman 1972; Polletta 2002). Members of traditionally disadvantaged groups may choose to exit deliberative spaces dominated by implicit or explicit cultural codes fitting the intersectional gendered norms of equality reflecting the culturally specific style of middle-class, white, androcentric speakers (Mansbridge 1983; Leondar-Wright 2014;). More studies show how selective habits of hearing (Polletta 2002; Doerr 2012) or group styles (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003) limit equality within deliberation and restrict its transformative potential.

Transparency

Transparency is key to democracy, both in large-scale formats of public deliberation and in digital forms of communication, as well as in the context of access to local governance and institutions (Fung 2013). Doerr faced the challenge of studying transparency in her ethnographic research comparing deliberative decision-making in meetings taking place in three countries and at the European level as part of the

European Social Forum process. In order to understand how the perception of transparency varies amongst different groups of participants in meetings across a broad set of cases involving twenty meetings, Doerr used a triangulation of ethnographic data combined with interviews and questionnaires distributed to participants and facilitators of deliberative processes (Doerr 2012). Her ethnographic observations enabled her to clarify an open question she had come across in her interviews and questionnaires, where the majority of participants who had attended perceived the multilingual European meetings to be more transparent than monolingual national meetings in their home countries. Deliberative theorists would have probably predicted the opposite finding, given that language barriers obstructed transparency in European meetings.

Part of the explanation to Doerr's counter-intuitive result was based on ethnographic observation of discussions and decision-making at European and national meetings: Participants who had volunteered for translation at the European meetings had become increasingly aware of how both subtle and unsubtle dynamics marginalized the voices of many for whom they were translating in those meetings. At the same time, they were aware of how power asymmetries in the national meetings obstructed transparency. They had discovered that volunteer translators had the unique agency to disrupt the process without being perceived as being out of order, because their official job was to witness and address linguistic miscommunications.

As volunteer translators motivated the enhancement of transparency at the European meetings, these critical participants used their translating position as critical listeners within multilingual deliberation to make sure that no group could withhold relevant information or seek to dominate the deliberative process. Ethnography, complementing the data gained through interviews and surveys with facilitators, participants, and translators, gave Doerr the tools with which to understand the overlooked and powerful agency of *third* actors within political translation, including participants in meetings who used their position as volunteer translators to perform critical political translations in order to address inequities hindering democratic deliberation and to entreat powerful groups to work more inclusively with disempowered groups.

Conclusion

In this chapter we provided an overview of the use of ethnography in the study of deliberative politics. We described ethnography as a perspective and a toolbox that orients understanding towards the lived experiences of the process of deliberation, as well as revealing how the deliberative virtues of inclusiveness, equality, and transparency can be empirically observed and analysed.

Before concluding, we would like to flag some of the limits of this approach. First, on the practical level, ethnography is a time-consuming method, one that demands

intellectual and emotional investment on the part of the researcher. Many ethical issues surround ethnography which we cannot enumerate here, including issues of reliability of the ethnographer's account, the ethics of anonymization and covert ethnography (see Pachirat 2018). Sometimes, practical realities of academic timetables, publication deadlines, and other concerns set a limit to the extent to which an ethnographer can immerse herself in the field and acquire a deeper knowledge of a particular society. Second, on a conceptual level, ethnography cannot provide a neat answer to 'what caused what' questions. While experiments are useful in identifying variables that caused differences in behaviour, ethnography cannot isolate factors and instead brings out the complexity of a situation which, to some audiences, may seem unconvincing and tentative. Nevertheless, through our brief discussion, we hope to have encouraged researchers interested in the nuts-and-bolts of everyday life to consider ethnography not only as an approach to research, but also as a normative guide to engaging the political.

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19

Rhetorical Criticism

John Rountree

Rhetoric has a bad reputation in vernacular political discourse. It connotes misleading speech or shameless propaganda, and it is haunted by modifiers like ‘mere’ and ‘empty’. Yet, rhetoric does not have these negative connotations for rhetorical scholars. Rhetoric, instead, can be defined as *public discourse that creates meaning and moves communities*.¹ Understood this way, rhetoric is central to public life and deliberative democracy, and it privileges citizens not only as voters but as communicators (Asen 2004). Rhetoricians see it as a core feature of liberal arts education to teach ethical communication practices within a democratic community.

Notably, ‘rhetoric’ in rhetorical studies differs markedly from conceptions of rhetoric often invoked in deliberative democratic theory. Simone Chambers (2009) describes attempts in political theory to ‘rehabilitate rhetoric as a legitimate component of deliberation’ (325). Such efforts have been undertaken by thinkers like Iris Young (1996, 2000, 52–80), John Dryzek (2010), John O’Neill (2002), and Danielle Allen (2009, 140–160). These theorists view rhetoric through ancient Greek and Enlightenment philosophy as a particular type of communication—the persuasive appeal—that can be isolated and potentially exiled from deliberation. ‘Rehabilitating’ rhetoric, in this case, means defending the role of explicit advocacy in deliberative encounters. However, from the perspective of rhetorical scholars, these arguments start from a flawed premise: rhetoric is a fundamental aspect of communication and cannot be excised from deliberation. Attempts to do so would be futile and potentially harmful if they portray some appeals as non-persuasive and objective. Rhetoricians have shown over the past forty years that persuasion exists in all forms of communication, and even the seemingly neutral discourses of science are not immune (see Ceccarelli 2001; Gross 1990). This is not to say that all persuasion is intentional, but rather that any communication involves choices, choices that inevitably present a partial view of the world and invite us to think and act in particular ways (Burke 1966, 46–52). The question of rhetoric and deliberation, therefore, should not be whether rhetoric is a legitimate part of deliberation, but rather how best to be reflexive about rhetorical dimensions of deliberation (Hauser and Benoît-Barné 2002; Roberts-Miller 2005; Zarefsky 2008b).

¹ For better or worse, the term ‘rhetoric’ is itself contested within the field and has no central, agreed-upon definition. Wayne Booth (2009) in *The Rhetoric of RHETORIC* charts thirteen popular definitions that have variously been employed. Many scholars hesitate to even define it for this reason. Readers should therefore understand that the definition I offer is tentative and open to contestation.

In this chapter, I introduce rhetorical methods for studying democratic deliberation. Rhetorical criticism is the *qualitative, humanistic study of rhetorical artefacts and processes to understand how rhetoric functions within the public sphere*.² Unlike rhetorical theory, which teases out the implications of rhetorical processes in an abstract sense, rhetorical critics take deep dives into particular cases to understand the richness of communicative interactions. Sixty years ago, this meant studying the great speakers and speeches, but now rhetoricians study people and artefacts that are much more inclusive of the wide variety of communicative practices that characterize democratic life. Rhetoricians concern themselves both with the exceptional and the quotidian, from the high-flown oratory of presidential address to the seemingly innocuous discourse around how to tally war deaths (Barnett and Boyle 2016; Stuckey 2004). Scholars examine objects as diverse as historical photographs, legislative debates, petitions, architecture, protests, museums, digital platforms, scientific papers, bureaucratic memos, and more. Rhetorical criticism offers a close look at specific communication practices and how they constitute meaning in a democratic society.

In what follows, I explain major theoretical assumptions of rhetorical criticism that pertain to the study of democratic deliberation. I then introduce the methods of close textual analysis that animate current scholarship.

Theoretical Assumptions of Rhetorical Scholarship

To understand rhetorical criticism as a method, one must first appreciate how rhetoricians theorize the relationship between discourse and deliberation. I review two assumptions in this section: the rhetorical construction of reality and the centrality of context. These two assumptions emerge out of decades of theoretical debates concerning the nature of rhetoric and how it shapes democratic experience.

Rhetoric Constitutes Reality and Invites Deliberative Judgements

The first major assumption rhetorical critics make is that everything we say, do, or know is inevitably filtered through a communicative terrain that contextualizes and gives meaning to our experiences. Discourse is tied to what we think and what we are able to imagine in public deliberation. Rhetoric empowers and constrains in this way, as any given piece of discourse invites audiences to share in its view of the world—including its blind spots and misconstruals.

² Most rhetorical scholars would view theory and criticism as complementary projects—good theory emerges out of criticism, and good criticism is informed by theory. James Jasinski (2001, 256) calls this ‘conceptually oriented criticism’.

In the context of democratic deliberation, rhetoricians have shown how symbolic choices invite specific trajectories in policy debate. Pamela [Connors \(2017\)](#) explains that public policy is ‘fundamentally symbolic’ in that ‘the language that analysts, policymakers, and the media use to define problems and name solutions shapes the nature and extent of the public’s concern and understanding of social issues’ (423). David [Zarefsky \(2005\)](#), for example, highlights strategic definitions and how they prime policy discourse on poverty to take some directions and not others. As he explains,

If the phenomenon of a person lacking work is symbolized as indolence, sloth, or sinfulness, then stern admonition might be called for but public employment programs would seem extremely inappropriate. Conversely, if the same phenomenon is seen as a specific manifestation of a maladjusted economy, then moralizing or temporizing would seem ineffective if not hypocritical; the situation clearly calls for public action.

([Zarefsky 2005](#), 3)

This perspective recognizes that rhetoric is both selective and social. It is selective in that terms, definitions, or other forms of representation are choices. They simultaneously reveal and conceal, and they are never innocent. The way we describe the poor directly implicates how we deliberate on appropriate policy measures for them. Simultaneously, rhetoric is social in that people in deliberation participate in a common language that helps define the policy situation. Participants, even political elites, do not necessarily see ‘behind the curtain’ in understanding the implicit trajectory of their symbolic choices, nor are those choices always theirs. Rhetorical choices may have developed over time and no longer seem like choices at all. At the same time, available rhetorical choices may reflect power relations, as what is ‘say-able’ at any given moment can be dictated by the hegemonic ideologies within a society or culture ([McGee 1980](#)).

We should distinguish this theoretical perspective from a study of communication effects, as rhetorical criticism is not well-equipped to evaluate effects. A handful of studies will draw on evidence of how contemporaneous commentators and other audiences responded to discourse, but rhetoricians do not isolate causal variables or run experimental studies. In fact, the language of ‘effects’ has caused considerable consternation within rhetorical studies in the past, and some rhetorical critics are still too loose with terms like ‘persuasive’ or ‘effective’ ([Kiewe and Huock 2015](#)). [Zarefsky \(2008a\)](#), in an article comparing social science to rhetorical criticism, notes that rhetoricians may be mistaken for making effects claims when, in reality, they are making claims about how discourse reflects interpretive frameworks and invites particular responses. Zarefsky cautions rhetorical critics to be careful with causal language for this reason (2008a, 637). Of course, in a back-and-forth exchange within deliberative events, a critic could say that one piece of discourse generated a response from others, but they could not make the types of claims survey researchers could about political efficacy, trust, knowledge gains, etc. ([Kuyper 2018](#)).

Context is Central to Understanding Meaning within Deliberation

The first theoretical assumption leads directly into the second. Given that rhetoric constructs our understanding of reality and given that people always enter into deliberation within a rhetorical context, understanding that context is very important for rhetorical critics. This is because rhetoricians are concerned with discourse as it actually operates within the public sphere. Rhetoricians focus on meaning as it is generated within existing political communities and cultures, examining discourse with all the texture of its context.

Rhetoricians ask questions that make context central. Because critics are interested in how interlocutors create meaning and interpret their own deliberations, critics must reconstruct the political exigencies and constraints that bring deliberations into existence. In other words, the rhetorical critic seeks to understand deliberation as the deliberative participant would—not as an isolated event but as an intervention into a historical and political context. In this vein, Kirt Wilson (2010) describes rhetorical criticism as a ‘hermeneutic enterprise’—or an enterprise that investigates the connections between a community’s discursive texts and their contexts of interpretation. Rhetorical criticism, according to Wilson, elucidates sociopolitical contexts by analysing specific communicative acts because deliberative discourse presents a pragmatic intervention into contexts.

I will offer an example from my own research. In a recent article, I analysed deliberation over the 2013 immigration bill in the US Senate. The bill represented a major compromise between advocates of increased border security and those who wanted a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. As I examined the debate, I realized that the fundamental disagreement between Democrats and some Republicans relied on how they were understanding the history of immigration policy going back to 1986 with the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act. Each side reconstructed alternative policy histories—Democrats talked about a history of ‘enforcement first’, while Republicans referenced ‘promises’ that had been broken over the last thirty years. Even though I was more concerned with how gridlock is justified in congressional debate, my analysis hinged on understanding the policy contexts and debates that preceded the deliberation and how they were being differently framed and interpreted (Rountree 2018).

In sum, critics assume that a strong analysis of rhetoric must put it in conversation with its various contexts. For deliberation scholarship, this means that rhetorical critics will situate the deliberative encounters they analyse by showing how such encounters interact with contexts that are technological (Benoît-Barné 2007), political (Hogan 1986; Steudeman 2014), institutional (Hartnett and Goodale 2008), patriarchal (Keremidchieva 2012, 2013), ideological (Cloud 2004), and racial (Bacon 2003; Wilson 2002). Not all these contexts, of course, can be addressed in a single study, but they present the range of options available to the critic in the investigation

of deliberative discourse. In the next section, I will explicate in more detail how rhetorical critics go about this enterprise through close textual analysis.

Rhetorical Methods: Close Textual Analysis of Democratic Deliberation

Ironically for my purpose in this chapter, it is not customary in contemporary rhetorical analyses to have a methods section *at all*, and this genre standard in rhetorical journals and books can leave rhetorical methods opaque to those outside the field. As it stands, contemporary rhetoricians are reluctant to reduce rhetorical criticism to a specific set of procedures, as they perceive it would inhibit the critic's ability to explore and uncover creative perspectives or arguments.

Nevertheless, rhetorical scholars *do* have methods—they are just not often outlined explicitly. My aim in this section will be to do some translation work for outside audiences, to reconstruct methods of rhetorical analysis with an eye towards their application in studies of democratic deliberation. I will focus on four key issues: the questions rhetoricians attempt to answer about deliberation; the units of analysis they rely on; how they construct their data sets; and how they translate textual evidence into arguments.

Asking Key Rhetorical Questions about Democratic Deliberation

Rhetorical scholars study public discourse to answer a wide variety of historical, empirical, philosophical, pedagogical, and ethical questions for deliberative democracy. I will focus on three main categories of research questions that recur in rhetorical criticism of democratic deliberation. This list will not be exhaustive but will instead focus on the three most recurrent themes driving contemporary research.

The most dominant strand of rhetoric and democratic deliberation traces the mutual interplay between historical public deliberations and political thought. It asks: *How do historical deliberations reflect and constitute political thought and policy trajectories?* Multiple book-length rhetorical analyses have examined the evolution of public policy and how that evolution was carried through rhetorical transformations in the public sphere. In line with the assumption that rhetoric constructs reality, these scholars ask how deliberative rhetoric justifies some policy trajectories over others, and, more broadly, how deliberative discourse reveals undercurrents in public understanding.

Robert Asen's work on welfare debates presents a good example of this type of research. [Asen \(2012\)](#) shows how images of the poor in US presidential and congressional discourse shifted from the 1960s through the 1990s, as those who were once viewed as 'contract-signees' were gradually construed as 'cheats, shirkers, and

double-dippers'. This discourse shift ultimately justified the US Congress repealing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Similarly, Kirt Wilson (2002) analyses the US congressional debates over desegregation during Reconstruction. Republican idealists at the time pushed for African American civil rights to ensure political equality, but Wilson concludes that moderate Democrats constructed a 'rhetoric of place' that justified local, Southern sovereignty and undermined civil rights. Wilson's purpose, however, is not only to understand how the 1875 desegregation bill was debated but also to understand how key concepts like 'race', 'equality', and 'place' were understood and contested during this period in history. Deliberative encounters, from a rhetorician's perspective, provide insights into the constructed and contested social reality of the times (Wrage 1947).

A second strand of rhetorical scholarship investigates problematic argumentative patterns that arise and repeat themselves in democratic deliberation. Researchers in this area will ask: *What argumentative pathologies recur in democratic deliberation, and how should we address them?* Scholars offer descriptive and prescriptive arguments. They empirically investigate how problematic arguments develop and function to hinder deliberation, and they offer normative solutions for combatting such arguments.

Many such studies focus specifically on how deliberators construe political others negatively. Robert Ivie (2005) has drawn particular attention to the problem of political conformity in deliberative discourse. He shows how the rhetoric surrounding the 'War on Terror' not only vilified foreign adversaries but also construed dissenters as anti-American. Jeremy Engels (2015) also argues that a problematic politics of resentment operates within American democratic discourse, one that 'encourages Americans to direct civic resentment against their fellow citizens and not at social structures that benefit the wealthy and powerful' (26). Other forms of argumentation have also been examined. Marie Lund Klujeff (2012), for example, argues that a 'provocative style' of deliberation should not be dismissed wholesale, as it can give presence to perspectives that may otherwise be ignored. Leah Ceccarelli (2011) examines how political operatives 'manufacture' scientific controversies in an effort to deceive the public on issues such as climate change, and she offers prescriptions on how to defend scientific consensus against such attacks.

A final major theme of rhetorical research is pedagogical and relies on rhetoric as training for citizenship in a deliberative democracy. The question, therefore, is: *How can we develop democratic deliberation as a model of civic pedagogy?* Craig Rood (2016) puts the matter plainly: this research agenda proposes 'a linear model—rhetorical education and then civic discourse—which promises that the things learned in rhetoric classrooms can be useful later' (144). There are, these scholars would argue, deliberative and rhetorical habits that we can teach students to apply in the larger public sphere. Rosa Eberly (2002), for example, regards the classroom as a 'protopublic' space where students can practice and produce critical arguments, perhaps even for publication in newspapers or for discussion in public events. Along the same lines, J. Michael Hogan (2010) argues that rhetorical education can help revitalize American civic culture if it teaches students about the ethics of public

speaking, the methods of rhetorical criticism, and the history of public address. Each addresses deliberation in different ways—public speaking by accounting for the judgement of diverse audiences, rhetorical criticism by examining complex policy debates, and public address by understanding the historical conditions that have promoted public deliberation.

Approaching the Units of Analysis as ‘Texts’

In order to investigate these research questions about deliberation, rhetorical critics analyse ‘texts’ as their primary data. Rhetorical criticism originally emerged out of literary criticism, and it carried with it an appreciation for the internal workings of communicative artefacts. These ‘texts’ can be almost anything—from back-and-forth deliberative discussions, to speeches, to photographs, to architecture, or digital infrastructure. For rhetoricians, what is important is that they investigate *what* and *how* people communicate through the products and processes of their communicative efforts. The critic examines what texts can reveal, how they frame situations, what they highlight and downplay, and how they invite audiences to think and act. Close textual analysis is a hermeneutical enterprise that puts the internal workings of texts in conversation with their various contexts, the understanding of reality they invite, and rhetorical theory.

Rhetorical criticism, as a type of close textual analysis, is good for investigating the ‘black box’ of deliberation (Mutz 2008, 530; Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger 2009, 174). Multiple times in democratic deliberation scholarship, writers have called for more studies that analyse the communicative practices of citizens as they deliberate (Black 2012; Tracy 2011, 5). Karen Tracy (2011), notably, has called attention to practices of ‘ordinary democracy’ that encompass the everyday communicative acts of citizens participating in democratic institutions. Rhetorical criticism is particularly well-suited to investigate ‘ordinary’ democratic communication with close attention to the implications of what people say in public meetings. In this respect, the practice of rhetorical criticism looks very similar to critical discourse analysis or some types of argument analyses (Fairclough 2003; Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2016; Wodak and Meyer 2015). They emerge out of different intellectual traditions, so the differences amongst these approaches are more historical than essential. Compared to argumentation scholars, rhetorical critics focus less on formal structures of argument and attend to aspects of discourse that some argumentation scholars would consider beyond the scope of their research, such as narrative, metaphor, or identity formation. Critical discourse analysis is harder to distinguish from rhetorical criticism and, indeed, some scholars would classify rhetorical criticism as a type of critical discourse analysis.³

³ Again, in my estimation, the primary distinction here is intellectual tradition. Rhetorical critics do not usually recognize themselves as CDA scholars or cite CDA work, and methods books on CDA seldom

Navigating the Intertextual Terrain and Creating a Data Set

As with any other empirical method, rhetorical criticism requires the researcher to construct a data set for analysis. Because a rhetorician's data set is public texts, the data are usually already available—the question becomes which data to examine. Legislative debates are common fodder for analysis and are a matter of public record, as are political speeches and school board deliberations. Additionally, more rhetoricians have begun to draw on fieldwork to get better access to vernacular deliberation rather than focusing solely on the discussions of political elites.

Rhetorical critics typically examine public discourse as it permeates through the public sphere. Much like the 'systemic turn' in deliberation studies has emphasized the interconnectedness of different sites of deliberative discourse over time and space, rhetorical critics trace discourse trajectories across a variety of deliberative contexts (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012). Rhetoricians have not yet engaged with deliberative systems theory, but I would argue that their approach to deliberation has been 'systemic' for a long time.

Nevertheless, it is tricky to develop specific procedures for constructing a data set. Deliberation at the level of the public sphere presents a vast intertextual terrain that is hypothetically boundless. In a thoughtful reflection on the rhetorical analysis of policy debates, Robert Asen (2010) notes the challenges of constructing a data set to examine:

To appreciate fully this diachronic policy episode, I would have to place Franklin Delano Roosevelt [FDR] address in dialogue with congressional committee hearings, [US] House and Senate floor debates, government agency reports, news media coverage, public advocacy campaigns, and more. Of course, as rhetorical scholars interested in public policy, we have to delimit our studies somehow, and I do not mean to suggest that macro-analyses must examine every potentially relevant utterance. Instead, a macro-level analysis must cast a sufficiently wide net to elucidate the diverse perspectives forwarded by multiple authors of policy debate and the developments in policy debates over time.

(139)

Asen articulates the problem well, but the solution remains elusive. What constitutes a 'sufficiently wide net'? The data set is not only laterally expansive but temporally so—one could go back and look at policy deliberations through twenty years. He seems to suggest that it is enough to gather more texts until one stops encountering new perspectives, but again, exactly what that means is opaque. Examining a data set that is too narrowly defined would do injustice to the way that contexts shape the

mention rhetorical analysis. When CDA books do talk about rhetoric, they refer back to classical rhetoric rather than contemporary rhetorical scholarship.

meaning of the texts. Conversely, a data set too broad would make rhetorical analysis an impossible task and would risk losing the richness of the specific case.

There are no perfect answers here that will apply universally to each study. Instead, we need to conceptualize the type of work that the rhetorical critic does when s/he constructs a data set. Any deliberative text is going to exist within what Kirt Wilson (2005) calls a 'discursive field', an intertextual terrain that gives the text meaning to a particular community. In other words, interlocutors in a deliberation do not encounter the deliberation in a vacuum—they encounter it as one in a series of communicative moments, and prior discourse provides a framework in which they interpret deliberative exchanges. While we can never discover the full context that shapes an individual or community's experiences, we can at least examine the residual public discourse available to us and try to understand prominent themes within communities of interpretation.

Rhetorical critics must start with a central object of analysis and build outward from that point to reconstruct the relevant discursive field. For deliberation, rhetoricians usually identify the object of their analysis as the controversy—the relevant points of disagreement and tension animating a deliberation (Olson and Goodnight 1994). J. Michael Hogan and Craig Rood (2015) explain that the rhetorical analysis of policy deliberation 'involves identifying recurrent themes and key players over time, while zeroing in on important "moments" of clash or on key policy "texts" that transform the debate or propel it in new directions' (365). Rhetorical critics, as Asen argues, have to take both micro and macro approaches, where they zoom in on specific moments while keeping the larger sociopolitical contexts in view. A critic can begin, for example, with a transcript of a specific deliberative meeting and locate central frames (e.g. key terms, tropes, stories) that encapsulate the different perspectives. These key frames can then be used as a filter as the critic expands outward to look at the discursive field into other relevant texts that help contextualize the deliberation, including news reports, speeches by important policymakers, widely circulated TV ads, viral YouTube videos, iconic photographs, etc. Those other relevant texts are typically treated as contextual and supportive rather than primary data, but they can lend explanatory depth to frames that arise within a deliberative text.

Translating Textual Evidence into Empirical Arguments

Rhetorical analysis encompasses much more than what makes it into a final essay or book. The rhetorical critic must dwell in the deliberative texts and contexts, shifting back and forth between potential arguments and a holistic view of the evidence. In this process, the critic looks for presences and absences. What is featured in the discourse? Are there specific stories, people, terms, metaphors? Conversely, what is missing? What rhetorical choices were not utilized? As a critic asks these questions, s/he can discern patterns within the texts and start to piece together how they reflect and constitute participants' self-understanding of the deliberation.

Specifically, the critic can translate textual evidence into broader empirical arguments by looking for *coherence*, *recurrence*, and *contextual probability*. Coherence is whether the interpretation forwarded by the critic makes sense in terms of the specific interlocutor and other statements they have made throughout the deliberation. Recurrence is whether the pattern holds up with other deliberative participants or whether it is an isolated case. Contextual probability ascertains whether the empirical analysis makes sense in terms of the discursive field, in terms of the contextual exigencies that give rise to the discourse. With each criterion, the researcher should also look for counter-evidence that would complicate or refute the argument.

For example, in *Asen's* (2015) book on school board deliberations, he examined deliberations concerning permission for a Gay–Straight Alliance to form at one of the schools. He noted how school board members kept referring to their own public responsibilities to be ‘neutral’ and ‘unbiased’, while also expressing personal feelings that might conflict with their public obligations. This textual evidence, Asen argued, revealed ideological tensions within the school board. He demonstrates recurrence by showing how this language came up with multiple board members across specific deliberative texts. At the same time, he dives deeper into each interlocutor’s statements, giving ample context on other statements they had made and how those statements further evidenced coherence of their ideological tension. Asen also reconstructed a deliberative context through previous board meetings and newspaper accounts, and this contextual work lends probability to the existence of an ideological tension.

Conclusion

Overall, rhetorical criticism of deliberation constitutes an iterative and interpretive process, one that straddles the line between inventional art and social science. Rhetorical critics closely analyse public discourse to investigate the way it undergirds deliberative judgements and bolster healthy democratic practices. While rhetorical criticism often does not dictate standard procedures of verifiability and data collection, it is still a method that demands accountability to the lived experiences of deliberators and the ways that rhetoric configures those experiences. Rhetoricians emphasize the interplay of texts and contexts within deliberative discourse, simultaneously revealing how discourse invites public judgement and how such discourse should be evaluated.

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Process Tracing

Jonathan Pickering

Proponents of deliberative democracy argue that authentic, inclusive, and consequential deliberation has intrinsic value; that is, it constitutes what democratic legitimacy looks like (Dryzek 2000, 173–174). At the same time, deliberation may deliver a range of other empirically observable benefits, including higher-quality decisions, political systems that are better at managing collective problems, stronger capacity of citizens to engage in political processes, and higher citizen trust in political institutions (see generally Chambers 2003; Gutmann and Thompson 2004; Dryzek 2010).¹ Some of these empirical claims—such as the idea that involvement in deliberative processes enhances participants’ deliberative capacity—may be readily supported by surveying participants before and after their involvement in deliberative events. Yet even in these cases, it often remains unclear *how*—that is, through what kinds of cognitive, communicative, or material processes—deliberative capacity is enhanced. Other empirical claims may be even more difficult to substantiate, particularly when it comes to evaluating the impacts of small-scale deliberative forums on broader political systems, for example the role of such forums in enhancing the quality of public debate. Efforts to identify the macro effects of deliberation face the methodological challenge of disentangling causal connections when a much wider range of actors and institutions shape political systems.

Process tracing offers a promising and versatile method for qualitative assessment of these issues because it can identify and test causal mechanisms through which deliberation may produce change at multiple scales, ranging from individuals changing their minds to political institutions becoming more supportive of public participation or becoming better at solving problems. For the purposes of this chapter, process tracing is defined as ‘the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purpose of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case’ (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 7). As elaborated below, this definition emphasizes the value of process tracing as a method for *causal explanation* of *small-n case studies*.

Despite its increasingly common usage in other areas of political science, process tracing is rarely invoked explicitly in literature on deliberative democracy (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 4). Following an overview of the process tracing method that

¹ These empirical claims are variously referred to as epistemic, problem-solving or instrumental benefits of deliberative democracy.

outlines its rationale, potential applications, and limitations, I identify three areas in which process tracing can advance research on deliberation: (i) the adoption and diffusion of deliberative practices; (ii) the influence of actors on deliberative processes; and (iii) the influence of deliberative practices on policymaking and broader political systems.

Process Tracing: A Methodological Overview

Scope and Objectives of Process Tracing

Collier (2011, 823) describes process tracing as ‘a fundamental tool of qualitative analysis’. Although variants of process tracing can be found in the work of historians going back many centuries, the term was first used explicitly as a methodological description in the 1960s by cognitive psychologists investigating the processes through which individuals make decisions (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 5). It was not until the late 1970s that the method was applied to political science (George 1979). Process tracing has ontological groundings in positivist theories of causal explanation, such as scientific realism and pragmatism (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 10, 14). As such, it is less clearly compatible with postmodern or poststructuralist conceptions and critiques of causation.² It also places stronger emphasis on explanation than interpretive studies tend to do (Ercan et al. 2017, 198), although it shares with interpretive methods an interest in theoretically informed description and analysis of individual cases (see also Hopf 2007).³

The focus of process tracing on understanding causal mechanisms indicates that its primary value is in explanatory analysis, although proponents emphasize that good description of processes remains an essential foundation for sound explanation (Collier 2011, 823). Whereas quantitative methods such as regression analysis focus on causal effects—such as the average effect of an independent variable (e.g. democratization) on a dependent variable (e.g. government performance) over a large number of cases—process tracing focuses on identifying the *causal mechanisms* that link causes and effects within a single case or a small number of cases. Causal mechanisms are ‘ultimately unobservable physical, social, or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate, but only in specific contexts or conditions, to transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities’ (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 12). Since causal mechanisms themselves are not directly observable, researchers need to identify observable implications that should tell us whether certain mechanisms are at work. Talk of causal ‘mechanisms’ need not assume a deterministic conception of causation (where X cause always produces Y effect) but

² Although Bennett and Checkel (2015, 15) cite several attempts to bridge these differences (e.g. Hopf 2007).

³ Pouliot (2015) outlines a variant entitled ‘practice tracing’ that draws on both positivist and interpretive approaches.

may be compatible with a probabilistic conception (where X increases the likelihood of Y : Trampusch and Palier 2016, 442). While careful analysis of causal mechanisms can illuminate understanding of how causes produce outcomes, it can also help to establish whether outcomes are in fact the result of hypothesized causes (on the assumption that if certain causes are at work, they will operate through some causal mechanisms but not others).

One advantage of process tracing compared with regression analysis is its ability to deal with causal complexity such as endogeneity, interaction effects, and feedback effects (Collier 2011, 824; Vanhala 2017, 94–95). In the context of deliberative democracy, this feature may help to untangle which amongst many purported elements of good deliberation (e.g. civility, reason-giving or accurate information) tend to produce desired outcomes (e.g. opinion consistency or social trust: Mutz 2008), given that factors such as social trust could in turn influence people's inclination to give reasons or interact respectfully.

Process tracing can serve three main objectives: to build theories, to test theories, and to explain the outcomes of individual cases (Beach and Pedersen 2013; Bennett and Checkel 2015, 7–8). First, process tracing for theory building involves generating hypotheses from the evidence presented in the case. Theory building may lead to the discovery of new causal mechanisms. Second, process tracing for theory testing involves examining whether theories about causal mechanisms are borne out in the case at hand. Using process tracing in this way offers a means of assessing the merits of competing theories (e.g. agent- or structure-oriented theories of institutional change). Third, process tracing to explain an individual case will often involve a mix of theory testing and theory development (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 8).

An illustration helps to show how process tracing is distinct from, but complements, other methods of causal explanation. Hanusch (2018) employs both regression analysis and process tracing to investigate the influence of democratic quality on how well countries perform in addressing climate change. Hanusch conducts a large- N econometric analysis that finds a positive correlation between countries' democratic quality and their climate policy performance. While this is a promising finding, it leaves open the question of why this correlation emerges: is it because civil society groups have more access to policymaking processes, because governments are held accountable for their promises, or for some other reason? Hanusch then uses process tracing to identify which mechanisms may have been at work. Process tracing helps to test the theory on which the regression analysis is based (i.e. that democratic quality has a positive influence on climate policy) and to build a theory as to why this correlation occurs (Hanusch 2018, 52). He presents a case study of climate policy in Canada that has exhibited above-average democratic quality but very low climate policy performance and thus represents an outlier in the regression results and a hard or least-likely case for the purposes of case-study selection. By using a longitudinal design covering the period 1995 to 2012, Hanusch is able to track variations in democratic quality and climate policy performance and isolate key causal mechanisms that link democratic quality and climate policy performance. He finds that accountability

had a strong positive influence throughout the case-study period, while the inclusion of stakeholders in policymaking had a variable effect that depended on the quality of participatory processes (Hanusch 2018, 234).

Strategies for Data Collection and Analysis

When it comes to the data required for process tracing and the strategies needed to collect it, process tracing has much in common with other qualitative methods. Because process tracing involves reconstructing processes that have occurred in the past, it has close affinities with techniques of historiography (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 8). Overviews of process tracing generally emphasize the need to draw on multiple sources of data about decision-making and other political processes, including official documents, media reports, stakeholder interviews, event observation, and ethnography (Collier 2011; Bennett and Checkel 2015). Triangulation across multiple data sources is important for increasing confidence that the hypothesized causal mechanism is at work and for reducing the potential for biased results. Depending on the types of causal mechanisms in question, various methods for data analysis—including text analysis and discourse analysis (Neville and Weinthal 2016)—could be used as part of a process tracing strategy, for example to explain how a proposal or discourse emerging from a deliberative forum gains momentum through media reporting or through uptake in policy documents.

What arguably sets process tracing apart from other qualitative methods in social science is its structured approach to evaluating individual pieces of evidence.⁴ Process tracing involves what Mahoney (2010, 131) describes as an ‘implicit Bayesian approach in which singular pieces of data may carry great weight’ depending on how strongly the evidence supports or contradicts the researcher’s prior theoretical beliefs. Guides on process tracing commonly outline a series of diagnostic tests that can be used to assess whether a given piece of evidence supports a hypothesized causal inference. Collier (2011, 825, building on Van Evera 1997 and George and Bennett 2005) distinguishes four tests involving different combinations of necessary and sufficient conditions:

Straw-in-the-wind: neither necessary nor sufficient to confirm the hypothesis, but shows its relevance;

Smoking-gun: sufficient but not necessary to confirm the hypothesis; passing the test weakens rival hypotheses;

⁴ This again has much in common with historians’ methods for analysing evidence, which has led some commentators (e.g. Dowding 2016) to question whether process tracing really is a distinct method. However, Bennett and Checkel (2015, 9) suggest that political scientists conducting process tracing tend to foreground their methodological steps more explicitly, whereas historians prefer to keep them in the background to avoid disrupting the narrative they wish to present.

Hoop: necessary but not sufficient to confirm the hypothesis; passing the test weakens rival hypotheses; and

Doubly decisive: both necessary and sufficient to confirm the hypothesis; passing the test eliminates rival hypotheses.

Applying these tests is often likened to detective work and frequently involves counterfactual analysis to gauge whether the same result could have occurred even if other causal mechanisms were at work (Collier 2011, 825). These tests could be applied to assess deliberation in various ways. Take, for example, the question of whether a deliberative citizens' forum (or 'mini-public') influenced a policy decision. A hoop test would be whether the report of the mini-public was available to decision makers early enough to inform key stages in the decision-making process (see also Jacobs 2015, 65). If the report was only finalized after key decisions were made, this would eliminate the hypothesis of influence. A straw-in-the-wind test would be whether the mini-public was covered in media sources that typically attract decision makers' attention. This may suggest a possible channel for influence but would not rule out the possibility that decision makers ignored the media reporting or were influenced by the mini-public via other channels. A smoking-gun test could involve the presence of official documentation declaring that decision makers had decided to accept the findings of the mini-public. That would provide strong evidence of influence (although there remains the slight possibility that the decision was made for other reasons and the mini-public's findings were used as a fig leaf), but it is possible that the mini-public influenced the outcome even if no such public declaration is made. Doubly decisive tests are difficult to pass in most real-world contexts involving multiple interacting causes, although it may be possible to approximate such a test by combining elements of the first three types of tests (Bennett 2010, 211). A test that comes close to being doubly decisive could involve establishing that decision makers accepted the findings of a mini-public despite evidence that civil society organizations, key decision makers, and the broader public previously favoured a different result.

Limitations and Synergies with Other Methods

Process tracing has attracted several critiques, some of which are also levelled against other small-n qualitative case-study methods. These critiques include the difficulty in producing findings that can reliably be generalized across a large number of cases and the related difficulty in detecting average or probabilistic causal effects (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 13–14; Collier 2011, 828). Four responses can be made to these critiques. First, as with other qualitative methods, careful case design can address some limitations of small-n analysis, for example by choosing most-likely or least-likely cases that could provide valuable evidence for or against a theory (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 13). Second, by analysing multiple stages in a policy process, process

tracing can increase the number of observations on which research findings are based, even within a single case. An example of this can be found in Ravazzi's (2017) article (discussed below), where a causal mechanism is tested at two stages in a legislative process. Importantly, the observations generated from process tracing (often referred to as 'causal process observations') are qualitatively different from the observations routinely used in quantitative analysis ('data-set observations'). An important distinguishing feature is that some causal process observations—for example, those that pass a 'smoking-gun' test—may have high evidentiary value for testing a theory even if the overall number of observations is small. Third, process tracing does not need to focus solely on a single case but can be incorporated into a comparative case study (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 29; see also Ulibarri 2015, discussed in further detail below). Finally, process tracing can be used in conjunction with other qualitative methods such as qualitative comparative analysis (QCA; Beach 2018) or with quantitative methods such as regression analysis to encompass a broader range of cases (Collier 2011, 825).

Even if the critiques outlined above can be addressed, an enduring limitation of process tracing is that its emphasis on careful sifting and analysis of a wide range of data sources makes it a highly time-intensive method. As a result, it may also be difficult to present the results in brief form (Trampusch and Palier 2016, 442), such as a single journal article, although some scholars have shown how this can be achieved (see, for example, Ravazzi 2017; Vanhala and Hestbaek 2016; Allan and Hadden 2017). One strategy for presenting process tracing results in journal articles is to summarize key findings in the main article and give a detailed description of the case in a data appendix (see, for example, Ulibarri 2015). Another limitation—albeit one that is again not unique to process tracing—is the difficulty of reconstructing decision-making processes when documentation for some key stages is unavailable, for example if some meetings were closed to the public or not transcribed (Ulibarri 2015, 298).

A final risk associated with process tracing is the temptation to think that a detailed sequential description of a process is all that is needed to qualify as process tracing, when what is vitally important is that researchers are rigorous and explicit about the theoretical framework they are using and about the explanations and causal mechanisms that they are investigating to test or further develop the framework.

Examples of Process Tracing in Deliberation Research

In this section, I show how process tracing offers a useful method for addressing three key areas of research in deliberative democracy: (i) the adoption and diffusion of deliberative practices; (ii) the influence of actors on the outcomes of deliberation; and (iii) the influence of deliberative practices on policymaking and broader political

systems.⁵ Process tracing in all three areas can help to address one of three key questions that Elstub et al. (2016, 140) identify as a priority for future research in deliberative democracy: ‘how to conceptualize the connections and transmission across different sites of deliberative activity’ (see also Boswell et al. 2016). More specifically, the second area speaks to ongoing scholarly interest in the internal dynamics of deliberation, including patterns of inclusion, inequality, and power (Mansbridge et al. 2010), and the third area addresses another key question highlighted by Elstub et al. (2016, 140): ‘how to understand and study the relationship between mini-publics and the broader [deliberative] system’ (see also Goodin and Dryzek 2006).⁶ In each area I critically analyse existing studies that have used process tracing and identify scope for future applications to deliberative democracy.

Adoption and Diffusion of Deliberative Practices

The first area where process tracing could offer valuable insights involves explaining how and why deliberative practices and innovations are adopted and how they diffuse.⁷ This question is of considerable interest for scholarship on deliberative democracy because it speaks to the political feasibility of strategies to advance deliberative democracy and may help to identify what barriers may be encountered when employing these strategies and how they could be overcome.

Ravazzi (2017) offers one of the few systematic uses of process tracing in the literature on deliberative democracy. Her study seeks to explain legislative reforms in Tuscany, Italy, which embedded processes for citizen deliberation in the political system. Ravazzi (2017, 81) uses process tracing ‘to highlight the main variables that intervened in the development of the process and reconstruct the mechanism through which the policy was initiated’. The analysis aims thereby to go beyond general explanations offered in earlier literature for how the reforms took place, such as public disaffection with government decisions and the presence of a political leader (or ‘policy entrepreneur’) committed to public participation (Ravazzi 2017, 82). The law in question was first introduced in 2007, with a sunset clause then legislated on a longer-term basis in 2013, offering an opportunity to test whether the same causal mechanisms applied at both points in time (Ravazzi 2017, 84).

Ravazzi finds that, although the legislation was passed at both points, it did so despite concerns amongst civil society organizations that deliberative forums could bypass their established channels of access to decision makers and bureaucratize participatory processes that should ideally emerge from ‘bottom-up’ rather than

⁵ Another area not discussed here in detail involves tracing the process of individual preference change that may result from people’s involvement in deliberative forums.

⁶ The third question identified by Elstub et al. (2016, 140)—‘which standards to employ when assessing the deliberative quality of a system as a whole’—mainly involves matters of evaluation rather than explanation, so process tracing is likely to be less relevant for that purpose.

⁷ On the use of process tracing for studying policy diffusion in general, see Starke (2013).

'top-down' regulation. Legislators were concerned that citizen forums could erode representative arrangements and prolong already lengthy processes for approving government projects (Ravazzi 2017, 89–90). Her interviews reveal that a key factor, which ultimately outweighed this opposition, was a perception amongst legislators and civil society organizations that public participation was 'politically correct', and that it would be ill-advised to oppose moves to strengthen citizen participation because it would exacerbate public disaffection and enable right-wing political parties to claim the higher moral ground on commitments to public participation (Ravazzi 2017, 90, 94). Introducing a sunset clause in the original legislation helped to tip the balance towards approval. Ravazzi (2017, 94) finds that in the lead-up to the second round of legislation, opposition to deliberative legislation remained considerable, but again a sense that opposing public participation had become 'taboo' helped to overcome this resistance.

The analysis shows not only that one cause posited by previous research (e.g. policy entrepreneurship) was insufficient to explain the process, but also that another posited cause (public disaffection) operated in a more nuanced way than previously understood: instead of public disaffection producing a positive consensus amongst decision makers and civil society on the value of public participation, it was decision makers' perceptions about the value that citizens placed on public participation (and the risk of further disaffection if this value were to be undermined) that served as an intervening factor that overcame ongoing opposition to the legislation. In this way the paper shows how process tracing can yield a fine-grained account of how deliberative practices are adopted.

Even so, the analysis has some limitations. For example, the study does not establish definitively that decision makers' views about the political correctness of public participation rested primarily on normative commitments rather than on material interests, such as electoral competition with populist right-wing parties. Jacobs (2015) offers a range of useful recommendations on how process tracing could assess the effects of ideas (including social norms) vis-à-vis material interests, including investigating whether normative beliefs and material conditions varied over time (e.g. in this case, whether decision makers held the same views about public participation even if competition from populist parties was higher at some points than others).

Influence of Actors on Deliberation

The second area that process tracing could illuminate is the influence that actors exert on the outcomes or quality of deliberative processes. This could involve the internal influence of participants formally involved in a deliberative process (e.g. members of a citizens' jury) or the external influence of actors on a process in which they were not formally involved (e.g. the role of social movements in changing a policy decision).

Process tracing has been used successfully to this end in a number of studies on the influence of non-government organizations (NGOs) in global environmental politics (Vanhala 2017, 89). Betsill and Corell (2001, 77) offer a useful typology of three stages at which evidence needs to be gathered: (a) whether NGOs engaged in an intentional effort to transmit information to other actors (e.g. decision makers); (b) whether the other actors received this information; and (c) whether changes in the actors' behaviour are consistent with the information that the NGOs provided.

Process tracing could break these stages of influence into further sub-components, including the strategies used by actors to transmit information or exert influence. Allan and Hadden (2017) provide a good example of this approach in their exploration of the framing strategies used by NGOs in UN negotiations on loss and damage resulting from climate change. To establish that NGOs' reframing of the issue of loss and damage helped to produce a breakthrough in negotiations, they ascertain first that NGOs did in fact reframe loss and damage as a concern of justice rather than as a primarily scientific or technical issue (the independent variable). Then the authors link this finding to evidence of framing and policy shifts in negotiations (the dependent variable) by tracing growing attention to loss and damage and the formation of coalitions on this issue (causal mechanisms or intervening variables) (Allan and Hadden 2017, 604). They use counterfactual analysis to argue against the competing explanation that the policy shift on loss and damage was attributable to a general increase in NGO advocacy rather than to the reframing of the issue (Allan and Hadden 2017, 614–615).

Process tracing in this vein could be useful to help future research in deliberative democracy establish whether, for example, the inclusion of civil society, marginalized actors or experts enhances the deliberative quality of a decision-making process. This approach could also be used to explain the role of different actors in the diffusion of deliberative practices (as discussed in the previous subsection).

Impacts of Deliberative Practices on Policymaking and Political Systems

A third promising use of process tracing involves detecting the causal influence of deliberative practices or forums on policy decisions and broader political systems. Papadopoulos (2012, 127) highlights this role for process tracing, noting that studying the impact of deliberative 'devices' or mechanisms 'requires meticulous process-tracing, because participatory devices are only one of the inputs in the policy process, and their effects have a "diffuse and temporally dispersed character"'.⁸ The impacts of deliberative practices could be studied at various levels, including their

⁸ Boswell and Corbett (2017) do not mention process tracing in their overview of how to compare deliberative systems, even though it could help to overcome two of the deficiencies they identify in existing research, namely rigid comparative frameworks and overly descriptive studies.

influence on a specific policy decision or their broader effects on the effectiveness of a political system (see also Vanhala 2017, 89).

While assessing the impacts of mini-publics on deliberative systems has been a major theme of recent work in deliberative democracy (see, for example, Mackenzie and Warren 2012; Niemeyer 2014), empirical studies on this topic tend to use small-n comparative analyses without explicit resource to process tracing (see, for example, the two-case study in Felicetti et al. 2016, and the four-case study in Curato and Böker 2016). Thus, it is necessary to look to other literature to find examples of how process tracing could illuminate this area.

Process tracing has found productive use in investigating the effects of participatory or collaborative governance on environmental outcomes. Ulibarri (2015), for example, examines the role of collaborative governance in licensing hydroelectric power generation in the United States. Her analysis involves a comparative study of seven licensing processes, chosen to span cases of high and low collaboration. The comparative analysis reveals a positive correlation between levels of collaboration and the stringency of environmental standards contained in hydropower licences but is insufficient to demonstrate a causal relationship between the two. To address this, Ulibarri conducts process tracing on a subset of three cases to explore causal mechanisms through which collaboration may have influenced the licensing requirements. In the high-collaboration case, she finds that ‘stakeholders used a careful process of discovery and deliberation to work toward a comprehensive settlement agreement, and sought to include all interests each step of the way’ (Ulibarri 2015, 294). In the low-collaboration case, the government authority largely sided with the electricity utility applying for the licence despite calls from stakeholders—which had been marginalized in the licensing process—to include a wider range of licensing requirements (Ulibarri 2015, 294). Although the process tracing results are presented quite briefly, they provide a plausible basis to support the conclusion that the different outcomes were attributable, at least in part, to the extent of collaboration.⁹

With this example in mind, we can return to the question of how process tracing could strengthen analysis of the impacts of mini-publics on deliberative systems. A first step would involve systematic categorization of the range of observable impacts that mini-publics could have. Goodin and Dryzek (2006, 219) present a useful typology of eight kinds of deliberative impact: ‘actually making policy, being taken up in the policy process, informing public debates, market-testing of proposals, legitimation of public policies, building confidence and constituencies for policies, popular oversight, and resisting co-option’. Process tracing would require generating a set of empirically observable indicators associated with these impacts as well as a typology of causal mechanisms through which mini-publics could influence each of these indicators. Taking as an example the role of mini-publics in informing public debate,

⁹ A further example of how process tracing can be used to assess the effects of participatory governance mechanisms on democratic quality can be found in Friedrich (2006), who analyses the role of the European Union’s Open Method of Coordination in social inclusion policy in Germany.

indicators could include public awareness of the mini-public's findings or of the range of available policy options, or public opinion on or interest in the topic (Goodin and Dryzek 2006, 228). Causal mechanisms could include different types of communication channels (e.g. mainstream media reporting, social media, or word of mouth), the involvement of different individuals or organizations in those channels (e.g. mini-public participants or organizers, civil society organizations or policymakers), the level of financial resources invested in disseminating findings, or contextual factors (e.g. pre-existing levels of public awareness about the topic).¹⁰ Process tracing could then be used to assess the role of these causal mechanisms in producing wider deliberative impacts.

This strategy could, in turn, help to resolve some ongoing puzzles in existing empirical analysis of mini-publics. For example, Curato and Böker (2016) attribute the limited impact of the Australian Citizens' Parliament in part to the fact that it coincided with catastrophic bushfires in Victoria, which may have diverted media coverage away from the Parliament. However, another case they analyse—the *Conférence de Citoyens* in France—attracted widespread public attention despite coinciding with the soccer World Cup hosted in France at that time. This suggests that one causal mechanism that may work against the impact of mini-publics (i.e. the presence of competing priorities for public attention) may only have limited leverage in explaining their impact. Process tracing could investigate whether other factors may have been more important in explaining the level of public attention in each case (e.g. the choice of topic or the level of investment of each process in media engagement).

Finally, this mode of process tracing could help to investigate other controversial questions in deliberative democratic theory, including whether and how non-deliberative acts, such as protest, can function as a trigger for enhanced deliberation. One challenge with using process tracing to detect systemic impacts is that the influence of a single mini-public may be difficult to detect amidst the cacophony of deliberative and non-deliberative communication in the system. This suggests that process tracing of broader impacts may require redefining the scope of the case study. Rather than the case comprising a one-off mini-public, it may be necessary to treat a broader programme of deliberative innovation as the case (e.g. a legislated programme of deliberative processes such as the one discussed in Ravazzi (2017) above) and to conduct an assessment of the cumulative impacts of the programme.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that process tracing has a valuable role in the repertoire of methods for assessing deliberation. Process tracing cannot by itself confirm or

¹⁰ In a quantitative study of the impacts of deliberative processes on political efficacy, Geissel and Hess (2017) identify several factors (e.g. decision makers' support for the process and dedicated staff resources to run deliberative processes) that could also be used in process tracing.

undermine some of the foundational normative claims of deliberative democracy—such as the intrinsic value of citizen deliberation—but it can shed light on contested empirical claims about the effects of deliberation and thus perform a valuable role in constructing and testing falsifiable ‘middle-level’ theories of deliberation (Mutz 2008). The examples presented here have shown how process tracing can illuminate key questions facing deliberative theorists, including how deliberative practices are adopted, how participants influence the outcomes of deliberative processes, and how those outcomes in turn influence broader political dynamics. Future research on these questions could begin by mapping out the explanations offered by competing theories of deliberative democracy (drawing on other research in political science on sources of policy diffusion and institutional change) and systematizing the range of possible causal mechanisms that would support these explanations. Applying these frameworks effectively will require judicious selection of cases that offer opportunities to test competing explanations, and creative combinations of single and small comparative process tracing studies with medium- and large-N research designs to maximize the explanatory leverage that process tracing can offer.

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21

Q Methodology

Lucy J. Parry

The systemic turn in deliberative democracy has drawn attention to the importance of deliberation outside of the confines of small group or facilitated deliberation (see [Chambers 2009](#); [Dryzek 2009](#); [Hendriks 2006](#); [Mansbridge 1999](#); [Parkinson 2003](#); [Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012](#)). Whilst the conditions and limits of the deliberative system are still under discussion, attention has also moved towards how to study deliberative systems empirically ([Ercan et al. 2017](#)). Since methods used to assess micro deliberation are not always suitable for studying deliberation in the real world ([Ercan et al. 2017](#), 197; [Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019](#), 3), researchers must expand their methodological repertoire to meet this challenge.

Q methodology is an approach to studying intersubjectivity ([Brown 1980](#)) that can provide insights into both micro deliberation and deliberative systems. A Q study asks subjects to rank a set of statements or images on a matrix, and uses qualitative and quantitative techniques to identify correlations and establish shared viewpoints. Here I discuss how Q method can be used to study micro deliberation, followed by how it can enhance our empirical understanding of the deliberative system through identifying discourses in the public sphere and giving an insight into deliberative quality on a discursive level. I also provide an overview of the assumptions underpinning the method, the practicalities of conducting a Q study, and consider what Q can and cannot do.

Theoretical Assumptions

[Ercan et al. \(2017\)](#) argue that interpretive research methods have an important role to play in the study of deliberative systems. In particular, interpretive methods seek to understand meaning and phenomena as they are socially constituted by the actors involved (2017, 202). Q is one such interpretive method. In a Q study, participants are invited to rank a set of statements or images on a matrix, creating a map of their own viewpoint on the topic. The interpretation of these items is up to the participants; they make their own meaning ([Brown 1997](#)) and individuals' subjectivity is taken seriously by Q methodology ([Dryzek 2005b](#), 40). Items are ranked in relation to each other, and the overall map that makes up each 'Q sort' is a holistic account of that person's view.

The aim is to identify shared viewpoints in a way that takes into account the active construction of meaning by participants. The factors that emerge from a Q study are not predetermined by an externally imposed scale or definition (Cross 2005, 211). Whilst the factor analysis employed to define clusters of individuals' viewpoints reveals statistical relationships across individuals, Q methodology is grounded in interpretive principles (Dryzek 1990, 173). Analysis requires a close reading of qualitative material gathered during the study, whilst 'the statistical actions performed in Q methodology support us in interpreting the discrete subjective views on any given issue' (Stevenson 2015, 6–7).

John Dryzek (1990, 2005b) has also argued that Q is in keeping with the principles of deliberative democracy, given that it takes seriously the subjectivity of participants (2005b, 40); the items sorted are presented in an accessible and transparent manner, and participants are free to construct their own meaning for each item, and the whole matrix. There is no assumption that participants will interpret each statement in the same way, since correlations are not made across statements. Indeed, the differential interpretation of the same statement may provide some of the most interesting findings. For example, in my study on foxhunting, I found divergent interpretations of the statement 'I consider myself to be an animal lover'. One pro-hunting viewpoint ranked this statement with the highest level of agreement, with participants pointing out that foxhunting supporters are animal lovers, despite perceptions. Another pro-hunting discourse was more cautious, suggesting the term 'animal lover' implied somebody who wanted to cuddle up with animals, which is not in their (perceived) best interests. On the anti-hunting side, the most critical animal rights position also had a lukewarm perception, with stronger sentiment attached to more abstract statements on the morality and politics of hunting (Parry 2016, 70; Parry 2019).

Q Methodology and Micro Deliberation

During deliberative forums, surveys are sometimes taken to assess participants' views before and after deliberation. This enables us to understand if and how an intervention affects peoples' views—although whether it is *deliberation* itself that affects preference change is contested (Goodin and Niemeyer 2003). Q methodology can be utilized for a similar purpose, to assess the extent to which participants' preferences shift following deliberation. However, Q offers an alternative approach to a standard survey, in identifying synthesized viewpoints rather than aggregating individual viewpoints (Pelletier et al. 1999, 105).

Indeed, a good start to understanding Q methodology is by taking surveys as a point of comparison. Q uses an inverted form of factor analysis that correlates individuals as variables, rather than survey questions as variables (Van Exel and De Graaf 2005, 1). Whilst in a survey, questions and a scale are constructed by the researcher,

participants in a Q study arrange a set of items (a set of statements or images termed the ‘Q set’) on a matrix in an order that is significant to *them* (Brown 1980, 6). How to interpret and rank each item is down to the participant rather than the researcher. Factor analysis then identifies relationships across participants’ subjectivities, producing factors that ‘refer to *groups of people* that sorted the statements in a similar way’ (Pelletier et al. 1999, 108; emphasis in original).

In the context of pre/post deliberation, Q can identify opinion shifts through assessing the extent to which an individual is associated with a discourse before and after the event (e.g. Niemeyer 2011; Pelletier et al. 1999). There are a variety of techniques that can be used to understand these changes, depending on the purpose of the research. Simon Niemeyer (2011, 2019) deploys surveys alongside Q methodology to understand ‘intersubjective consistency’—the extent to which individuals’ underlying subjective will (according to Q data) aligns with their policy preferences (according to survey data). Niemeyer argues that the discourses resulting from Q analysis constitute participants’ ‘underlying reasoning regarding the issue at hand’ whilst survey data provides participants’ ‘expressed preferences’ (2011, 104). Following deliberation at two citizens’ juries, he finds intersubjective consistency is higher; that is to say, the deliberative process resulted in a closer alignment of both types of preference, Q and survey preferences.

Pelletier et al. (1999) deploy a range of analytical strategies to assess the effects of deliberation on the food system using Q method. They analyse differences in the substantive content of the shared viewpoints before and after a series of participatory planning processes, as well as how individual membership of each discourse is altered following the events. Their findings indicate that the factors (viewpoints) produced are remarkably stable—containing the same substantive themes before and after deliberation (Pelletier et al. 1999, 113). They also analyse the extent to which individuals associated with one factor become associated with another following deliberation. A more subtle change can also occur if individuals remain associated with the same factor, but the strength of that association changes. This type of fine-grained analysis allows an insight into subtle shifts in viewpoint that might not be expressed explicitly through preference ranking in a survey.

Q Methodology and Deliberative Systems

The deliberative systems approach—though diverse and dynamic in its conceptions—holds a common emphasis on the importance of deliberation across and within different sites of interaction (e.g. Dryzek 2009; Hendriks 2006; Mansbridge 1999; Mansbridge et al. 2012). One response to the challenge of studying deliberative systems empirically is an emphasis on discourses and/or narratives (Boswell 2016; Ercan et al. 2017, 201; Stevenson and Dryzek 2014). Dryzek’s (2005a, 9) definition of a discourse is congruous with the ‘structure and form’ (Brown 1986, 58)

of the shared viewpoints produced by Q methodology through the process of factor analysis and interpretation:

... a shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts. Discourses construct meanings and relationships, helping to define common sense and legitimate knowledge.

(Dryzek 2005a, 9)

How a participant ranks the items in a Q study reflects ‘the way a particular individual, in particular circumstances and at a particular time, relates to, and forms conceptions of, certain aspects of the world’ (Barry and Proops 1999, 338); a Q methodological analysis clusters together those individuals to reflect intersubjective viewpoints or discourses.

Proponents of the discursive approach to deliberative systems suggest that it is the constellation and contestation of discourses that denotes a healthy deliberative public sphere (Curato et al. 2013; Stevenson and Dryzek 2014). Other sites in the system—such as ‘empowered space’ (Dryzek 2009) where authoritative decisions are made—are evaluated according to the extent to which public discourses are reflected (e.g. Boswell 2016; Parry 2016; Stevenson and Dryzek 2014). The transmission mechanisms that connect discrete sites can also be examined to determine which discourses travel through the system and how they are communicated, as well as considering why some discourses are successfully reflected in policy decisions, whilst some viewpoints are marginalised, or expressed in some sites but not others (e.g. Boswell 2016; Boswell et al. 2016; Parry 2016; Stevenson and Dryzek 2014).

Whilst the inclusion of a diverse range of viewpoints is not sufficient to warrant a healthy deliberative system (Ercan et al. 2019; Owen and Smith 2015), studying and mapping discursive elements within and across different sites of interaction makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of deliberative democracy at both macro and systemic levels (Ercan et al. 2017). It allows us to address two key questions: identifying ‘the sites, agents and discursive elements that comprise a deliberative system’ and the ‘connections and transmissions across different sites of a deliberative system’ (Ercan et al. 2017, 197). Q can identify discourses that can be traced through different sites in the deliberative system to help us understand the deliberative or democratic deficits present through the suppression or distortion of certain discourses.

Q may also contribute to the evaluation of the deliberative system. David Owen and Graham Smith (2015) argue against relying on the balance of discourses as a marker of deliberative quality, pointing out that evaluation on a systemic level could result in an apparently healthy system that is made up of non-deliberative actions. They point out that assessing the balance of discourses does not tell us anything about the deliberative quality of actual interactions within a given site in the system. Nonetheless, Q may still be able to provide some insight into deliberative quality. The

viewpoints resulting from a Q study can reveal potential points of consensus or distinctions that may not be immediately apparent in other accounts of a debate (Brown 1996, 17). This is particularly relevant for highly polarised debates, where Q can contribute complexity to the usual dichotomies. My study on foxhunting found two viewpoints on animal rights and animal welfare that were highly correlated. This has deliberative significance because it shows that two perspectives, often characterized as mutually exclusive, actually have more in common than not, and that individuals may subscribe to both views in different measures (Parry 2019, 20).

By looking at the discursive content Q produces, it is also possible to examine whether discursive commitments and characteristics enable or preclude possibilities for inclusive deliberation (Parry 2016, 78). If a discourse is intrinsically antagonistic or dismissive towards alternative viewpoints, possibilities for meaningful reflection and listening across discourses may be hindered. Discourses can constrain and enable actors, realizing a kind of interdependent agency along with actors: discourses shape actors as actors shape discourses (Leipold and Winkel 2013). Whilst this cannot make any definite conclusions about the health of the public sphere—since Q cannot determine who is saying what, how, and where—it can provide some insight into deliberative quality at the discursive level.

Doing Q Methodology

It is worth mentioning that to many proponents, Q methodology is much more than just doing a Q study. It encompasses its founder William Stephenson's determination to develop a scientific approach for studying subjectivity (Watts and Stenner 2012, 25). Stephenson, who held doctorates in physics and psychology, drew upon and contributed a variety of theories throughout his career that elaborated on his initial inverted factor analysis technique (Stephenson 1935), including behaviourism, concurrence theory, and constructivism.¹ However, it is not strictly necessary to acquire in-depth knowledge of this background in order to conduct a successful Q study (Watts and Stenner 2012, 5).

The first practical stage is selecting a suitable research question to define the scope of the study. To identify discourses within the deliberative system or public sphere, this may be as straightforward as asking 'what are the discourses that exist on X?' Q studies can be conducted to address more complex questions, such as asking participants to respond to a policy issue or to share their personal experience of particular circumstances (Watts and Stenner 2012, 55–56). The question must be clear and unambiguous, given that it will not only guide participants but will also establish the scope of the study.

¹ Watts and Stenner (2012) provide a digestible chapter on Stephenson's theoretical trajectory over his career.

The statements sorted by participants (the ‘Q set’) are designed to be representative of the landscape of debate (known as the ‘concourse’). The concourse can be developed in a variety of ways depending on time, resources, and research aims. The ‘Q set’ is usually comprised of written statements, but it can also be visual, eliminating any literacy barriers to participation (e.g. [Alexander et al. 2018](#); [Hardy and Pearson 2016](#)). It is possible to use interviews as the basis for the concourse; for my research on fox-hunting, I conducted ten interviews from which I extracted 248 potential statements structured according to the central themes of the foxhunting debate (identified from existing literature): people, animals, place, and politics ([Parry 2019](#)). Statements can also be generated from existing material including literature, blogs, reports, or media. Using published material saves time, and interviewing may not give additional value if a wealth of published material already exists ([Stevenson 2015](#), 3). However, interviews offer the advantage of providing statements in readily accessible language and providing insights that might not be available in existing material; if you are interested in marginalized viewpoints, interviews might provide insight not covered in existing material.

From here, you need to develop the ‘Q set’ from the concourse. Again, methods vary—from highly structured, theory-driven sampling approaches (see [Dryzek and Berejikian 1993](#), 51) to more fluid ones where the only requirement is that the ‘Q set’ is comprehensive and broadly representative of the concourse ([Brown 1986](#), 73). Either way, this is an iterative process aiming to arrive at a manageable number of items. There is no hard rule for the exact number, but more statements will require more time for sorting and may be overwhelming for some participants ([Watts and Stenner 2012](#), 61). However, there must be a sufficient range and number to represent the concourse. The representativeness of the ‘Q set’ can be checked through piloting the study, checking for noticeable gaps, and ensuring that participants feel fully able to express their view.

Alongside the refinement of the ‘Q set’, you will need to decide a matrix for participants to rank the statements on. For the most part, this comprises a quasi-normal distribution as illustrated in [Table 21.1](#).

Items placed towards the centre of the scale are generally less crucial to the participant’s viewpoint—although this is not always the case,² whilst items at the extremes are more important, either positively or negatively.

The next stage is selecting participants. Whilst survey participants are often selected to be representative of a broader population, in Q it is the ‘Q set’ that fulfils this role. The selection of participants in Q is like the selection of questions in a survey—it is done carefully and strategically. The aim is to have a group of participants who are likely to have interesting, relevant, and diverse views on the subject ([Watts and Stenner 2012](#), 70). It is not necessary to have a particularly large number

² There may be statements placed towards the centre that participants feel entirely neutral about, feel torn about, or cannot decide how they feel about, or they simply do not feel knowledgeable enough to stake a stronger opinion on. These feelings can be discussed during the Q sort and the researcher can take note as it may aid in interpretation later on.

Table 21.1 Quasi-Normal Distribution

Most Disagree						Most Agree						
-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
(1)												(1)
	(2)											(2)
		(3)								(3)		
			(4)						(4)			
				(5)				(5)				
					(6)		(6)					
						(8)						

Source: Parry (2016, 68).

of participants, since the aim is not to make claims about generalisability to the wider population, but to have sufficient variety to establish the existence of shared viewpoints.

In my foxhunting study, I selected campaigners, activists, animal protection professionals, hunt staff, and people who took part in hunting or who had some direct experience with hunting. In studies such as Niemeyer (2011) or Pelletier et al. (1999), studying the views of participants in a deliberative process, this kind of purposive sampling will likely not apply because participants are the people taking part in the deliberative process. The precise composition of the participants will therefore depend on the purposes of the study and research question. Q methodology cannot—and does not—claim generalisability in the same way that a survey deployed to a representative sample of the population might. Q cannot claim what percentage of the population subscribe to a particular viewpoint, or what a particular demographic thinks. A Q study may not even collect demographic information about study participants, given that its focus is on what is being said, rather than who is saying it (Parry 2016, 15). However, it is possible to claim a different type of generalizability from Q, that of ‘substantive inference’ (Thomas and Baas 1992, 22) about a topic. Rather than generalizing about who holds certain viewpoints, it is possible to generalize about the nature and substance of the viewpoints themselves.

Moreover, as [Dryzek \(2005b, 205\)](#) points out, ‘each factor is a generalization because it indicates how people of a particular kind think’.

The administration of the study—the ‘Q sort’—can be carried out online or in person. Online has the advantage of convenience and there are a number of software packages for conducting Q studies, some of which also carry out the analysis. However, given that Q is usually novel for participants, doing it in person gives you the opportunity to provide guidance and answer questions. I find that some participants like to discuss each statement, often providing additional material that aids interpretation. It is possible—and desirable—to conduct interviews after the sorting to ask about participants’ reasoning. Being present also helps when participants become frustrated or confused about the process—I have occasionally had people confuse the poles of the matrix, or feel restricted by the distribution. Talking this through in person helps ensure that participants feel able to complete the sorting procedure thoughtfully, rather than giving up or going through it very quickly. Of course, this takes time for both parties; I have spent up to three hours with a single participant following an unstructured, conversational approach. Whilst this gleaned valuable qualitative material that assisted in the interpretation of factors later on, it is not always feasible.

Factor analysis can be carried out in a range of software packages, although PQ Method ([Schmolck 2014](#))—a Q-specific, command-line programme developed in the 1990s—remains a popular option. It is free, relatively simple to use, and carries out only factor extraction and rotation for Q methodology. PQ Method offers two types of factor extraction—Centroid and Principal Components Analysis. Their relative merits are a matter of debate (see [Akhtar-Danesh 2017](#); [Ramlo 2016](#)), but in reality they produce similar results ([Watts and Stenner 2012](#), 99). The first stage is factor extraction, which entails extracting ‘portions of shared or common meaning’ ([Watts and Stenner 2012](#), 98) from the matrix of all the relationships in the study. Following extraction, you must decide how many factors to retain. This can be informed by a range of statistical criteria (see [Watts and Stenner 2012](#), 105–110) but should also be aided by your knowledge and judgement ([Brown 1980](#)).

Following extraction, factors can be rotated. [Brown \(1980, 224–226\)](#) provides a useful analogy for this process. Imagine a transparent sphere containing various dots embedded inside. The constellation of dots look different depending on how you turn the sphere in your hand. Rods can be inserted at right angles into the sphere; these are the factor axes. Rotation is akin to examining the dots from different angles; the dots represent individual ‘Q sorts’. Their position does not move, but you can look at them from different perspectives. The closer a factor axis is to each Q sort the more closely a participant is associated with that factor. Factor rotation ‘aims to position each factor so that its viewpoint closely approximates the viewpoint of a particular group of Q sorts, or perhaps just one or two of particular importance’ ([Watts and Stenner 2012](#), 127). Following rotation, my research on foxhunting revealed four groups of Q sorts: two broadly in favour of and two against foxhunting. My analysis shows that whilst the two anti-hunting positions are highly correlated statistically, they are distinct ([Parry 2019](#), 8). Distilling this kind of nuance required the use of qualitative

material and judgement; this highlights the importance of an interpretive approach in Q analysis, rather than relying solely on the quantitative data.

The final stage in the analysis is the creation of ‘factor arrays’. Factor arrays are a hypothetical Q sort—what it would look like if a person had a 100 per cent loading on that factor. Factor arrays are compiled from individual ‘Q sorts’ that are highly associated with a given factor. Factor arrays always differ slightly from actual ‘Q sorts’, since a factor array ‘is simply a best-possible estimate of the factor’s viewpoint’ (Watts and Stenner 2012, 143; emphasis in original). These form a tangible qualitative foundation for interpretation. The final output from PQ Method includes a potentially overwhelming amount of additional data, including Z scores, factor correlations, and arrays of statements across factors from consensus to disagreement. Any to all of these components can be used for interpretation and further analysis, depending on your research aims and level of comfort with statistics. Interpretation can be further supported by interviews or additional information from participants. This helps to flesh out factor arrays into substantive viewpoints with quotes and examples, bringing discourses to life.

Many Q studies simply identify and discuss a range of shared viewpoints at length. For those aiming to analyse the discourses before and after a deliberative intervention, this will only be the first stage. Either way, it is helpful to provide a narrative description of each viewpoint including both the wording of the statements and how they are scored in each factor array, and including interview material for further elaboration:

Hunting is nothing more than inflicting gratuitous cruelty on animals for the sake of entertainment (S22, +3) and there is no place for hunting in a modern, civilized society (S50, +5) because ‘as with other modern attitudes, particularly 21st century, we’ve moved into a different place of awareness as regards animal life . . . there is no place for taking pleasure in hunting another species, particularly where there’s no necessity involved in it . . . apart from gaining pleasure’ (P23).

(Parry 2019, 11)

Niemeyer (2011) provides diagrams that indicate how each factor relates to others, along with a visual plot of how the distribution of ‘Q sorts’ changes following deliberation. I have personally presented the results of a rough and ready Q study as spoken word poetry at a Hackathon, where time was short and I wanted to engage a non-academic audience (Carson and Parry 2016). The precise presentation will depend on the purposes of the research, but it is worth noting that as Q is unfamiliar to many, it may require some explanation in a publication. Here Watts and Stenner (2012) are particularly helpful in providing practical guidance for writing up and publishing Q studies.

Conclusion

Q methodology can enhance our understanding of deliberative democracy in a number of ways. It offers the opportunity to assess deliberation in the context of both micro deliberation and deliberative systems. At the macro level, Q can be used to identify shared viewpoints in the public sphere, which in turn provide the discursive foundations that can be traced within and across the system. Q can also provide insight into deliberative quality through assessing the extent to which the resulting discourses contest and overlap.

Q methodology also reaches across typical methodological divides through its use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques, although it remains an interpretive approach commensurate with the principles of deliberative democracy: it takes seriously the subjectivity and agency of individuals in expressing their views. This makes it an important empirical arsenal for scholars interested in studying deliberation and deliberative democracy, for both understanding the constituents of the deliberative system and assessing deliberative quality on a discursive level.

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Dramaturgical Analysis

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At first glance, drama and deliberation would appear unlikely bedfellows. Conventionally, deliberation is conceptualized as a communicative process centred on reasoning and authenticity, not spectacle and drama. Yet the world of theatre and its associated concepts of scripting, setting, staging, and performance can offer a rich palette for analysing public deliberation. In this chapter, we introduce dramaturgical analysis as a useful analytical framework for studying the performative aspects of public deliberation, drawing on examples to illustrate its application.

Dramaturgy is a sociological perspective about how people construct, present, and manage themselves in social interactions. It is premised on the notion that when people interact, they are part of a performance that shapes the way they talk, engage, and act. In theatre, dramaturgy is used to examine how moving bodies, voice, sound, and light can tell a story and affect values (Szatkowski 2019). It was Erving Goffman (1959), who first adapted the term dramaturgy from theatre to sociology to study how people conduct themselves in social interactions. Since then, dramaturgy has been applied in diverse fields of social sciences (for overviews, see Travers 2001 and Birch 2017). In sociology, it is usually associated with ‘symbolic interactionism’ which is a theoretical perspective exploring how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions between individuals (Carter and Fuller 2016). In political science, dramaturgy has been used to study the performances of political leaders and politicians (Merelman 1969), the role of symbols (Edelman 1964), the staging of propaganda rallies (Mayo Jr 1978), and social movements (Benford and Hunt 1992).

Dramaturgical analysis is an interpretive analysis which draws on the vocabulary of dramaturgy (such as theatre, performance, audiences, staging, scripting, acting) to describe and make sense of what is going on in social, cultural, and political life. Dramaturgy enables researchers to see politics as ‘a sequence of staged performances’ and to focus empirically not only ‘what people say’ but ‘how they say it’, ‘where they say it’, and ‘to whom’ they say it (Hajer 2009, 65). By undertaking dramaturgical analysis, researchers can develop a better understanding of how political controversies are enacted, how different acts relate to each other, and how conflicts are expressed and resolved.

There are many ways dramaturgical analysis can be applied to the empirical study of public deliberation, understood as a broad communication process taking

place in structured forums and in the broader public sphere (Ercan and Dryzek 2015). Dramaturgical analysis directs the researcher's attention to often-overlooked or taken-for-granted aspects of public deliberation, such as the performative styles and body language of the actors involved in deliberation, where they stand, how they enact and stage their arguments, what symbols and artefacts they use to reinforce their viewpoints, and how they reach out and persuade diverse audiences. By asking these questions, researchers can develop novel interpretations of what is going on in and around deliberative processes and establish new connections between previously unexplored aspects of public deliberation, such as the relationship between the physical setting and the quality of communicative interactions.

In this chapter, we first offer an analytical framework that can be used for interpreting public deliberation through the lens of dramaturgy. We then present three illustrations of dramaturgical analysis in deliberative democracy research. Our aim is to encourage scholars of deliberative democracy to be more attentive to the performative aspects of deliberation and to build research knowledge on the components and practice of dramaturgical analysis.

A Framework for Dramaturgical Analysis

For researchers intending to use dramaturgy as part of their empirical work, the first step involves developing or adapting a framework for the dramaturgical analysis. There are various dramaturgical frameworks that scholars have developed to capture the performative aspects of political practices (for examples, see Benford and Hunt 1992; Hajer 2005a; Alexander 2011; Hendriks et al. 2016; Yuana et al. 2020). These frameworks serve to 'operationalize' various theatrical concepts and provide researchers with scaffolding for organizing and interpreting their data.

In this chapter, we elaborate on one particular dramaturgical framework that was originally developed by Maarten Hajer (2005a) to study the performative aspects of planning and policymaking more broadly. Hajer applies dramaturgy to the 'performativity' of language (how it does something) as well as the 'performance' of language (how it can convey certain meanings that are constantly reproduced and enacted in a particular setting). His analytic framework includes four partly overlapping dramaturgical dimensions for generating and analysing data: *scripting*, *setting*, *staging*, and *performance*.

Scripting refers to the intentional design of the entire interaction. It is about developing the cast of characters and the audience, how they ought to perform or interact, and who should be included and excluded. It also defines the characteristics of the central participants as either active or passive, interested or disinterested, collaborative or antagonistic, competent or incompetent. Apart from the characters and cues on the frontstage, scripting captures a host of frontstage and backstage activities. In his dramaturgical analysis of the work undertaken by citizen engagement practitioners, Oliver Escobar (2015, 278) observes how scripting 'assembles time (e.g. pacing, opportunity), space and dynamics (e.g. layouts, formats), characters (e.g. individuals,

groups, places), strategies and tactics (e.g. exposing participants to diverse others), materials and artefacts (e.g. tablecloth, facilitation tools), narratives and frames . . . and enactments (e.g. facilitating, orchestrating)’. Scripting in this broader sense functions as a kind of meta-category, under which [Hajer’s \(2005a\)](#) three other conceptual categories sit, namely setting, staging, and performance. Pertinent to the category of scripting is also the idea of a ‘counter script’ which refers to ‘the conscious activity of antagonists who try to alter the effects of particular stagings of politics, to twist the meaning of what is said by giving it a new contextualization or introducing a new antagonism.’ ([Hajer 2009](#), 66).

Setting refers to the physical environment or context in which interaction takes place, and how it shapes behaviour and communication. Settings not only shape what is considered appropriate and expected behaviour in a given context, but they also configure expectations about dress code and communication. A setting can include the scenes, or backdrops, against which a communicative interaction occurs, such as a parliament, a shopping mall, or a particular landscape. A setting can also encompass the props and artefacts that shape the interaction. These include things such as seating arrangements, location of speakers, use of images, tabled reports, and minutes of previous meetings. All settings consist of a backstage, where individuals prepare for a performance, and a frontstage where they are on display.

Staging is about managing and directing the performance, particularly the interaction between participants. Staging typically involves drawing on existing symbols or inventing new ones. An important aspect of staging is the distinction between those central to the performance (such as the directors and the actors) and the audiences ([Hajer 2005a](#)). Staging draws analytic attention to questions about who is coordinating the entire performance and how, and who is the intended or imagined audience. From a dramaturgical perspective, audiences are not simply out there waiting to be engaged and entertained by the actors. Instead, they are actively constructed as part of the performance ([Turnhout et al. 2010](#); [Hajer and Uitermark 2008](#)). In this sense, audiences resemble publics, which do not exist as an entity, but must always be ‘brought into being’ through various performative practices and actions ([Butler 2010](#), 147).

Finally, *performance* is concerned with how staged actions and interactions construct new understandings of the issues at stake and reconfigure power relations. It is about the way in which social realities are produced, reproduced, or challenged ([Polletta 2006](#)). Performance, however, is an interpretive act and it is not always clear how an interaction or activity will be received, and what messages and power relations it will reshape or affect. Sometimes performances can generate unexpected or unintended effects, especially if they unfold rapidly ([Hajer and Uitermark 2008](#)).

Table 22.1 below outlines an illustrative list of empirical questions associated with the four different dimensions of [Hajer’s \(2005a\)](#) dramaturgical framework. These can be adapted and applied to study different settings and aspects of public deliberation.

Table 22.1 Four Dimensions of Dramaturgical Analysis

Dramaturgical dimension	Definition	Empirical questions for deliberative democracy research (illustrative list only)
Scripting	The overall design of the interaction which determines what characters are in the performance and how they ought to act and for what end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did interactive space come into being, and what is its goal, and central message? • How do the organizers describe and promote the interaction, and its purpose? • Who are the intended characters and what acting cues (instructions) are they given?
Setting	The physical situation or context in which the interaction takes place, including the building, backdrop and backstage, and any artefacts and props that are used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the ‘physical’ nature of the interactive space • What artefacts, props, images and symbols are used? • How does the particular setting influence how actors behave, what is said, what can be said, and what can be said with influence?
Staging	The management and direction of the interaction, as well as distinguishing between different participants and audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are interactions within the interactive space organized, and facilitated? • Who are the participants? What roles do they play? • Who are the audiences? How are they constructed? How do they interact (if at all) with the performance?
Performance	The way in which the contextualized interaction itself produces social realities such as understanding of the problem at hand, knowledge, new power relations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What function does the interactive space play in the broader political debate? • To what extent does the interactive space shape how issues are defined and discussed, and how knowledge is used and understood? • How does the performance reinforce or reconfigure power relations?

Source: Adapted from [Hajer \(2005a\)](#).

Once the analytical framework and associated empirical questions are developed, the next step in a dramaturgical analysis involves gathering and organizing the ‘data’. Data for dramaturgical analysis is typically obtained through the close observation (either in real-time or via video recording) of social or political interactions and

the behaviour of actors in both frontstage and backstage (e.g. [Escobar 2015](#)). For example, in studying a deliberative forum, one might observe the physical and aesthetic aspects of the process (the form of the invitations, the seating arrangements and the use of space, colour, symbols, and music), how the actors engage on the stage (for example, their body language, clothing, tone of voice, and how and who they interact with), and what goes on behind and outside the forum (the backstage happenings, the real-time media, and political developments).

Observational data can be supplemented with interviews, media articles, Internet sources and other relevant documentation that helps the researcher to reconstruct the ‘deliberation in action’ as a series of staged performances. Data gathering in dramaturgical analysis must support ‘the discovery of communication, symbols, gestures, facial expression, props, sentiment, documentation and other instruments of human interaction’ ([Corrigan and Beaubien 2013](#), 309f.). Interviews with the actors involved in the performance or its audience can be especially fruitful to help flesh out the meaning of certain acts and symbols and identify how actors themselves experience and relate to the performances at work. Interviews with various actors beyond forum participants, including organizers and facilitators, and even non-participants, can enable the researcher to capture diverse interpretations of the performances under scrutiny.

Dramaturgical analysis can also be combined with other methods of analysis such as discourse analysis (for examples, see [Hajer and Uitermark 2008](#); [Hendriks 2009](#); [Yuana et al. 2020](#)). In this case, each analysis draws on different kinds of data: for example, a discourse analysis might draw primarily on written and spoken text (such as policy documents, media articles, interviews, and recordings), whereas a complementary dramaturgical analysis might take into account non-verbal aspects of the interaction, shifting the researcher’s focus on the performative effects of the setting and the use of imagery, colour, or props. The discourse analysis serves to ‘identify how certain terms (concepts, classifications) dominate a political debate over a period of time, and the dramaturgical analysis implies a more precise focus on how people use particular terms in particular situations’ ([Hajer 2009](#), 54). It is also possible to combine dramaturgy with concepts from geography and environmental justice (e.g. [Barnett and Scott 2007](#)), science and technology studies (e.g. [Felt and Fochler 2010](#)), narrative analysis (e.g. [Roberts 2018](#)), and interpretive policy analysis (e.g. [Escobar 2015](#)).

Dramaturgy of Public Deliberation: Illustrative Examples

Dramaturgical analysis enables researchers to investigate often-overlooked or taken-for-granted aspects of deliberative practices. These include the physical environment within which deliberation takes place and how it influences behaviour and communication; how the seating arrangements in

deliberative forums affect the way participants relate to each other; and how the materials and artefacts used in deliberative practice shape the overall atmosphere as well as the prospects for interaction. Furthermore, dramaturgical analysis offers a powerful way of studying the non-verbal expression in public deliberation, which has been a key topic of scholarly interest and investigation in the field (e.g. [Rollo 2017](#); [Curato 2019](#); [Mendonça et al. 2022](#); [Hendriks et al. 2020](#)).

Below, we draw on some specific examples to illustrate the ways dramaturgical analysis can be used in the empirical study of deliberative democracy. Given our understanding of public deliberation as a broad communicative process that goes beyond structured forums, our examples come from a variety of spaces where deliberation takes place in contemporary societies, including the deliberative forums, the public sphere encompassing both physical and digital spaces and deliberative policymaking processes.

Dramaturgical Analysis of Deliberative Forums

Dramaturgical analysis can be applied to empirically study deliberative forums, which have been the key focus of attention in the field of deliberative democracy especially over the past two decades. Scholars study these forums so that they can identify and optimize the conditions that encourage high-quality deliberation. They develop innovative procedures to select participants or devise different forum models for engaging citizens in policy deliberations on complex issues (e.g. [Curato et al. 2021](#)). Dramaturgical analysis can assist these efforts by shifting the attention from design principles to the scripting, setting, staging and performances in these forums.

It has been long acknowledged that the physical setting where deliberation takes place plays a crucial role in shaping the political behaviour and interaction of participants ([Elster 1998](#)). While some settings can amplify communicative interactions and behaviours that deliberative democrats find valuable, others can mute them ([Parkinson 2012](#)). For example, creating a seating arrangement based on multiple round tables versus one in which two rows of seats face each other in front of an audience raises different kinds of expectations from participants and from their participation in deliberative forums. Particular seating arrangements can also encourage informal interactions and produce specific behaviours ([Van Maasackers and Oh 2020](#)). Other 'atmospheric qualities' of the physical environment, such as the level of formality or informality can shape the dynamics of communication in deliberative forums ([Christiansen 2015](#)). Dramaturgical analysis can help to examine these dynamics and the interaction between the physical environment and forms of interactions ([Hajer 2005a, 2005b](#)).

It is not only the physical environment of deliberative forums to which dramaturgical analysis draws our attention. Equally important for this type of analysis is the discursive environment within which deliberative forums take place. A classic example of how dramaturgical analysis can be used to study the discursive

environment of a deliberative forum is presented by [Hajer \(2005a\)](#) in his work on the participatory planning forum *Listening to the City*—a twenty-first-century town meeting held in New York. The purpose of this forum was to engage the public in a dialogue on rebuilding lower Manhattan after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. In that study, Hajer applies his dramaturgical framework to examine how the forum's setting and scripting shaped its inclusivity. He finds that the forum was scripted narrowly for a certain audience and around a single deliberative process, which contributed to the process being abandoned by decision makers. Hajer argues that the organizers missed the opportunity to script a more inclusive governance storyline into the process, enabling broader and better participation ([Hajer 2005a](#), 455).

Similarly, [Bernhard Wieser and Sandra Karner \(2010\)](#) use dramaturgical analysis to examine how the scripting of deliberative forums can shape the roles given to participants and experts, and what counts as legitimate knowledge in these forums. Their analysis of deliberative forums on genome research in the Netherlands shows that the narrow scripting of these forums hindered lay participants from expressing their personal experiences as legitimate considerations. Such insights are crucial for both scholars and practitioners of deliberative democracy; they can inform their efforts to make deliberative forums more effective and inclusive. Researchers interested in using dramaturgical analysis for the empirical study of deliberative forums should pay particular attention to the scripting and staging of these forums, which are intentional and strategic activities that can enable or hinder meaningful and inclusive deliberation.

Dramaturgical Analysis of Deliberation in the Public Sphere

Dramaturgical analysis can also be used to study the performative aspects of deliberation in the public sphere. Here, researchers might focus on how political leaders script and stage public debate, especially after a dramatic political event, such as a policy crisis, a natural disaster, or a terrorist attack (e.g. [Hajer and Uitermark 2008](#); [Hellman and Lerkkanen 2019](#)). The way political leaders respond to such dramatic events can shape the discursive quality of the public sphere in significant ways. Researchers can use dramaturgical analysis to examine the performances of political leaders and the implications of these performances for public deliberation. Alternatively, they might also explore how advisory bodies work to bring authoritative advice to the public stage (e.g. [Hilgartner 2000](#)), how social movements stage protests (e.g. [Benford and Hunt 1992](#); [Szerszynski et al. 2003](#); [Barnett and Scott 2007](#); [Morton 2021](#); [Cevik-Compiegne et al 2022](#)), or how everyday citizens participate in debates taking place in the public sphere (e.g. [Hendriks et al. 2016](#); [Jones 2020](#); [Ercan and Hendriks 2022](#)).

One of the major appeals of applying dramaturgical analysis to study contemporary public spheres is that it enables researchers to analyse both verbal and non-verbal

modes of expression and interaction. We know that public deliberation is not confined to speech and text; it also encompasses non-verbal modes of expression, such as visuals, sound, and presence (Mendonça et al. 2022). Actors in contemporary public spheres draw increasingly more on non-verbal modes of expression to display their arguments and take part in public deliberation (Ercan et al. 2022). Yet the methods to study non-verbal expression in deliberative democracy are yet to be established. Dramaturgical analysis offers one way of examining non-verbal communication in public deliberation.

In our study of a polarized political controversy over Coal Seam Gas (CSG) mining in Australia, we turned to dramaturgy to help us make sense of non-verbal communication, including playful visual material circulated on social media both by proponents and opponents of CSG projects (Hendriks et al. 2016). Applying dramaturgy in online environments required making some adaptations to standard dramaturgical frameworks and data generation. Our analysis focused on the dramaturgical dimensions of the setting, scripting, and staging of six Facebook pages associated with a controversy surrounding a proposed CSG project in Narrabri, in eastern New South Wales. For each Facebook page we analysed the organizational description of the page, the imagery and text on the cover and in profile images, the imagery and text of original and shared posts, as well as the comments, all over a four-month period. This analysis helped us to understand how like-minded publics form and perform on social media, and how they enact arguments and establish boundaries.

In a different study on the same controversy, we undertook a dramaturgical analysis of the protests enacted by a social protest group, the Knitting Nannas Against Gas (KNAG) (Ercan and Hendriks 2022). Members of this group meet regularly in public places to knit yellow and black objects such as beanies (hats), scarves, and toys to oppose CSG and to express care for land and communities. In this study we undertook a dramaturgical analysis to examine how KNAG scripts its performances, the central characters and audiences it employs, and the deliberative effects of these performances in the public sphere. Particular attention was paid to the props, symbols, and colours that KNAG uses to evoke a particular emotion or mood. Here, dramaturgical analysis enabled us to explore the ways in which the colourful performances of KNAG challenge the dominant ideas about 'who is affected' by CSG, and facilitate different voices to enter the controversy. Through their casting of the central character 'nanna' (wise older women), and supporting characters, for example 'kiddies' (children), KNAG is able to discursively represent previously excluded voices, such as future generations (Ercan and Hendriks 2021; Hendriks et al. 2020).

Dramaturgical Analysis of Deliberative Policymaking Processes

Finally, dramaturgical analysis can be used to study political communication in and around deliberative policymaking processes. By studying the staging and setting

of political communication within complex policy contexts, researchers can gain insights into ‘what is said, what can be said, and what can be said with influence’ (Hajer and Versteeg 2005, 345). Scholars interested in deliberative democratic themes can apply dramaturgy to illuminate different discursive and democratic aspects of unfolding policy sequences or events (e.g. Hendriks 2009; Visram et al. 2020). It is especially well-suited for studying new or emerging forms of governance where there might be unconventional, unforeseen, or disruptive activities (Hajer and Versteeg 2005; Yuana et al. 2020).

An example of applying dramaturgy to study democratic aspects of contemporary policymaking is Carolyn Hendriks’ (2009) analysis of the enactment of political representation in governance networks associated with energy policy reforms in the Netherlands. This study, which combined dramaturgical and discourse analysis (after Hajer 2005a), examined how the state and other actors staged, scripted, and discursively constructed representation. In the dramaturgical aspects of this study, Hendriks analysed a series of network arrangements that were established and scripted by the Dutch government as part of an energy reform programme (2004–2008). The dramaturgical analysis probed questions such as: how were the policy interactions constructed, who was active on the stage, and who was the audience? How were characters selected, and what acting cues were they given? How did the interaction and its setting produce and change meanings and power relations? The dramaturgical analysis showed how the Dutch energy reform programme at the time created a complex layering of network arrangements (or stages) upon which different meanings of representation were performed. The discourse analysis focused more on the language of representation, for example how it was articulated by relevant policy actors in key policy documents. The combined effect of this layering, Hendriks (2009) argued, was the emergence of a kind of ‘democratic soup’ where actors and institutions enacted alternative meanings of representation that were mixed in with representative democracy’s emphasis on political authorization, accountability, and responsiveness.

Conclusion

Politics has long been recognized as a site of drama. It is full of intriguing characters, scripts, settings as well as staged and improvised events (Rai et al. 2021). These performative aspects of politics are arguably more abundant and complex than ever before, given the expansion of where and how modern politics is enacted (Theocharis and Van Deth 2018). In this chapter we have shown that deliberative democrats have much to gain by viewing and examining public deliberation through a dramaturgical lens. Dramaturgy offers scholars a useful analytical framework for making sense of social interactions and communication in a variety of spaces of public deliberation. Our examples demonstrate how dramaturgical concepts can be applied and adapted to examine the scripting, setting, staging, and performances of deliberative forums, and more broadly to study the enactment of political

controversies, discourses, and democratic ideals in the public sphere and policymaking processes.

Dramaturgical analysis is an interpretive mode of analysis. Given this, some of the criticism levelled against interpretive research in general (mainly from a positivist research perspective) also applies to dramaturgy. These include issues such as the ‘reliability’ of the data, ‘generalizability’ of results, and the ‘replicability’ of the analysis (for effective responses to these criticisms from an interpretive perspective, see [Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012](#)). The purpose of dramaturgical analysis is not to draw generalizations, but to facilitate ‘a view of micro-practices with a gaze drawn to the *specific* and *contextual*’ ([Corrigan and Beaubien 2013](#), 311; our emphasis). We contend that this contextualized perspective is crucial for deepening and advancing knowledge on the practice of public deliberation ([Ercan et al. 2017](#)).

Sceptics within the interpretive research tradition might question the value of dramaturgy and ask what it offers in addition to existing qualitative methods. In our view, dramaturgical categories enable researchers to go beyond the dominant ‘structure vs agency’ thinking when describing or explaining human behaviour and interactions. They draw our attention to the role of physical and discursive environments in shaping productive interactions and conversations. Especially when supplemented with other methods of inquiry and analysis, dramaturgy provides a powerful means for studying deliberative politics in action.

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Narrative Analysis

John Boswell

Barely a day goes by without a media pundit, strategic adviser or public figure referring to the importance of winning ‘the narrative’ in public debate. We are, after all, ‘narrative animals’. We find narratives effective in representing the *natural* way in which people make sense of, and argue about, complex social and political issues (see especially Fisher 1987; Bruner 1991).

But if we are narrative animals at heart, what does this mean for the hopes of a more deliberative form of democracy? The things we typically associate with narrative—drama, conflict, emotion—seem at first pass to be at odds with the things we typically associate with deliberation—sober reflection, consensus, and rationality. A deeper consideration, however, reveals more promising potential for mutual accommodation. An emphasis on narrative need not entail a repudiation of deliberative norms, and more significantly still, a messy, broad systemic view of deliberative democracy need not entail a repudiation of drama, conflict, or emotion. The relationship between how people do communicate (narrative) and how they ought to communicate (deliberation) is more ambivalent than first appears.

In this chapter, I argue that the value of narrative analysis to assessing deliberation lies precisely in this ambivalence; that because narrative can be both good and bad in the normative sense, exploring the implications in practice through narrative analysis can provide unique insight for deliberative democrats. In fact, narrative analysis offers a set of tools for unpacking precisely the sort of messy, contextual communicative and political practices that deliberative democrats are beginning to grapple with (see Boswell et al. 2016).

To make this argument, the chapter makes two key moves. The first is to unpack precisely what narrative is and what narrative analysis entails. The second looks at examples of narrative analysis in practice, with a particular emphasis on how applications of this approach can help to refine contemporary debates in deliberative democracy.

Pinning Down Narrative

In the last three decades or so, there has been a surge of enthusiasm for studying narrative in political scholarship. Like most concepts across social scientific endeavour,

its swelling popularity has also entailed a degree of concept stretching or slippage. At one end of the spectrum, narrative is seen as synonymous with anecdote, an everyday recounting of a specific sequence of events. At the opposite end of the spectrum, narrative is synonymous with what is more commonly called discourse, as a broad ensemble of ideas and symbols that order actors' understanding of social and political affairs. Discourse is usually presented as something beyond the apprehension of most actors themselves, and never articulated as such (that is the work of the analyst—see [Hajer 2006](#)). There is extensive work across the social sciences, and in politics and policy scholarship particularly, that theorizes about, and makes empirical use of, narrative in both of these senses of the term (as outlined in [Boswell 2013](#)). Some of it intersects with important work in deliberative democracy. For example, a focus on narrative as anecdote was an important element of the 'difference democrat' push-back two decades ago against an overwhelming emphasis on rational argumentation in deliberative democracy (see [Young 1996](#); [Polletta 1998](#)). Likewise, a focus on narrative as discourse has been a key driver in thinking about deliberative democracy at the broad scale in theory (see [Dryzek 1990](#)) and in practice (see [Stevenson and Dryzek 2014](#); [Parry 2019](#)).

However, the dominant usage of narrative in empirical politics and policy scholarship, which I also adopt here, sits in between these two conceptions. The sort of narrative I have in mind is defined as a chronological account that helps actors to make sense of, and communicate about, a social or political issue ([Roe 1994](#); [Stone 2002](#); [Fischer 2003](#)). It is important to acknowledge that this mid-range view of narrative cannot be completely distinguished from the other two conceptions in practice. A narrative in this sense can be seen as an accretion of anecdotes ([Ospina and Dodge 2005](#)) while at the same time as a 'surface textual' manifestation of a deeper underlying discourse ([Schram 2012](#)). Conceptual distinctions in social science often have blurry lines in practice. The chief value in emphasizing the mid-range view of narrative is that it represents the way in which people think about and argue about the controversial or uncertain issues that occupy the interests of deliberative democrats.

As this definition attests, there are clear affinities and overlaps with other approaches to the study of discourse used prominently in research on deliberative democracy. This edited volume itself contains methods focusing on the analysis of discourses ([Chapter 20](#)), or frames ([Chapter 24](#)), for example. So, let's cut to the chase: what in particular does narrative analysis have to offer? I have elsewhere made this argument in more detail (see [Boswell 2013](#)), but the particular key is that any narrative *must be enacted*.

Contra research on discourse, which tends to present discourse as somehow independent of agents or as enacting its own agency, an emphasis on narrative focuses on enactment rather than the mere text itself. Narratives exist, but not independent of agents ([Stone 2002](#); [Bevir and Rhodes 2003](#)). Narratives must be brought to life in and for a specific context, reproduced and rearticulated by embedded political actors. In short, narratives require narration. But narration is also not purely strategic or manipulative, in the way much of the literature on framing implies. Focusing on

narrative and narration acknowledges that it is not possible to make sense of issues in some non-biased way, absent the social construction of reality. It entails emotion, drama, performance (see especially [Boswell 2016a](#)).

In the context of an evolving normative account of deliberative democracy that stresses the importance of performativity and non-verbal communication (see [Chapter 14](#) in this book), the analytical attention to enactment is apt. Narrative analysis offers the tools to uncover and focus attention on these wider contextual features.

Doing Narrative Analysis

This is a book largely about opening up the black box of how to study and assess deliberation in various contexts; so, what are those tools in the case of narrative analysis? I will later reference exciting work from a range of other scholars pushing the frontiers of deliberative democratic scholarship. However, in talking about the craft of undertaking narrative analysis, it is much easier to reflect in depth on my own work (outlined in most depth in [Boswell 2016b](#)). This is not to say mine is the only way. Far from it. In fact, there is a rich literature on narrative analysis in political science ([Turnbull 2016](#)), psychology ([Bruner 1991](#)), communication and rhetoric ([Fisher 1987](#)), organizational studies ([Czarniawska and Gagliardi 2003](#)), and far beyond. There are many distinct variants of narrative analysis, which are ever adapting and evolving in response to the emergence of new techniques and tools. Increasingly, many analysts are attempting to measure narrative meaning systems by rigidly coding textual sources against core narrative elements. Some are even so bold as to claim to have developed a ‘science of storytelling’ that assimilates narrative to a positivist paradigm ([Jones et al. 2014](#)). In my view, however, an emphasis on narrative fits more naturally with an interpretive paradigm that foregrounds the beliefs and practices of situated actors (see especially [Bevir and Rhodes 2003](#)), and in doing so holds greater potential to shed light on poorly understood dynamics in deliberative theory and practice (see [Ercan et al. 2017](#)).

Of course, interpretive forms of analysis are often criticized for being relatively opaque. So, to confront this sticky prejudice head-on, I lay out in simple, slightly stylized terms (it is never quite this neat in practice!) how I have used this tool and to what effect.

Narrative Context

In this interpretive vein, the first step in coming to grips with the narratives swirling around a complex and contested issue in public deliberation is to establish the boundaries and contours of debate—where it happens, who the key protagonists are, and what the primary areas of conflict are. This step is almost certainly not unique to

narrative analysis. In fact, it probably has analogies in any in-depth research into public deliberation at a broad scale. Pragmatically, I found the most useful tool in developing this initial contextual knowledge to come in the form of ‘helicopter interviews’ (see also [Hajer 2006](#); [Boswell et al. 2019](#)).

As the name suggests, ‘helicopter interviews’ are designed to give you an overview. They occur at the outset of the project with a small handful of key informants who know the context very well and have the willingness and patience to help you get to grips with things. Ideal ‘helicopters’ are experienced journalists, retired civil servants, long-standing third sector representatives, or academics with substantive expertise on the topic of interest. In my PhD research, I conducted three helicopter interviews: one with an experienced health activist; one with a public health official; and one with a professional body representative, all of whom I contacted through personal and professional networks. In each case, I was able to identify key actors and settings, and develop a sense of how actors with different experiences perceived the debate. Given my familiarity with the respondents, I was also able to ask seemingly mundane questions, make and correct basic factual errors, and hone my interview skills in a relatively relaxed and friendly environment. Two of these ‘helicopters’ remained important touchstones for me throughout the project.

Narrative Tropes

Having established the basic context through these ‘helicopter interviews’, the next step entails apprehending, exploring, and cementing the structural features of the different narratives. Inspired especially by the work of Deborah [Stone \(2002\)](#), I broke this down into two parts: emplotment (working out the plot) and tropes (establishing key rhetorical features). While the former is perhaps the more important and certainly the more time-consuming part of the analysis, the latter helps most in quickly sorting, sifting, and organizing the analysis.

Put simply, political narratives tend to entail a recurring set of tropes—most notably a pantomime ‘cast’ of familiar characters. Like any good story, there are caricatured villains, victims, and heroes. Identifying this ‘cast’ of characters—and the different ways in which proponents of different narratives establish and portray their villains, victims, and heroes—is, in my experience, the easiest way to identify and separate out the competing narratives on an issue. In my PhD work on obesity, for instance, it was clear that some advocates saw Big Food as the chief villain, while others presented the food industry as a constructive ‘part of the solution’, and others still said little about the food industry altogether ([Boswell 2016b](#)). Taking note of these characterizations helped in the exploration stage because it allowed me to sort out patterns of difference and similarity in what would eventually become the six distinct narratives I identified in my research. The emphasis on dramatic characters and conflict was also a useful spur for starting to think about the implications for deliberative norms such as mutual respect and reciprocity.

Narrative Emplotment

Narratives have a beginning, middle, and end, and, as analysed in political science, tend to follow one of two arcs—narratives of decline (where things go from good to bad, and therefore need intervention) and narratives of control (where things are out of control until a hero steps in to impose order) (Stone 2002). The most time-consuming task of narrative analysis is to sift through data to track out these elements. It is, unmistakably, painstaking work, and, in the case of my PhD, involved thousands of pages of text and video footage of public deliberation. (The study involved a comparative analysis of public deliberation on tackling obesity in Australia and the UK between 2007 and 2013, inclusive of media coverage, legislative debate, and select committee deliberations, the work of specialist task forces, and administrative committees in both countries.)

Here, I found interviews a useful source of corroboration and augmentation to the analysis of text and video. Interviews were useful for ‘narrative emplotment’ for two key reasons.

First, I could ask interview participants to articulate their narrative on the issue of obesity and could use that to reinforce or challenge the emplotments I was developing. Eliciting narratives from interview participants is a well-worn strategy in interpretive political science (see Rhodes 2011), and in practice it was deceptively easy. To be clear, I did not ask participants to give ‘their narrative’ or use even the word narrative at all. I was conscious that most of the actors I spoke to were deeply committed to their cause and might not recognize their deeply held convictions as merely ‘a narrative’. Nevertheless, it proved quite simple to elicit a coherent narrative with little prompting via a simple interview topic guide structured in narrative form. I would ask: how did obesity emerge as a public policy issue? What problems does it present to the health service and broader society? What should we do about it and who needs to do it? Often, I did not even have to ask all these questions. Sometimes participants would launch into the full story from the outset, without any prompting whatsoever. The interview format is ideal for allowing participants to inhabit their innate ‘narrative animal’.

Second, as the research developed, I was able to sense-check my emerging findings with participants with whom I had already built up a good rapport. Here, I could talk about different ‘narratives’ without fear of offending. In fact, these participants reflected that they were acutely aware of the variety of perspectives at play on the issue, because they had to interact with rival policy actors all the time. Running my interpretation past them was useful for it offered something akin to a first round of review (see Ospina and Dodge 2005 on co-production in narrative analysis).

Narrative Enactment

Perhaps most important of all for scholars of deliberative democracy at the broad scale is an emphasis on enactment. Narratives, as I have stressed above, are per-

formed. The basic idea is that it is not just what people say, but how they say it. The emphasis is on performativity—enactment focuses on narrators (who is giving voice to a narrative?), the stages on which they perform (what context are they narrating in?), and the manner in which they manage their performance (how are they narrating?) (see also [Parkinson 2012, chapter 2](#) on narrating). It focuses on the way people dress, the tone of voice they use, the manner in which they interact with others around them, and their use of hand gestures or physical props. A focus on enactment therefore gives insight into deliberative practice in and across settings.

An emphasis on narrative enactment can come in two forms. One is through experiencing the context, noting and charting differences in the way narratives are performed to different audiences in different settings. The key method in this sense is *observation* in the moment. This can be done either directly or with the help of mediated footage (television, radio, online). The other is through a retrospective ‘insider’s’ account of how actors navigate these different settings and how they reflect on the experience. The main tool in this latter sense is the *ethnographic interview* in which the researchers try to elicit reflections on the experience of ‘being there’ through a lengthy and reflective interview, or series of interviews. (For more on the distinction between direct observations and indirect elicitation of reflections, and the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, see [Boswell et al. 2019](#))

In my PhD research, I attempted to do a mixture of both, albeit with the balance skewed to the second approach. In terms of analysing enactment in context, I was limited pragmatically by what I had access to—some settings and events were off-limits, had happened in the past, or were only available through a medium (such as video) which does not entirely capture ‘being there’. But still it produced important data. I observed a notable difference, for example, in video footage of a legislative committee hearing on obesity in Australia. First came a group of government officials, dressed in suits, reading from a technical report about the strain on acute health services. Later came a single obese woman, voice wavering, sharing her intimate experience of the indignities of accessing services. They gave voice to the same narrative, but in distinctly different ways, with distinctly different implications in deliberative terms.

Nonetheless, observational insights were limited, so a key purpose of the interviews, then, was to get a sense of what it was like and how different settings enabled different sorts of performances. They were undertaken with an eye to understanding the overall consequences for public deliberation at the broad scale—what was included and amplified, or excluded or muted, across settings of debate, and what this meant in deliberative terms (see especially [Boswell 2015, 2016c](#)).

Using Narrative Analysis for Assessing Deliberation

Having explained in practical terms what narrative analysis involves, the rest of the chapter focuses on how narrative analysis can be useful to the field of deliberative democracy at the broad scale. To be clear, I do not want to be seen as saying narrative has no use as a tool for understanding the micro dynamics of deliberation in a single setting. Hampton (2009), for instance, demonstrates the value of an emphasis on narrative on mini-public deliberation about environmental management. Narrative policy analysis is to be found in extensively tried and proven toolkit for enhancing and evaluating mini-public deliberation. In contrast, it is at the broader scale where deliberative democracy has much greater need for effective tools of analysis and evaluation (Ercan et al. 2017; Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019), so I direct my attention there.

Probing Flimsy ‘Consensus’ in Controversial Debate

The place of conflict in deliberative democracy remains a point of some uncertainty and contention. Though long associated with—and critiqued as—the pursuit of consensus, in fact most theories of deliberative democracy have long since its early formulations moved beyond consensus as a goal. They recognize that conflict on some issues is simply ineliminable and that the appearance of consensus is as likely to be underpinned by problematic discursive dynamics as by ‘perfect’ deliberation (see Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006; Mansbridge et al. 2010). How might we come to terms with these dynamics at the broad scale?

Mark Roberts’ (2018) recent analysis of the ‘communication breakdown’ surrounding the ‘Citizen Power’ initiative in Peterborough, England breaks important new ground. Citizen Power was a wider programme in British civil society. In the case of Peterborough, it took the form of an initiative to empower citizens in four specific policy areas: community arts, education, drugs and alcohol misuse, and environmental concerns. Civil society groups met with Council leaders in a series of designed dialogues based on deliberative principles of engagement. Roberts deploys narrative policy analysis to track the trajectory of contestation about the initiative—from a honeymoon period of optimistic consensus in the initial, high-profile dialogues through to considerable antagonism and recrimination behind the scenes later on, largely because proponents of competing narratives about ‘Citizen Power’ simply ‘could not understand one another’. His account provides insight into how an apparent consensus can break down in the absence of sufficiently deep common ground across rival narratives. What is particularly interesting from a deliberative perspective is that Roberts’ analysis probes beneath the sort of agreement often reached in one-off or high-profile moments of deliberation to reveal festering conflicts about

what those abstract ideas ought to look like in practice. It provides further ammunition for conceptual claims that deliberative democracy ought to be just as interested about what happens *after* will formation as before, in the context of messy, iterative processes of real-world governance (see also [Boswell and Corbett 2017](#); [Dean 2018](#)).

Unpacking the Dynamics of Polarization

Deliberative theorists have been increasingly worried about the apparently inexorable polarization of society, as revealed in the rise of reactionary populism and opposition to the ‘cosmopolitan elite’ (see discussion in [Hendriks et al. 2020](#)). These macro-political forces seem to render the deliberative ‘fantasy’ ever more utopian (see [Achen and Bartels 2017](#)). Once more, narrative analysis provides unique insights into these dynamics and how to counter them at a broad scale.

A good example is in the work of [Raul Lejano and Jennifer Dodge \(2017\)](#). Focused on the impasse over climate policy in the US, and the ‘adversarial turn’ pushing sides of the debate further and further apart, Lejano and Dodge focus on a key narrative underpinning scepticism. They emphasize the linguistic properties and performance of the scepticism narrative, and show how the narrative evolves what they call ‘ideological’ properties over time. For example, they show how frequent rehearsal of the climate sceptic narrative in the US entails ‘saturation’ (or extreme exaggeration) of some of the key tropes discussed earlier. For example, in this narrative, the casting of proponents of progressive climate change policy as ‘liberals’ works to delegitimize their claims, placing them in an ideologically encamped opposition to the narrator and their assumed audience—in particular, former Vice President-cum-climate change campaigner Al Gore occupies the place of chief pantomime villain at the centre of the ‘global warming hoax’. Sceptics coalesce around the narrative, and in the process become progressively isolated from the influence of others in debate. Taken as a whole, Lejano and Dodge’s analysis reveals that traditional approaches to communicating climate science to sceptics ignore the deeper roots of the divide, and so reinforce rather than mitigate conflict and paralysis. What is required to enable progress on the climate debate at the broad scale, they show, is a more fundamental attempt to bridge narratives.

Unpacking the Dynamics of Transformation

Narrative analysis is not just valuable in revealing pathologies in deliberative democracy at the broad scale. It can also reveal unexpected or unappreciated opportunities. Particularly important—in deliberative systems’ terms—is how to breach the sorts of impasses described in the two examples above. How do we enable meaningful progress and resolution of debate in messy, polarized macro terms? The established techniques of democratic innovation, which have been the focus of deliberative

democrats for much of the previous two decades, provide few pointers. They show us constructive transformation (understood in terms of individual preference change) in isolated ‘social laboratories’ but relatively little about how deliberative transformation might occur at the broad scale. Once more, narrative analysis can provide fruitful answers.

We get an important hint of this in Marcos Engelken-Jorge’s (2018) account of the abolition of military service in Germany and Spain. I should note here that Engelken-Jorge does not describe this work as ‘narrative analysis’—albeit he has written eloquently elsewhere about the centrality of narrative to public communication in deliberative democracy (see Engelken-Jorge 2016). He describes it more openly as a focus on mechanisms apart from rational persuasion. In practice, it entails a careful reconstruction of the competing narratives around military service and their evolving interaction in settings of debate over multiple decades. The emphasis is on how narratives emerge and evolve as they are enacted repeatedly in public deliberation. His analysis reveals how the abolition narratives in both countries gained ascent, not through any single, cathartic moment of reflection, but through a gradual, non-linear process of transformation and accommodation. The key mechanism was continued problematization of conscription in both countries—but problematization rooted in different reasons, underpinned by different narratives. (In Spain, for example, he charts how continued bouts of problematization in the public sphere are sparked by those concerned morally about protecting the rights of conscientious objectors *and* those concerned pragmatically about the need to professionalize the military to be fit for modern warfare.) He shows us how an imperfect, messy public debate in both countries enabled deliberative democratic effects at the broad scale: ‘namely, to attain mutually justified decisions, to secure the free, reasoned and informed consent of citizens, and to promote substantively correct decisions’ (Engelken-Jorge 2018).

Conclusion

Allusion to these brief vignettes reveals that narrative analysis has much to offer the study of deliberative democracy, especially now that the study of deliberative democracy has expanded its focus on institutions and mini-publics to examine the wider deliberative system. These studies reveal how creative analysts can shed light on complex and pressing questions for deliberative theory, and for democratic practice.

Naturally, what I see as strengths, others may point to as limitations. Creative exploration does not exactly go hand in hand with systemic standardization. Emphasis on contextual enactment may not fare well when the goal is a rigid form of generalizability. Is marrying these goals the next step?

On that point, I would sound a final word of caution. Much of the so-called ‘science of storytelling’, which attempts to link narrative insight with mainstream social science, ends up blunting what is interesting about narrative (for critiques, see Lejano 2015; Dodge 2015). It reduces narrative to rigid elements and, more importantly,

places artificial controls on real-world political debate. In fact, in practice it often falls into the same ‘social laboratory’ trap that has befallen studies of deliberative practice. More promising, then, might be efforts to combine approaches—[André Bächtiger and John Parkinson’s \(2019\)](#) recent book represents an effort to bridge ‘two worlds’ in this sense—which can go beyond idiography but retain an emphasis on richness and context.

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Frame Analysis

Ricardo F. Mendonça and Paula G. Simões

Deliberative democracy involves exchanges of discourses across time and space. To understand how discourses emerge, how they challenge each other, how they are revised and transformed, and how they pervade the way social actors ascribe meaning to these exchanges is a challenge for any scholar of deliberative democracy. In this chapter, we introduce frame analysis as one way of addressing this challenge.

In simple terms, *frames* answer the question: ‘what is happening here?’. Humans need this basic definition in order to make sense of what they are doing, what is expected from them, and how they may act within particular social interactions. Frames are *interpretive packages* (Gamson 1992), which articulate meanings, throwing light on particular elements of reality while obscuring others. They are enacted and updated in human interaction.

Frame analysis is a method that describes how frames are produced, mobilized, and interact with other frames. It reveals how individuals position themselves in relation to existing frames and identifies frames’ consequences in specific contexts. The epistemological assumptions of frame analysis are aligned with core elements of deliberative democracy. First, it is grounded on the premise that meaning is created, crystalized, or displaced intersubjectively. It, therefore, challenges methodological individualism and echoes the deliberative attention to interaction, mutuality, cooperation, and discursive exchange (Mendonça and Santos 2009). Second, frame analysis conceives of discourses as constitutive of reality, and not merely as descriptions of it. As van Gorp argues (2007, 73) ‘the purpose of a frame analysis is to assess not so much the impact of loose elements in a text but the impact of the implicitly present cultural phenomena conveyed by all these elements as a whole and to relate them to the dynamic processes in which social reality is constructed’. Third, frame analysis places context at the heart of meaning-making, thus shedding light on the importance of situating discourses in the context in which they were expressed. The current attempt of deliberative democrats to understand how different communicative contexts may offer diverse contributions to deliberative processes is grounded on the same premise that discourse is not only content, but a contextualized production (Goodin 2008; Mansbridge et al. 2012).

Having established the clear connection between deliberative democracy and frame analysis, the question now is how exactly frame analysis can be used in the study of deliberative democracy. Our answer to this question will be presented in

two sections. The first section presents three ways of using frame analysis while the second section provides illustrative case studies.

Frame Analysis: Varieties and Potentials for Deliberative Scholarship

Frame analysis can be conducted in various ways, leading [Entman \(1993, 52\)](#) to describe it as a 'fractured paradigm'. [Mendonça and Simões \(2012\)](#) identify three ways of operationalizing frame analysis. By presenting these three ways, we do not mean to provide a rigid typology, but rather to point out the different emphases in the use of frame analysis. In what follows, we introduce each of these three perspectives, provide a brief description of how to employ each one, and argue how it can be useful for deliberative democrats.

Investigating Sequences of Interaction

The first way to conduct *frame analysis* is to reconstruct sequences of interaction. The aim is to reveal how individuals employ and displace certain interpretive packages to make sense of what is going on. This mode of operationalization looks at how different contexts shape the relationships established therein, and how actors operate within these situations. It grasps their fragility by looking at observable ruptures along interactions and at the following efforts to generate new alignments and mutual adaptations.

The analysis begins with the identification of *interactive strips*, which are the unit of analysis. Interactive strips are sequences of interaction with turns from different actors. When studying a deliberative mini-public, for example, an interactive strip would be a specific excerpt of the relationships therein established. In other words, it is a conversational fragment. The notion of sequence is relevant here because it draws attention to the idea that actions are intertwined, with each step affecting the development of a given interaction. The focus is hence on dynamics of interactions and not on isolated utterances.

By reconstructing fragments of broader conversations, frame analysis investigates how discourses are defined and redefined as actors engage in interaction. The following are useful questions when conducting frame analysis: What is happening there? Who are the ones taking part in that situation and how do they position themselves? How do they make sense of what is going on? Are there conflicting attempts to define what is going on? How do actors deal with alternative attempts to define the situation? What are the rules and grammar that govern the interaction? What happens when interaction is broken?

Studying the relationships pervading interactive sequences, scholars working from this perspective may uncover struggles over framing and over the right to make

oneself heard in given contexts. Reconstructing sequences of interaction enables deliberative democratic scholars to comprehend how actors position themselves intersubjectively for the construction of interpretive patterns to make sense of reality. This interactive approach offers a qualitative way to deal with reason-giving and reciprocity. It sheds light on how they operate in specific contexts and in specific language games.

How frames operate in specific contexts is a central part of this analysis. Discursive exchanges must be thought of within the contexts in which they happen. At the heart of meaning production are the addressees of messages, the devices used to produce and to receive these messages, the communicative features of the interaction, and the broader social environment in which particular interactions are nested. The inherently situated lenses provided by this approach foster an attention to the different shapes that discursive exchanges can assume. At this point, it is relevant to remember that the starting point for the deliberative systems approach is that different venues have different features and that the articulation of arenas with diverse qualities may be good for deliberation (Goodin 2008; Dryzek 2012; Mansbridge et al. 2012; Elstub et al. 2018). Investigating deliberation through a systemic lens entails reconstructing discursive situations so as to understand how utterances are produced, to whom they are addressed, how they circulate, and what the rules are that shape interactions in specific settings. By shedding light on the centrality of situation and context, frame analysis can help deliberative scholars to make sense of the role played by different venues in a deliberative system. Different discursive arenas are sites of diverse communicative situations. They create the conditions for certain forms of expression, while inhibiting others. Through frame analysis, deliberative scholars can investigate sequences of interaction in order to understand the affordances that different discursive situations provide for public debates.

Mapping Public Clashes of Discourses

Frame analysis is also an approach to mapping debates around controversial issues. At the kernel of this approach lies an attempt to understand the way specific discourses frame political topics, such as war, climate change, nuclear energy, abortion, or elections (Gitlin 1980; Gamson 1992; Ferree et al. 2002), and how social actors mobilize frames in public battles over interpretations (Cefai 2007; Snow et al. 1986; McAdam 1996). Scholars grounded on this approach often seek to comprehend how the content of discourses establishes a context of meaning. The interpretive route to do this, broadly speaking, follows this sequence: (1) define a problem; (2) offer a causal interpretation; (3) evaluate it in moral terms; and (4) provide a treatment or recommendation (Entman 1993, 52). Frames are thus employed as analytical mechanisms to develop content and/or discursive analysis.

This mode of frame analysis may involve an inductive procedure, through which the scholar navigates a selected public debate, identifying: (1) the arenas in which it

happens; (2) the actors involved in building that discursive field; and (3) the recurrent patterns of interpretation mobilized by these actors. Van Gorp (2007) suggests that this reconstruction of patterns of interpretation (i.e. frames) should be attentive to three things: (1) the *framing devices*: which words, metaphors, exemplary cases, visuals are used; (2) the *reasoning devices*: which justifications, causes, consequences, and equivalences are presented; and (3) the implicit cultural phenomenon: what does this frame reveal about broader patterns of interpretation and social values? Each pattern (or frame) must be transformed into a narrative as a way to define a given situation or problem.

Content or Discourse Analysis that employs frames from this perspective can also, nevertheless, operate in a deductive way, starting with pre-established categories that are used to code the empirical material. These categories can be derived from theoretical work or other empirical investigations. The basic difference is that the researcher does not build the frames from the data analysed, but uses categories developed in previous investigations. For example, one could draw on feminist theories to identify frames used by different actors in a given policy discussion about gender-based violence. Applying deductive frame analysis can be useful for comparative enterprises, and it is important to employ adequate procedures to assure inter-coder reliability in this application. The unit of analysis varies in different studies, ranging from single sentences, to utterances, and even entire texts. This decision depends on the focus of the study and the empirical data available.

After identifying frames (either inductively or deductively), the researcher may use them to answer a variety of research questions. Mapping frames can help to understand, for instance, the diachronic transformation of a given debate, through an analysis of the flows, overlaps, and displacements of interpretive packages in the public sphere. It can also help in identifying the factors that explain the strength or weakness of different frames in diverse contexts. Mapping frames may also be useful when seeking to diagnose whether a debate is focused or dispersed, to identify networks of actors operating within the same interpretive pattern, and to comprehend how the addresses of discourses are relevant in word selection and metaphor usage. These are just a few of the possibilities afforded by this method.

All these possibilities are relevant for deliberative scholarship, especially for those investigating what goes on in the public sphere. Macro deliberative scholars and those working within a systemic perspective seek to identify the broad discursive processes cutting across time and space. They are concerned with comprehensive discursive dynamics, looking at public opinion formation, cultural interpretive changes, or the capacity of debates to exert influence on decision-making processes. In offering tools to map wider discursive processes, frame analysis helps to track discourses travelling through time and space, which is essential for scholars who investigate connections between arenas or transmission processes within systems (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Boswell et al. 2016; Mendonça 2016). By focusing on frames, instead of particular utterances, deliberative scholars can investigate public clashes of discourses, understanding how specific interpretations of a given problem have been developed.

Interestingly, therefore, the attention to discursive situations fostered by frame analysis does not imply the construction of a micro approach, but can help in developing macro and situated approaches.

Identifying Framing Effects

Lastly, frame analysis is also used to investigate *framing effects*, which happen ‘when (often small) changes in the presentation of an issue or an event produce (sometimes large) changes of opinion’ (Chong and Druckman 2007, 104). Applying frame analysis from this perspective involves conducting experiments to test the effects of specific discursive formulations or the consequences of media devices and cultural products. Surveys are also frequently used to assess the impact of certain discourses in public opinion and to investigate the role that different factors play in agenda-setting (Weaver 2007). The susceptibility of persons to frames is measured and there is a search for factors that may limit the impact of framing (Druckman and Nelson 2003). In this approach, frames are often taken as a strategic discursive bias to drive audiences in a given direction (Reese 2007).

Deliberative scholars can benefit from the study of framing effects in many ways. It can reveal, for instance, the consequences of biased informative materials in experiences of democratic innovation or of non-plural debates in the public sphere. As discussed below, there is also a vein of the literature seeking to argue how deliberation might control framing effects and reduce its impacts. The use of frame analysis to look at discourse effects is also relevant to deliberative democrats because it is alert to the interplay between agency and culture in the construction of discourses. Frame analysis is well suited to investigating how discursive construction involves a series of choices and strategies that affect the way audiences deal with discourses. Frame analysis realizes, however, that meanings always emerge intersubjectively, and cannot be determined by individuals who formulate them. In addition, it also acknowledges that the choices pervading discursive construction are made within a net of cultural meanings, linguistic grammars, and taken-for-granted elements. It is this interplay between agency/strategy and society/culture that allows a rich analysis. Through frame analysis, deliberative scholars can investigate the agency of deliberators in political debates and also grasp the context of this agency. Actors make choices (about words, metaphors, definitions, arguments) within contexts, aiming to promote meanings and arguments that can be comprehended by their addressees.

Frame Analysis and Deliberative Democracy

There are many studies that employ frame analysis to investigate public discussion. Even if some of these studies are not explicitly working under a deliberative label, they

offer paths and findings that can deepen our knowledge of how deliberation works. One example is the work that [Ferree et al. \(2002\)](#) devoted to comparing public discussion about abortion in Germany and in the US. Frame analysis was employed to map these broad discursive scenes. The authors tracked the strength of different interpretive packages (i.e. frames) over the years, their internal changes, and their clashes and transformations. Sensitive to context, the investigation reconstructed the role of agents, key historical events, and culture in shaping abortion discourse throughout time. Although not explicitly deliberative, these studies deal with some of the key questions raised by deliberative scholars. Mapping public discourses and understanding their influence over public opinion, cultural change, and decision-making is one of the main goals of the field.

Other illustrations of investigations using the notion of frames that are not explicitly based on deliberation, but which offer significant contributions to the field, are found in the studies of rhetoric. [Breton \(2003\)](#), for instance, suggests that the investigation of argumentation starts by identifying the frames that create the context for the understanding of specific argumentative bonds. And [Kuypers' \(2009\)](#) rhetorical criticism places frame analysis at the heart of the comprehension of communication, mobilizing it to investigate how problems are defined and how causes and solutions are discursively built. Such an approach has proven to be particularly relevant for those working with Critical Policy Analysis, where the links with deliberative democracy become clearer. Attempting to study public policies as communicative practices, the argumentative turn led by [Fischer and Forester \(1993\)](#) advocated the need to investigate how problems were defined in the discussions around a policy solution. [Dekker \(2017\)](#), [Braun \(2016\)](#), and [Rein and Schön \(1996\)](#) are examples of the use of frame analysis in the study of policy controversies.

There is also a growing number of studies that use (or discuss) frames with an explicit reference to deliberation. The concern with framing effects seems to be the predominant agenda amongst deliberative scholars referring to frame analysis. [Bohman \(2007\)](#) fears that framing effects may restrict complex debate, while [Barisione \(2012\)](#) proposes a *Deliberative Frame Analysis* to identify the conditions that would avoid the dangers of framing effects. Many have pointed out, however, that deliberation itself may work as an antidote against framing effects, since the exposure to different perspectives may challenge the strength of single frames ([Druckman and Nelson 2003](#); [Druckman 2004](#); [Barisione 2012](#)).

A more ambivalent conception of framing pervades recent investigations on the topic. [Calvert and Warren \(2014\)](#) acknowledge, for instance, the epistemic and ethical dangers of framing effects, which could weaken individual judgements. But they note that framing is inherent to communication and consequently seek to identify specific forms of framing that hurt deliberation. Framing effects are dangerous, according to them, when we have dominant (unchallenged) frames, when they have polarizing effects, and when they are group-based. For to the authors, mini-publics can be designed to avoid these problematic frames and this is relevant for the enhancement of broader systemic deliberation. [Leeper and Slothuus \(2018\)](#)

also advance a complex approach to the topic. While acknowledging the dangers of non-deliberative followership nurtured by frames, they highlight the importance of cognitive shortcuts provided by political elites through frames.

Despite its importance, the focus on framing effects is not the only possible avenue to be pursued by deliberative scholars willing to work with frame analysis. As previously argued, frame analysis can help deliberative scholars in diverse ways. Some have studied discursive processes to identify how certain frames may promote deliberative values such as inclusiveness and civility (Rinke et al. 2013; Sarmiento and Mendonça 2016). Others have employed it to comprehend the enactment of power relations in participatory experiments (e.g. Blue and Dale 2016).¹ Many scholars have used it to map public deliberation in diverse arenas, including the media, parliaments, and participatory experiments. Simon and Xenos (2000), for instance, studied media frames in relation to a labour strike in the US and the actual consequences of these frames in political developments. Blue (2016) investigated public deliberation about climate change, pointing out that the monopoly of scientific lenses may hinder the emergence of the plurality of frames needed to face the issue in all its complexity. Vimieiro and Maia (2011) studied processes of social learning and cultural change, by tracing frames about disability over a period of five decades. Ercan (2015) investigated the competing frames about honour killings in Germany, studying parliamentary discussions and the broad public debate. All these studies, amongst others, demonstrate the potential of frame analysis to map broader discursive processes and to foster comprehension about how interpretations are built and displaced in situated interactions.

One of the authors of this chapter has also made extensive use of frame analysis in a series of studies about deliberation. Initially, Mendonça (2009) employed frame analysis in a study about the struggles of people affected by leprosy in Brazil, seeking to comprehend if (and how) discussions in different arenas attempted to promote the thematization of a public problem. The arenas under study were everyday conversations in former leprosy colonies, a social movement newsletter, and the mass media. They were understood as different contexts of interaction (or *loci for interactions*), whose features, grammars, and rules affected the discourses uttered. Through a frame analysis, this research found that the social movement's discourse was aligned with the way the media reported the disease, missing many of the complexities and feelings of injustice pervading everyday conversations in former colonies.

Mendonça and Santos (2009) and Mendonça and collaborators (2014) have used frame analysis to advance a broad conception of reciprocity that is not based on an individual-to-individual relationship. They claimed that *discursive reciprocity* should

¹ It is worth highlighting the overlaps between this agenda and the growing literature on Dramaturgical Analysis, due to its attention to the reconstruction of the contextual dynamics pervading meaning-making processes (Hendriks et al. 2016; Escobar 2015; Hajer 2005). Drawing from Goffman (1986) and developing a specific trend in the debates over interpretive methods, this literature uses the notion of frames to make sense of how actors engage in interactive processes to define given situations. This literature will not be deepened here as it covered in Chapter 22 of this book, authored by Selen Ercan and Carolyn Hendriks.

not be limited to an interpersonal level, as it happens through the public clash of discourses. Investigating a referendum about the commercialization of firearms and a public consultation about political reform in Brazil, these articles mapped the public clash of frames. Furthermore, they argued that discursive reciprocity could involve *intra-frame* and *extra-frame* arguments (Mendonça et al. 2014). The former refers to situations in which diverse positions are advocated within the same frame, while the latter refers to situations in which a frame is mobilized to displace other frames, thus moving the debate in different directions. In the case of political reform, for instance, discussions about the electoral system were driven by a specific *frame* (individual/party) with opposing arguments about the benefits of the maintenance of an open-list proportional system or a change either to closed lists or to majoritarian systems. This was quite a contrast to the discussion about campaign funding, in which there was a clash between two different frames: one focused on equity and fair competition, and another focused on public expenditure. We have, therefore, mapped two different dynamics of discursive reciprocity: argumentative exchanges orbiting one frame (intra-frame reciprocity) and argumentative exchanges with clashes of interpretive frames (extra-frame reciprocity) (Mendonça et al. 2014).

This range of studies points to the considerable potential for the use of frame analysis to solve puzzles that are of interest to deliberative scholars. This does not mean that the method should be conceived of as *the* technique for the study of deliberation. Frame analysis does not seem well suited, for instance, to assess the deliberativeness of specific arenas or to evaluate the quality of arguments. Nonetheless, it can help to address some of the central questions in the field of deliberation.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that frame analysis can play an important role in the study of deliberative democracy. It answers questions related to discursive dynamics, pointing to the emergence and the transformation of interpretive perspectives. As a method, it can be effectively applied to the study of deliberative politics for the following reasons: (1) it is context-sensitive; (2) it challenges methodological individualism; (3) it allows the reconstruction of broader discursive processes that are spread over time and space; (4) it is attentive to the interplay between agency/strategy and society/culture; and (5) it analyses the potential dangers of some framing effects to deliberation. Frame analysis emphasizes the intersubjective and cultural dimension of discourses and can be fruitful in studies that deploy a deliberative lens.

Further Reading

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Talk-based Analysis

Paromita Sanyal

Deliberative democracy is a normative political ideal that was long considered the reserve of literate and egalitarian enclaves of the Global North. The fulcrum of this form of democracy rests on consensus-building deliberations amongst open-minded and persuasive citizens who can sway others with the power of their reasoned arguments and are willing to be swayed by the arguments of others. Early proponents of this political philosophy assumed an ideal society where all citizens were endowed with equal communicative privileges and prowess. Much of the early empirical research focused on town hall meetings in New England, USA, where concerns about social stratification were suspended (Mansbridge 1980). Deliberative forms of governance have since diffused from ideal enclaves in high-income countries to unequal communities in middle- and low-income countries. In recent scholarship there is broader recognition of deliberation-based governance institutions and practices that have multiplied in the Global South (Curato et al. 2017; Dryzek 2000; Heller and Rao 2015). Some of these institutions are rooted in historical antecedents and have been mandated countrywide, like Indian *gram sabhas* (village assemblies), while others are newer innovations.

At this juncture of its global diffusion, we need to diversify the questions we ask about deliberative democracy. It is not enough to pursue classic concerns such as evaluating the quality of public opinions and collective decisions against the yardstick of ends-and-means discussions and consensus building. We also need to worry about how social inequalities and social policies affect the process of deliberation and citizens' deliberative capacities. We need to examine a new set of concerns: how deliberative forums introduce the scope for new kinds of communication amongst citizens and between citizens and the state; how citizens perform their community membership or citizenship in these deliberative forums; and how civic bodies and states perform their authority and facilitate or obstruct deliberative governance efforts. There are multiple dimensions of the institutions and practices of deliberative democracy, and these have political as well as sociological ramifications. For studying each of these, we need multiple methodologies. This chapter proposes one such method, a qualitative method, which engages in talk-based analysis. In the rest of the chapter, the method is described, and its distinctive advantages and limitations are discussed.

Analysing talk in deliberative forums is full of potential. It can allow us to characterize citizens' performances and state/organizational enactments and to form a

qualitative assessment of deliberations. The core of the analysis is an interpretive examination of verbal discourse (discussions and speeches). This includes demands that are articulated, arguments and counterarguments that are formulated, concerns and critiques that are voiced, and rhetoric presented for public and political consumption. So, rather than solely following the evolution and culmination of decisions, this method focuses our attention on who talks in deliberative forums, what they say, and how they speak and express themselves. In contexts of proximate inequality, where citizens gathering for deliberations are objectively and symbolically unequal in resources and recognition, it is important to focus on how citizens articulate their demands and decisions, respond to each other, and hold the state or other agencies accountable. In a fundamental way, then, this method focuses on understanding deliberative democracy from a sociological perspective. It does not discount communicative exchanges in the public sphere that fail to meet the rigorous normative standards of 'deliberation'. Rather, it is an analytical method in which civic deliberations are considered analogous to a drama in which people participate and perform.

Thus, the proposed method can be used to examine cool and considered deliberations as well as deviations from this norm that include highly charged emotional renderings, narratives, competing claims, derisive critiques, and also chaos and conflict. By analysing speech (what people talk about and how), this method also allows for a systematic analysis of how social stratification and state policy act as moderators and mediators of deliberation. Therefore, the unique advantage of talk-based analysis is that it allows one to (a) characterize the variations of voice, styles of articulation, and discursive performances, and (b) identify the underlying patterns of power and privation amongst citizens and the state that may be associated with deliberative participation. In the broadest sense, this method is a stepping-stone that can be used to address key higher-order questions. Is it possible to have good deliberations in contexts of inequality? Do disadvantaged citizens have the same competency as their advantaged peers to engage in informed deliberations? What factors influence citizens' competency or capacity for good deliberations? And what can institutions like the state do on a large scale to improve deliberations and reach for their normative ideal?

Data Generation: Sampling, Recording, and Transcribing Deliberative Assemblies

Public assemblies tasked with deliberations on community governance can vary in size, regularity, and constitutionality. Even within the same geopolitical unit, the local contexts that host public deliberations may vary in background conditions. These features can be leveraged in the sampling methodology to maximize our knowledge of how social stratification and policy may be related to differences in deliberation. This section begins with a discussion of the appropriate units of analysis and the

sampling strategy, with illustrative examples cited from our own research (Sanyal and Rao 2019).

The unit of analysis can be any deliberative forum or public meeting, where people engage verbally through discussion and debate. For deliberation scholars, community governance and development are core concerns. So, deliberative institutions centred on these concerns are prime units of analyses. These could be civic meetings in the public sphere organized by communities, by the local government or state agencies, or by non-governmental organizations and development agencies.

Public meetings can be sampled following a variety of strategies informed by the research question, including ones guided by natural experiments. In our study of Indian village assemblies (Sanyal and Rao 2019), we chose our village assemblies following two sampling strategies for comparative analysis. We sampled assemblies from villages that were in language-matched blocks (which we take as a proxy for similarities in discursive cultures) that fell across modern state lines but historically belonged to the same larger administrative unit in pre-colonial India. By comparing these across-state village assemblies that were presumably culturally similar, we were able to examine the local state and political regime's role in shaping deliberations (through things like information-sharing with citizens, crafting an agenda, requiring public officials to be present). We also sampled village assemblies within the same state and district but with varying levels of literacy. By comparing these within-state village assemblies, we were able to explore the patterns of deliberation and citizens' deliberative capacities associated with high, medium, or low literacy levels.

For talk-based analysis, deliberations need to be recorded and transcribed. Translation to English will be necessary for transcripts of meetings occurring in other languages, if the research is intended to reach an English-speaking audience. Transcription and translation must be done with the utmost care since the substance of analysis is what people say and how they say it. Participants often use idioms and allegories and speak with sarcasm, all of which must be captured rather than lost in translation. For analysing social stratification in deliberations, transcripts need to include information on the relevant group and the gender identity of the speakers. In our study, each transcript was accompanied by corresponding information on the gender, caste identity, and the social position of the speakers (ordinary villager, schoolteacher or principal, club leader, women's self-help group leader or member, bureaucrat, etc.).

Qualitative Analysis: Coding and Interpreting Talk and Performances

The talk-based analysis proposed here draws inspiration from a few key sources. Mansbridge (1998), one of the early proponents of deliberative democracy, recognized the performative aspect of deliberation. In her feminist critique of deliberation, she acknowledged early on that deliberation may turn into theatre, and argued:

[A] history of relative silence makes women political actors more likely to understand that when deliberation turns into theatre, it leaves out many who are not, by nature or training, actors. When deliberation turns into a demonstration of logic, it leaves out many who cannot work their emotionally felt needs into a neat equation . . . Many shy men are quiet, but the equivalent percentage of shy women is increased by learning silence as appropriate to their gender.

(Mansbridge 1998, 152)

In this critique, there is an implicit call to analyse communication styles and performances as a way to dissect deliberation. But, deliberative democracy as a field has largely veered away from in-depth analysis of this sort. There are rare exceptions (Mansbridge 1999; Dryzek 2010). Research on civic participation in Sociology, however, has directed increasing attention at citizens' communication styles and narrative strategies. Eliasoph (1996, 2003) in her study of American civic participation proposed 'talk-centered' analysis. The talk-based analysis method proposed here is directly inspired by, and builds upon, this original version. To this has been added a focus on analysing deliberative participation from a performative angle. This take is inspired by Alexander's (2006, 2011) focus on social performances in the civil sphere from a cultural theory perspective and his interpretive analysis of political power and performances based on discursive materials such as political speeches. Other contemporary sociological research on civic participation and deliberation has also focused on analysing narrative strategies and discursive styles (Edgell et al. 2016; Polletta and Lee 2006). This section outlines ideas for the kinds of analysis that can be conducted using this approach and what we might learn from them.

What Is Spoken About and Who Speaks?

One analytic strategy can be to develop inductive codes for the issues that come up for discussion. For example, inductive codes can be developed for public concerns and collective demands that are raised for discussion, and private/individual issues and demands that are voiced. As a next step, analysis can be aimed at tracing the source of these public and private issues raised. Was an issue introduced by a top-down agenda or by citizens/deliberation participants; by a woman or a man; by a person endowed with some authority in the community or by a person representing a group or by a lay participant; by a person with some material or symbolic advantage or by a person marked by disadvantage? Further, which issues are taken up for collective discussion and which fade away without discussion can also be subject to systematic analysis. One can also identify the underlying reasons as to why one issue is taken up for public discussion while another is not.

This type of analysis can be used (a) to evaluate the extent of public-mindedness of community or governance deliberations, and (b) to understand if that public-mindedness is a feature driven by action from above or by a surge from below. It

can also be a powerful tool for revealing how social stratification may be associated with patterns of who speaks, what is spoken about, and what is responded to, and what results emerge from a general discussion.

How People Speak

This method is uniquely positioned to analyse and interpret the types of speech citizens use and the narrative strategies they employ in deliberative exercises. Researchers could inductively identify how people articulate their arguments and frame their demands and how they convince and critique others. Coding each of these styles and strategies with appropriate descriptive labels would generate a list of codes that can then be systematically applied to code the entire corpus of data.

Communicative styles are embodiments of citizens' sense of power and entitlement or the lack of it. Through interpretive analysis, we can classify communicative styles by the sense of power or powerlessness they embody. This type of analysis can reveal the power dynamics in deliberative settings. Viewing communication through a performative lens, we can then interpretively associate the communication content and style of a speaker with a performance they are carrying out in the deliberative arena. Therefore, the variety of communicative styles identified in the data could be assigned to a repertoire of performances that are on display in the deliberative forums studied. Where deliberative exercises bring citizens face to face with elected leaders and frontline bureaucrats, the communicative styles and performances used by individuals may even give us a pulse on the relationship between citizens and the local state. Through this type of analysis, then, we can arrive at a nuanced understanding of how deliberative spaces become sites for citizens' performances and state enactments.

Illustrative Examples

Examples from our work ([Sanyal and Rao 2019](#); [Sanyal et al. 2019](#)) are presented here for illustrative purposes. The first project was a study of village assemblies across four Southern Indian states. Our goal was to analyse if the states' political regimes and the village literacy levels made a difference in deliberations. We started with an inductive coding strategy that began with reading and rereading the transcripts with an eye to identifying patterns—the kinds of issues citizens raised, the types of citizens who were more or less likely to speak or raise certain issues, and a central focus on the narrative strategies that citizens used. After spending a significant amount of time reading our data, we began writing extensive memos listing all the patterns we could identify. One note about collaborative projects is warranted here. Like ours, many projects may be collaborative with multiple investigators. For these projects it is important for each investigator involved in the analysis to read the transcripts and establish a schedule of routine deliberations for collectively discussing the patterns they are each able to identify. Through this process a commonly agreed upon set

of codes or patterns can be identified. Then will begin the task of coding all the transcripts following this set of codes or patterns. Qualitative coding is a laborious manual process that must be carried out meticulously, whether researchers are using traditional memo-writing or using software, such as NVivo, Atlas.ti, or others.

In our project, this immersive inductive process led us to identify a set of themes and patterns (discussed below) that consistently appeared in the transcripts. Political leaders and public officials were prone to schooling citizens in deliberation; they encouraged citizens to cooperate with the state and cooperate mutually to undertake collective action; and they engaged in instilling in citizens a sense of civic and fiscal responsibility. Later, we went on to group these codes under the master code 'supply of governance'. In a similar fashion, we noticed citizens holding the state accountable for implementing various public works projects, addressing public goods deficiencies, and raising larger issues affecting quality of life. We grouped these themes under the master code of 'demand for governance'. We also noticed competition over public goods and competition for personal goods (claims made on the basis of caste status and economic status) as well as claims for dignity made by disadvantaged citizens lacking in social recognition. We also found a patterned difference in the frequencies with which these themes appeared in the assemblies. The biggest differences were across state lines, showing the influence of state regimes on these deliberative forums.

As we continued reading our transcripts through the comparative framework, we noticed a variety of articulation styles used by citizens and patterned state-wise differences in how citizens spoke in these assemblies. In some assemblies, citizens appeared from their speech to be desperately seeking the government's attention and pleading for help. In other assemblies, citizens were scathingly critical of government inaction and neglect, and vociferously denounced political leaders for their failings. In a few other places, citizens were rebellious, prone to being unruly and creating an anarchic atmosphere. In some places, a lot of factual information was disseminated by the agents of the state and discussed by the citizens, whereas in other assemblies, hardly any facts and figures relating to budgets and public works were discussed. In assemblies in some states, citizens were able to marshal a great deal of financial information and factual knowledge while framing their demands and complaints and holding the state accountable, while in other states, citizens were not knowledgeable of budgetary information or aware of the progress of public works projects undertaken by the local government. In addition to paying attention to the content and framing of speeches, we were also attentive to the emotional character of speeches by citizens, political leaders, and bureaucrats. These differences were most apparent across state lines and modest across literacy differences.

At the end of this phase of analysis, we were able to identify clear differences in the content, style, and strategy of citizens' speeches. We could also distinguish between the moral or pragmatic character and the facilitative or deflective strategy of speeches by elected leaders and public officials. Lastly, we proceeded to characterize citizens' performances and state enactments by developing conceptual labellings. Table 25.1 lists our interpretive labellings.

Table 25.1 Citizens' Performances and State Enactments in Indian Village Assemblies

LOW CAPACITY	MEDIUM CAPACITY	HIGH CAPACITY
CHITHOOR (AP) <i>State: Complaint collector</i> <i>Citizens: Passive petitioners</i>	DHARMAPURI (TN) <i>State: Social reformer</i> <i>Citizens: Civic deliberators</i>	
MEDAK (AP) <i>State: Complaint collector</i> <i>Citizens: Passive petitioners</i>	BIDAR (KA) <i>State: Scrutinizer</i> <i>Citizens: Elite stewards & Rude citizens</i>	
	COIMBATORE (TN) <i>State: Social reformer</i> <i>Citizens: Militant deliberators</i>	PALLAKAD (KL) <i>State: Planner</i> <i>Citizens: Benefit invigilators</i>
	DAKSHIN KANADA (KA) <i>State: Informant</i> <i>Citizens: Pragmatic deliberators</i>	KASARGOD (KL) <i>State: Planner</i> <i>Citizens: Benefit invigilators</i>

Note: AP: erstwhile Andhra Pradesh; KA: Karnataka; KL: Kerala; TN: Tamil Nadu.

Source: *Sanyal and Rao 2019*.

To understand the influence of literacy (ability to read and write) on civic deliberations, we examined village assemblies differing in literacy levels within the same district. The analytic focus was on three attributes: the ways in which citizens articulated their demands; their efforts to seek accountability from public officials and elected local government leaders with attention to the style of speech in which criticism was expressed; and the specificity and information, particularly numerical information, contained in the framings and justifications.

Through this process we were able to discover the influence of literacy on citizens' political literacy (knowledge of government operations) and capacity to deliberate. Table 25.2 summarizes our findings. We found the state's role to be far more impactful than village literacy levels in elevating or suppressing the quality of deliberations.

Using excerpts from our transcript analysis, we illustrate the talk-based method and explain how we used it to characterize the differences in citizens' performances and state enactments in Indian village assemblies. From our state-wise comparisons, we showcase village assemblies in the districts of Chithoor in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh and Dharmapuri in Tamil Nadu. Despite being from geographically contiguous blocks and having a shared cultural history, there were dramatic differences in citizens' performances and state enactments, revealing a large divergence in the reach and effectiveness of deliberative democracy. In Chithoor, Andhra Pradesh, the state as a *complaint collector* and citizens as *passive petitioners* are typified in the excerpt below. Villagers voiced their demands and grievances in brief utterances, without providing specific information and devoid of factual details. The political head (*sarpanch*) played a largely ceremonial role, inviting citizens to express their concerns and dismissing each concern with cursory promises to communicate the problems to higher authorities.

Table 25.2 Differences in Citizens' Performances and Gaps in Political Literacy

DISTRICT (STATE)	LOW LITERACY	MEDIUM LITERACY	HIGH LITERACY
CHITTOOR (AP)	No Gap <i>Citizens: Passive petitioners</i>	<i>Citizens: Passive petitioners</i>	*
BIDAR (KA)	<i>Citizens: Elite stewards & Rude citizens</i> Wide Gap	<i>Citizens: Strident deliberators (more anarchic & hostile)</i>	Nil
DHARMAPURI (TN)	<i>Citizens: Civic deliberators</i> Narrow Gap	<i>Citizens: Civic deliberators</i>	*
COIMBATORE (TN)	Nil	<i>Citizens: Militant deliberators</i> Narrow Gap	<i>Citizens: Militant deliberators (more acrimonious & hostile)</i>

* Note: Sample too small, hence eliminated from comparison.

Source: Sanyal and Rao 2019.

SARPANCH: *Today we are conducting this gram sabha to discuss the problems in our village and the various activities we have undertaken so far. You can express your problems here.*

VILLAGER (YOUTH COMMUNITY MEMBER): *There is no proper community hall in this village for holding meetings or events. We should construct a community hall.*

SARPANCH: *I will inform the government to construct a community hall and to provide all facilities to conduct meetings. I will try my level best to construct a community hall.*

VILLAGER (SC): *There are no cement roads in the village. Cement roads should be laid on all the village streets.*

SARPANCH: *Wherever we don't have the cc (concrete) roads, I will try and get them constructed at the earliest.*

VILLAGER (SC): *There are electricity poles on the streets, but the lights are not there. Should arrange for the lights.*

SARPANCH: *I will arrange for streetlights very soon.*

VILLAGER (SC): *In the village some people have huts. About fifty families have no houses to stay. So you should construct 'pucca' (permanent) houses for all the house-less people. We have permission to construct houses on the hill but there is no road.*

SARPANCH: *I will discuss with the government officials about this problem.*

VILLAGER: *We don't have a proper cemetery or graveyard in the village. Sometimes the adjacent villagers throw the dead bodies on the outskirts of our village, and this leads to health problems for our children.*

VILLAGER: *We have complained to the Panchayat office, but till now there is no solution. They are threatening us.*

SARPANCH: *I have given a complaint to the collector regarding this but nothing has happened, and I am helpless regarding this issue.*

(Kalyanapuram, Narayanavanam)

As is evident, village assemblies in Chithoor were vacuous governance rituals, thoroughly devoid of deliberations. The lack of transparency from the state kept citizens under a sort of blindfold, leaving them suppliant, submissively rehearsing a litany of complaints with little or no effect. The citizens' inability to raise pertinent questions, seek information, or hold their elected leaders accountable for their performance was painfully apparent. We interpret these features of citizens' participation to reveal a lack of oral competency to engage in deliberative democracy.

Village assemblies in Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu, stood in stark contrast to the above pattern. Every single assembly in this district started with an announcement of the meeting agenda, which included a range of clearly specified topics that were set by the state as governance priorities to be discussed at the meeting. The agenda typically included village development priorities. There could be as many as ten or twenty agenda items. A substantial part of the discussion was devoted to these themes. The agenda items were meant to raise public awareness of state-sponsored development schemes and to encourage villagers to adopt them. *Panchayat* officials reported on their implementation and checked villagers' compliance. Public officials made determined efforts to persuade villagers through moral and pragmatic arguments to comply with state-sponsored schemes. This exercise exemplified the *social reformer state* that was using these deliberative forums for public persuasion to bring its own vision of village development to fruition.

The citizens, whom we labelled as *civic deliberators*, consistently displayed the ability to engage in sustained discussions on shared problems. Though a substantial part of the time was consumed in deliberating on the agenda items, citizens were also capable of pushing aside these state-prioritized goals and introducing onto the discussion floor demands and concerns that mattered more to them. The excerpt below is one example out of many where citizens engaged in a sustained discussion on water shortage. The discussion ended with a pair of villagers offering financial help, and the elected leader agreeing to move ahead with assistance from them. The cooperative discussion led to a creative solution being proposed:

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 1): *There is no water in the village. What is the panchayat planning to do? There is no water in the tank.*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 2): *Lake should be deepened. This is important. Plumber is not attending to the fault properly.*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 3): *We need an overhead water tank near Thimmarayaswamy temple. People and cattle face much difficulty for water. Ministers and MLAs (members of legislative assembly) have not taken any steps!*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 4): *As much as I know, there is problem of water and electricity supply. Water problems are more severe. There is water connection from Chinnakothur (nearby village). But somebody has stolen the delivery line since past five years. Now the President has to spend Rs 2,000–3,000 to replace the steel pipe connection. Therefore, we request that a pump room with a bore well should be constructed in Bustalapally itself, like the one provided in the public bathroom.*

MALE PRESIDENT: *I will inform the BDO (Block Development Officer) for necessary action.*

... (Other demands are expressed and responded to)

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 15): *We need public toilet. There is no water in the water tank.*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 16): *There is no water in the lake even, then how can you expect water in the tank.*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 17): *We need cement storage tank at the ground level.*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 18): *If we have water in the overhead tank, then where is the need of smaller ground-level tanks!*

PRESIDENT: *We can build smaller ground-level tanks only with Panchayat funds. But the panchayat does not have sufficient funds.*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 20): *Even if we have water tank, there is no good water, and canal water is not good. We also need drainage. That is what I request the President and vice president to look into.*

PRESIDENT: *Already all our efforts to build the drainage system could not be carried out because people did not give land, and they themselves directed the drainage water along the roads. Even the drain water pipelines laid were stolen.*

...

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 22): *We will be very happy if drinking water facility for us and our cattle is provided by way of water tubs for the cattle and water tank for us.*

PRESIDENT: *We can do all these things if we get revenue for the panchayat.*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 23): *We are not asking the panchayat to do this. We are asking the government to do this.*

PRESIDENT: *Okay, we will also approach the government for assistance.*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 24): *Our most important demand is we should get uninterrupted water supply. Whether you change the motor or you repair and change the pipeline, we don't bother, but we want water.*

...

VILLAGER (FEMALE) (SPEAKER 29): *Is it not your responsibility to build the overhead tank?*

PRESIDENT: *No, it is the water board's responsibility, and it is asking for commission.*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 30): *Is it 20% (commission)?*

PRESIDENT: *No, it is 10%. It comes to Rs. 20,000. So I came back.*

VILLAGER (SPEAKER 31): *Sir, we two are the temple trustees. We will give Rs. 20,000. You get the sanction.*

PRESIDENT: *Yes, you also come with me. We will give the money and get the sanction.*
(Bustalapally, Shoolagiri)

Citizens here were clearly capable of pursuing information by asking pointed questions of their elected representatives. They strongly expressed dissatisfaction with the non-performance of high-level representatives, like ministers and legislative assembly members, who received budgets designated for the development of their constituencies. In addition to being able to critique and force public accountability from the local government, citizens also demonstrated their capacity to make constructive suggestions for what needed to be done to solve the shortage of water supply (deepening of the lake, building ground water storage tank, and constructing a pump room with a well). The deliberation over ends and means of village development combined moments of cool-headed consideration of alternatives alongside contestation and disparagement of public officials and leaders. Citizens displayed a high level of oral competency by being in command of factual information regarding public infrastructure problems (stolen pipeline, cost of replacement, plumber doing an unsatisfactory job), which they effectively marshalled into their arguments. Through this comparative analysis and interpretive characterization of citizens' performances and state enactments, we were able to discover the enormous difference the state could make as a facilitator or inhibitor of deliberative democracy.

In a second project (Sanyal et al. 2019), using the original data described above, we examined women's participation in village assembly deliberations. Our particular interest was to explore whether there were differences in concerns voiced and communicative styles between women who were members of self-help groups (SHGs, which are micro savings and lending groups formed under state poverty alleviation programmes) and unaffiliated women. For this analysis, the transcripts were coded to capture various dimensions of women's participation. Issues raised by women were inductively coded and generated several categories (civil works, water, health and sanitation, jobs and entrepreneurship, finance, and civics and participation). Narrative strategies the women used were also coded by analysing how women presented an account of what they wanted, or the problems they were facing, and whether they followed up these statements with a demand for remedial action. The sub-codes that were developed inductively were the following: command ('do x'); complaint ('you have neglected to remedy problem x'); demand ('you have to give me/us x'); descriptive ('there is a problem in our area with the quality/delivery of x'); need ('I need/want x', 'I don't have x'); query ('when will funds for x be allotted?'); request ('please give me x'). Each of these styles, for us, represented varying degrees of discursive power. For example, statements of need and request were considered less powerful narrative strategies reflective of petitioner mindsets, while complaints and commands were taken to be reflective of a sense of power to hold the state accountable. Quality of participation was assessed by coding every event of a woman speaking into high and low, based on a score derived from the issues raised and the narrative strategies used to communicate the issues. The score itself was generated by the coding software NVivo, but fundamentally based on our hands-on coding of the number of issues

raised in a speech and the variety of narrative styles used by the speaker. A consistent interpretation allowed us to form a rough assessment of women's quality of participation.

From this analysis, we found a stylistic difference between SHG women and unaffiliated women. SHG members made demands for government action (not requests or passive expressions of need), preceding the demand with informative descriptions of the problem and past inaction, in effect using these statements as reasons justifying their demands. Importantly, they used a public goods framing in voicing their problems and accompanying demands. These features meant that, in our coding system, they were coded as displaying a higher quality of participation at a higher rate than non-member women. Unaffiliated women were divided almost equally between high and low qualities of participation. We also found that in states with a relatively high baseline of women's verbal participation, the difference associated with SHGs, although significant, was less dramatic. Based on this finding we tentatively concluded that any intervention seeking to promote women's vocal participation was likely to have more dramatic effects where the baseline of women's participation was low, all else remaining the same.

Conclusion

The qualitative method outlined here excels in its ability to examine deliberative institutions in graphic detail (what is said, by whom, and how it is said) and in its interpretive strength to make sense of those utterances from a performative standpoint. Other methods may be better suited to accurately measuring the quantum of speech by particular groups, by gender, caste, race, or other identity-based criteria. For example, some studies have quantitatively analysed citizens' and women's speech in Tamil Nadu village assemblies (Ban et al. 2012; Palaniswamy et al. 2019). But if the goal is to identify communicative styles and narrative strategies used in deliberation and to understand them as part of rhetorical moves and performances, then one must rely on qualitative methods such as the one proposed in this chapter. Researchers have to be willing to make subjective assessments during the coding and interpretive process. These subjective assessments and interpretive characterizations must be carried out with care. They have to be adequately substantiated with discursive evidence, and evidence in favour of and against must be given systematic consideration. Yet, no matter how rigorous the procedure, to use the talk-based method, researchers must be comfortable embracing the subjective nature of the method.

Like most methods, the talk-based method is not immune from weaknesses. The biggest limitation is that the method is solely focused on analysing what is said on the floor of civic deliberations. It cannot tell us anything about the outcomes of these deliberations for civic life—what action was taken as a result and its impact on the quality of life in the community. For that kind of analysis, the talk-based method must be paired with longer-term fieldwork that follows discussions in the deliberative

space into the community and traces the extent to which they result in action or fizzle away. Another limitation is the difficulty of using this method on large-scale data to study if people change their opinions and preferences on public matters in the course of deliberation. For that kind of analysis to be possible, the transcripts would need to accurately identify each speaker every time they spoke in a deliberative setting. This would only be possible for small-sample analysis under very particular conditions. For instance, this would be feasible in smaller settings where there is a rule or custom of turn-taking in speech and people do not talk simultaneously, or collectively agitate on the floor of the discussion. Moreover, such opinion- or preference tracing would only be manageable in unidimensional discussions where there is only one focal topic that is being discussed and debated. Current limitations offer opportunities for future improvements. Deliberation scholars are invited to build upon this talk-based method to realize its potential more fully.

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Media Analysis

Rousiley C. M. Maia and Tariq Choucair

Deliberation occurs in a diversified media landscape. Hybrid communication that combines broadcast, print, and online communication transverses social wholes, posing ever greater challenges for researchers to develop methods for capturing media-based deliberation. Traditionally, communication scholars engage with inquiry into media communication at individual, institutional, and social levels. Whereas some approaches are quantitative-oriented, including methods such as surveys, experiments, and content analyses, other approaches are qualitative-oriented, based on visual observation, interviews, discourse analysis, and historical analysis. There are, indeed, many ways to study media and deliberation.

This chapter focuses on content analysis. We define this research method briefly as the ‘systematic, objective, quantitative analysis’ of communication content or message characteristics (Nuendorf and Kumar 2015, 1; see also [Krippendorff 2012](#); [Neuendorf 2017](#); [Riffe et al. 2019](#)). This method is used for making replicable and valid inferences from written texts or transcribed speeches as well as non-textual content, such as images, graphical elements, music, and sounds. The term ‘communication content’, therefore, refers to a broad range of materials such as newspaper articles, speeches, advertisements, social media posts, blog or microblog texts, and so forth. The effort to identify units for building code schemes for human coding requires full specification of the set of categories. Usually, coders are trained to use categories to measure differences in content; and this training should lead to inter-coder agreement, that is, stability in the protocol application over time. Then, the analysis of relationships involving these categories is often based on statistical methods. If the categories and rules are comprehensive, they should allow replicability according to the standards of reliability; and the patterns observed are likely to be valid in a more general way when transported to different contexts ([Neuendorf 2017](#); [Krippendorff 2012](#)). Recently, computer-aided textual analysis has enabled the coding of massive volumes of material, by accelerating data collection and reliability testing. With technological development, the use of content analysis has become more practical and opened up new venues for more sophisticated combinations of linguistic and visual cues with statistical analysis.

Our definition of content analysis works towards an integrative approach, which means combining it with methods like surveys, experiments, network analysis, and frame analysis to examine the roles that media play in deliberation in different

political contexts. Following the systemic turn, scholars have become particularly concerned with linkages between micro and macro analyses, so as to find different ways to embed deliberative practices or discussions within forums in some larger social whole (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Dryzek and Hendriks 2012; Hendriks et al. 2020; Mansbridge et al. 2012). This theoretical understanding poses several methodological challenges in the field of political communication and media studies, given the breadth, scope, complexity, and the speed of transformations in the contemporary media landscape.

This chapter aims to take on this challenge. We argue that the integrative approach we offer contributes towards building methodological strategies for studying distinct types of media in deliberative systems. We develop this chapter by demonstrating various levels of analysing media and public deliberation. In the first section, we demonstrate how content analysis can be used to examine mass media material, such as newspaper outlets, magazines, TV news, and news media articles. We argue that investigating the content of mass media provides insights into the mechanisms that enable perspectives, discourses, and claims to become available to broad audiences and circulate in the public sphere, transcending space and time. Content analysis, in this context, can be integrated with surveys, network analysis, and statistical methods to understand the dynamics of public debates. In the second section, we exemplify the use of content analysis to examine deliberation in diversified media platforms, including websites, social network sites, weblogs, and micro-blogs. We argue that the growing literature in digital media has provided ever more precise characterizations of online communication and distinct conditions of deliberative engagement, not only in deliberatively designed forums but also in other sites of democratic systems. In the final section, we demonstrate how content analysis can be adaptive across settings, in both micro and macro levels of analysis. We combine content analysis with statistical methods and frame analysis to reveal a multilayered analysis of deliberation in different contexts. This can be done by using less standardized coding typologies and ramified analytical strategies to track media dynamics. We outline some research designs to illustrate the viability of this approach.

Analysing Mass Media Material to Map Debates in the Public Sphere

Deliberation, conceived as a society-wide practice, requires argumentative exchange in public. Assessing broader acts of reason-giving and justification in the public sphere is complicated and underdeveloped, but there are several advances in this field from which empirical researchers can draw. Traditionally, scholars have investigated how a specific type of media, such as newspapers, TV programmes, and radio talks, could operate as forums for civic debate, by selecting topics and employing a set of operations to build public discussions. Content analysis is one of the widely used methods in this field.

There are at least two major approaches that use mass media samples for analysing public debates. The first approach seeks to map speakers and arguments that are included in media-based communication about an issue-specific controversy. Earlier studies investigated the set of speakers and claims that gain access to journalistic coverage and other forms of mass communication (Page 1996; Bennett et al. 2004). Later studies became more explicitly interested in capturing clashes amongst actors and discourses in journalistic material in order to reconstruct public controversies. Examples include public debates on abortion (Ferree et al. 2002), gun control (Callaghan and Schnell 2001; Maia 2009), same-sex marriage (O'Connor 2017), voting systems (Pilon 2009), education public policy (Saraisky 2015), and technological issues (Peters et al. 2008; Schneider 2008). More recent studies (Häussler 2018; Lycarião and Wozniak 2017; Maia, 2012a, 2018) incorporated conceptual tools of deliberation, that when properly conceived cannot be conflated with face-to-face interactions, adapted code schemes (Steenbergen et al. 2003; Steiner et al. 2004; Steiner 2012), and distinct forms of operationalization.

The second approach takes a comparative perspective to investigate the performance of newspapers, magazines, and TV news across distinct media systems in different countries. Studies here often focus on variations in national news culture and political systems, and explore factors such as autonomy of media organizations, format of news, professionalism, audiences, and journalist–source relations (van der Wurff et al. 2013; Schmidt et al. 2013; Wessler and Rinke 2014). Comparative content analysis is useful for evincing complexities in the relations between journalists, political/economic elites, and civic actors (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 2012). It helps to elucidate broader political and social structures that shape news practices and affect different deliberative dimensions of journalistic performances, which can result in greater or lesser plurality of voices and degree of responsiveness in the news media. Some studies in this field have moved towards multimodal analysis, by incorporating concepts of framing, narration, and visual representation in the code scheme (Wessler et al. 2016; Wozniak et al. 2014).

In this section, we explore methodological strategies related to the first approach. Assuming that public debates are processes that unfold over time (Habermas 1996; Häussler 2018; Mansbridge et al. 2012), our research group (Maia 2009, 2012a; Marques and Maia, 2012a; 2012b; Cal and Maia, 2012; Mendonça and Maia, 2012) have developed a set of indicators for capturing different dimensions of media debates.

The original code scheme included four indicators:

1. *Inclusivity and characterization of participants.* Who gains access to media arenas? What are the inclusion criteria in journalistic coverage, and how much space or time is allocated to speakers? This variable captures the inclusion of social actors and their claims in specific media.

2. *Use of arguments.* Do participants present reasons in support of their views, preferences, recommendations in public? Is media-based communication grounded on justification and demonstration? This variable enables the mapping of con and pro arguments put forward in the media arena regarding a specific controversy.
3. *Reciprocity and responsiveness.* Is there any dialogue or any possibility of mutual response in public amongst speakers with different views? Is there reference to utterances of other actors? Who responds to whom in media-based communication? This variable aims to identify patterns of discursive interactions and rebuttals on a large scale.
4. *Reflexivity and reversibility of opinions.* Are changes in position or preference observable? This variable is related to processes through which participants may review their opinions and arguments in public.

Building on previous studies (Ferree et al. 2002; Peters 2008; Peters et al. 2008; Wessler 2008), we argue that media debate dynamics can be observed at different levels: from the utterance in a given news media or different outlets, in varying time scales (over a short-term or a long-term period). To capture *inclusivity*, ‘who speaks in the media’, the coding scheme needs to be adapted for the type of media under scrutiny. In news media material, for instance, speakers’ utterances can be tracked either through direct quotations that preserve the original wording, or through summarized speech that is attributed to sources. A single news article can weave together voices of diverse actors, and boundaries between the voices of reporters and the persons reported are maintained to varying levels (Maia 2012a; Wessler 2008). Moreover, media professionals grant differentiated ‘standing’ to speakers, that is, acknowledgement of the value of one’s voice—in a way more or less indexed to prominence, prestige, or reputation enjoyed by a certain actor/group in a given society (Bennett et al. 2004; Ferree et al. 2002). Speakers’ utterances may assume different meanings depending on the location in the media context (Bennett et al. 2004; Esser and Strömbäck 2014; Ferree et al. 2002). While official sources, such as spokespersons are often prioritized (Entman 2004; Tresch 2009), the composition of sources can vary widely between media systems in different countries, and across issues and circumstances in the same country (Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2009).

Content analysis becomes especially interesting if we categorize the speakers according to their institutionally defined roles. Here, Peters’ (2008) and Habermas’s (2006, 2009) centre–periphery model of circulation of political power provides useful guidelines to classify speakers in news stories, in accordance to: (a) agents of the executive body; (b) legislative houses; (c) judiciary; (d) political parties; (e) experts; (f) media agents, such as journalists, editors, commentators; (g) entrepreneurs; (h) organized civil society, advocacy groups, and non-governmental associations; (i) intellectuals, artists, and celebrities; (j) church; and (k) ordinary people. Investigating the composition of speakers in different sections of the newspapers (editorials, commentaries, reports, interviews, and news stories) and examining

news-making operations (such as procedures to establish opinions' hierarchy, to roll up argumentation, to grant legitimacy to claims, etc.) offers important cues for understanding professional communicators' attempts to shape the overall course of a debate (Bennett et al. 2004; Esser and Strömbäck 2014). Citizens' opinions are typically located in less important spaces in news stories (Hopmann and Shehata 2011; Ferree et al. 2002). Yet, the participation of civil society actors in many important debates occurring in the media arena is not as marginal as is usually thought. A number of studies have demonstrated a greater presence of civil society actors in challenger debates and the importance of the themes, claims, and criticisms they address to political and economic elites (Häussler 2018; Peter et al. 2008; Schneider 2008).

Content analysis is also valuable for investigating the *types of arguments* displayed in public communication, as related to values, interests, vocabularies, and performances of different categories of speakers. The Discursive Quality Index (Steenbergen et al. 2003; Steiner et al. 2004; Steiner 2012) has been adapted to examine the structure of justifications—their logical connection and level of completeness, and the content of reasons alluding to the common good or abstract principles. To map the discursive space in more detail, one can include a list of pro and con arguments in the code scheme (Ferree et al. 2002; Maia 2009, 2012). Toulmin's model of argumentation (Toulmin 2003 [1958]) has also provided guidelines to capture types of evidence given in arguments (for example, *empirical, statistic, research findings, and legal evidence*) and *types of warrants* (for example, *conditional, analogy, value-based, meta-proposal*) (Adams 2014; Karpowitz and Raphael 2014; Maia et al. 2020a).

An effective way of examining the complexities of reciprocity and reflexivity in the public sphere is to focus on sequential moments of media-based communication. In longitudinal studies, content analysis helps in assessing changes in discourses over time. Depending on the research goals, data collection of news material can be planned to cover varying periods of time—weeks, years, or even decades. By sequencing justifications offered by actor categories in the news media over time, conflictual or co-operative relations become apparent (Nerlich and Jaspal 2013; Michailidou 2015). One can assess whether speakers make explicit reference to other actors' arguments, and shift emphasis or re-balance their positions in the face of other actors' claims (Häussler 2018; Maia 2009, 2012a). In the aggregate level, the voices, claims or discourses that either grow stronger or decline throughout the analyzed period can also be observed (Ferree et al. 2002; Schneider 2008; Kirilenko and Stepchenkova 2012; Saraisky 2015).

Understanding correlations between actors' argumentation in media communication and impacts on institutional decision-making helps to illuminate agreements and sorts of justification that become more collectively acceptable as discussions progress (Baumgartner et al. 2008; Boykoff 2013; Ferree et al. 2002; Häussler 2018; Maia 2009, 2012a, 2014). As will be discussed later, mass media-based

communication can be combined with deliberation acts observed in parliament or civic forums, to advance analysis of patterns of interactions amongst actors in various settings.

Deliberation in Diversified Online Platforms

Content analysis has been widely employed in the field of online deliberation. The first step in the process of analyzing deliberation through content analysis is to understand the affordances of online communication. One should investigate, for example, the level of identifiability/anonymity of discussants, the format of communication based on synchronous/asynchronous interactions; the presence/absence of moderation; the information available for forum users or technical equipment provided for communication (smartphone devices, type of Internet connection, webcams, amongst others) (Esau et al. 2017; Kies 2010; Maia 2014; Maia and Rezende 2016; Strandberg and Grönlund 2014, 2018; Stromer-Galley 2007). By understanding this, we get a sense of how online discussion is shaped by the design and purpose of the forum. For example, one can ask whether a forum fosters a deliberative stance.

After understanding the affordances of digital settings, the second step is to analyse the content of communicative exchange taking place there. Frequently, content analysis involves building representative samples of digital material (such as posts and forum users' comments) to measure the characteristics of communication reflecting deliberative dimensions. To develop code schemes, scholars usually focus on deliberative dimensions, such as expression of considered opinions, levels of justification supporting positions, expression of civility or respect towards others and arguments, levels of disagreement and rebuttals, reciprocity, appeals to the common good, use of personal stories, revision of views, and opinion change (Dahlberg 2001a, 2001b; Esau et al. 2017; Janssen and Kies 2005; Kies 2010; Stromer-Galley 2007). To analyse the deliberative quality of online discussions, code schemes have often adapted the *Discourse Quality Index* (Steenbergen et al. 2003; Steiner et al. 2004). Yet, particular attention should be given to features of the digital environment and variations in the context of interactions.

This means that the variables of the code scheme should be constructed in such a way as to apprehend the specificities of online discussions. When analysing news website spaces for comments, for instance, one should identify whether a participant is responding to the news story or to other participants' remarks (Kies 2010; Stromer-Galley 2007). In digital forums, it is also important to observe to what extent participants are responding to an existing thread or creating a new one (Kies 2010; Stromer-Galley 2007; Bravo and Sáez 2016). These two aspects help in identifying and measuring reciprocity, so as to understand who is interacting with whom, and in what ways, and whether the content is reciprocally shared. Discussants in digital settings often use hyperlinks to address content displayed in other spaces, such

as news portals, videos on distinct platforms, and even to other discussion threads. Identifying and analysing the hyperlinks ‘allow us to see connections among sites of deliberation being made at a granular level’ (Lyons 2017, 8). Moreover, online forum users, in contrast to face-to-face forum participants, use sources by directly ‘liking’ messages, building on previous comments or complementing content with their own opinions and arguments (Kies 2010; Stromer-Galley 2007; Bravo and Sáez 2016). These are crucial elements to investigate because social media ‘likes’ and shares, despite not directly explaining deliberative engagement, enable us to make more fine-grained interpretations of the scope and scale of a given online discussion, within the ecosystem of referentiality and reflexivity in digital environments.

Since the growing literature in digital media has become ever more complex and diversified, it defies an easy summary of the distinct ways in which content analysis has been used in this field. Depending on the research goal, scholars have employed content analysis to investigate:

- (1) the effects of specific designs and affordances (such as identifiability/anonymity and heterogeneity/homophily) on political discussions (Lewiński and Mohammed 2012; Esau et al. 2017; Halpern and Gibbs 2013; Mitozo and Marques 2019);
- (2) distinct dynamics of civil/uncivil discussions and disrespect in spaces harbouring like-minded people or adversarial discussion on YouTube, blogs, and Facebook pages (Molaei 2014; Muddiman et al. 2017; Maia and Rezende 2016; Rossini and Maia forthcoming);
- (3) factors that enable forum users to engage in a more egalitarian conversation on news websites and social media networks (Maia 2014; Rowe 2015);
- (4) types of outcomes of online discussion, concerning their influences on political policies and opinion changes (Strandberg and Grönlund 2012; Filatova et al. 2019; Bravo and Sáez 2016);
- (5) group polarization, disagreement and toxic discussions favouring intolerance and distrust of political institutions (Smith 2019; Maia et al. forthcoming).

It is worth noting that scholars investigating online deliberation have recently moved towards comparative content analysis, including more components and connections between data sets, which is beneficial for producing multifaceted descriptions and more nuanced evaluations of each component. While earlier studies have analysed only the verbal content of online discussions, later works have become more attentive to contexts and goals of different online settings to better understand the wider implications of their findings. For instance, Esau et al.’s (2020) study has differentiated between highly formal (a government-run consultation platform), semi-formal (mass media), and informal (social media) arenas, and employed content analysis to examine an issue-specific debate (German immigration policy) to track variations regarding rationality, reciprocity, respect, constructiveness, storytelling, and

expression of emotion in these settings. Maia et al. (2020b) have systematically analysed the relationships between disagreement and reason-giving in online discussions about a controversial issue (lowering the age of criminal responsibility) in arenas that serve distinct functions in the political system (legislative public hearings, news websites, and an activist social media page [Facebook]). The authors have also traced the implications of these practices for public reasoning. A growing body of studies has produced cumulative knowledge on practices of political discussion and deliberation underlying political participation and information seeking, and their associated outcomes. To date, studies that employ content analysis to map the systematic linkages between online discussions and broader components in the deliberative system are still rare.

The Integration of Content Analysis with Other Methods

So far, we have highlighted that studies on political communication and deliberation have become more methodologically sophisticated through a mixed methods approach. In this section, we argue that media research on deliberation can be fruitfully expanded by combining content analysis with additional data derived from surveys, face-to-face discussions in legislative or civic forums, frame analysis, statistical methods, and so forth. The integrative approach offers a tool for identifying relationships between political messages in media (news stories, social media, and Twitter, for instance) and other communicative practices from political representatives, experts, civil society organizations, and ordinary citizens. Research incorporating a mixed methods approach enables a better investigation of multiple venues for public information and discussion, traversing mass media and online settings. To be sure, researchers are expected to develop theoretically informed research designs and analysis protocols, including a clear description of the rationale for crafting the research questions or hypotheses, producing the coding scheme, and defining the sample and unit of analysis.

To illustrate this analytical effort, we report studies developed by participants of the Research Group on Media and the Public Sphere, from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (EME/UFGM). Our aim in this section is to illustrate the methodological options, trade-offs, and difficulties that arise in actual research.

Comparing Actors' Reasoning across Different Arenas

One possible research design for examining actors' reasoning within the deliberative system is to focus on different well-defined contexts of communication to investigate

an analytically equivalent phenomenon under different conditions. A study was designed to analyse reason-giving by experts when these actors participate in legislative public hearings and when they serve as sources for news media stories (Maia et al. 2016). A first methodological difficulty arose regarding how to achieve *conceptual validity*, since it can be notoriously difficult to compare reason-giving in legislative forums and reason-giving in comments for news making.

Our first step was to define an issue-specific debate—a controversial bill of law proposing to transfer the city bus station from its downtown central location to a new district—in order to produce ‘contextualized comparisons’ (Locke and Thelen 1998, 11). This procedure requires the researcher to make self-conscious and detailed considerations about contextual factors and the similarities/differences within the phenomenon in the selected settings. In our case, reason-giving is expressed in different forms in legislative public hearings and news media stories, and these forms needed to be conceptually and empirically distinguished. Our sample involved transcripts of three public hearings over two years and news stories concerning this issue, collected from three local newspapers during the same period. To produce *sample equivalence* we defined claims, that is, speech acts containing a demand (Steiner et al. 2004), as the unit of analysis. We followed the conventional procedure described in the literature on deliberation to identify claims in parliaments, that is, speech acts that contained a demand (Steiner et al. 2004, 55). In the news media material, we compiled every direct quotation or close paraphrase attributed to a speaker in the news text; and the analysis paralleled those of the public hearing transcripts. To reach higher levels of *measurement equivalence*, we compared the experts’ arguments with arguments expressed by all participants in the public hearings and news stories alike. After clustering similar arguments, we found forty-eight arguments in all material.

Altogether, 374 claims were analysed, sixty-seven from the public hearings and 307 from printed newspapers. Following an adapted version of the Discourse Quality Index, we elaborated a twenty-two-variable codebook for content analysis. To substantiate our study, the content of pro and con arguments was also investigated. Our findings revealed that experts played a similar role in both formal micro arenas (public hearing) and informal macro arenas (news media); they predominantly used arguments without any explicit reference to the common good and avoided engaging with conflicting arguments from third parties in these two settings. Since experts used mainly qualified and sophisticated levels of justification in both environments, this study, counter-intuitively, provided evidence that experts did not necessarily issue ‘lower-level’ justifications in media-based communication, in front of large audiences. Experts typically did not incorporate counterarguments in their utterances, and they were not politically accountable when confronted with other interests and goals for society, either in the legislative forum or in the journalistic arena. Interestingly, experts’ views, however, have been taken up by other discussants (non-experts), and the majority of speakers disputed their political preferences,

mostly using technical-knowledge justifications in both formal and informal contexts under scrutiny.

Another study was designed to map how activists—‘Movimento Tarifa Zero de Belo Horizonte’ (Free Bus Fare Movement)—built arguments in three different arenas (Arantes 2017; Maia et al. 2017). The settings were: face-to-face open assemblies in public spaces involving the local population; a Facebook page administered by the activists; and the news media covering the topic at stake, when Tarifa Zero movement’s speakers served as a source for journalists. We built a five-variable codebook (including the mobilization goals, expansion of the movement, sort of divulgation, diagnostics/strategies, arguments), which was applied when examining the transcripts of the assemblies, the content of news articles, and Facebook posts, covering a three-month period. Specific categories were built for specific settings. We analysed the topics under discussion in each setting, and classified the content of arguments according to the following aspects: evidence (factual statement, story); conclusions (proposal, problem definition); and warrants (conditional, value statement, analogy, and meta-proposal) (Adams 2014). In addition, we analysed the content of arguments. This analytical framework revealed the activists’ reasoning variations across settings as part of a broader discursive dynamic and their sequential interactions with distinct actors in society.

The type of research reported above does not aspire to select cases that are representative of diverse populations. Process tracking here focuses on processes within a particular case, not on correlation of data across cases. Our aim was to uncover, as much as test, reason-giving mechanisms that might explain our correlational findings in distinct settings. This methodological framework can offer rich explanations as to the linkages between arenas and a good picture of the complexity of actors’ reasoning in distinct settings within the deliberative system. These studies, nevertheless, reflect a relative difficulty in making generalizations that apply to broad populations.

Comparing Frames and Reasons in Multiple Sites

Another good example of research design seeking complementarity of methods includes articulation of content analysis and frame analysis. In studies about deliberation, this combination is beneficial because it enhances ways of looking at a given problem and provides different paths of empirical investigation so as to develop more effective explanations. For instance, more conventional content analysis of claim justification reveals nuances of the logical structure of specific arguments, references to own-group or other groups, the common good, and abstract principles (Steenbergen et al. 2003; Steiner et al. 2004; Steiner 2012). This method alone, nevertheless, has difficulties in dealing more satisfactorily with issues of macro analysis. By contrast, frame analysis enables the analyst to grasp the broader perspectives

that underpin: (a) disputed definitions of the problem at stake, (b) attribution of responsibility and (c) solutions offered for conflict resolution (Chong and Druckman, 2007a, 2007b, 2011). Yet, this method fails to show concretely how objections are built and how preferences are explained and transformed. By definition, frame analysis allows researchers to capture perspectives and interpretive schemes encompassing a full range of ideas, as an ‘organizing principle’ that people use to structure the world, current events, and their experiences (Druckman 2004; Entman 1993; Goffman 1974; Kahneman and Tversky 1984; Maia and Vimieiro 2013; Matthes and Kohring 2008). Methodologically, arguments and frames can be comparable in a congruent manner within settings and across different contexts, allowing for the investigation of the phenomena in more detail and accommodating larger interpretations.

In this line, the study developed by Choucair (2018; see also Choucair et al. 2018) examined both arguments and frames employed in discussions in formal as well as informal settings. Focusing on an issue-specific debate—a Bill of Law proposing more rigid criminalization of abortion in Brazil (Bill of Law 5069/13)—this research analysed: (i) speech acts from political representatives in three deliberative meetings of the Commission of Constitution and Justice and Citizenship (CCJC) of the Chamber of Deputies, where the constitutionality of the Bill was voted; and (ii) posts and comments regarding the aforementioned Bill on Facebook from diverse actor categories. This study used content analysis to investigate whether pro and con justifications, expressed in citizens’ informal online discussions, correlate with those vocalized by representatives in legislatures at the centre of the political system. A frame analysis was also performed in the same material.

Since this research sought to say something about political representation, conceptualized in terms of discourse (Bohman 2012; Saward 2009; Maia 2012b), analysis of discussion within legislatures would not be enough. We sought to create a representative sample to allow inferences from a larger population. Data collection included Facebook posts over a one-year period, encompassing a wide range of actors, such as ordinary citizens, members of social movement organizations, religious leaders, experts and political representatives, and celebrities. In total, we mapped 1158 Facebook pages from these different actors. A total number of 310,151 posts were collected from these pages. The estimated number of comments on these posts was 3,009,677.¹

Given the huge number of online settings, the problem of site selection in the digital media landscape constitutes one of the central challenges in current research. To deal with a realistic number of observations, we built a probabilistic sample of comments and posts.² To produce conceptual refinement with a higher level of validity

¹ Given the difficulty in collecting such a large amount of Facebook data, we decided to collect only posts. Then, comments were collected from the probabilistic sample of posts, which indicated that there were approximately 3,009,677 comments in total, with 95 per cent reliability and 5 per cent sample error.

² We constructed a probabilistic sample of posts ($N = 382$) and comments ($N = 655$) with 95 per cent reliability and 5 per cent sample error.

over a small number of cases, we built a 19-variable codebook to capture the position, the arguments (both pro and con) and the elements of the frame—the definition of the problem (Entman 1993) divided between the definition of the problem in relation to whom, that is, the actor, and the definition of the problem in relation to what, that is, the topic (Matthes and Kohring 2008); moral judgements (Entman 1993) divided between positive and negative judgements; diagnosis of causes (Entman 1993); and suggestion of solutions (Entman 1993).

By employing both content analysis and frame analysis, this study allowed advancement on different fronts. Analysis of arguments indicated that a large number of aspects about abortion criminalization were discussed on Facebook, whereas political representatives were more strictly focused on the Project of Law 5069. Moreover, a wide range of arguments was employed by Facebook users, whereas only a few of these arguments were expressed by political representatives. These results do not necessarily constitute a legitimacy problem, deliberately speaking, insofar as political representatives may ‘filter’ a multitude of detailed issues regarding controversial debates and provide a synthesized argumentation.

Application of frame analysis, however, revealed important new features of the discursive process itself. By examining the frames employed in formal and informal settings a notable result emerged: while the abortion issue was mostly framed as a problem pertaining to women’s concerns (38 per cent) in Facebook discussions, legislative discussants rarely used this frame (15 per cent). This discrepancy is particularly significant because this was the prevalent framing pattern in citizens’ discussions on both sides of the debate, that is, amongst those speakers in favour or, as well as those against, abortion criminalization. Thus, this finding suggests a serious disconnect in the interpretive scheme employed by citizens and their political representatives regarding the causal diagnosis as well as suggested solutions to the problem at stake.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how different types of media can be analysed in conjunction with deliberative theory. We aimed to provide brief descriptions of different types of research to highlight the applications for, and main trends in, the use of content analysis in a variety of contexts. After surveying studies on mass communication and digital media, this chapter indicated some ways to link micro and macro analyses. We argued that content analysis, when integrated with other methods, helps to produce a better understanding of different connections between actors, deliberative acts/practices, and media dynamics. Researchers should be encouraged to add different data to their content analysis whenever possible to take greater account of the hybrid and multi-platform media environment. This helps to avoid potentially limited interpretations occurring at one site only. In general, images and visual

elements remain underexplored in studies on deliberation. In future studies, scholars may focus on variations of content analysis to capture the broader implications of visual cues and non-textual ways of producing meaning in public deliberation. This requires that scholars advance and refine their concepts and become conversant with different methods. The integrative content analysis model, for example, by combining argumentation and frame investigations, also helps to clarify the strengths and limitations of specific analytical tools in order to make more informed readings of findings. Obviously, this is a difficult task because content analysis, frame analysis, and statistical and formal modelling are becoming increasingly sophisticated and are constantly updated. However, this integrative approach also opens up some important opportunities for more collaborative research amongst scholars working with different methods.

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Mixed Methods

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The areas of inquiry in deliberative democracy are multifaceted and often require methodological approaches that can grapple with complexity. This chapter ¹ argues that mixed methods are particularly well suited to investigating deliberative democracy, while noting advantages and limitations of this approach. The chapter reviews methodological foundations, outlines basic aspects of research design, and illustrates how mixed methods can contribute to deliberative scholarship.

Mixed methods research (MMR) entails combining qualitative and quantitative strands in a research programme where findings and inferences are derived through the methodological and/or analytical integration of data. You may integrate in the early stages of data generation, for example, using the findings from one method (e.g. qualitative observation) to develop the foundations for another (e.g. quantitative survey). Or you may integrate later, for example while addressing a research question by drawing inferences from both quantitative and qualitative findings. Combining methods that generate one type of data, for example qualitative interviews and focus groups, constitutes a *multi-method design*, rather than MMR. Conversely, generating qualitative and quantitative data without integrating both strands constitutes a *quasi-mixed design*. Some level of integration across data sources and/or analytical strands is therefore what defines MMR (Bazeley 2018; Hesse-Biber and Johnson 2016).

MMR has proliferated in applied social science fields such as health, education, social policy, and international development, motivated by the need to conduct research that can inform policy and practice (Brannen and Moss 2012; Bazeley 2018). MMR starts from the premise that social phenomena and lived experiences are multidimensional and therefore research can be both limited and limiting if we grapple with complexity through a single dimension. MMR invites researchers to ‘the large table of empirical inquiry’ where they may engage with ‘multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued’ (Greene 2007, 20).

¹ I dedicate this chapter to Andy Thompson—friend and mentor in learning, doing, and teaching mixed methods. I want to also acknowledge the funding and support from the Edinburgh Futures Institute, ClimateXChange, and the What Works Scotland programme (ESRC Grant ES/M003922/1). Finally, I would like to thank Hans Asenbaum, Nicole Curato, Selen Ercan, and Ricardo Mendonça for very helpful reviews of the draft.

MMR is underpinned by paradigm pluralism, positing that various worldviews may serve as philosophical foundations for research (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2012, 779). The starting point for a mixed methods study is not a particular scientific paradigm (e.g. positivism, constructivism), or their disciplinary variants (e.g. post-positivism, interpretivism, critical realism). Instead, MMR starts with the problem or question that animates the research and then mobilizes relevant methods. There is some disagreement amongst methodologists regarding the ‘incompatibility thesis’, which argues that mixing is inappropriate due to clashes between the epistemological paradigms that underpin qualitative and quantitative methods (see Bryman 2006). MMR scholars respond to this ‘purist’ stance through frameworks such as the ‘pragmatist’, ‘dialectical’, or ‘transformative’ approaches, which reject the existence of inherent linkages between methods and paradigms and provide alternative philosophical foundations (Hesse-Biber 2016; Biesta 2010).

Accordingly, MMR is guided by the research questions and thus unencumbered by fixed philosophical or disciplinary loyalties. It transcends the qualitative/quantitative divide that fuelled the ‘science wars’ in favour of a pluralistic approach to social and political inquiry (Escobar and Thompson 2019, 503–505). MMR therefore accommodates multiple philosophical traditions, theoretical lenses, lived experiences, normative perspectives, and methodological approaches to grapple with complexity and generate a better understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Greene 2007, vii).

Mixed Methods Research and Deliberative Democracy

These foundations make MMR well suited to the study of deliberative democracy, given their ontological, epistemological, and normative coherence. Ontologically, the objects of inquiry in deliberative scholarship are multiple, multilevel, multifaceted, and changing. The variety of beings that populate deliberative studies implies a diverse ontology that may encompass individuals, groups, artefacts, processes, systems, cultures, and so on. Epistemologically, deliberative studies range from positivism to constructivism and their variants, thus accommodating various ways of knowing (cf. Ercan et al. 2017). Normatively, deliberative scholarship carries a commitment to pluralism in values and viewpoints, which is also central to MMR.

This coherence between MMR and deliberative democracy is unsurprising given their shared intellectual heritage from classic pragmatism (Escobar 2017b; Biesta 2010). Their synergies offer untapped potential as the ‘third generation’ of deliberative scholarship develops an empirical agenda in pursuit of breadth and depth (Elstub 2010). Deliberative theory has morphed into a field of applied scholarship, where ideas and practices intertwine in growing research, civic, and policy networks and across communities of place, practice, identity, and interest. Democratic innovations are proliferating globally, multiplying experimentation and institutionalization

of deliberative processes across policy arenas and levels of governance (Bächtiger et al. 2018; Elstun and Escobar 2019; Chwalisz and Cesnulaityte 2020). This is fertile ground for the contribution of MMR, given its focus on generating applied research and actionable learning.

MMR fits well with recent calls for deliberative scholarship to be guided by the objects of inquiry rather than the habits of disciplinary or methodological silos (Bächtiger 2018). Methodological choices have profound consequences in terms of the empirical realities thrown into relief and the issues that become matters of public and research concern. For instance, if we choose to investigate solely through a quantitative lens, we may lack depth, whereas if we choose a qualitative lens, we may lack breadth. Reducing the scope for discovery to the single track of mono-method research, or to the confines of a multi-method approach, may limit our capacity to investigate complex phenomena.

Some research questions asked about deliberative democracy require attention to both patterns and cases, statistics and narratives, measures and meanings, numbers and words. For example, while studying mini-publics we may want to investigate the quality and effects of deliberation amongst participants, as much as their personal experiences of the process or the perspectives of citizens in broader publics affected by the decisions. When researching community deliberation processes, we may want to evaluate local outcomes as well as broader impact on policies, political culture, and institutional development. Or we may seek to understand the everyday work of deliberative practitioners as well as the effects of facilitation practices across comparative cases. The objects of inquiry in deliberative democracy are thus multifaceted and often require a varied methodological toolbox.

MMR can address exploratory, explanatory, and confirmatory questions simultaneously, which allows the generation and verification of theory in the same study (Teddle and Tashakkori 2009, 578–587). Exploratory questions aim to generate new insights and are usually open and tentative, seeking to illuminate an issue for which there is limited knowledge—for example, how do organizers, experts, and/or participants decide what types of evidence should be presented in a mini-public? In turn, explanatory and confirmatory questions seek to explain or confirm insights for which there is already a body of evidence—for example, why do some participants change their views through deliberation? An MMR project may feature separate strands with different questions, as well as overall questions that seek to integrate those strands—for example, how do different types of evidence presented in a deliberative process affect the participants' views?

The added value of MMR is articulated by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, 9–10) as follows. First, MMR provides strengths that can offset the weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative research by addressing questions that may not be answerable by either approach alone. Second, MMR accommodates multiple viewpoints and encourages dialogue to overcome the (sometimes) adversarial relationship between qualitative and quantitative researchers. Finally, MMR is practical and resourceful because the methodological toolbox is wide-ranging. This versatility enables the investigation of normative or empirical puzzles that emerge from the deliberative

phenomena at hand, rather than limiting ourselves to questions that can be asked through our preferred methods. As in the proverb, if you are always holding a hammer, everything begins to look like a nail. The challenges of investigating deliberative democracy require space for creativity and discovery, and this invites us to open up the toolbox and look beyond the hammer.

Nevertheless, there are critiques and notes of caution to temper optimism and expectations around MMR (see [Hesse-Biber 2016](#); [Ahmed and Sil 2012](#)). MMR is not always viable or advisable, nor is it necessarily superior to mono-method or multi-method research. [Bryman \(2008, 624\)](#) offers a useful catalogue of challenges. First, MMR requires skills for both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Researchers must be conversant with basic foundations and research designs for both, and open to ongoing development of technical expertise. Second, MMR is usually resource-intensive as multifaceted lines of inquiry increase fieldwork strands. Finally, to merit effort and investment, MMR must generate findings that genuinely result from integration and that could not be gleaned via another approach. These challenges make MMR sometimes more viable for medium- and long-term research rather than for shorter studies (for practical solutions, see [Creswell et al. 2008](#)).

The study of deliberative democracy offers opportunities for MMR to address questions that are unanswerable through a single qualitative or quantitative approach. The following suggestions illustrate range and scope. For example, to understand the frequency and depth of public deliberation in everyday conversations, we may start by conducting a population survey and use the findings to frame deeper inquiry through focus groups. Or we may want to investigate the factors contributing to variable levels of participants' influence over the outcomes of deliberative processes. We could use process tracing in a small set of archetypal cases to explore key factors and then test the explanatory power of these emerging variables by building a large dataset for quantitative comparative analysis.

Or let's say that we aim to understand how facilitators address power inequalities in group deliberation. We could start with non-participant observation of facilitation work in diverse contexts. Over time we could map strategies and tactics and eventually test their efficacy through an experimental design. Finally, let's imagine that we seek to investigate the contribution of public officials to improving transmission or translation processes in deliberative systems. We may start by interviewing practitioners operating at nodal points between civic and official spaces (e.g. engagement officers, digital managers, partnership coordinators) and develop an observation protocol for ethnographic shadowing of a sub-sample. The resulting dataset then provides the foundations for a survey of practitioners across various policy arenas and levels of governance, helping to illuminate the role of agency and institutional culture in the functioning of deliberative systems.

These suggestions illustrate the potential of MMR to investigate deliberative actors, groups, processes, systems, and cultures. I will return to specific examples after introducing how researchers can design their study and undertake analysis drawing on mixed methods.

Using Mixed Methods: Design, Analysis, and Quality

The normative and practical considerations that apply to any single method presented in this book provide relevant guidance for the individual strands of an MMR study. What makes MMR distinct is the combination and integration of qualitative and quantitative findings as part of a coherent research design. This section focuses on features that are unique to MMR, namely, its signature research designs, analytical approaches, and quality standards.

The first consideration is whether the research question, problem, or puzzle invites a mono-method, multi-method or MMR design. A robust mixed methods project begins with a clear rationale that explains why MMR is best placed to address the question(s). Qualitatively oriented questions often explore ‘specific dynamics or processes of everyday life’, typically with a focus on hidden or unquantifiable dimensions (Hesse-Biber 2010, 43). Quantitatively oriented questions usually seek to test relationships between variables, for example checking how independent variables (assumed to be determining factors) relate to dependent variables (assumed to be effects) (Ibid.). In turn, MMR questions blend empirical interest in meanings, actions, practices, or interactions as well as causality, frequencies, patterns, or correlations (Hesse-Biber 2010, 44).

A long-standing typology of rationales for MMR outlines five distinct purposes, and mixed methods projects are usually underpinned by at least one of these (Greene et al. 1989, 259). The first is *triangulation*, which checks corroboration or convergence between findings from different methods. For example, when conducting research on a mini-public we may check whether findings from observation field-notes regarding power dynamics amongst participants are corroborated or disputed by the findings from anonymous questionnaires (e.g. Roberts and Escobar 2015). The second distinctive purpose of MMR is *complementarity*, which seeks elaboration, illustration, or clarification of the findings from one method with the findings from another. For example, one could complement a population survey on deliberative attitudes with focus groups or interviews to generate a richer dataset on meanings, experiences, values, and narratives (cf. Neblo et al. 2010). The third purpose of MMR is *development*, where findings from one method help to develop another method. For example, the findings from studying income distribution and community participation in a local area may be used to inform observations and interviews with people involved in local deliberation at participatory budgeting assemblies (e.g. Baiocchi 2005).

The fourth purpose is *initiation*, by which the findings from one method inspire the use of another method to address a puzzle or contradiction or to elicit a new perspective. For example, one could imagine using the most puzzling results from a quantitative experiment on public attitudes to evidence to inform qualitative action research in an actual deliberative policymaking process. The final purpose is *expansion*, which seeks to amplify the scope of the inquiry by adding new methodological strands. For instance, an ethnographic study of deliberative practitioners may be expanded through a quantitative survey of its broader community of practice

(e.g. [Escobar 2014](#); [Escobar et al. 2018](#)). These different purposes can be articulated and combined in various ways depending on the choice of research design—[Box 27.1](#) offers an overview.

Box 27.1 Types of Mixed Methods Research Designs

Adapting and blending the typologies by [Creswell and Plano Clark \(2011, 69–104\)](#) and [Teddlie and Tashakkori \(2009, 2557–2563\)](#), we can distinguish five basic MMR designs:

1. In *parallel designs* mixing occurs more or less simultaneously to answer related aspects of the same questions by drawing on both strands (quan ↔ qual).²
2. In *sequential designs*, mixing takes place in stages, with qualitative and quantitative strands sequenced purposefully so that each informs the next, guided by questions that may evolve. Within this type, there are
 - a. *explanatory sequential designs*, with the quantitative strand shaping the qualitative (QUAN → qual);
 - b. and *exploratory sequential designs*, where the qualitative strand sets the foundation (QUAL → quan).
3. In *conversion designs*, mixing occurs when one type of data is transformed and analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively (quan → ← qual), for example, text may be analysed thematically and then coded numerically to check frequencies or patterns.
4. In *embedded designs*, one strand takes place within the other, for example, an interview within an experiment: QUAN [qual]; or a questionnaire within a focus group: QUAL [quan].
5. Finally, *multi-level designs* entail larger programmes of inquiry where various sequential, parallel, conversion, and embedded designs may be combined.

Interpreting findings from different strands through combined analysis can be a challenging aspect of MMR (for guidance, see [Bazeley 2018](#)). While quantitative and qualitative data must be generated and interpreted ‘according to their own merits’, the benefit of mixing methods lies ‘in the way the data are integrated or can be used to interrogate each other’ ([Brannen and Moss 2012, 799](#)). As noted earlier, integration

² Developing a terminology for MMR has been an ongoing endeavor in the field ([Creswell and Plano Clark 2011, 189](#)). This paragraph illustrates a bespoke notation system, where symbols indicate type of relationship and capitalization indicates priority.

entails mixing strands either during data generation (e.g. findings from one method inform the work of another method) or at the stage of systematic analysis (e.g. drawing inferences from both strands and making sense of their resonance or divergence). This work can now be aided by software such as Dedoose, MAXQDA, NVivo, and QDA Miner (see [Bazeley 2018](#), 37–49).

MMR is a craft—that is, flexible, iterative, responsive. Drawing on [Greene \(2007](#), 144–145), [Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie \(2003\)](#) and [Bazeley \(2018\)](#), there are various stages and options available for data processing, interpretation, and analysis:

- Dataset creation: All data are processed according to quality standards appropriate to their respective sources, checking for methodological rigor, and organizing the dataset to enable accessibility and reflect range and depth.
- Data reduction: Data may be reduced through an initial analytical round that seeks to render it manageable by generating descriptive codes, frequencies, descriptive statistics, factors, case summaries, memos, or other ways of summarizing or synthesizing.
- Data display: A useful heuristic for analytical integration of data from different sources is to develop visual representations such as tables, charts, diagrams, or logic models.
- Data transformation: Quantitative data may be standardized, scaled, factor analysed, etc., while qualitative data may be developed into case profiles, thematic maps, critical incidents, chronological narratives, analytical codes, etc. MMR offers the option of transforming qualitative data into numbers (*quantitizing*) or numbers into words (*qualitizing*).³
- Data comparison and/or correlation: This is about exploring patterns and relationships in the dataset, for example developing clusters of variables, themes, or stories that indicate resonance or divergence. If qualitative data is *quantitized*, we may run tests to check for patterns. If quantitative data is *qualitized*, we may conduct new qualitative coding and analysis.
- Data consolidation: Sometimes it may be possible to combine different types of data to create new variables, themes, or datasets.
- Analysis of findings to draw inferences and meta-inferences: This is the process by which we arrive at a set of ‘negotiated and warranted’ conclusions ([Bazeley 2018](#), 277–280), going from findings derived through each method, to inferences drawn from those findings, and then to meta-inferences developed from combining methods.

In MMR, *inferences* are conclusions derived from analysing findings from each qualitative or quantitative strand, whereas *meta-inferences* are conclusions generated by analysing inferences across strands ([Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009](#), 4900

³ For more information on *qualitizing* and *quantitizing*, see [Teddlie and Tashakkori \(2009\)](#) and [Bazeley \(2018\)](#).

and 2567). Meta-inferences thus epitomize the added value of MMR, that is, claims and arguments warranted by interpretive integration.

The MMR field has developed bespoke criteria to assess research quality. A robust MMR study includes: an explicit rationale for MMR; a design outline articulating the purpose, sequencing, and priority level for different strands; an overview of data generation and analysis for each strand; an indication of where and how integration was conducted; reflections on limitations; and an account of meta-inferences or insights drawn from mixing methods (O’Cathain 2010).

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008) have proposed an ‘integrative framework’ to assess MMR. Data quality is first evaluated according to customary standards—that is, if quantitative data are valid/reliable and qualitative data are credible/dependable, then the study has ‘high overall data quality’ (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 3493). In addition, the integrative framework proposes a new set of criteria specific to MMR:

- *Design quality* refers to the quality of inputs at all stages, including research design, data generation, and analytical procedures (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 4848).
- *Interpretive rigor* refers to the quality of the process of making meaning by drawing inferences through the systematic linking and interpretation of findings (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 4849).
- *Inference quality* derives from blending the notions of internal validity (quan) and trustworthiness (qual) and is the standard for evaluating the quality of conclusions drawn from findings (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 467).
- *Inference transferability* blends the principles of external validity (quan) and transferability (qual) to assess to what extent the conclusions may resonate, be applicable, or offer insights in other contexts (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 470).

Researchers can sometimes be challenged by seemingly contradictory, divergent, or dissonant findings from different strands of an MMR study. This may seem problematic, but it can also help to enrich the analysis. Discrepancies between inferences force us to re-examine the findings or to ‘create a more advanced theoretical explanation’ (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 5191; for practical solutions to this challenge see Tashakkori and Teddlie 2008, 116). Divergence and dissonance illustrate the capacity of MMR to grapple with complexity by generating ‘puzzles and paradoxes, clashes and conflicts that, when pursued, can engender new perspectives and understandings, insights not previously imagined, knowledge with originality and artistry’ (Greene 2007, 24). From this perspective, divergence is not a hindrance to be reluctantly accepted, but something to be embraced as a potential source of analytical creativity and depth. All in all, ‘convergence, consistency, and corroboration are

overrated in social inquiry' (Greene 2007, 144), and engaging with the messiness of socio-political phenomena can be one of the joyful and generative challenges of conducting MMR.

Using MMR in Deliberative Democracy Research

The use of MMR in deliberative scholarship is somewhat sparse. A database search of the terms 'mixed methods' and 'deliberation/deliberative' elicits a limited number of publications.⁴ This does not mean that researchers of deliberative democracy are not mixing methods, but it does suggest that it is uncommon to articulate those studies as MMR. Does this matter? Mixing methods is more than conducting qualitative and quantitative research in one study. There are philosophical, technical, and analytical considerations to be heeded, and it is hard to see how this can be done without reference to basic tenets of MMR.

There are exceptions to this limited use of explicit MMR approaches to study deliberative democracy. For example, there is growing work on 'moral case deliberation' within the context of health policy and practice (Spijkerboer et al. 2017); studies of 'deliberative contestation' in local development (Gibson and Woolcock 2008) or civil society deliberation in post-conflict justice (Kostovicova 2017); and research about emotions in deliberative processes like the Citizens' Initiative Review (Johnson et al. 2019). These studies use MMR to combine a range of methodological angles in order to make sense of complex processes, actors, and contexts.

Deliberative scholars have also developed approaches that incorporate principles and practices of MMR. For instance, the Discourse Quality Index (Steenbergen et al. 2003), and its conceptual expansion via Deliberative Transformative Moments (Jaramillo and Steiner 2019), illustrate the analytical possibilities opened up by *quantitizing* qualitative data. Another example is Q methodology, which creatively blends qualitative and quantitative work to investigate discourses (e.g. Niemeyer 2019) and practices (e.g. Durose et al. 2016). There is also scope for expanding MMR as comparative approaches to the study of democratic innovations proliferate (Ryan 2019; Boswell et al. 2019).

The remainder of this section introduces examples that illustrate three MMR designs: parallel, sequential, and multi-level.

⁴ Search conducted in October 2019 using the Web of Science Core Collection database. The paired terms were 'mixed methods' and 'deliberat*' (using a wild card) and generated 161 entries. Titles and abstracts were screened for relevance, reducing the sample to twenty-three publications where MMR was explicitly used to investigate aspects of deliberative democracy. Almost half of the entries were in health-related fields (47 per cent), with the rest spread sparsely across education, environment, communication, justice, computing, international development, urban planning, and methodology journals. This was not a full systematic review, but it offers a proxy to illustrate limited usage of MMR in deliberative scholarship, particularly within political science and public administration.

Example 1. *Parallel Design*: Three Citizens' Juries on Wind Farm Development

The first example is a study of three citizens' juries tasked with developing principles to guide wind farm development in Scotland (see full report in [Roberts and Escobar 2015](#)). The study featured a *parallel design* repeated in the three sites that combined quantitative (i.e. panel survey at four time points) and qualitative data sources (i.e. non-participant observation fieldnotes, facilitation debriefs, evaluation reports, artefact analysis, presenter interviews). The purposes for mixing methods were *complementarity* and *expansion* in order to generate evidence about the complex intertwining of inclusion, interaction, deliberation, and influence within the process. Citizens' juries, like other mini-publics, provide excellent opportunities for MMR because parallel strands can be developed to grapple with phenomena unfolding simultaneously within and across sites.

In this project, the *parallel design* generated a large dataset that enabled the study of multiple dimensions, including: the politics and logistics of organizing mini-publics on contested issues involving multi-stakeholder policy networks (chapter 3); the evolving internal dynamics of citizen participation at the juries (chapter 4); the quality of public deliberation throughout the process (chapter 5); the conclusions and outputs developed by the mini-publics (chapter 6); the subtleties of deliberative learning and contestation while engaging with evidence and expertise (chapter 7); factors in opinion formation, consolidation, and change (chapter 8); participants' experiences of deliberative work and the development of civic skills and attitudes (chapter 9); and a set of meta-inferences to inform recommendations about the role of mini-publics in decision-making—including the intricate relationship between policy context, process design, and public legitimacy (chapter 10).

The report illustrates the capaciousness of MMR, in this case generating insights to address twenty-four research questions ranging from micro dynamics in deliberation to macro dimensions in the institutionalization of deliberative processes.

Example 2. *Multi-level Design*: Two Studies of Mini-publics and Maxi-publics

The *parallel design* from Example 1 was subsequently developed into a *multi-level design* in two new projects: one studying public support for alternative policies to tackle health inequalities;⁵ and the other investigating the Citizens' Assembly of Scotland about the future of the country.⁶ What redefines these as multi-level designs is the addition of strands beyond the confines of the mini-publics.

⁵ See <http://www.healthinequalities.net> (accessed March 1, 2021).

⁶ See <https://www.citizensassembly.scot> (accessed March 1, 2021).

For example, the health inequalities project comprised three citizens' juries in Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow, as well as a population survey that generated data for the United Kingdom as well as for each jury location (see [Smith et al. 2021](#)). This enables the comparison of deliberative versus aggregative constructions of 'the public' as a basis for analysing the resulting dilemmas for decision makers facing alternative public-making approaches ([Escobar et al. 2017](#)). The MMR multi-level design thus helps to explore what types of publics are more supportive of *upstream* policies to tackle health inequalities (e.g. taxation, housing, labour, advertising) and which are more supportive of *downstream* policies (e.g. diet, smoking, fitness, lifestyle). These are very different policy responses to a complex challenge, and we are currently working on a paper outlining the implications for policymaking.

The second example of a multi-level design is the research project about the Citizens' Assembly of Scotland. Besides studying the internal dimensions of the Assembly (i.e. inclusion, design, facilitation, deliberative quality, governance), the research also considers its external dimensions. Therefore, it includes population surveys to investigate how the maxi-public relates to the mini-public and the issues undergoing public deliberation. This is complemented by interviews with institutional, political, and media actors to understand the systemic uptake and future prospects for democratic innovation in Scotland. The research was recently completed (see [Elstub et al. 2022](#))⁷ and we have turned the shareable parts of the mixed methods dataset into an open access resource⁸ so that interested researchers can work with it. The project illustrates the resource-intensive nature of MMR, in this case comprising a team of ten researchers across various disciplines.

Example 3. *Sequential Design*: Studying the World of Official Deliberative Practitioners

The final example is a *sequential design* to study the work of public engagement officials who organize and facilitate deliberative processes in local and regional governance in Scotland. The first stage entailed two years of ethnographic fieldwork in four case study areas to develop a qualitative dataset including documents, images, participant observation fieldnotes (i.e. 117 meetings, 131 days of shadowing, fifteen weeks of work placements), and transcripts from forty-four interviews and three focus groups (see [Escobar 2014, 2015](#)). The qualitative strand explored three questions: How do public engagement officials design and facilitate deliberative processes? What kind of work does it take? And what kind of work does this do (i.e. what is the impact on institutional cultures)?

⁷ Interim data briefings are also available, covering internal dimensions to inform ongoing work by the Assembly's Stewarding Group and Secretariat, as well as the design and facilitation teams: <https://www.citizensassembly.scot/research> (accessed March 1, 2021).

⁸ The dataset has been deposited with the UK Data Service (<https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/find-data/>) and was being prepared for open access at the time this book went to print.

The findings provided the foundation to later develop a quantitative strand, thus turning the project into a *sequential* design that widened the inquiry. The rationale for MMR was thus threefold: development, complementarity, and expansion. Building on the qualitative findings, a two-wave survey was conducted in 2016 and 2018 to investigate the broader network of official engagement practitioners across Scotland (Escobar et al. 2018; Weakley and Escobar 2018). The first wave provided a baseline, while the second also explored the early impact of the Community Empowerment Act—new legislation introduced in 2015 to advance participatory governance and deliberative policymaking. The MMR sequential design therefore entailed an in-depth study of everyday work by a small group of practitioners, which generated ethnographically informed propositions to be tested across a larger population. This enabled the national surveys to be based on a grounded understanding of public engagement work at the frontline of deliberative processes.

Crucially, MMR allowed us to check whether findings from the case study areas in the qualitative strand had resonance across the country (see Escobar et al. 2018; Weakley and Escobar 2018). For example, the surveys showed that levels of burnout amongst deliberative practitioners varied across localities, which tempered the stark findings from the qualitative strand (i.e. that burnout was rife). Conversely, we thought that the qualitative strand had focused on officials who were unusually committed to advancing culture change in public administration, and that therefore these case study areas were outliers. The surveys, however, suggested that culture change work was prominent across the country, thus giving us insight into widespread ‘internal activism’ by public officials—a dimension that remains under-explored in democratic innovation (Escobar 2017a). All in all, this sequential MMR project spanned a decade and provided the evidence base to support meta-inferences about the current institutionalization of participatory governance in Scotland (Escobar 2021).

Conclusion

This chapter offered an overview of MMR, outlining its philosophical foundations, varied designs, strategies for analysis and integration, specialist terminology, and quality standards. I hope the chapter reads like an invitation to develop a mixed methods community of practice within the deliberative democracy community of inquiry.

As we seek to enhance our current approaches in order to grapple with complex phenomena, we may grow in appreciation of what MMR has to offer. This may be particularly so as deliberative democracy enters mainstream politics and policymaking and we try to understand, for example, the successes and failures of institutionalizing deliberative public engagement; how power dynamics unfold in deliberative systems; the work of policy actors and communities of practice in the deliberative industry; the prospects for public deliberation in everyday talk and multi-media contexts; how

various publics, stakeholders, and gatekeepers relate to citizen-centred deliberative institutions; or how online deliberation may enable transnational governance or the formation of a global demos to tackle the challenges of our time.

MMR can foster collaboration across disciplines and temper the hegemonic tendencies of some research communities wedded to narrow definitions of scientific inquiry. All in all, MMR provides fertile ground for building an actionable science of and for democracy. Our current collective predicament, as citizens and researchers, demands no less.

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Case Study Research

Stephen Elstub and Gianfranco Pomatto

Deliberative democrats are usually interested in finding evidence for different kinds of causal claims. For example, what causes people to change their mind? In which contexts is deliberation most likely to cause opinion change? What conditions are required for good quality deliberation? Under what conditions can deliberation be consequential? There are different ways of studying these questions. Statistical research usually focuses on responding to these questions across a large number of cases, paying particular attention to average effects.

There is a different way to answer these questions, however, and that is through case study research. Case study research can be defined as ‘the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity in important circumstances’ (Stake 1995, ix). A case can be a person, event, activity, process, group, organization, or institution. The focus on an individual unit means that within-case analysis is conducted as opposed to comparative cross-case research (Ryan 2019; see also Ryan, Chapter 17 in this volume). This is to enable intensive and context-dependent data collection and analysis on important cases that include a large number of variables, thereby producing more depth, detail, richness, completeness, and variance than cross unit analysis can generally achieve. In general, the more cases there are, the less data is collected on each (Gomm et al. 2004). Case studies enable researchers to move beyond covariation between variables and focus on ‘causes-of-effects’ in a specific case (Mahoney and Goertz 2006).

Case study research has been prevalent throughout the history of deliberative democracy due to the depth of insight and attention to context that this method provides (Boswell and Corbett 2017). In this chapter, we argue that case study research has been integral in helping deliberative democracy develop from a new normative theory to an established and mature theory guided by significant empirical evidence. Moreover, we suggest that as deliberative democracy research moves towards a systemic approach, case studies will continue to be essential for understanding the practice of deliberative democracy across the huge variety of contexts that a system involves. Case studies are a research approach that is relevant to both positivist and interpretivist research traditions. However, in this chapter, we suggest that case study research can help deliberative democracy move beyond this distinction. Guidance is provided on how to select a suitable case and how to collect and analyse data, specifically in relation to the field of deliberative democracy.

The Value of Case Studies in Deliberative Democracy Research

Case study research is important to both the positivist and interpretivist research traditions. Both approaches are prevalent within deliberative democratic research. Nevertheless, these two broad methodological approaches utilize case study research differently for the purposes of responding to different research questions. The positivist tradition is more interested in questions of generalization, which involves hypothesis generation and testing through the consideration of intervening variables. In contrast, the interpretivist tradition favours contextual richness, which includes considering the perceptions, values, and expectations of actors (Ercan et al. 2017). Here, cases are seen as specific and unique, worthy of understanding in their own right. We advocate a ‘third way’, believing case study research has relevance to both traditions.

Case studies are useful for building theory by generating hypotheses (Flyvbjerg 2006; Crasnow 2012; Yin 2014; Toshkov 2016). The research identifies a phenomenon in one case and this leads to the generation of hypotheses that this will be found in the whole population or some of the population. However, there is much more scope for theory building in newer theories that are not yet established (Toshkov 2016). The use of case studies for theory building is often considered most appropriate within the positivist research tradition. However, deliberative democracy, emerging as it did in the late 1980s, is still a relatively new theory, so there has been plenty of scope for theory building and much of the case analysis has followed an interpretivist approach. For example, at the birth of deliberative democracy (Florida 2014), we see seminal case studies on town hall meetings and cooperative workplace democracy in America using ethnography and qualitative interviews generating hypotheses, amongst others: that participatory processes can lead to representational and elitist dynamics; that people can find deliberation hard; and that features of complexity represent unavoidable facts, leading to conflicts of interests (Mansbridge 1983). Mansbridge (1983) concluded that participatory and deliberative approaches are more successful in decentralized processes, but must still be combined with more traditional representative and adversarial institutions.

Deliberative democracy is a normative theory; it is about a counter-factual, political ideal. As a result, relevant cases of it being even approximated in practice have been few and far between. Particularly in its infancy, there were simply not the number of cases available for large statistical or comparative research. As a result, case studies were often the focus of deliberative democratic research because they were the first case of a certain type. Consider, for example, the first ever deliberative poll (Luskin et al. 2002), citizens’ assembly (Warren and Pearse 2008), and participatory budget (Abers 2000). These practices were used as cases to investigate the extent to which ordinary citizens can deliberate about complex issues effectively, and to discern what institutional conditions are required to promote this.

This explains why case studies have been at the vanguard of empirical deliberative democracy research to date, but it is becoming an established theory now with developed hypotheses that need testing and refining (Curato et al. 2017) and as a result we are seeing more positivist approaches that compare cases. Comparative content analysis on the deliberative quality of cases, such as legislative debates (Steiner et al. 2004) and televised election debates (Marien et al. 2019), are some examples. Case study research is often criticized from a positivist perspective, claiming, for example, that it is impossible to generalize and to test theories as this would assume the full population of cases was homogenous and causes deterministic (Stake 1994; Yin 2014; Boswell and Corbett 2017). Consequently, the statistical significance of the single case is usually unknown. This can certainly be the case if there is heterogeneity in the population under study and the hypothesized effects are weak: ‘There is not much point in testing a weak causal relationship relevant for a heterogeneous population with a single-case study design because the result of the investigation, whatever it may be, would have very little import’ (Toshkov 2016, 290). We must, therefore, be very cautious about making inferences about the population of cases, as a whole, from case study research. Should case studies, therefore, be sidelined for large-N statistical and comparative methods in deliberative democratic research now the theory has matured?

We believe that this critique is misplaced for three reasons. First, we do not always need to seek generalization if the case is significant in its own right. This is often how cases are viewed from an interpretivist perspective. As democratic innovation increases in practice, we are still witnessing a stream of new cases, relevant to deliberative democracy, that merit in-depth, within-case analysis. This is a crucial development, as case study research contributes to the building of deliberative theory in important respects. For example, Hendriks (2016) was able to develop the concept of ‘designed coupling’ in deliberative systems only through in-depth case study research.

Second, in contrast to what critics assume, generalization can be possible from a single case study, making case study research compatible with a positivist research tradition. It very much depends on the rationale for case selection. For example, Michels (1959 [1911]) researched the German Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1911. He selected this case study because the SDP had sought to be an internally democratic party, and as such it should be the *least likely* to be oligarchical. The fact that Michels found that the party was oligarchical led him to conclude most others would be too, without researching these other cases.¹ Furthermore, a single case study can test hypotheses, and thereby also lead to generalization, if it falsifies a theory, providing a case is suitably selected for its validity. The classic example being a single black swan disproving the claim that ‘all swans are white’. We would then need only to find one example of an internally democratic organization to falsify Michels’ ‘iron

¹ While there are some problems with Michels’ analysis of the case data (see Elstub 2008, 188–191), the rationale for case selection was sound.

law of oligarchy'.² This is because average cases will not always be the most revealing: 'Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied' (Flyvbjerg 2006, 229).

Third, at present, the focus of both theoretical and empirical research on deliberative democracy is moving towards (or returning to) a focus on systems, which requires analysing the connections and relationships between different parts of the system (Elstub et al. 2016). It has been argued that deliberative systems must be researched in context and that this requires interpretivist methods, where hypotheses are less relevant, to understand the perspectives of a multiplicity of actors in numerous sites and the different types of communication that exist between them (Ercan et al. 2017). For example, case study analysis has developed our understanding of transmission in deliberative systems (Boswell et al. 2016). Case study research enables us to investigate a number of research questions on how instances of micro deliberation relate to the broader public sphere, such as how politicians view a particular site or the discourses that emerge from it, or how citizens and associations view different political organizations and their discourses in particular contexts. These questions are not always possible to address through statistical analysis: 'in large-N research it is not always possible to verify the incentives that the various actors face, the information they have and the beliefs they hold' (Toshkov 2016, 299). Therefore, as deliberative democrats increasingly consider how deliberation can be scaled-up, the need for case study research grows. For example, how participants deliberate an issue, the likelihood of them changing their opinion, and their attitudes to deliberation, need to be researched in case studies embedded in real-life policy processes, precisely because they are imperfect, if we are to really understand deliberative democracy in practice. Communication about policy issues is inevitably different when a decision is going to be taken that will actually affect people, as indicated by a land management case study from the Peak District in the United Kingdom (Elstub 2010). Nevertheless, it is this type of communication that we must gain a greater understanding of if we are going to get greater leverage on deliberative systems in practice and revise the theory accordingly.

Conducting Case Studies Research

Case studies aim to extend our knowledge of how and why deliberative processes embedded in real-life policy processes work and do not work, as well as which elements of the process lead to policy influence. To achieve this goal, case study research should critically examine the implementation of deliberative processes in both structured forums and the unstructured public sphere; the dynamics between participants; and the broader social and political context in which the deliberative processes are

² It should be noted that as a normative theory, deliberative democracy as a whole is not a falsifiable theory (Dryzek 2007); however, there are elements that could be refined through falsification.

embedded, including the reciprocal influences between the deliberative process and policy context.

In other terms, interpretive case study analysis reconstructs the deliberative process as it has been implemented in the most accurate and detailed way possible. This enables us to make judgements as to their effectiveness from a deliberative perspective because we examine how deliberative processes have been adapted to the external social and political context—the adjustments and variations that they have been subjected to during their implementation due to the explicit or implicit choices of the organizers, internal or external pressures, or other relevant factors. Different actors—organizers, participants, external influencers (such as political actors or the media)—should therefore be a key focus of case study research in deliberative processes.

To achieve this, it is of paramount importance that case studies identify all the actors that, formally or informally, internally or externally, influence deliberative processes and their results. At the same time, it is crucial that case studies explain the purposes of the actors, the logic of action that they follow, the behaviour they adopt, the relations they establish with other actors, and their interpretation of the events (Scheirer and Griffith 1990; Pawson and Tilley 1997). Take, for example, the use of citizens' juries as case studies on the reconfiguration of a hospital service in the city of Leicester in the UK (Parkinson 2006). The study not only focuses on the internal dimensions the jury, but also analyses the role played by all relevant external actors, such as Health Authorities, the citizen committee that collected 150,000 signatures against a first version of the reconfiguration plan, health professionals, unions, charity groups, and the media. As highlighted by the author of the study: 'The key feature of this case to keep in mind is that the jury was not the only element, but just the end point of a much bigger, Leicester-wide debate' (Parkinson 2006, 14).

Case Selection

Choosing a case to study is the first step in case study research. Yin's (2014) distinction between four main types of case studies with different rationales for selection, albeit not exhaustive, is widely used by empirical scholars undertaking case study research:

1. *The revelatory case* is one that reveals new or underexplored phenomena. In the context of deliberative democratic research, the revelatory case enables access to deliberative processes on which existing literature is not available at all or is largely absent. In this situation, case studies have an explorative aim; they are useful to produce empirical evidence of what deliberative processes consist in and to elaborate inductive hypotheses to be tested in further research. Revelatory case studies can be carried out in innovative or unprecedented applications of the deliberative approach, as in the case of the deliberative processes on constitutional reforms (Levy et al. 2018), or cases implemented in the

context of deeply divided societies (Steiner et al. 2017), such as the case study of a deliberative poll on education policy in Northern Ireland to demonstrate that citizens can deliberate constructively together in these contexts (Luskin et al. 2014). Although deliberative approaches are growing in number, they are also expanding in geographical and policy reach, variety, and significance. Therefore, there are many revelatory cases that merit further study.

2. *The common case* is one that is prevalent, typical, or representative. In deliberative democratic research, it might consist in a deliberative process presenting a typical design embedded in a sociopolitical context with ordinary characteristics. Mini-publics on salient issues in local communities characterized by average social conditions and deeply rooted democratic institutions belong to this category. One example is the deliberative processes implemented in the Tuscany Region in Italy, financed by a regional law on participation of citizens in policymaking approved in 2007. In the first five years of implementation, 116 deliberative processes were funded. Most of them were processes promoted by centre-left or left-wing municipalities in small localities characterized by an active civil society. Participants were generally recruited through random selection and the topics under discussion were not particularly conflicting, focusing on issues such as urban renewal and land planning (Lewanski 2013).
3. *The critical case* presents conditions and contexts that are particularly challenging or extreme. Examples of these kinds of cases could be deliberative processes implemented on particularly controversial issues or in a context in which democratic institutions are weak or even non-existent. Case studies of deliberative democracy in China, for example, include deliberative polling (Leib and He 2006); deliberation in rural and urban areas and in a state-owned enterprise (Unger et al. 2014); and online forums (Medaglia and Yang 2017). The implementation of deliberative processes in China is a critical case of particular interest because it consists in an unexpected and apparently contradictory combination of an authoritarian regime at the national level and deliberative practices at the local level. The study of several empirical cases of local deliberative processes suggests that deliberation and democracy are not synonymous and that a deliberative authoritarianism could develop.
4. *The unusual case* can be considered a variation of the critical case. It consists in a deliberative process particularly rare or uncommon for its design or for the context in which it is embedded, albeit not particularly adverse or challenging. The study of unusual cases is useful in shedding light on specific factors influencing deliberative processes that are poorly studied so far. For example, Davidson et al. (2017) analysed the deliberative quality of the first ever televised election debates in the UK. The Ostbelgien Model in Belgium represents an unusual case since it is the first permanent citizens' assembly (Niessen and Reuchamps 2019). Unusual cases are different from revelatory

cases as the latter explore new or underexplored phenomena, but are not necessarily rare cases. The unusual case is always a rare case, but it does not necessarily pertain to a new or underexplored phenomenon.

Data Collection

The second step to conduct case studies consists in collecting empirical data in the field. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to cover the different methods of data collection that can be used in case study research in detail. Most of the methods presented in this volume are suitable for case studies. Importantly, data can be collected which illuminates the deliberative process itself, as well as its relationships to other actors and institutions, and causes of the outcomes. Therefore, the aim is to collect a large amount of data on the case to analyse a significant number of variables or dimensions. Nevertheless, data collection choices inevitably need to be made, even when researching just one case. The data-gathering strategy should be determined by the nature of the research question and the type of case study that has been selected. However, it is worth noting that case studies are particularly suitable for mixed methods approaches (Escobar and Thompson 2019; see also Escobar, Chapter 27 in this volume). This can enable triangulation—the application of several research methods to study the same phenomenon—but also increases the amount of evidence we have to assess causal hypotheses (Gerring 2004) or to enhance the interpretation of the case. For example, the mixed method study on the case of citizens' juries on onshore windfarms in Scotland had several data sources including juror survey data, non-participant observation, interviews with the witnesses, and an analysis of the jury discussions, which enabled triangulation about good practice for the use of evidence in mini-publics (Drury et al. 2021; Roberts et al. 2020).

Relevant quantitative data collection can include characteristics of the processes under investigation, for example the number of participants, duration of process, volume of media coverage, etc.; surveys of participants that can help evaluate opinion change in the process and attitudes towards the process; and content analysis that can test the deliberative quality and media coverage of the case. However, these aspects of one case are not comparable in the same way that we might compare a number of cases on just one variable (Toshkov 2016). Relevant qualitative data include descriptions, narratives, opinions, and interpretations on what has happened during the implementation of the processes and after their conclusion, from those involved and other stakeholders. This can be collected through archival research, participant observation, interviews, and focus groups involving actors and other key informants, often in combination. Secondary literature can be used before collecting evidence from primary sources in order to have an overall picture of existing information and interpretations. Moreover, it can be used to enrich and problematize evidence deriving from primary sources.

Analysing the Data

The third step to conduct case studies is analysing the data in order to produce a coherent, plausible, and well-founded interpretation of the specific social mechanisms working in the case under investigation. There are two main challenges here. The first risk is that of only producing a detailed chronicle of the studied process that does not go beyond the descriptive level. The second risk is the opposite: producing a subjective interpretation of the processes based on cherry-picking and in line with a preconceived thesis. Two main recommendations are useful in seeking to avoid these risks and they apply to all types of case studies.

The first recommendation is to avoid a simplistic interpretation of the behaviour of social actors. For example, exclusively referring to rational choice theory where social actors would be considered to be motivated only by egoistic interest would result in a biased narrative with actors depicted as caricatures. Take, for example, a case study on Tuscany law on citizens' participation in policymaking (O'Miel 2016). The case study focuses on the role played by some actors that directly contributed to the formulation of the law: a politician, a scholar, a civil servant, and a practitioner. All of them are depicted as being motivated by self-interest. The analysis suggests that they contributed to the formulation of the law in order to extend consensus, to achieve legitimation, to strengthen their own influence, and to obtain economic advantages. In contrast, Bobbio and Floridia (2016) highlight that a major role in fostering a new regional law on citizens' participation in Tuscany was played by a large movement of associations and intellectuals, and that, therefore, the role attributed to the presumed self-interest of a limited number of actors, albeit influential, is a clear deformation of what transpired. The authors highlight that to produce a profound and realistic interpretation, researchers should refer to a plurality of social theories: the behaviour of actors is influenced not only by interests, but also by values, beliefs, cognitive shortcomings, and shortcuts, the social and historical context in which they are embedded, and the networks of which they are a part, amongst other factors. Therefore, researchers should exercise a critical analysis in all possible directions, taking into consideration, comparing, and questioning competing hypotheses.

The second recommendation is to conduct the case study as a skilled detective solving a crime mystery. In this analogy, hypotheses are suspects. A detective collects clues in the field, identifies all the possible suspects with different motives and analyses, and combines the clues until a solid proof of the guilt of one of the suspects is reached. Data analysis is not sequential, but, developed along an iterative and incremental process. During this process it is crucial for the researcher-detective to evaluate the solidity of hypotheses in the light of the collected evidence. *Process tracing methodology*, also called *causal process observation*, is a method of qualitative analysis that is particularly useful for case study analysis (see Pickering, Chapter 20 of this volume). It can be defined as 'tracing the decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes' (George and McKeown 1985, 35). Given the focus on decision-making, it is a useful approach for research on the policy processes and institutions from a deliberative democratic perspective, because it provides a

clear formalization of the logical steps that a detective-researcher has to take in order to reach a valid interpretation. These logical steps can be considered a tool in the hand of researchers in order to avoid simplistic and biased interpretations, and helps to explain why the proposed interpretation has been developed.

Process tracing provides four logical tests of causal hypotheses and is useful for evaluating different pieces of evidence and their contribution to causal inference and whether they are necessary and/or sufficient for the cause to occur (Collier 2011):

- *The straw-in-the-wind test* (which way is the wind blowing?): A hypothesis passes this test when some of the collected evidence could be effectively considered to be supporting it, but at the same time the evidence is not decisive. It is useful for the researcher to conduct an initial assessment of the collected evidence and to better focus on which directions merit further investigation.
- *The hoop test* (jumping through the hoop): The collected evidence is useful to eliminate one or more hypotheses and to strengthen one or more other hypotheses. This means that the researcher is getting closer to a plausible interpretation, but other efforts are yet required.
- *The smoking-gun test* (a murder suspect is found holding a smoking gun): If a hypothesis passes this test, then it has very strong support. The alternative hypotheses are substantially weakened, although not completely eliminated.
- *The doubly decisive test*: If a hypothesis passes the test, it is confirmed and at the same time all the alternative hypotheses are rejected. It is a level of solidity that is particularly difficult to achieve, and it can be considered an ideal research objective.

The tests vary according to how unique they are and their level of certainty. The former relates to how likely it is that the evidence will be there if the hypothesis *is not* true, and the latter if *it is* true: ‘High certitude means that the hypothesis is very unlikely to hold if the piece of evidence is not available and vice versa . . . High uniqueness means that, if the evidence is found, it could have been produced under only one hypothesis and not others. Low uniqueness means that the evidence could have been left by several competing hypotheses’ (Toshkov 2016, 295). How these four tests relate to the two criteria is depicted in Table 28.1 below.

A useful way to highlight the validity of this approach for research on deliberative democracy is the case study on a public debate on the project of a highway in Italy that has combined participant observation with in-depth interviews with key informants

Table 28.1 Types of Evidence and Their Implications

		Certitude	
		<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
Uniqueness	<i>High</i>	Doubly decisive	Smoking gun
	<i>Low</i>	Hoop	Straw-in-the-wind

Source: Toshkov (2016).

(Pomatto 2015). The conflict between citizen committees and public institutions willing to build a new highway lasted more than ten years. Before the beginning of the debate, citizen committees were particularly distrustful of it. They maintained that the public debate was an attempt by public institutions to produce consensus for the infrastructure without any real possibility to change the original project. A failure of the public debate and the prosecution of the conflict between citizen committees and public institutions without any changes appeared probable. However, the study highlights that public debate did not fail and that some positive solutions can be reached even if the conflict is not completely resolved. It is a thesis progressively developed by researchers in the field using the logical tests provided by the Process Tracing Methodology.

At the beginning of the debate, citizens' committees, which were strongly against the infrastructure under discussion, accepted the invitation to take part in the public debate. This is a first piece of evidence that passes the straw-in-the-wind test. On the one hand, the fact that citizen committees did not boycott the debate does not mean that they were willing to discuss the project with the proponent of the highway. On the other hand, it suggests that the conflict is not completely unresolvable, meaning that there is merit in further research on the behaviour of the citizen committee during the debate.

Two revelatory episodes occurred in two different public meetings of the debate. On both occasions, the facilitator did not tolerate contestations from a group of participants against supporters of the highway who were speaking. In both instances, the facilitator was strongly challenged by the participants and in both cases the leaders of the citizen committees stopped the contestation against the facilitator and asked the public to be respectful. These two episodes constitute evidence that passes the hoop test. They strengthen the hypothesis that citizen committees wanted the debate to continue. However, these episodes do not prove that positive sum solutions can be produced through the debate.

In the last part of the debate, two lay citizens advanced some proposals to change the layout of the highway in order to reduce the project's negative externalities. These citizens discussed their proposals with technicians in a specific workshop. The new project advanced by the technicians after the conclusion of the debate included a variation of the original layout very similar to the proposals advanced by these citizens. This is evidence that passes the smoking-gun test: it proves that the public debate could produce positive sum solutions even if it is implemented in a strongly conflicting context (Ravazzi and Pomatto 2014; Pomatto 2015).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we provided an overview of how case studies can be used in deliberative democratic research. Case study research is not always required, nor is it

always the best approach. Far from it. Comparison across cases, experiments, and large random sample research methods are hugely valuable for the study of deliberative democracy: ‘The advantage of large samples is breadth, whereas their problem is one of depth. For the case study, the situation is the reverse. Both approaches are necessary for a sound development of social science’ (Flyvbjerg 2006, 241). Our epistemological approach does not lead us to favour a particular methodological tradition. Rather, we see methods as tools and it is a matter of selecting the right tool for the job in hand, so it very much depends on the research question. Case studies are very useful for investigating causes in context, and should therefore continue to be a method widely used for deliberative democratic research.

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PART IV
ENACTING DELIBERATION

Deliberative Policy Analysis

Hendrik Wagenaar

It has been almost two decades since Maarten Hajer and Hendrik Wagenaar published *Deliberative Policy Analysis* (hereafter DPA). The book's publication was considered a major development in the post-positivist policy movement. The book's subtitle—*Understanding Governance in the Network Society*—indicated DPA's programmatic approach. It argued that the changing nature of the political-administrative system made post hoc, research-based information less effective as input into processes of political decision-making. The editors, in their introduction to the book, depicted these changes in terms of a 'network society'. In today's terms, the vocabulary would be one of complexity (Wagenaar 2007; Gerrits 2012), turbulence (Ansell and Trondal 2018), or uncertainty (Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993). This led the editors to ask: 'What kind of policy analysis might be relevant to understanding governance in the emerging network society?' and to posit a lack of fit between dominant, positivist, technocratic forms of policy analysis and the predicament of political and administrative decision-making (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003, 13). The editors have argued that for policy analysis in the network society to be effective and democratically legitimate, it should be interpretive, practice-oriented, and deliberative. That is, instead of the traditional after-the-fact academic policy study, the editors of DPA proposed that policy analysis should be forward-looking and situated; it should involve stakeholders in problem setting and solution design; and it should capitalize on their practical, experiential knowledge. DPA aimed—once again—to make good on Lasswell's historic call for a policy science of democracy (Lasswell 1971; Dryzek 1989).

Since the book's publication, the development and uptake of DPA has been both inspiring and frustrating. Many readers found the book's diagnosis of the limits of technocratic policy analysis convincing. They also regarded the book's central message persuasive, namely that an interpretive and participative form of policy analysis is better equipped to address the challenges that the dynamic, interconnected nature of contemporary society poses to policymakers. However, as Li observes (2019), the absence of a clearly recognizable methodological approach, a set of operational and replicable procedures that potential practitioners can make their own, has hampered the diffusion of DPA. People who are, in principle, sympathetic towards DPA have a hard time figuring out how to actually *do* it.

In this chapter, I offer three methodological approaches to DPA. I have articulated them by inductively drawing on the recent literature on applications of DPA in various settings and countries (Li and Wagenaar 2019; Bartels et al. 2020b). I speak of ‘methodological approach’ and not ‘methods’ because of the open-ended nature of DPA. In keeping with the complex, indeterminate character of the policy world that DPA attempts to harness (Axelrod and Cohen 2000), I argue that the very purpose of DPA is to maintain a flexible, relational, open-ended approach to policy analysis.¹ In addition, one of the key insights of DPA is that it is more than just an epistemic innovation. By striving for institutional transformation, it collapses the boundaries between policymaking and policy analysis, claiming that the two are continuous. This does not accord with rigid methods. DPA does not operate like an algorithm but more like a heuristic, tailored to specific situations. The term ‘heuristic’ denotes a strategy of discovery (Abbott 2004, 81), or, in different terms, a strategy of abduction (Tavory and Timmermans 2014).

Abduction is a kind of reasoning that ‘produces plausible provisional results—insights, guesses and concepts that link things together in new ways . . . Abductive reasoning produces insights and ideas that are plausible but provisional’ (Kimbell 2015, 35). Abduction results in conceptual understandings and practical solutions. It is a central element of contemporary ‘design-in-practice’, which is not rationalist and comprehensive but emergent (Kimbell 2012). It is interactive and collaborative, using a variety of insights, experiences, and material artefacts to link the desirable, the feasible, and the viable (Kimbell 2012, 294). Design-in-practice has articulated a forward-looking ‘epistemology of creative work’ using a repertoire of resources (from relational reconfiguration to organizational change), to generate new insights, solutions, and practices, as well as organizational structures and institutional arrangements, in situations of indeterminacy and uncertainty (Kimbell 2012, 295; see also Goodin 1996, 29). Emergent, interactive, practice-based design is a central feature of DPA methodology.²

It is thus possible to formulate three distinct methodological approaches to DPA: (1) Designed Deliberative Forums; (2) the Enhancement of the Deliberative Capacity of a Policy System; and (3) Institutional Design-in-Practice. These three approaches do not exhaust the full range of DPA-like methods. I suggest, however, that other, related methods such as co-production (West et al. 2019) and action research (Bartels and Wittmayer 2018; Bartels et al. 2020a) show family resemblances to

¹ There is an important literature on relational ontology in various disciplines that is relevant to DPA but that, for reasons of space, can only be mentioned here. Relational ontology ‘assumes that what primarily exists is relation, not entities like things and individual human beings’ (Sidorkin 2002, 91). Relational ontology has its roots in the pragmatism of Mary Parker Follett and John Dewey, and the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. It has been further developed and applied in anthropology (Sidorkin 2002), sociology (Emirbeyer 1997), and recently in Public Administration and policy studies (Stout and Love 2018). Through its relational roots, DPA has a strong family resemblance with Action Research (Bartels and Wittmayer 2018; Bartels et al. 2020).

² After all, *Deliberative Policy Analysis* was published in Cambridge University Press’s *Theories of Institutional Design Series*.

these three approaches. In fact, they all share transformative ambitions through an interventionist, ‘(actionable) methodology of co-producing inquiry and social intervention with all relevant stakeholders’ (Li and Wagenaar 2019, 432). This range of methods shows that DPA is a versatile approach to policy analysis that covers different scales and modes of the policymaking process and is useful to policymakers, stakeholders, social activists, and researchers alike.³

Designed Deliberative Platforms

The most frequently used methodological approach to DPA is Designed Deliberative Platforms (DDPs). DDPs come under various labels such as collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash 2008), collaborative planning (Innes and Booher 2010), interactive governance (Edelenbos and van Meerkerk 2016), or policy labs (Kimbell 2015). All these approaches have in common that the policy process has broadened to include deliberation with stakeholders and citizens in the problem formulation and design stage of the policy process.⁴

Designed Deliberative Platforms show several recurrent elements. *First, they are problem-oriented.* They are organized around a concrete policy issue. Bowman, in a paper on the pragmatist roots of DPA, argues that an orientation towards resolving concrete problems that originate in doubt, ‘promoted by a problematic situation’ in the pragmatist vocabulary, is a necessary condition for all inquiry (2019, 560). And Ansell, in his pragmatist-informed treatise on democratic governance, considers a ‘problem-driven perspective’ to be a prerequisite of ‘evolutionary learning’. ‘[P]roblems disrupt existing assumptions and call for fresh recovery,’ he says. ‘They pin disputes about knowledge, principles, and values down to particulars . . . and they focus our attention on action and consequences’ (2011, 11).

Second, deliberation is a strategy of policy inquiry. The cases testify to what pragmatists call ‘the communal basis of inquiry’ (Ansell 2011, 12). Deliberation aims at discovering shared goals and values, recognizing interdependence, and articulating shared problem definitions. These cognitive goals (reflection, reframing, and evolutionary learning) are arrived at through establishing new relationships—one of the major strategies of harnessing complexity. For example, Forester and colleagues speak of ‘establishing new pathways’ for forging relationships and agreeing on problem definitions and discovering new, creative solutions (Forester et al. 2019, 468). They talk of ‘relational re-braiding’ and describe it as follows:

³ In their book *The Pandemic Within: Policy making for a Better World* (2021), Wagenaar and Prainsack introduce utopian re-imagination as a fourth, systematic, practice-oriented method of deliberative policy analysis. It exceeds the limits of this chapter to explain this method in detail. I refer to the book for further details.

⁴ Li’s Laboratory of Deliberative Policy Analysis in Beijing—in which citizens and experts engage in guided deliberation about contested issues in a kind of citizen jury-type arrangement, the results of which are subsequently presented to the authorities—is a good example of this approach (Li 2015).

Here we have a quality of creating not just a view of the past, but a lived present in which participants who have not been in the same room together slowly ‘met’ each other, slowly came to develop a new trust in one another, slowly came to see each other not just vaguely ‘in new ways’, but with new qualities of respect, appreciation, recognition, acknowledgment, curiosity, empathy, and mutual regard. These are the deliberative accomplishments, the relational accomplishments.

(Forester et al. 2019, 469)

In complexity terms, changing the relations in a group or policy system amounts to facilitating nonuniform interaction patterns (Axelrod and Cohen 2000, 63). Outcomes of the system arise from the complex interactions of its material, human, and symbolic agents. Effectuating change in both the proximity of interactions (who interacts with whom) and activation patterns (the sequencing of interactions) can have profound effects on the problem-solving capacity of the system. The change mechanisms are multiple. Increasing diversity opens the system up to new values, knowledge, perspectives, skills, and ideas. Diversifying interaction patterns also triggers different co-evolutionary patterns that, in the long run, may change the system (Axelrod and Cohen 2000, 68–69). Changing interaction patterns through deliberation is a practice. This is never easy in conflictual situations, but accomplishing this task results in recognition of mutual dependence, joint ownership of the problem, while new professional and personal relationships set in motion reflective processes that facilitate mutual learning (Axelrod and Cohen 2000, 38; Ansell 2011, 177–178). The relational dimension of deliberative inquiry results in a deeper form of lived, embodied learning—learning that sticks.

Third, DDPs emphasize the continuity of inquiry and action, where practices drive the process of joint inquiry. Deliberation in the service of practice is coterminous with policy design as a ‘distributed social accomplishment in which artifacts and other humans play an important role’ (Kimbell 2011, 300). Practice is an answer to uncertainty. As Cook and Wagenaar state:

[W]e live in a world where problem formulations are often unclear and contested, where it is unclear what the materialities of the situation will ‘afford’, where the implications of alternative actions are uncertain, and where the utility of various kinds of knowledge is not immediately apparent.

(Cook and Wagenaar 2012, 17)

Therefore, from a practice perspective, the initial task of the actors involved in a transdisciplinary research project is not to apply knowledge but to devise a productive form of practice within which the problem can be addressed. Acting or ‘doing’ is central here, from interpersonal dialogue to physical tinkering and interaction with the environment, to ‘get the measure of the situation’ and figure out ‘how to go on’ in light of affordances and constraints, purposes and expectations (West et al. 2019). A good

example is administrative discretion. Because formal rules are inherently limited in the extent to which they are able to shape behaviour, to make administration work at all requires practical engagement with the situation at hand and the professionals and clients that populate it. Out of this practical engagement, understanding, moral judgment, and decision-making emerge (Wagenaar 2020). A practice approach to policy analysis fuses analysis, experience, and interaction.

Fourth, visual tools are used to explicate both functional and dysfunctional policy processes. Visual tools such as timelines or diagrams, although deceptively simple, serve performative and relational functions in design-in-practice (Kimbell 2011, 237). They are crucial for getting perspective on a conflict when participants are immersed in their own jealously guarded sense of rightness. They suggest avenues for a resolution of the conflict, in this way breaking the impasse. The key to this is that the visual aids are constructed jointly. For example, the central element of the reconstruction clinic described in Forester et al. (2019) is the collective construction of a timeline. Starting from a situation of impasse and entrenched positions held in place by strong emotions and 'self-evident' value positions, the timeline is a visual reconstruction of the chronology of the conflict based on events that are critical according to the participants, 'with quotes from each party in a different color' (Forester et al. 2019, 461). With the help of two neutral commentators, so-called 'reflectants', the participants began to develop a 'collective insight that the situation that they were in was something they were in together and that they [had] created *together*'. The timeline and the reflectants' commentary helped the participants to become 'unstuck'. It helped them both to see their different interests and *modi operandi* as well as their mutual dependency. Interviews with participants also showed that the construction of the timeline was a subtle form of empowerment. It allowed the weaker parties in the process, such as citizens, to be heard and to have an input in the process. The final step was to ask participants to jointly construct a future timeline. The outcome, according to the organizers, was that the conflicting parties began to see the situation as a 'collective mess that needed collective action in order to move forward. Individuals became part of a system and attributions to others morphed into shared responsibility' (Forester et al. 2019, 462).

Fifth, DPA invites participants to embrace complexity. The open, deliberative format of DPA encourages receptiveness to surprise and improvisation. For example, Foster et al. (2019) are explicit in their approach to complexity. Their 'systematic co-inquiry' is designed as a methodical approach that begins with acknowledging uncertainty and 'focuses on processes of social learning and the emergence of opportunities, rather than on pre-defined timelines, blueprints and outputs common to projects and programs' (Foster et al. 2019, 522). The authors used visual diagrams to depict both the messiness of the current situation and the more organized complexity of the UK Water Management System. Similarly, a 'Future-Proofing' rainforest conservation initiative in Colombia grew out of 'dissatisfaction around existing technical approaches to climate adaptation'.

Strategies for tackling climate change were rooted in the linear assumptions of the traditional model—that more science would reduce uncertainty, and that less uncertainty would lead to decisive action in rethinking conservation governance to accommodate climate change.

(West et al. 2019, 545)

However, these institutional routines were shattered when ‘existing conservation interventions were no longer adequate, and the world was indeed “talking back” in increasingly strident tones’. The team began to grapple with a situation of ‘ecological instability that many felt was certain to increase’ (West et al. 2019, 546). The ecologists involved in the conservation project settled on a pragmatist-inspired strategy of evolutionary learning that consisted of a series of interlinked elements. A key element was a shift from conservation thinking to one of anticipating and accommodating change. As both the direction and extent of change in a complex system are, by definition, unpredictable, this required a shift in both the object as well as the strategy of conservation management. The researchers sought the substitution of things (species, ecosystems) to values ‘that are contestable and more overtly political’ as ‘guides for management’ (van Kerkhoff et al. 2019, 702).

But this strategy could only be successful in a system of co-production in which all partners were able to assess the state of existing knowledge and evolving knowledge needs relevant to each partner’s specific situation. That meant accepting uncertainty, a willingness to value the hands-on experiential knowledge of field rangers as guides for systemic action, and not hiding behind the lack of scientific evidence as a reason for inaction (van Kerkhoff, personal communication). Through a series of workshops, the group came up with a ‘product’ that they describe as ‘a “process”—a multi-stage suite of activities that engages participants in a series of deliberations around conservation, culminating in a dialogue event to connect the pieces’. The authors describe this process as the establishment of a ‘practice’: ‘As a practice it is ongoing, deliberative and potentially transformative, framed by learning and dialogue rather than the application of technical solutions’ (West et al. 2019, 548).

These quotations demonstrate both the acknowledgement of the complexity and uncertainty that policymakers were facing and the open-ended, jointly produced, improvisatory character of the deliberative strategy. Embracing complexity, in conjunction with the tactics discussed above, helps to transform ingrained institutional practices, facilitate evolutionary learning, and build institutional capacity. In this way, all DPA examples discussed so far are aimed at harnessing complexity (Axelrod and Cohen 2000) rather than reducing it.

Enhancing the Deliberative Capacity of a Policy System

The second methodological approach to DPA is *enhancing the deliberative capacity of a policy system*. Designed Deliberative Platforms are an important and relatively

easy to implement methodology for working through conflict-ridden policy issues with the affected actors. By diversifying the lines of communication and opening deliberations to hitherto neglected local knowledge, DDPs release creativity and harness complexity (Axelrod and Cohen 2000). However, as some authors have argued, the place of deliberation in policy analysis is not always immediately obvious (Bächtiger et al. 2010, 40; Papadopoulos 2012, 126). As a result, DDPs face several risks that might ultimately limit their reach and effectiveness.

First, it is not always clear what deliberation is *for* when introduced into the policymaking process. While the intended programmatic effects of DDPs are well articulated by their proponents (knowledge enhancement, intersubjective meaning, shared problem-solving, awareness of mutual dependence), these forums serve different de facto functions in institutionalized policy systems, such as conflict resolution, cooptation of political opponents, mustering political support, delaying unpopular decisions, overcoming veto-points, or deflecting public attention from unpopular programmes. Although such strategic political considerations are not necessarily negative, they are often at odds with whatever direct benefits DDPs might have. This risk is aggravated by the epistemological vulnerability of DPA in the current institutional environment. In an institutional setting that is in the sway of instrumental reason and command-and-control models of governing and policymaking, interpretive methods and a focus on practices have less standing than knowledge that is purportedly based on formal scientific methods (Taylor 1995, 7).

Second, these problems are part of a more general obstacle for DPA. Most policymaking institutions are not particularly receptive to deliberation when left to their own devices. It is probably for this reason (to avoid the difficult work of persuading political decision makers to accept the outcomes of deliberative platforms) that the examples discussed so far all represent carefully designed forums that (mostly) operate outside the regular chains of command and channels of political communication. More often than not, deliberative innovations in governance exist alongside hierarchical imposition or the continued privatization of public services, seriously constraining whatever positive effects they may have. This then raises the issue of how these atypical platforms of communication produce actionable, transformative knowledge that can be integrated into the everyday policy process. Differently put, it is ‘important to look at how forums play out in larger systems of governance, for it is the deliberative virtues of the latter that is ultimately the main concern’ (Dryzek 2016, 231).

The earlier mentioned Future-Proofing initiative in Colombia is an example of enhancing the deliberative capacity of a comprehensive policy system as a methodical approach to DPA. The Future-Proofing Conservation project explored new ways of managing protected rainforest areas that were challenged by large-scale, rapid, destructive ecological change (van Kerckhoff et al. 2019). What makes the case interesting is that its design transcended the usual small-group deliberative initiative and focused on climate governance as a *systemic* issue. The team consisted of government officials, activists, academics, NGOs, and consultants who were dispersed over four

continents. In this sense the group was more akin to a deliberative system than a deliberative forum (Mansbridge et al. 2012). For example, while the focus of the project was on improving the uptake of knowledge in conservation policies, the actors realized that climate adaptation is not only a scientific but also, above all, a governance issue. In fact, knowledge (of all kinds) and governance were seen as integrated elements of a general strategy of evolutionary learning (van Kerkhoff et al. 2019; Ansell 2011). Evolutionary learning is a form of institutional capacity building that embraces three principles: (1) a problem-driven perspective; (2) facilitating processes of practical judgement—or, in the words of the organizers, ‘supporting processes of reflexivity at both individual and institutional levels, thereby recognizing different possibilities for change and transformation, as well as constraints—recognizing the “policy mud”’; and (3) creating ‘spaces for deliberation that include consideration of personal and social values, historical processes of change, and aspirations for positive futures’ (West et al. 2019, 546). Throughout the process, the researchers kept their eyes on park conservation as a systemic issue. They were interested to learn, with partners, about the context of park conservation. ‘Participants appreciated that the process enables them to think deeply about the “bigger picture” of conservation, and to relate that to their more immediate management context’ (van Kerkhoff et al. 2019, 10).

The Future-Proofing initiative points the way to a feasible, design-driven, hands-on approach to enhancing the deliberative capacity of policy systems as a whole.

[B]y developing this larger transition to new governance, through a series of smaller, interconnected transitions that linked values, rules and knowledge, the participants could work through a series of steps that enable new ways of thinking about the role of protected areas in conservation and consequently new ways to manage them.

(van Kerkhoff et al. 2019, 13)

Institutional Design-in-Practice

Finally, the third methodological approach to DPA is Institutional Design-in-Practice. DPA claims to have an answer to complexity. It mobilizes intense small-group deliberation to bring conflicting parties together, unfreeze policy impasses, and set in motion design-in-practice. In the process, it forges new forms of collaboration that unleash creative problem-solving. It has proven itself capable of liberating the wisdom of practice in, and enhance the deliberative capacity of, local and national policy systems to initiate evolutionary learning. But complexity introduces two qualities that have yet to be addressed so far: interconnectedness and higher-order effects.

First, through a myriad of continuously evolving relationships, the elements in a complex system are densely interconnected. Positive and negative feedback creates the unexpected feedback loops and confounding emergent outcomes that are characteristic of complex systems. Interconnectedness poses real problems to policy-makers. We intervene knowing that our action will have consequences that reverberate through systems in unpredictable, often nonlinear, ways, expressing themselves as the absence of any desired effect or alternatively as negative or perverse unintended consequences (Stermann 2000; Wagenaar and Prainsack 2021, chapter 1). We also know that our models of the world that we use as leverage for our interventions are limited at best. Yet, if we ever hope to design policies that are effective, that minimize negative unintended consequences, and that are sufficiently robust to withstand changing circumstances, then our interventions need to be commensurate with the multiple interactions and dependencies between elements of the system. That means that the policymaker not only understands the compound nature of the problem at hand, but also designs a differentiated, integrated policy whose elements support and reinforce each other in attaining their goal.

Second, the emergent outcomes of complex systems are a feature of the *interactions* between entities. The higher-order phenomena that emerge through these interactions have properties that cannot be reduced to those of lower-order phenomena. They cannot be reconstructed from the latter by simple extrapolation. The reason is that at each level of aggregation, properties appear that are specific to that level and that require their own concepts, explanations, and generalizations (Anderson 1972, 393; Wagenaar 2007, 25). This has momentous implications for an interventionist, transformative form of policy inquiry. Interconnectedness and higher-order effects in policy systems go beyond interpersonal relations in that they involve aggregate phenomena, such as organizations, institutions, buildings, laws, regulation, policy instruments, as well as natural systems, in short, the stuff of public administration. To harness this kind of administrative and natural interconnectedness requires an ability to intervene intelligently in these higher-order entities. ‘Intervening intelligently’ is the language of design, in the case of DPA, the design of institutions of public administration and public policy.

Understanding and accommodating interconnectedness requires a different level of analysis. Not on the elusive level of comprehensive systems, but rather a focus on institutional design where the leverage points are precisely the organizations, institutions, policy instruments, and professional roles that comprise policy systems. One of the goals of the Future-Proofing project, for example, was not only to bring indigenous actors into the deliberative monitoring system, but also to strengthen relationships between local/regional and national levels of management (van Kerkhoff et al. 2019). In addition, the researchers developed a Protected Area Benefits Assessment Tool that invited area managers to link landscape features with the benefits and costs of interventions in light of expected climate change (van Kerkhoff et al. 2019). To gain traction, laws and programmes have to be operationalized, by being translated into

a series of policy instruments, such as dedicated organizations, budgets, information tools, and monitoring and enforcement arrangements. Put otherwise, DPA needs a method of institutional design. I will illustrate this with an example.

In their article on the public housing system in Vienna, Austria, Wagenaar and Wenninger describe how that system not only successfully houses 60 per cent of the Viennese population, in the process creating a liveable, mixed-use city, but has done so for a century now (Wagenaar and Wenninger 2020). Viennese public housing rests on five integrated strategies: (1) active social protection in which the availability of high-quality, affordable housing and strict tenant protection laws are a key feature (2) a proactive land purchase and zoning policy; (3) a multi-pronged finance policy that consists of affordable rents, capped construction, and land purchase costs; (4) long amortization periods; and (5) reliable, long-standing partners (predominantly housing corporations) who agree to a cap on profits (3.5 per cent of invested capital) and an obligation to reinvest capital in the construction of public housing (Ludwig 2017).

The authors trace the origins of the system to the remarkable surge of integrated institution building by the Social-Democratic administration of Vienna in the years following the First World War, the famous ‘Red Vienna’ (*Das Rote Wien*) era (Weishmann 2002). They describe how this administration, faced with a series of overwhelming social and political challenges that, in today’s language, surely deserve the designation ‘sustainability crises’ (Bartels et al. 2020a, 392),⁵ forged a remarkably comprehensive, ambitious, and robust municipal administration system. The Social-Democratic city administration was driven by a combination of idealism and exigency. It had an integrated vision of the social, cultural, and political emancipation of the working class. In designing and realizing its agenda, it built upon the tradition and achievements in energy provision, public transport, and tenant protection of previous administrations. In effect, what the officials of Red Vienna were engaged in was ‘design-in-practice’ (Kimbell 2012, 2015).

Design-in-practice combines many of the themes and strategies of transformative intervention discussed so far:

[Designers] are seen as using an iterative process that moves from generating insights about end users, to idea generation and testing, to implementation. Their visual artifacts and prototypes help multidisciplinary teams work together. They ask ‘what if?’ questions to imagine future scenarios rather than accepting the way things are done now.

(Kimbell 2011, 287)

Mediating between policy, evidence, and delivery (Kimbell 2015, 9), design-in-practice represents a participatory, practice-based approach to systematic institutional change (Kimbell 2012, 142). It presumes that we step back from a static

⁵ Bartels et al. define sustainability crises as ‘large-scale, dynamic, multi-dimensional systems problems that require immanent and systemic resolution to prevent irreversible catastrophe’ (2020a,393).

conception of institutions as a fixed set of rules, norms, and understandings, often but not exclusively embodied in organizations. If, instead, we employ a transactional perspective of institutions as ‘dynamic, ongoing interactions between concepts, experience and situations’ (Ansell 2011, 36), we begin to see how institutions can be designed for interconnectedness. Institutions are not context-independent entities but instead are embedded in and reflect the experiences of particular communities. Such culturally embedded institutions ‘accrete in response to a variety of local situations and are evaluated by the test of time’ (Ansell 2011, 37). They are chosen, but not designed in the sense of rational design, and although the choice is never comprehensive or synoptic, it is guided by a normative vision. Neither wholly sedimented into our social and political environment, nor alterable at will, institutions are part of a world of meaning and purpose. In this pragmatist vein, Ansell designates them as ‘a skein of practices, values and loyalties that are essential to the very meaning of the institutions’ (Ansell 2011, 37).

Conclusion

Without excluding other methods, Deliberative Policy Analysis begins to converge on an identifiable and replicable methodological approach: Designed Deliberative Platforms, the enhancement of the deliberative capacity of policy systems, and institutional design-in-practice.⁶ Design-in-practice is the mother lode of all three methods (Kimbell 2012). Design-in-practice does not conceive of designers, or policy analysts in our parlance, as the main agent in design, but instead opens the process up to officials, citizens, and other stakeholders who, through their practices, are an intrinsic part of the problem at hand (Kimbell 2012, 135). It understands designers/analysts as ‘practitioners being in the world and their relation to other social actors including artifacts and other social practices and institutions’ (Kimbell 2011, 298). This relational, decentred view of design and analysis corresponds with both the theory and practice of DPA as a methodology that fits the dynamic complexity, essential indeterminacy, and dense interconnectedness of policy systems, and that accords with the continuity between policy analysis and policy practice.

These methods represent an important step forward in the development of DPA. That said, some important unresolved issues remain. For example, DPA claims that it provides a strategy for dealing with complexity, but its theory of complexity, and its implications for policymaking, policy inquiry, and democratic governance, reflects the underdeveloped state of the art in this field. Second, DPA describes itself as a normative-empirical programme, but its ethics are underspecified. Part of these ethics are internal to the programme. These are the well-known normative principles of deliberation as a special kind of communication (reason-giving, attentive listening, mutual respect, and non-coercion) as well as the ethics of interpretation.

⁶ And utopian re-imagination. See footnote 3.

Fay describes the latter as striving for enhanced communication and professing respect for the life world of the subjects of inquiry (Fay 1975)—to which I add that this injunction should extend to *all* subjects of inquiry, including natural objects and future generations. However, DPA also embodies a situated ethics. These are the values that emerge in the situation at hand and reflect the challenges that actors face, their needs and desires, and the affordances and constraints that frame their choice architecture. At present, DPA does not offer a coherent understanding of, and approach to, integrating contextualized values into policy inquiry.

Finally, an endemic risk of policy analysis is that its results are not adopted or acknowledged by officials in the policy subsystem (see also Li and He 2016, 241). This is because the output of analysis suffers the effects of cognitive dissonance, does not accord with the political mandate of these officials, is considered by policy practitioners to be irrelevant to their needs or lacking in authority, or because the input from the larger policy subsystem is more urgent than the results of analysis. In other words, critical, interpretive analysis is not ‘transformative by default’ (Bartels et al. 2020a, 397). If it aspires to be more than just an epistemic innovation, DPA needs to position itself more clearly as a critical-interventionist approach to democratic enhancement. DPA as design-in-practice seeks to enhance the effectiveness of policy analysis by prioritizing the establishment of new interactions within the policy subsystem, and by involving citizens, politicians, and administrators as co-designers. DPA has successfully invited a rethinking of the role(s) of the policy analyst, as less, or perhaps more precisely not just, a producer of quantitative or interpretive, scientific knowledge, a consultant in policy design (Howlett 2011) or a provider of policy arguments (Majone 1992), but more a knowledge broker, change agent, and designer and facilitator of deliberative inquiry, evolutionary learning, and democratic process (Ansell 2011; Bourgon 2011; Bartels and Wittmayer 2018, 9). Yet, DPA has still to demonstrate more convincingly the practical feasibility of these roles in the institutionalized landscape of public policymaking.

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Action Research

Kiran Cunningham and Lillian Muyomba-Tamale

Action research is a form of research in which knowledge claims are co-generated with community members with the goal of taking action to promote social change and social analysis (Greenwood and Levin 2006, 5). It is a methodology well-suited to deliberative democracy as they share similar commitments, assumptions, and underlying values. Both action research and deliberative democracy are grounded in principles of inclusion and equality, aimed at the co-generation of knowledge, and oriented towards action. While action research may not be the best methodology for studies *on* deliberative democracy, it is a particularly suitable methodology *for* deliberative democracy. By this we mean that while research *on* deliberative democracy is more likely to be done at a distance, action research, as this chapter illustrates, is part of the deliberative democratic process itself.

Deliberative democracy, according to James Fishkin, ‘is the practical answer to the philosophical question: What would the people think should be done if they could consider key issues under good conditions for thinking about them?’ (2018, 1). Theorizing and experimenting with the creation of these good conditions is the work of scholars and practitioners in the deliberative democracy field. Within this field, ‘public engagement’ is the term used to encompass a range of methods for creating these good conditions for people to be brought together to address issues of public importance (Nabatchi and Amsler 2014). In this sense, action research is a methodology for deliberative public engagement.

Methodologically, action research aligns with critical theory and feminism in its commitments to emancipatory knowledge-seeking and approach to research participants, who are considered not subjects but rather collaborative agents in the research process (see Harding 1987). In action research, research partners have the power to shape, interpret, and act on co-generated knowledge. Writing about the intersections between action research and feminist methodology, Colleen Reid points to their ontological and epistemological coherence, as both ‘seek to shift the centre from which knowledge is generated’ and ‘share an avowed intent to work for social justice and democratization’ (2004, 4). It is also possible to draw similar parallels between action research and deliberative democracy, where the purpose of research is also to contribute to democracy. Scholars advocating for action research in the field of deliberative democracy include feminists like Marian Barnes, who

give activism, passions, and practical politics a central place in deliberative practice's account of justice (see Barnes 2008). Bringing action research into the field of deliberative democracy is also an important step towards enacting Hammond's call for deliberative democracy to embody democratic critical theory through an inclusivity that moves beyond mere participation, and a reflexivity grounded in a keen awareness of the structures of power at play in any setting where the researcher or facilitator shapes the framework of a deliberative exercise (Hammond 2019; see also Curato et al. 2018).

While there are varieties of action research, in this chapter we draw particularly on the form of action research described in Davydd Greenwood and Morten Levin's *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (2006), and Ernest Stringer's *Action Research* (2007). Greenwood and Levin provide an excellent discussion of the history and epistemology of the action research methodology. Stringer, on the other hand, provides a how-to approach to action research. Both ground their discussions of action research in an epistemological framework that will resonate with scholars and practitioners of deliberative democracy. Greenwood and Levin, for instance, describe the action research process as one of 'democratic inquiry where professional researchers collaborate with participants in the effort to seek and enact solutions to problems of major importance to the local people' (2006, 62). They go on to enumerate the following five principles that guide the methodology:

1. Action research is context bound and addresses real-life problems.
2. Action research treats the diversity of experiences and capacities within the local group as an opportunity for the enrichment of the research-action process.
3. Action research is inquiry where participants and researchers co-generate knowledge through collaborative communicative processes in which all participants' contributions are taken seriously.
4. The meanings constructed in the inquiry lead to social action, or these reflections on action lead to the construction of new meanings.
5. The credibility-validity of action research knowledge is measured according to whether actions that arise from it solve problems (workability) and increase participants' control over their own situation.

(Greenwood and Levin 2006, 63)

Ernest Stringer's discussion of action research deepens that of Greenwood and Levin by emphasizing the social values that underpin it (Stringer 2007). He describes it as a process of inquiry that is democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing. Echoing many of Greenwood and Levin's points, Stringer emphasizes the iterative nature of this kind of research:

AR [action research] works on the assumption that all stakeholders—those whose lives are affected by the problem under study—should be engaged in the processes of investigation. Stakeholders participate in a process of rigorous inquiry, acquiring information (collecting data) and reflecting on that information (analyzing) to transform their understanding about the nature of the problem under investigation (theorizing). This new set of understandings is then applied to plans for resolution of the problem (action), which, in turn, provides the context for testing hypotheses derived from group theorizing.

(Stringer 2007, 10–11)

Action research, in sum, begins with real-life problems, an understanding of which is arrived at through deliberative processes that then lead to new meanings out of which stem social actions (Cunningham and Leighninger 2010, 63). More than a methodology to simply investigate the processes and impacts of deliberation, action research is a method for simultaneously engaging in it, as deliberation is embedded in the action research process itself (Cunningham and McKinney 2010).

Thus, action research is a methodology *for* deliberative democracy, though the data generated through the process can also be useful for gaining insight into the process itself. In this sense, then, one could argue that the action research methodology is useful in conducting research both *for* and *on* deliberative democracy, but it is important to underscore that the latter is always intertwined with the former. This is best understood through an illustration of its use. To that end, we draw from our experiences designing and implementing the Civic Engagement Action Plan process, an initiative of the Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE), a public policy research and advocacy think tank in Uganda. Through this discussion, we illustrate the common assumptions and theoretical underpinnings of action research and deliberative democracy, the way that action research furthers deliberative democracy, and the ways that data generated through the action research process can be analysed and used.

Action Research and Deliberative Democracy: The Case of the Civic Engagement Action Plan in Uganda

In this section, we provide an example of how action research is used in both designing and analysing a deliberative process in Uganda, by focusing on the way that Civic Engagement Action Plans (CEAPs) are developed in this country. CEAPs are exemplary of both the practice of deliberative democracy and action research. Initiated as deliberative processes by governments together with research institutions that pursue action research, CEAPs are social accountability tools that enable citizens to constructively engage with their elected leaders to hold them accountable and to demand effective delivery of public services. They are an outcome of civic engagement

meetings that are facilitated by civil society organizations and researchers to share service delivery standards with citizens¹.

There are three major stakeholders in the CEAP process: citizens, local government officials, and researchers. The citizens, together with their elected leaders, identify local service delivery gaps and develop plans for engaging the district council to address the gaps. Local government councils respond to citizen demands for better service delivery and accountability. The researchers, who are associated with local civil society, facilitate the process and act as intermediaries between the citizens and the local governments by monitoring local government response to citizen demands. The CEAP process includes mobilization of participants, organizing civic engagement meetings, identifying the most pressing service delivery concerns, agreeing on the best strategy for engagement, and finally, monitoring the implementation of the strategies and the local government's response.

The purpose of the CEAPs is to enhance the capacity of government to respond to citizens' demands for better service delivery. Conceptually, CEAPs fall under the umbrella of *deliberative civic engagement*, which includes 'processes that enable citizens, civic leaders, and government officials to come together in public spaces where they can engage in constructive, informed, and decisive dialogue about important public issues' (Nabatchi et al. 2012, 7). Underneath the deliberative civic engagement umbrella, the CEAP process fits squarely within the more specific category of *direct public engagement in local governance*, defined by Nabatchi and Amsler (2014, 65S) as 'in-person and online processes that allow members of the public . . . in a county, city, town, village, or municipal authority to personally and actively exercise voice such that their ideas, concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into governmental decision making'.

What is particularly noteworthy for the purposes of this chapter is that CEAPs are grounded in action research; they are designed to move beyond deliberation to ensuring action. As such, they are also a social accountability strategy in that they are aimed towards improving institutional performance by bolstering both citizen engagement and the public responsiveness of local governments (Fox 2014, 7). Consistent with the findings of research on essential elements of effective social accountability initiatives (Grandvoininnet et al. 2015b; Grandvoininnet et al. 2015a), and in keeping with action research and deliberative democratic principles of inclusion, the CEAP process involves citizens, leaders of civil society organizations, and government officials, and seeks to create a relationship between these three sets of players that is circular and ongoing.

Jonathan Fox (2014) discusses the importance of 'sandwich strategies' that create a 'pro-accountability power shift' through 'state-society synergy'. He argues that,

¹ The CEAPs were developed in the context of ACODE's Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative (LGCSCI) and subsequently expanded to ACODE's Center for Budget and Economic Governance (CBEG), and later to all of ACODE's programmes and projects.

While initial opportunities for change are necessarily context-driven and can be created either from society or from the state, the main determinant of a subsequent pro-accountability power shift is whether or not pro-change actors in one domain can empower the others—thereby triggering a virtuous circle . . . of mutual empowerment.

(Fox 2014, 32)

The CEAP process was designed to trigger this virtuous circle of mutual empowerment by involving citizens, civil society organizations, and local government officials in a direct public engagement process oriented towards change. Through the CEAP process, citizens deepen their understanding of the mandated roles and responsibilities of their local elected officials, better understand their own rights and responsibilities as citizens, and gain experience using tools of civic engagement. Because CEAPs are facilitated by district researchers affiliated with civil society organizations, these individuals and organizations deepen their capacities to be important intermediaries between citizens and local government officials. They also play the complementary role of helping government deliver on its mandate. In this role, they both amplify citizens' voices and monitor government response to civic action. Government officials, too, benefit from the CEAP process since they are able to engage with a more informed citizenry and receive demands from citizens in a timely manner and in forms that they can use. Notably, since 2016–2017, when the CEAP process was implemented in all thirty-five districts where ACODE conducts performance assessments of district councils using an evidence-based scorecard process, average scores for councils in the areas of monitoring service delivery and engagement with the electorate increased by 70 per cent and almost 30 per cent, respectively (Bainomugisha et al. 2020).

The five steps in the CEAP process are: (1) participant mobilization; (2) issue identification; (3) information sharing; (4) action planning; and (5) support and monitoring. In keeping with the action research framework, and consistent with direct public engagement processes, the facilitation of each step must be deeply participatory, involving community leaders and local government officials representing the communities in which the CEAPs will be conducted. Moreover, through the process, knowledge generation and action are tied together not just in a way that applies existing knowledge, but in a way wherein the research itself generates new meanings for all participants, leads to social action, and results in improved delivery of public services in the areas of education, health, water and sanitation, roads, and agricultural services. All along the way, researchers affiliated with civil society organizations facilitate the co-generation of knowledge, share relevant data and information for deliberation, record the knowledge generated, and monitor government responsiveness. The resulting data are both qualitative (fieldnotes and case studies) and quantitative (tracking sheets). These data are analysed so as to understand what is and is not working and, in keeping with the iterative nature of action research, to inform the ongoing recalibration of the CEAP process.

Rather than describing each of the steps in detail, we provide an excerpt from one of the case studies that takes us through the process as it unfolded in one of the communities. It should be noted that within the rural Ugandan context, inequalities along age and gender lines can make it difficult for women and youth to have their voice heard and considered. For that reason, during the action-planning step, the larger group is divided into smaller groups of women, men, and youth. The following example comes from one of the groups of women.

Nawaikoke is one of the rural sub-counties of Kaliro District in the Eastern part of Uganda. The main economic activity of the residents of Nawaikoke sub-county is agriculture. Over recent years, the sub-county has continued to suffer from low productivity and yield from agricultural practices due to long droughts resulting from climate change, land fragmentation, and depleted soil quality. A CEAP session was convened on 11 July 2017 to discuss service delivery issues and the roles of both citizen and local government officials in ensuring that services are delivered efficiently, effectively, and equitably. During the deliberation, criticism of the disbursement of agricultural inputs through Operation Wealth Creation (OWC)—Uganda’s agricultural extension system at that time—arose as a particularly significant issue. Citizens pointed out that women were often left out during the distribution of seeds by OWC staff, and that seeds were distributed during off-season for planting. The women in the group developed an action plan for writing a letter to the district councillor representing Nawaikoke sub-county to bring to his attention their discontent with the manner in which seeds were being distributed to beneficiaries. As part of their action plan, the group convened another meeting on 17 July 2017 to draft the letter. The letter written during this meeting, with the attendance list attached, was delivered directly to their elected councillor. Upon receipt of the letter, he pledged to forward their issues to the Coordinator of the OWC programme and provide the group with necessary feedback. In his capacity as the area councillor, he wrote a letter to the office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) informing him of the citizen letter he received. The Senior Assistant Secretary, on behalf of the CAO’s office, wrote a letter to the office of the Coordinator of OWC requesting that the Coordinator allocate seedlings as requested by the group of women from Nawaikoke. The councillor provided feedback on the process to the women’s group, noting that the OWC Coordinator verbally made a commitment that he would prioritize this particular women’s group in the next distribution cycle of seeds, even though they had not organized themselves as an official farmers’ group as required by OWC implementation guidelines. During the month of September 2017, the women’s group reported that they had received the agriculture inputs as promised. Specifically, they received 130 kilograms of maize seeds and 60 kilograms of bean seeds. Moreover, the women’s group has now been recognized as an official farmers’ group and will therefore be eligible to receive disbursements of inputs in future.

In this example, the entire CEAP process unfolded over a roughly two-month period, beginning with what we refer to as the CEAP session on 11 July. The researcher plays an important role throughout the entire process, beginning with mobilization of the CEAP participants, moderating the community meeting, and finally working with the local government to follow up on the progress of the action plan. In other words, the researcher attached to the civil society organization acts as an intermediary between the citizens and the local government council to improve service delivery. It is the role of the researcher to ensure that the meeting is not dominated by the political leaders by encouraging citizens to share their concerns. The initial session is the piece of the CEAP process most closely aligned with processes falling under the deliberative civic engagement umbrella, as it is in this session that citizens, community leaders, and government officials come together in a public space to engage in dialogue about pressing public issues. The outcome of that session is a set of action plans for using one of the tools of civic engagement, in this case a group letter, to request a resolution of a salient service delivery issue. In the example above, the first step in the action plan developed by the women was to convene a meeting with a broader group of women in the area on 17 July to draft the letter. This is a meeting that the civil society organization-affiliated researcher also attends and supports as needed. Fieldnotes were taken on the initial CEAP session and all subsequent meetings. Following the submission of the letter on 20 July, the researcher periodically conducted monitoring visits at district headquarters to interview key government officials about the status of the community request and recorded information gleaned through these monitoring visits in a tracking sheet on a weekly basis. This case example incorporates both fieldnotes and tracking data.

In addition to cases like this where issues were resolved through local government responsiveness to community demand, there were also many cases—unexpectedly—where the CEAP process led to communities resolving issues on their own. In one community, for example, the issue of overgrown roads was identified as a problem affecting people's access to markets and health services. A youth group from the community decided to organize a workday and clear the bush from the problem areas. In another community, the issue of pupil absenteeism due to illegal child labour practices in a nearby quarry came to the fore. A group of women decided to resolve the issue by going to the quarry and confronting its operators and threatening to call the police if they continued to employ children. The practice halted immediately, and the children were back in school the next day. There were also many cases where the elected leaders present at the CEAP sessions were able to take the issues back to the district and get the issues resolved without the need for a formal petition or letter. In all these cases, the researcher maintained close contact with the community and was therefore able to document the progress even in situations where solutions were provided to the citizens in record time.

This description of the CEAP process illustrates the parallel assumptions between action research and deliberative democracy. The process was inclusive, designed to

co-generate knowledge and new understandings of community issues, and oriented towards action. Moreover, consistent with processes falling under the deliberative civic engagement umbrella, the CEAP process created opportunities for citizens, civil society leaders, and government officials to engage in constructive and decisive dialogue about public concerns. Through this process, citizens identified service delivery issues and used the tools of civic engagement to raise their concerns and hold their leaders accountable for addressing them. In many cases, the deliberations themselves led to citizens and/or government officials taking action to resolve the identified issues without the need for letters and petitions.

Generation, Analysis, and Use of Action Research Data

Typical of action research, the data generated through the implementation and tracking of the action plans have been used in a number of ways. Examples include advocacy work with local and central government officials, identification and initiation of promising local governance practices, documentation of outcomes, and the iterative understanding and improving of the process itself.

Understanding and advocating for citizens' service delivery priorities. An analysis of the content of the 385 action plans developed by citizens across the thirty-five districts in 2017 led to an understanding of citizens' service delivery priorities. Access to health care was the focus of 108 of the plans; 89 plans focused on water; 76 on education; 69 on roads; and 19 on agriculture. Within each of these service delivery areas, the data point to issues of specific concern. The top three issues in the health sector, for example, were inadequate service provision at the health centres, having to walk long distances to the health centres, and inadequate supply of medicines, in that order. Within the water sector, the most pressing issues identified for action were too few water sources, contamination of water sources, and dysfunctional water sources. Armed with this kind of information, the district researchers, and ACODE more generally, have pressed decision makers at both the national and district levels to prioritize these issues in terms of both resource allocation and action.

Tracking progress and refining the process. The tracking data generated through the support and monitoring phase of the CEAP process are useful in gaining insight into the process itself, and in identifying which elements should be maximized and which need to be rethought. Tracking data on the 385 action plans, for example, were analysed to determine which tools of civic engagement (petitions, letters, meetings, SMS messages, etc.) were most likely to lead to government responsiveness. That analysis, which showed that petitions were the most effective tool, has led to more emphasis being placed on that particular tool. A petition template was developed and recent CEAP sessions have included more discussion about what Uganda's Local Government Act has to say about how petitions should be submitted, received, and addressed in district council proceedings. Equipped with this information, citizens

are better able to hold their leaders accountable for responding to their petitions. Moreover, collecting the tracking data is itself a form of accountability as the civil society organization researchers monitor government response.

Understanding particularly powerful elements of the process. Data analyses also point to elements of the public engagement process that are critical for productive outcomes. For instance, analysis of the transcripts of interviews with local government officials as part of the monitoring process, and fieldnotes from CEAP sessions and subsequent check-ins with community groups, pointed to the importance of local government leaders' involvement in all phases of the direct public engagement process. By design, the CEAP methodology has local elected leaders engaged from the very beginning in mobilizing their constituents for the community meetings. They are also expected to attend the CEAP meetings to share information about the district development plans, explain their role in overseeing service delivery, and respond to citizen queries. Not only does this level of engagement lead to increased buy-in on the part of elected leaders, an increased level of citizen trust in their leaders, and an increase in confidence on the part of citizens that their engagement is worthwhile, data showed that it can also make local government more efficient. An interview with the Speaker of Council in one district, for example, noted substantial savings in resources allocated for monitoring service delivery because the majority of his councillors were attending CEAP meetings where concerns could be raised and feedback and updates provided.

Documenting change and sharing promising practices. Data generated through the monitoring process have also shed light on how council deliberations are changing as a result of the CEAP. Evidence from thirty-two out of thirty-five district council meeting minutes where CEAPs were implemented revealed that most of the service delivery issues raised in the CEAPs were discussed during the council meetings. Analysis of the data also identified practices that can be shared with other districts. In the year before the CEAPs were implemented, data collected through ACODE's Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative revealed that only one of the thirty participating districts had received a petition from citizens. By the end of 2018, districts were receiving an average of five petitions per year, and Speakers of Council in all of the twenty districts monitored confirmed that citizens' concerns raised in petitions and letters now form a regular part of the agenda for council meetings. In Nebbi District in Northern Uganda, the deliberation of citizens' concerns in council meetings even led to prioritizing citizens' concerns about water and education in the Financial Year (FY) 2018/19 budget. After receiving a petition from citizens in one sub-county, which suggested funds be allocated towards drilling, construction, and rehabilitation of boreholes in thirteen villages, the council allocated UGX 336 million (US\$90,000) for the work. Citizens in another community in Nebbi drafted a petition to the district council requesting that the council allocate UGX 15 million (US\$4,000) to support regular inspection of schools as a means of curbing rampant teacher absenteeism. In response, the district allocated UGX

52.1 million (US\$14,000) in the district budget for FY 2018/19 for both inspection and monitoring of government-aided schools. The actions by Nebbi District Council have been shared with other districts as evidence of how the principles and practices of responsiveness can be embedded into the way councils do their business. These actions were shared during the sessions when results of the performance scorecard were disseminated in each of the thirty-five districts where ACODE's Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative (LGCSCI) is implemented. They were also shared with the Uganda Local Government Association, which then disseminated the information to the other eighty districts in Uganda where LGCSCI is not in operation.

Understanding and addressing shortcomings of the process. Data also point to the shortcomings in the process. For example, in nine of the twenty districts monitored in 2018, Speakers of Council had not provided feedback to petitioners upon receiving their petitions. This affected the subsequent round of CEAPs when a number of community members in these districts claimed that the previous processes had not yielded much, and they were no longer eager to engage with their elected leaders. The frustration was not so much because their service delivery concerns had not been addressed, but rather because there was no response at all from their elected leaders. In response to these findings, researchers worked with Speakers of Council in the nine districts to strengthen the feedback mechanism. The monitoring data also revealed that information received from citizens did not make it through appropriate channels in seven of the twenty districts. In one district, for example, the council chair informed the CEAP monitoring team about a decision that had been taken by the District Executive Committee regarding resources allocated for the establishment of youth-friendly corners in all health facilities. In a separate meeting with the District Health Officer, he noted that he was not privy to this information, yet he is responsible for implementing the decision. When the district researcher followed up with the chairperson, he admitted that his office had not interfaced with the technical staff, but pledged to make improvements in this area. In both these examples, research findings led to improvements in local governance practices and to improvements in the CEAP process as areas for additional capacity building were identified.

Conclusion

Action research is not just a methodology to study the processes and practices of deliberative democracy; the former is a vehicle for the latter. Enabling members of the public to exercise their voice, such that their ideas, concerns, and needs are incorporated into governmental decision-making, the CEAP process and action research are examples of 'direct public engagement' in action (Nabatchi and Amsler 2014). In this methodology, the lines between research and deliberative action are

blurred. The research itself is designed to engage participants in the co-generation of knowledge that leads to social action (Greenwood and Levin 2006) through a research process that is democratic, equitable, and life-enhancing (Stringer 2007). As the CEAP example shows, the data generated through the deliberative public engagement process can be either qualitative or quantitative, and analysed and used in any number of ways. The data can provide the basis for formative and summative assessments of the public engagement process, advocacy work by civil society organizations or the communities themselves, holding governments accountable for the provision of public services, and the identification of promising practices for replication by other actors.

While action research is an excellent methodology *for* deliberative democracy, it is not so well-suited as a methodology for research *on* deliberative democracy. That is, it is less able to analyse deliberative processes from a distance because action research is a methodology that is connected to both the design and implementation of the deliberative process itself. Thus, it would not be a good choice for analysing the effectiveness of parliamentary debates or public engagement components of local government meetings. Rather, as the discussion and case study presented in this chapter demonstrate, action research is a methodology that generates data through the deliberative process itself. When fused together, the shared commitments to inclusion and equity, the co-generation of knowledge, and social change are centred and enacted through the research process itself.

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Community of Inquiry

Kei Nishiyama

Interviewing is a popular social research method because it allows researchers to understand the subjectivity of participants. However, interviews can also reinforce existing power relations between researchers and respondents, especially if the respondents come from vulnerable or marginalised communities (Auerswald et al. 2017). One way to address this is to translate deliberative democracy's norms into a research method that places equality, reason-exchange, and listening in the foreground. This is the case with so-called deliberative interviews (Berner-Rodoreda et al. 2018). The *Community of Inquiry* (CoI) introduced in this chapter offers one example of this approach, designed with a specific focus on minimizing the risk of unequal power relations. CoI was originally pioneered by pragmatist philosophers such as John Dewey (1938) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1955), as a question- and listening-centred deliberation. In CoI, participants discuss a common topic by exchanging and weighing reasons, as well as by questioning and listening to each other for the purposes of gaining a deeper understanding of the topic at hand. Participants serve *both* as interviewers and interviewees without the researcher's active involvement. They engage not only in responding to questions but also in the activities of questioning, listening, and reflecting.

For deliberative democratic researchers who use in-depth interviews to understand and examine the subjective views and lived experiences of deliberators, the idea of CoI is instructive. Rather than conducting usual one-to-one interviews, the researcher applies deliberative norms to a group interview to help interviewees examine their views and behaviours in and around deliberative forums in a non-coercive and non-oppressive fashion, which is a key source of ethically trustworthy and analytically useful data. In my own research on deliberation in schools, for example, I used CoI to understand students' deliberative experiences in and beyond the classroom by mitigating various power imbalances between students and the researcher (Nishiyama 2018, 2019). Based on my own research experience, this chapter shows how question- and listening-centred deliberation enabled by CoI, coupled with participants' roles as both facilitators and interviewers, can help to realize the epistemic and inclusive aspects of deliberative interviews. To this end, this chapter outlines the theory behind CoI and offers a step-by-step practical guide for its implementation in practice. Importantly, unlike other methods in this book which are used to understand deliberation, CoI uses deliberation as a method to gain useful data for deliberative research.

Deliberative Interviews

Deliberative interviews are a practical application of deliberative norms to an interview method that emphasizes the significance of equality, reason-exchange, and listening during an interview process. This method is theoretically rooted in Svend Brinkmann's idea of epistemic interviews. Brinkmann (2007) divides qualitative interview styles into two categories: *doxastic* and *epistemic*. Doxastic interviews are single interviews in which there is a one-way relationship between interviewers and interviewees. The relationship in doxastic interviews is similar to the clerk–customer relationship that is based on the assumption that the client is always right. Interruptions, expressions of disagreement, critical questions, and stating opinions in response to interviewees' experiences on the part of the interviewer are prohibited because doxastic interviews aim to understand the research subject as accurately as possible. Examples of this type of interview include narrative interviews, oral histories, phenomenological interviews, and ethnographic interviews (Bernier-Rodoreda et al. 2018).¹

Epistemic interviews differ from doxastic interviews in their understanding of knowledge. While doxastic interviews regard interviewees as knowledge-holders who must be listened to and not challenged, epistemic interviews presuppose that knowledge is constructed through the interaction between interviewers and interviewees. Epistemic interviews are sometimes called Socratic interviews. Following a Socratic approach, a deliberative interviewer actively asks questions, requires the justification of positions, and identifies assumptions in order to understand the underlying values, beliefs, and preferences of the respondents in a dialectical and dialogical manner. Thus, epistemic interviewers assume that knowledge is not something waiting to be discovered, but a product of interpersonal exchange. Epistemic interviews value the process of critical and reflective examination of interviewees' lived experiences; hence epistemic interviewers play a more active role. Sometimes they challenge the interviewees' opinions and allow interviewees to challenge interviewers. They ask various questions to clarify the consistency of arguments and underlying assumptions.

Epistemic interviews can be practised in different forms, such as active interviews or confrontational interviews.² *Deliberative* interviews, a practical application

¹ While Brinkmann (2007) is critical of doxastic interviews, it is fair to say that doxastic interviews play a meaningful role in building and sustaining rapport with interviewees, especially when the interview is conducted in challenging settings. Vulnerable individuals (e.g. disaster victims, refugees) often need a space for expressing their feelings and emotions and being heard without interruption, and such doxastic interviews enable a researcher to approach the reality of interviewees (Auerwald et al. 2017). Kohli's (2009) argument on the ethics of researching with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children offers valuable insight to understand this point.

² Active interviews are one method in which an interviewer treats interviewees not as a repository of knowledge but as a constructor of knowledge. In this interview, an interviewer engages in *collaborative* communications to assist an interviewee's narrative production and reflective examination on his/her own experiences (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Confrontational interviews are one example of an active

of deliberative theory to the interview method, offers another form of epistemic interview (Berner-Rodoreda et al. 2018; Curato 2012). Deliberative interviews follow the norms and ideals of deliberative democratic theory. First of all, deliberative interviews are *inclusive*. In the context of a group interview, the interviewer should provide participants with an equal opportunity to present and justify their position, to reflectively examine their beliefs, values, or preferences, and, most importantly, to be heard by others. Interviewees are encouraged to reason together, to ask questions to clarify the meaning of what has been said, and, if necessary, to disagree with each other, so that they collaboratively reach a clearer and deeper knowledge of their lived experience. Without listening, which is the requirement of respecting different opinions and the desire to understand others, deliberative interviews may end up as tokenistic conversations rather than offering an opportunity for intersubjective understanding. In addition, to make deliberative interviews inclusive, interviewers allow interviewees to express their views with various forms of reasoning, including not only verbal expressions (e.g. storytelling) but also non-verbal reasoning (e.g. facial expressions, gestures).

The second important principle of deliberative interviews is that they are oriented towards what Curato (2012, 579–580) calls *public spiritedness*. Deliberative interviews do not address private experiences but discuss public issues or, in Curato's terms, 'common human interests.' Interviewees may still speak about their private experiences. Yet, what is important in deliberative interviews is that participants explain and justify (1) how their private experiences relate to the common topic, and (2) why their stories and narratives are worth considering together in a deliberative community, even if their experience is not directly related to common interests. As such, deliberative interviews can be conceptualized as 'the joint search for a better understanding' (Berner-Rodoreda et al. 2018, 6). Interviewers and interviewees are asked to consider the relationship between their lived experiences and the common topic to jointly share and examine the experiences.

Deliberative interviews do not sit well with positivist approaches because deliberative interviews assume that knowledge is reflectively constructed through interpersonal interactions, rather than waiting to be discovered through hypothesis testing (Berner-Rodoreda et al. 2018). Instead, deliberative interviews correspond with a constructivist, or so-called interpretive epistemology. That is, knowledge, the meaning of actions, and experience emerge within a broader historical, social, and cultural context (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). As with deliberative interviews, interviews used in interpretive research value the active and deliberative involvement of the interviewer. The interviewer's active involvement provides an opportunity for the interviewee to examine the meaning of his or her knowledge and experiences (Kvale 2007; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). However, while interpretive interviews have

interview, but its focus is an *agonistic* aspect of communication. In confrontational interviews, an interviewer challenges an interviewee's views and narratives to critically examine his/her lived experiences from multiple angles (Kvale 2007).

no specific normative agenda, deliberative interviews follow the specific norms of deliberative democracy. Hence, one could say that deliberative interviews offer a normative framework for interpretive research (see also [Curato 2012](#)).

Power Imbalances in Deliberative Interviews

As we have seen, deliberative interviews can offer meaningful contributions to studying social phenomena. Before we move on to the question of how to implement deliberative interviews, it is necessary to consider an ethical question that is at the heart of the study of deliberative democracy—namely the question of *power*. We need to ask: how can deliberative interviews mitigate power imbalances between interviewers and interviewees?

Following the normative principles of deliberative democracy, it is important to take power into consideration—not only in society at large but also in particular research settings. As already indicated, deliberative interviews should be an inclusive practice. However, critics have argued that deliberation can reinforce asymmetrical power relations in the real world. For example, [Sanders \(1997\)](#) argues that deliberation can potentially reproduce or even amplify existing hierarchies because deliberation can advantage the communication style of the majority. Also, some people may not receive an equal opportunity or equal hearing in deliberative processes. [Karpowitz and Mendelberg \(2014\)](#), for example, show how existing deliberative forums shape and reinforce male-centric communication rules and behaviours, and how this can have the effect of silencing women's voices.

The prevailing inequalities and power imbalances may become even more complicated with the active involvement of the researcher in the interview process ([Kvale 2006](#)). This could be the case especially in situations where interviews are undertaken with marginalized or vulnerable individuals (see [Allen 2017](#); [Danaher et al. 2013](#)). Consider, for example, interviews with children ([Auerswald et al. 2017](#); [Kohli 2009](#); [Nishiyama 2018](#)). Deliberative interviewers pose a series of questions to clarify the assumptions, values, beliefs or preferences that underlie interviewees' actions, which can make children feel uneasy as they might perceive the interviewer as an inquisitor ([Auerswald et al. 2017](#); [Ebrahim 2010](#)). In this situation, child interviewees often use various 'counterstrategies' ([Nishiyama 2018](#)) to cut off the interview, including maintaining their silence, smiling without responding, or using noncommittal utterances such as 'hmm'. Put simply, children often dislike interview situations in which 'children have less control' ([Punch 2002](#), 328).

Asymmetrical power relations can also be observed in group deliberative interviews. Children who have a leadership role in their class may dominate in group interviews. As [Graham et al. \(2012, 12–13\)](#) indicate, 'some children would dominate the interviews and while the researchers attempted to address this, some less vocal children would simply agree with statements made by their partners

(Yes, me too). These group dynamics may affect the quality of deliberation in deliberative interviews. This sort of deliberation is problematic precisely because opposing and minority voices are not heard at all. As critics of deliberative democracy have warned (e.g. [Sunstein 2000](#)), such deliberation may risk producing extreme opinions.

One particularly promising way of taking power imbalances into account and conducting deliberative interviews is suggested by the idea and practice of Community of Inquiry. The next section focuses on the theoretical dimensions of CoI with a specific focus on its application in the context of deliberative interviews. This is followed by an illustration of how CoI can be adapted in practice.

The Concept of Community of Inquiry

CoI was originally suggested as a purely philosophical concept by early pragmatists, such as John Dewey, Charles Peirce, and Jane Addams, as a way to challenge the transcendental conceptualization of knowledge. Advocates of CoI are critical of the idea of universal knowledge independent of one's lived experience, pointing out that knowledge is the product of critical and reflective examination of experiences ([Dewey 1938](#); [Peirce 1955](#)). Drawing upon the principle of fallibilism, pragmatist philosophers argue that knowledge is always open to new interpretation and reflective modification, and therefore it is crucial not to search for 'true' knowledge but rather to share and examine one's knowledge from multiple angles in the process of communication ([Peirce 1955](#)). Ontologically, CoI is grounded in the idea that knowledge is socially and discursively constructed, and epistemologically such knowledge can be approached and modified only through communicative interactions ([Nishiyama 2018](#)).

In practice, CoI takes the form of group dialogue. In response to a difficult question, a group of individuals create a community where they participate in a process of critical examination of the key concepts behind the question by drawing on their own experiences, learning with each other by listening to what others say—a process whereby an intersubjective agreement on the resolution of the question emerges (see [Seixas 1993](#)). The practice of CoI is applied to various contexts. Matthew Lipman's (2003) idea of a Philosophy for Children (P4C), currently practised in over sixty countries and regions (see [Gregory et al. 2016](#)), is one example of this. Lipman has introduced CoI into educational settings, particularly schools, as part of education for critical thinking. In these collaborative dialogues, students engage in philosophical conceptual analysis, critical examination of their lived experiences, and collaborative knowledge-making.

I have previously suggested that CoI can be used as one form of the focus group interview method ([Nishiyama 2018](#)). As we shall see, however, in contrast with focus groups, CoI puts more emphasis on the reciprocal aspect of deliberative interactions. In what follows, I will suggest that deliberative interviews can benefit from CoI.

I will present four theoretical rationales as to why CoI is a good fit for deliberative interviews, and how it can help to face the challenge of power asymmetries in interview settings.

First, following the logic of deliberative interviews, CoI is a practice of *experience examination* and *knowledge generation*. As discussed above, the main objective of CoI is to examine experience from multiple angles through a collective investigation of values, beliefs, assumptions, and preferences (Lipman 2003). More specifically, CoI facilitates participants' thinking on untested beliefs, stereotypes, and values, to support and question each other for the purpose of gaining deeper understanding. It also promotes listening to the other side in order to understand multiple perspectives on a given topic (Nishiyama 2018). As a result of this collective and cooperative inquiry, participants update their perspectives and generate shared knowledge.

Second, CoI is a *deliberative* practice. To realize the above goal, CoI participants engage in deliberation that includes exchanging and weighing reasons and listening to others. CoI is different from conversation because CoI participants need to explain not only what they think but also *how* they think and *why* they hold particular opinions. In order to clarify each other's untested assumptions, participants share their experiences using their own vocabulary and listening to each other. In Lipman's (2003, 20) terms, the ideal deliberative process in CoI is to 'listen to one another with respect, build one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions'.

Third, CoI is deliberation about *shared and common concerns* (Lipman 2003). CoI participants talk about shared, or broadly public, concerns rather than simply focusing on their personal matters. This does not mean that they should not present their private experiences. Rather, their personal stories need to contribute to the creation of a common understanding. Sometimes, participants are asked to tell their own story as a form of deliberative reason. As a result, CoI brings such public spiritedness to the foreground of deliberation.

Fourth and most importantly, to make the interview process more inclusive and less hierarchical, CoI emphasizes the significance of *reciprocal questioning by participants*. Early pragmatist philosophers argued that knowledge may not be generated or even updated without recognition of different and diverse perspectives (Dewey 1938). In order to understand what sort of different perspectives participants have, CoI participants should engage in questioning in a way that helps their interlocutors examine their experiences and thereby help all participants gain a clearer understanding of the issue in question (Lipman 2003).

A unique aspect of CoI is also that *interviewees*, not *interviewers*, put questions to each other in a reciprocal way to gain a clearer understanding of one another's position. This means that, in CoI, participants serve as quasi-interviewers. While CoI is a form of group interview (Nishiyama 2018), this unique feature can further contribute to making the interview process more inclusive. In focus group interviews, interviewers ask a set of questions whereas interviewees talk (see Morgan 1996).

On the other hand, asking questions in CoI is an interviewee-centric practice. Once someone expresses his or her own view, other participants are encouraged to ask questions—preferably three or four questions are asked by different participants.

While the participant-centric CoI is useful in mitigating vertical power relations between the researcher and other participants, this does not mean that it provides a panacea for all sorts of power imbalances. If the researcher takes a hands-off and uninvolved approach during the inquiry, this may fail to rectify the horizontal power relations amongst the group. The researcher is, therefore, expected to play a crucial role as, what [Dillard \(2013\)](#) calls, a moderate facilitator who is a quasi-participant in deliberation and whose role is to ask questions aimed at eliciting content and providing opportunities to less powerful participants to express their opinions. As such, CoI, coupled with a researcher/facilitator, can enable participants to share power and avoid a situation in which a particular individual dominates the deliberative process.

A Step-by-Step Guide to CoI

Existing literature offers some promising suggestions about how to undertake deliberative interviews. According to [Berner-Rodoreda et al. \(2018, 6\)](#), deliberative interviews are structured around ideas such as ‘reasoning together’, equal speaking time, and so forth. This section adds to their argument by providing a more concrete guide for CoI as deliberative interviews. On the basis of the theory and practice of CoI ([Dewey 1938](#); [Lipman 2003](#); [Peirce 1955](#)) and my own work on CoI as an interpretive interview method ([Nishiyama 2018](#)), I divide the process into six steps:

Step 1: Preparation

As with all interviews, the work starts *before* conducting the interviews ([Kvale 2007](#)). At the beginning of the group deliberation, all participants, including the researcher, sit in a circle so that they can see each other’s faces. To foster a relaxed environment, an icebreaker can be introduced at this stage, such as greetings, self-introduction, 15-second speech, and so forth. As [Young \(2000\)](#) rightly notes, it is recommendable to start deliberation with such activities as they enable participants to recognize the presence of others.

Step 2: Instruction about Deliberative Norms

As indicated by some deliberative scholars (see [Gastil and Levine 2005](#)), instructions about ‘good deliberation’ offered to participants before deliberation takes place can affect the quality of deliberation. Hence, in CoI the researcher provides

a brief introduction about deliberative norms. These norms include, for example, reason-giving, justification of positions, listening, respect for difference. Above all, reciprocal questioning needs to be introduced as the core element of CoI as a deliberative interview practice. The researcher either explains or demonstrates through role play examples of reciprocal questioning that facilitate further collaboration and reflection. For example, [Kono \(2014, 128–129\)](#) suggests the following types of questions:

- a) Clarification (What is the meaning of X?)
- b) Reason (Why do you think so?)
- c) Evidence (For example?)
- d) Authenticity (Why do you think X is true?)
- e) Generalization (I have a different example about X. What do you think about this?)
- f) Clarifying assumption (What makes you think so?)
- g) Inference (If what you have said is true, what will happen then?)

Step 3: Collection and Selection of Questions

At this stage, the researcher introduces the topic of deliberation (e.g. students' self-understanding of democracy). The particular question to be discussed, however, is selected by participants themselves on their own terms. In the question collection phase, each participant is asked to propose at least one question, and the facilitator asks 'why do you propose this question?' to clarify the participant's underlying intention. The questions introduced by interviewees articulate their particular interests in the topic, which provides a meaningful starting point for deepening their collective understanding of the topic. Interviewees are asked to pose as many questions about the topic as possible (e.g. Is there democracy in our school? Why are we not so interested in democracy? What is the meaning of democracy in our lives?) The questions generated by the participants should preferably be open-ended (not yes or no questions and either/or questions) so that everyone can potentially contribute to the deliberation by examining their experience-based knowledge, values, and beliefs. The questions introduced by interviewees are written on a whiteboard so that the question remains visually present during deliberation. It is important for all participants, including the researcher, to understand the underlying values that give meaning to the question. Hence, when each interviewee poses a question, the researcher asks him or her to explain why s/he is interested in this question. Then, interviewees choose the most adequate and/or interesting question by vote or consensus. The selected question serves as the core question of the deliberation. The other generated questions serve as sub-questions that can be referred to during deliberation over the core question.

Step 4: Group Deliberation

All participants deliberate together. They talk, listen, and think together about the selected question through a critical examination of their experiences. Depending on the context, deliberation can take anything from thirty minutes to two hours.

The researcher has a dual role as both the facilitator and guide of the deliberation. As a facilitator, the researcher stimulates participants' question-based interactions. For example, the researcher encourages participants to ask questions once one speaker has expressed their view; proposes questions to assist in a deep examination of expressed experiences; gathers counterexamples; asks for evidence; helps to clarify misunderstandings; addresses what is still unexamined; and helps to refocus the conversation if participants veer off-topic.³ While facilitating deliberation, the researcher also serves as a guide in the deliberation process who ensures the epistemic and inclusive quality of deliberation. To realize epistemic deliberation, the researcher asks participants to give further reasons to clarify their assumptions and positions, and fleshes out incoherence or vagueness in what has been said. To realize inclusiveness, the researcher asks talkative participants to listen and think, provides silent participants with the opportunity to express their view, and encourages participants to take various forms of reasoning (e.g. storytelling, joking, emotion) into account.

Step 5: Analysis of the Content of Deliberation

After the deliberation, the recorded discussions are transcribed. Then the researcher analyses the content by employing analytical methods suited for the respective research purpose. There are various ways of analysing interpretive data, such as qualitative content analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological description, discourse analysis, frame analysis, amongst others (Ercan et al. 2017; Kvale 2007; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012; Wagenaar 2011; see also Boswell, Chapter 23 and Mendonça and Simões, Chapter 24 in this volume).

Conclusion

In this chapter, building upon the existing study of deliberative interviews, I offered the first step-by-step guide to deliberative interviews with a specific focus on CoI. I argued that CoI enables the deliberative interviews to be truer to the principles of deliberative democracy in two important ways.

First, CoI emphasizes the significance of power-sharing through reciprocal questioning undertaken by the interviewees themselves. Interviewees ask questions in a reciprocal manner to share powers in the deliberative community and

³ Some useful facilitative designs are illustrated in Nishiyama et al. (2020).

serve as quasi-interviewers. In doing so, CoI reduces the risk of a particular individual—including the researcher—dominating the deliberative process. Yet, this does not mean that CoI leaves deliberation entirely up to the interviewees. Instead, the second key insight is that even though CoI is an interviewee-centric activity, there are various roles that the researcher must play throughout deliberation. Researchers need to serve as a guide/facilitator who checks whether deliberation is being practised in an inclusive manner and ensures the epistemic quality of deliberation.

In this way, CoI as a deliberative interview method can help deliberative democratic researchers to examine and unpack the views and the contextualized meaning of the experiences of people in and around deliberative forums. However, it would be wise to avoid using CoI when the researcher does not have a firm understanding of what constitutes authentic and inclusive deliberation. In this sense, facilitation in CoI is quite a demanding task, and thus CoI is *not* available for everyone. Also, CoI is not a stand-alone interview method in that it requires the researchers to be familiar with the research subject and field under study. In particular, prior to CoI, the researcher needs to identify who can potentially be (less) powerful during deliberation, and, preferably, establish a rapport with the research subject. In this sense, establishing the conditions under which CoI works effectively requires time and effort, but the potential gains to be had in terms of knowledge and data are significant.

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The Deliberative Camp

Donatella della Porta and Andrea Felicetti

The Deliberative Camp is a novel method of inquiry to investigate the complex and ever-changing ways in which deliberative democracy and social movement politics interact, but also for the promotion of knowledge and activism. This method entails the development of an open space for citizens, including activists, and other actors that might be interested in coming together to discuss a given political problem and envisage future action. Crucially, the Deliberative Camp is inspired by social movements' own practices, departing from the formalized settings of traditional deliberative assemblies. In this sense, the Deliberative Camp can be used as a resource for developing and/or investigating grassroots engagement. In this chapter we focus on the latter aspect and discuss the Deliberative Camp as a method of inquiry to study the role, forms, and qualities of democratic deliberation in social movements. Researchers can rely upon this method (in combination with others) to address a set of research questions, such as: What are the deliberative qualities of citizens' interactions within specific settings? What are democratic deliberation's strengths and weaknesses in the context of social movement politics? Which are the arguments used on specific issues and how can they be combined? Which type of knowledge is produced during the discursive interactions?

The Deliberative Camp represents a particularly timely methodological contribution, given that deliberative democracy and social movements are increasingly interconnected. The long-standing ties between these two fields have recently resulted into substantial cross-fertilization of ideas between social movement studies and research on deliberative democracy. In particular, we have seen a growing number of theoretical and empirical efforts seeking to ascertain the deliberative democratic qualities of movements (e.g. [della Porta and Rucht 2013](#); [Felicetti 2016](#)) and activists' contributions to deliberative systems (e.g. [Curato 2020](#); [Smith 2016](#); [Parry 2017](#)).

Today, scholarly developments are more and more accompanied by sustained interaction between movements and forms of public deliberation in real life ([della Porta and Doerr 2018](#)). With particular focus on progressive social movements, research has long stressed the role of activists in promoting alternatives to representative democracy and demanding democratic participation and deliberation in political institutions. Participatory budgeting is the most well-known and widespread example of this ([Wampler 2010](#)) and Extinction Rebellion's call for Citizens' Assem-

blies to fight climate change is one of the most recent illustrations of the role of social movement actors in spurring democratic innovation (Westwell and Bunting 2020). Furthermore, movements not only express criticism of real, existing democracies and support change, but also experiment with different democratic practices within their own organizational life (della Porta 2013). Activists' recent engagement in prefigurative, innovative, democratic practices, and in forms of deliberative democracy in their own activities (e.g. Mendonça and Ercan 2015), reinforces movements' long-standing interest in experimenting with new forms of democratic life (Polletta 2002).

The Deliberative Camp offers a means to learn from the way democracy is practised in real-life settings. This, in turn, can help in developing what Simone Chambers labels in Chapter 2 of this volume 'applied constructive theory', defining it as a way of theorizing that gives centrality to the operationalization of ideas from a theory and subsequently the development of normative contributions that might advance the original theory. In particular, in order to use the idea of deliberative capacity to study social movements, we need theoretical refinements, which enable us to observe strengths and weaknesses of deliberation in the public sphere. Insight from this type of observation helps us recast our ideas on what we ought to (or cannot) expect from activists and other public sphere actors in deliberative democracy (Felicetti 2016) or even to rethink some essential features of democratic deliberation (Mendonça et al. 2020).

Below we offer a quick glance at some key developments that, besides being important in themselves, have greatly contributed to our own thinking about this method, from Global Justice's social forums of the early 2000s to the recent *acampadas* of the anti-austerity movement. Then, we discuss the basic ideas informing the method and illustrate its potential application in the study of bottom-up responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Movements teach us that being able to adopt and adapt practices and ideas is fundamental for effective democratic engagement. We believe this is an important lesson also for those interested in the empirical study of social movements. Attentiveness to movements' ever-changing practices and a deliberative spirit of critical reflection might well lead researchers and activists alike to revise and improve our proposal. Indeed, as novel practices from movements might offer new means to study deliberation in movements, we encourage researchers to envisage the Deliberative Camp in ways that might, to a greater or lesser extent, depart from the conception we present here.

Social Movements and Research on Democracy

A quick overview of key developments in research on social movements and democracy is necessary in order to understand the genesis of the Deliberative Camp. In this respect, the labour movement in Europe, which developed during the first phases of democratization up to the 1920s, provides a good starting point. Amongst its claims, the labour movement articulated a critique of the then dominant conception of democracy, as based upon (limited) electoral representation, proposing alternative

visions and practices. While struggling for universal enfranchisement, labour movement organizations also contested the representative model, calling for direct forms of democracy and limits upon the delegation of power. As historians such as E. P. Thompson (1991) and William Sewell (1980) have observed, the idea of *direct* democracy was kept alive in the labour movement, with frequent contestation of the increasing bureaucratization of left-wing political parties and trade unions. Direct democracy remained central in the visions and practices of the new social movements that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, criticizing, amongst others, the institutionalization of the Old Left and proposing more *participatory* democratic practices. In promoting their claims, student movements, women's movements, and environmental movements also articulated fundamental critiques of conventional politics, thus shifting attention from politics itself to meta-politics (Offe 1985).

These movements introduced new approaches that departed from the conceptions then dominant in the labour movement. In particular, in grassroots social movement organizations, activists were said to '[expect] each other to provide legitimate reasons for preferring one option to another. They strove to recognize the merits of each other's reasons for favouring a particular option . . . the goal was not unanimity, so much as discourse. But it was a particular kind of discourse, governed by norms of openness and mutual respect' (Polletta 2002, 7). Consistently with the debates in political theory, these values and related practices were seen as partial solutions to the limits of participatory (especially direct) democracy, such as the 'tyranny of the majority', the foreclosure to newcomers, and 'hidden' leadership (Freeman 1972; Breines 1989).

More recently, the Global Justice Movement has focused on the development of intense and innovative forms of networking, the endorsement of diversity and subjectivity in movements, and the diffusion of multiple repertoires of action, including experimentation with forms of 'possible utopias'. In this context, the values of *deliberative* (or discursive) democracy, with particular emphasis on consensus building, have been linked with participatory ones (della Porta 2009).

Finally, in the anti-austerity movements, protest took a markedly prefigurative character. The future social relations that the social movements wanted to construct were enacted within protest camps, temporarily occupied spaces that had a central role in mobilization. Those who protested in squares from Tahrir, Kasbah, Sol, Syntagma, or Zuccotti criticized representative democracy as corrupted, experimenting with different democratic models. These were inspired by past participatory and deliberative models of mobilization. In part, however, activists built on these models, in a process of collective learning and adaptation to new internal and contextual challenges (della Porta 2013). In particular, the *acampadas*—at the same time a repertoire of protest and an organizational form—represented a major democratic experiment, one that was adopted and adapted in different contexts.

The *acampadas* can be seen as an adaptation and development of the social forums invented a decade earlier by the Global Justice Movement (della Porta 2009). *Acampadas*, in particular, added to the focus on participation from below a special concern with the creation of inclusive and egalitarian public spheres. The main site of protest

was kept in public squares to emphasize openness. The movement also stressed the importance of the consensual method by applying it to general assemblies, often involving thousands of people, rather than just spokes-councils. The consensual, horizontal decision-making process was based on the continuously forming small groups that were then integrated in the larger assembly. Deliberation through consensus was thus intended as an instrument against not only bureaucratization, but also the tendency to routinization in assemblies and as a way to build a community (e.g. Graeber 2013; Flesher Fominaya 2017).

The *acampada*, featuring a participatory model of deliberation, is at the basis of the Deliberative Camp idea proposed in this chapter. While participatory and deliberative democracy can be in tension with each other (Pateman 2012), movements show that they can also coexist and support each other in practice.

Once the value of researching movements and their practices is acknowledged, a methodological question emerges: *How* can we specifically study the democratic practices of movements? Democracy in movements and its transformations have been analysed through the use of various methodologies. To take the example of the project Demos (Democracy in Europe and the Mobilization of Society)—coordinated by Donatella della Porta between 2004 and 2008, in order to understand deliberative and participatory democracy within social movements—surveys, discourse analysis, and participant observation have been used to examine the different ways in which democracy is practised by social movement organizations and their activists in the context of the Global Justice Movement (della Porta 2009). Research using these various methods has yielded solid insights into how democracy is practised in social movements and on their claims about changes that could deepen democracy as well as on their capacity to effectively influence it (della Porta 2020).

In our view, however, the empirical study of the deliberative qualities of social movements and their contributions to the political system would be greatly enhanced by the use of a method designed for engaging and researching movement practices specifically. To this end, we propose the Deliberative Camp as a new, bottom-up, deliberative methodology. Importantly, the Deliberative Camp is not only a context to learn *about* deliberation in social movements. A fundamental idea of the method is that movements are valuable actors for scholars of democracy to learn *from* (see also Doerr 2018). Below, we first introduce the idea of Deliberative Camps, sketching out their main features and basic assumptions. Then, we offer guidance on how Deliberative Camps can be set up and used in research that aims to enhance citizens' democratic participation.

The Deliberative Camp

Assemblies have been the assumed venue for participatory and deliberative democratic innovations—from participatory budgeting to citizens' parliaments (Elstub and Escobar 2019)—which often have positive effects on policymaking and on public

debate (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). Nonetheless, scholars have highlighted important limitations in their ability to enhance democratic politics at the systemic level (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012). Despite their potential relevance, political scientists still pay limited attention to alternative, informal democratic engagement practices in public spaces. Evidence showing that emergent forms of democracy in social movements effectively remedy some of the shortcomings of assembly based forms of participation tends to be neglected (Felicetti and della Porta 2018). Deliberative Camps challenge this orthodox approach, by taking the emerging practices of social movements seriously and adapting them in order to improve civic engagement.

A Deliberative Camp is a deliberative-participatory process in which participants collaboratively identify an issue and address it through inclusive and consensual practices of communitarian and direct democracy in public, open-air spaces. The Deliberative Camp differs from other methods of studying and fostering deliberation in some key respects. First, it retains the goals of both participatory and deliberative models, while blending them. In this, it differs from many other forms of engagement that researchers have studied, in which participatory and deliberative qualities tend to be seen as being in reciprocal tension (Fishkin 2018) and whose analyses rarely embody the experiences of participants. Second, Deliberative Camps go beyond participatory practices that leave no room for deliberation, and yet they remain a genuinely bottom-up form of engagement which adapts the forms of participation observed in social movements to broader popular engagement. This is quite unlike public deliberation, which tends to engage citizens through adapted formats of what occurs (or fails to occur) in institutional deliberation as evoked by the ideas of citizen *parliaments* and citizen *juries*.

The Deliberative Camp represents then a methodological innovation in that it offers for the first time a method specifically devised to study deliberation in the context of social movement research. It seeks to establish a method to research informal spaces where activists deliberate, on the basis of a broad conceptualization of democratic deliberation and one that is suited to an interpretivist approach to research informal settings (Bevir and Ansari 2012; Ercan et al. 2016; Holdo 2020). It is designed with the aim of capturing the deliberative dimension of democratic practices.

The Deliberative Camp is a bottom-up approach to foster and research deliberation (unlike the bulk of top-down experiments in deliberative democracy). Interestingly, as Florida (2017) has observed, it was social movement ideas from the 1960s and 1970s that sowed the participatory and deliberative seeds that would flourish in democratic theory starting from the 1980s. The Deliberative Camp builds upon the generative capacity of movement practices and ideas, also from a methodological standpoint. It does so in three different ways. First, the activities of a Deliberative Camp are a formalization of the practices that social movements have long engaged in and that scholars have studied. In particular, the method is inspired by the encampments that have been a main form of organization and action for many anti-austerity movements (della Porta and Mattoni 2014; Fominaya and Hayes

2019). Second, Deliberative Camps are, by and large, run by the actors themselves with very limited engagement on the part of researchers—in a way that resembles the Community of Inquiry approach discussed in [Chapter 31](#) of this volume. Third, the Deliberative Camp is interested in some specific movement practices. In particular, it focuses on those through which movements seek to promote values that resonate with deliberative ideals, including transparency, equality, inclusiveness, consensus, argumentation, orientation to the public good, and preference transformation. Importantly, while the method shares features with Action Research (see [Chapter 30](#) in this volume), by actively engaging the researched groups, the two should not be conflated. If some collaboration between researchers and participants is important to generate knowledge, and if there is an emphasis on real-life problems, the type of deep engagement with communities, characteristic of Action Research, is not envisaged in the Deliberative Camp. With the exception of the act of deliberating, there is no primary focus on ‘action’ ([Greenwood and Levin 2006](#)).

In short, Deliberative Camps seek to achieve transparency through engagement in public, open-air spaces. They approach equality through communitarian or direct democratic practices. In Deliberative Camps, engagement aims at the inclusion of the citizenry at large, and preference transformation in the polity. This is in contrast with earlier forum-based democratic engagement, which was aimed at movements and activists only and relied upon meetings and interaction models connected to associational democracy ([della Porta 2005](#)). Deliberative Camps employ consensual practices in assemblies open to all, rather than just to spokes-councils and representatives of social movement organizations. As such, they give space to prefigurative and emotional argumentation and the ‘construction of the common’, rather than abiding by rationalistic political debate linked to more or less unquestionable notions of ‘common good’. Finally, while centred around the practices of social movements, Deliberative Camps can also be used widely by other civil society actors. A Democratic Camp aims at enhancing the ability of participants to work effectively and democratically with their partners, citizens, and political institutions.

Besides its guiding principles, the Deliberative Camp is markedly deliberative as a method in that it places deliberation at the centre of the research. As we will see, participants engage in a series of activities that are essentially deliberative in nature. This does not mean that participants reject other forms of democracy: in fact, the Deliberative Camp could be better understood as a form of deliberative participation (see also [Fung 2005](#); [Lafont 2019](#)). Likewise, though not central, ideas and actors around representative democracy are not altogether alien to the Deliberative Camp. For instance, elected representatives might be invited to join and participants might use the Deliberative Camp to think about how to address existing, liberal democratic institutions.

The latter point is crucial: the Deliberative Camp is not an exclusively academic exercise. The Deliberative Camp aims to observe actors in the context of engagement

that has a collective purpose. As we will see, the political goal is not pre-given. The aim of the Deliberative Camp, besides the fulfilment of the investigation, is to offer a space for interested actors to meet, discuss, and, if possible, coordinate their actions. The Deliberative Camp provides a context for movements to engage in democratic life and simultaneously for the researcher to study these interactions.

The experimental approach often used in the study of deliberation is based on the idea that it is possible to identify independent and dependent variables, to manipulate the former and see how this affects the latter. However, today there is a concrete risk for innovators to design (and research) democratic innovations that simulate democratic engagement fostering mere activation, rather than empowerment (Hammond 2020). This is neither empowering nor emancipatory, and thus is in tension with deliberative democratic ideals (see Lafont 2019). The Deliberative Camp takes this concern seriously and rather than creating a top-down, elite-driven format for participation, it strives to keep as much as possible the bottom-up forms of participation as the context to research. In the Deliberative Camp, researchers immerse themselves in contexts in which movements concentrate and intensify their deliberative activities.

Furthermore, the notion of researching *citizens* as entities, about which it is possible to make neutral and generalizable inferences, is replaced by a different understanding of *participants* in democratic innovations. Rather than being bracketed, the specificities of participants in their capacities as activists, members of minority groups, interested citizens in terms of, for instance, their values, perspectives, and interests are given full attention.

The Deliberative Camp has been planned in the context of a study in the Tuscany region of Italy. The research will explore how activists, civil society actors, and citizens can contribute to address the social, political, and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic through deliberative participation. The pandemic has generated a remarkable degree of mobilization from a diverse set of social movements and civil society organizations and identifying the set of actors involved in the Deliberative Camp represents a crucial challenge for the preparation phase, as we will see. Importantly, the Deliberative Camp represents a unique opportunity for interested actors to converge in a democratic and deliberative space where, at a distance from representative institutions, they can envisage the most pressing problems they face and explore ways to address them.

In the following section, we present a step-by-step guide to Deliberative Camps inspired by this ongoing research project. These guidelines can certainly be adapted to fit other and potentially widely different research directions. The Deliberative Camp can be applied to study how the deliberative participation of these actors relates to other contemporary challenges, such as migration and integration, climate-change adaptation, and economic recovery. Further, the Deliberative Camp need not be tied to the local level, but can be used to study the action of movements that are active at other levels (national, local, and transnational).

How Deliberative Camps Work

Step 1: Preparation

Deliberative Camps are highly visible events open to all interested citizens, especially those who might be hesitant to join more formal political arenas. Researchers, activists, or other actors in civil society themselves can call for Deliberative Camps individually or in collaboration. In either case, snowballing techniques are necessary to identify organizations potentially interested in participating and committed to the deliberative values informing the interactions in the Deliberative Camp. Researchers and participants will select a broad area of interest that will be addressed by participants. As far as funding is concerned, the Deliberative Camp follows similar logics (and costs) as a deliberative assembly. Funding from outside research agencies and institutions should only be sought with great caution, making sure that funders will not be perceived as threatening the movements, as might happen, for instance, with private actors with a potential interest in the outcome of the Camp. It is vitally important that the Deliberative Camp is a free space, not controlled or manipulated, for instance, by economic or political elites.

Step 2: The Event

Once the area of interest and sources of funding have been identified, participants can be sought. There is no formal recruitment, thus neither acceptance upon official invitation nor random selection are employed. Rather, the event is made widely public across a diverse set of social movement organizations and civil society associations. Avoidance of the selection by lottery of participants, which is characteristic of deliberative assemblies, is justified on two levels: a more general one and a more specific one. At the general level, we recognize that, although not without its limitations, the idea of random selection is an important component of institutional public deliberation and democracy at large (Abizadeh 2020), but we oppose the tendency to equate this aspect with deliberation. The fact that sortition has become a shorthand for democratic deliberation is problematic, especially so for those actors in public spheres that are excluded by the lottery system. In this respect, one might think of the Yellow Vests' critique of the Great National Debate, the public deliberation process supported by President Macron in France in response to unprecedented popular mobilization. In particular, the movements contest exercises in public deliberation that retain formal sortition while perpetuating exclusion, often of activists themselves (Ehs and Mokre 2020). Sortition, which can be used in more or less radical ways (Sintomer 2018), is in fact a choice that needs to be, first, justified and, then, properly conducted. In the specific case of the Deliberative Camps, in a situation of scarce resources and in a context in which democratic deliberation deliberately targets marginalized publics, sortition seem inappropriate. As oppositional publics are

relevant for deliberative democracy (Dryzek 1990), if the use of sortition excludes them, it should be reconsidered.¹

The Deliberative Camp assembly (or assemblies) is then to be held in a public space (e.g. a square) and open to all who show up (after registration, so as to manage the event properly). The publicity is, in fact, given fundamental value as it improves transparency and respects the principle of equal participation. As for the protest *acampadas*, being in an open public place is intended to give a sense of common ownership of the space—it is a space that belongs to all and can be accessed by all, embedding the idea of a public sphere as being not only visible but also accessible to all (della Porta 2015).

In another departure from the mini-public logic, the Deliberative Camp does not task participants with generating proposals, voting, making policy recommendations, but rather seeks to forge ties and, if possible, to envisage common ground upon an issue. Linking otherwise disconnected publics and their ideas is valuable for deliberative democracy (see Mansbridge 2005; Fraser 1990). Further, we agree that there is value in deliberation even if ‘it ends not in consensus but in a clarification of conflict and structuring of disagreement’ (Mansbridge et al. 2010, 68). Towards these ends, participants will engage in facilitated discussions. In fact, facilitated interaction (by either professional moderators or trained scholars) is fundamental. The deployment of Deliberative Camps overall relies essentially on researchers and on their ability to acknowledge the desire of participants to own and contribute to the process.

Once participants have gathered in the open public space, they are divided into small groups of 10 to 20 which are guided through deliberation by a group facilitator. Moderators will instruct participants about the basic features of the event (e.g. the overall rationale of the process, the resources available and their sources, the logistical arrangements, etc.) and the basic qualities of the deliberative mode of interaction (e.g. respect, justification-giving, reciprocity, openness, attentive listening, etc.). They will also facilitate the group discussions. In line with movements’ practices, small groups can then convene in general assemblies to share insights from the small groups, to discuss matters of special importance, and in case a general decision needs to be made.

The first moment of the actual deliberation is for participants, supported by moderators, to identify one or two themes of special relevance that resonate with the overall theme for debate and the agenda of the Deliberative Camp. Then, arguments and ideas are exchanged. On the basis of the latter, participants will have time to build coalitions, coordinate efforts, and envisage common goals.

The sessions of deliberation should last no more than three hours and can be repeated during the day or over a range of days. During breaks between moderated debates, participants will interact with each other and with passers-by who might be interested in the event taking place in the square. The expectations and timelines for

¹ For a discussion of the complex relationship between movements and sortition-based assemblies, see Felicetti and della Porta (2019).

the Deliberative Camp should be established at the beginning of the meeting and confirmed or revised at the end of the day. The Deliberative Camp ends when a common problem and related plan of action is identified or when the impossibility of such an outcome is acknowledged. The outcome does not need to be a decision about how to influence policymaking. Participants, for instance, may resolve to take action to counter marginalization and social exclusion independently of political institutions. In the Tuscan case, three appointments will be available with proper facilities and reimbursement for participants coming from within the region.

Step 3: Researching the Deliberative Camp

Researching the Deliberative Camp can occur already in the preparatory phase, by means of ethnographic and interviewing techniques, to see, amongst others, who is (not) interested in joining and why. Of course, it needs to be disclosed from the beginning that the research aspects are an integrating dimension of the Deliberative Camp. Researchers might also decide to engage in survey research (e.g. pre- and post-interviews, to study, for instance, opinion change) or plan focus groups with some of the participants later on.

One of the definitive strengths of this method is that data is generated during the Deliberative Camp itself. There is no specific research object prescribed beforehand by the method. Researchers are, in fact, fully free to decide which aspects to focus on and what means are best within a given context. Research activities can be planned, to a great extent, contextually within the event. This enables one to develop a design that is responsive to the needs of all parties involved, in contrast with traditional mini-publics, where the researcher's needs might dominate those of the participants. Possible areas of focus are the qualities and forms of deliberation, the types of networks that are established, the emerging forms of inclusion or exclusion, the effectiveness towards reaching political objectives (e.g. coordination of action, drafting of political proposals), the individuals' experiences of the interaction setting, the type and extent of participation, and the nature of the interactions observed (if allowed) through the video-recording of the event. Deliberative Camps can use a mix methods approach, for instance, by integrating survey research with focus groups, interviews of participants, and direct observation.

In Deliberative Camps, informal practices of social movements are expressed in ways that can challenge the empirical research. Especially, the nature of the interaction is deliberately informal and with limited constraints from the moderators, which might make it difficult, for instance, to audio-record and transcribe interactions, due to background noise in an open space. Also, being constructed for welcoming discursive interactions, the Deliberative Camp might be poorly suited to gain an understanding of other aspects of the rich repertoire of social movements' action. This limit extends to digital practices that are gaining increasing relevance both in social movements and in deliberative democracy ([Gastil and Chambers 2020](#)).

Another challenge relates to the need to acknowledge the agency of participants in giving shape to how the event unfolds and thus to promote openness and collaboration while simultaneously affirming the centrality of deliberative democratic values to the movements' practice.

As someone in charge of collaboratively running and investigating the event, the researcher can refine the method. Yet, such efforts, which are challenging and fall clearly beyond the remit of a single researcher, demand highly experienced and collaborative teams to work. We expect that with practice some of the promising sides of this new method might be strengthened and some of its weaknesses and limitations might be redressed. The ambition here is not to develop the ultimate means to study deliberation in public spheres, but instead to add an important instrument to this endeavour as the public dimension of democratic deliberation gains renewed attention in the field.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we introduced the Deliberative Camp as a new methodology to investigate the relationship between social movements and deliberative democracy. As the deliberation–movement nexus gains currency on the ground as well as in academia, it is important to have methods specifically envisaged to investigate this dimension of contemporary democratic life. In this direction, we have presented the main rationale in the development of this method, the key steps in its use, and its main strengths and weaknesses. Importantly, the Deliberative Camp is not just a resource that *aims* at studying deliberation in movements. First and foremost, it is a method *based* on movements' deliberative practices. For all those interested in democracy, activists are not just actors to learn *about*, but also actors to learn *from*. The rich tapestry of democratic practices in movements is a valuable source of insights for deliberative democracy and for democratic theory more generally (Felicetti 2021), which can help to redress the field's long-standing preference for looking at politics as it unfolds in formal institutions, be they traditional (such as parliaments) or innovative (such as mini-publics). That is a key concern for an approach to democracy that is characteristically interested in democratic systems at large, not just institutions (Chambers 2012).

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PART V
CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Mutual Need

In the Study of Deliberative Democracy, Norms, Practice, and Empirical Assessment Depend on One Another

Jane Mansbridge

In 1998, James Bohman proclaimed in a classic article that deliberative democracy had ‘come of age’. The field has now reached early adulthood. It still has the rambunctious enthusiasm of youth, diving into new projects and new ways of seeing, but it combines that energy with the sober responsibility of the early child-rearing years. What we do now has consequences. In this critical moment, deliberative democracy benefits from an unusually close connection between normative theory, practitioner invention, and empirical analysis, reflected in this volume. Empirical scholars need normative theory in order to identify measures of ‘success’. They also need results from practice. Practitioners need both normative and empirical guidance in their experimentation and replication. Theorists need the input of practitioners, who are responsible for many insights and telling advances. They also need empirical scholars, who expose gaps and problems in normative theories and whose qualitative and quantitative findings—both inductive and hypothesis testing—help refine, expand, or revise those theories.

When analysing the necessary recursivity amongst theorists, practitioners, and empirical researchers,¹ I focus on both perceived and normative legitimacy. Today many democracies face crises of perceived legitimacy, prompted by increasing inequality, increasing globalization, and, most fundamentally, increasing interdependence, which often requires increasing government regulation and therefore coercion.² The field of deliberative democracy is therefore concerned not only with how to solve problems better, with greater epistemic accuracy and creativity, and not only with how to bring more citizens generatively into democratic participation, but also, at least implicitly, with how deliberative innovations can strengthen the legitimacy of the many new regulations that more interdependent human beings will need. A new OECD publication lists ‘stable or rising levels of public trust in government’ as

¹ I take this application of recursivity from theorists in the new field of grounded normative theory (see Johnson, Chapter 4 in this volume, and discussion below).

² For a fuller exposition of the increasing need for government coercion, see [Mansbridge \(2014, 2022\)](#) and note 12 below.

one goal of deliberative democracy.³ Normative legitimacy (what we decide is right after consideration) should underlie any rise in levels of perceived legitimacy (public trust). Accordingly, we may ask: How can deliberative citizen forums increase both the perceived and normative legitimacy of regulations that some people will experience negatively and perhaps also as coercive? Finding workable approaches to the legitimacy deficits of current democracies requires the combined and recursive forces of practitioners, theorists, and empiricists in the three arenas of deliberative theory, deliberative citizen forums, and deliberative systems.

Theory

The study of deliberative democracy has spawned a closer connection between normative theory and empirical research than any other field in political science. Normative theory is always somewhat inductive.⁴ Even Kant must have built on what he saw in himself. Rawls built not only on what he saw in himself and others but also on what he learned in academic forums about the empirical world and others' underlying conceptions of justice. Habermas drew early inspiration from the empirical world of eighteenth-century coffee shops, and continually analysed the political world he experienced in Europe in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.⁵

The normative theory in deliberative democracy is especially inductive, partly because it takes respectful interaction as its normative foundation,⁶ partly because it is inspired by the current proliferation of novel deliberative institutions around the world, and partly because the theory itself is new. Innovations in normative theory tend to be inductive because of the way norms develop. Human beings often act in new ways, morally/normatively as well as in other ways, without thinking consciously about why they are doing so. Then they begin to find words for their actions, thoughts, and feelings. The next step, 'normative theory', analyses those conscious and unconscious formulations, asking on what normative and empirical foundations they are built, and seeing if, once formulated and taken forward, those normative and empirical implications might conflict with other norms or empirical realities.⁷

³ OECD (2021, 26), drawing from Nabatachi et al. (2012).

⁴ Here I go further than Chambers (Chapter 2 in this volume, p. 28), who writes that the normativity in normative theory 'can be, and often is, deeply rooted in empirical reality'. For theory that is more explicitly inductive (e.g. Mansbridge 1980 and much of the theory in the field of deliberative democracy), Landemore (2020) has coined the term 'inductive theory'.

⁵ See, for example, Rawls's theory of reflective equilibrium and the many footnotes in *A Theory of Justice* (1971) that respond to his many interlocutors; and Habermas (1989 [1962]), in which he first spells out his vision of deliberation in the public sphere, and 1996 [1992] for, e.g., his 'two-track' theory and reanalysis of bargaining. On the empirical and normative, see also Bowman 2022.

⁶ See Smith in the Foreword to this volume, on mutual respect amongst fields in the deliberative community; and Ercan, Asenbaum, Curato, and Mendonça, Chapter 1 in this volume, especially p. 6 and references to Hammond (2019), Lee (2011), Renwick et al. (2017), and Farrell et al. (2019).

⁷ See especially Chambers (Chapter 2 in this volume) on 'critical reflective theory', exemplified in the work of Iris Marion Young.

Theorists can become practitioners and empiricists in the field of deliberative democracy without relinquishing their theoretical work. James Fishkin began his career writing relatively abstract normative theory and drawing primarily on the rich past literature in political theory. Michael Neblo ‘cross-trained’ in normative theory and empirical work, writing his first book in normative theory. Both have since become active in promoting and even creating new deliberative institutions, which then prompt these scholars’ own empirical studies and new theories.

Practitioners become theorists as they collectively and inductively develop principles to guide the practice of deliberation. Recognizing the potential problems in the proliferation of randomized citizen forums without normative guidance, practitioners in the OECD, after extensive consultation with other practitioners and theorists and immersion in some of the relevant normative theory, have drawn up eleven principles for ‘good practice.’⁸ Enunciating these principles is a major step in the world of practice. It also advances normative theory. Next steps in this recursive process might investigate the implications of, and possible trade-offs amongst, these principles.

Empiricists can become normative theorists in this field without relinquishing their empirical work. The major task of those trained in empirical political science is to test theory, and this is the goal of most chapters in this volume, but several empirical scholars in this volume also contribute explicitly to theory. Empirical political scholars help develop normative theory when they use their experiences to think hard about both the goal (what we want to achieve; the dependent variables) and the potential causes (what produces or hinders what we want to achieve; the independent variables). Quantitative empiricists and modellers are in good positions to help refine, expand, or revise the theory, because they have to operationalize the question of what we want to achieve, and that process of operationalization prompts analytic thought (Chambers, Chapter 2 in this volume). Qualitative/interpretive empiricists are also in good positions to refine, expand, or revise deliberative democratic normative theory, because, on the question of what we want to achieve, their job is to notice what people value and ask why. On the question of causes, they also have in-depth, sometimes lived, experience with some of the most subtle threads in the fabric of deliberative interaction.

As Genevieve Johnson points out in *Grounded Normative Theory* (Chapter 4 in this volume, p. 52), ‘it is now standard practice for contemporary political theorists. . .to engage directly in the development, assessment, and analysis of forms of empirical evidence or empirical research materials.’⁹ The goal of ‘recursivity’ in grounded normative theory has the theorist ‘moving back and forth’ between empirical materials and normative claims, sometimes in dialogue with research partners and participants, in order to develop, revise, refine and sometimes co-produce

⁸ Examples of these principles are (1) a clear purpose, (2) influence on public decisions, (3) transparency, and (4) representativeness (OECD 2020, 118–119). See also the five ‘Principles of Deliberation’ from the Australian non-profit MosaicLab (2021) and, in a related, overlapping field, the seven ‘Core Principles for Public Engagement’ from the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (2009).

⁹ See Ackerly et al. (2021), discussed in Johnson, Chapter 4 in this volume.

the evolving norms (p. 55; see also Asenbaum, Chapter 5 in this volume). At the same time, empiricists in the field of deliberative democracy must engage directly with normative theory because, as noted, that theory provides the very basis for their explorations. Their empirical work then provides the basis for recursivity in helping to develop, revise, and refine the theory. Such recursivity applies to both dependent and independent variables in deliberation.

In asking, ‘*What do we want to achieve?*’ (and formulating their dependent variables), researchers differ—some focusing on process, some on outcome. Historically, both deliberative theorists and empirical researchers began with a focus on achieving high quality in the *process* of deliberation. The Discourse Quality Index (DQI), discussed in Bächtiger et al. (Chapter 6 in this volume) and explicitly derived from the theory of Jürgen Habermas, measures how frequently one finds in a deliberative process qualities that are arguably good in themselves even if they produce negative outcomes. Participatory equality is good in itself, deriving directly from the equality of respect owed each human being. A high level of justification is good in itself, mostly because reason is good in itself and perhaps also partly because thoughtful justification is a form of respect for others. Even storytelling may be good in itself as part of a good faith effort to communicate to others the reasons for one’s conclusions. Aiming at a common good is also good in itself, as is aiming at good for the least advantaged. Respect for others, a core principle, is good in itself. Constructive politics leading to consensus is good in itself as part of aiming at the common good. In expanding the DQI, the suggested new values are also arguably good in themselves: equality of consideration and interactivity/responsiveness as forms of equal respect, and substantive quality and sincerity as forms of reason and respect.¹⁰

Some deliberative theorists, however, value deliberation not because it incorporates forms of human interaction that are good in themselves, but because it produces good *outcomes*—good epistemic outcomes (Estlund 2008; Landemore 2012, 2020), outcomes good for the development of the participants, or good effects on the deliberative system, including increased legitimacy for collective decisions. We like to assume that processes based on interactions that are good in themselves will also produce high-quality outcomes, but analytically we must accept the possibility of non-congruence. The standards for the quality of outcomes are independent of the standards for the quality of the process (Bohman 1998), and normative theory cannot decide definitively between good processes and good outcomes. Both

¹⁰ For a table of ‘First generation’ and ‘Second generation’ process standards for good deliberation, see Bächtiger et al. (2018, 4). Other important process assessments include the Deliberative Reason Index (DRI), a measure of intersubjective consistency (Niemeyer and Veri, Chapter 7 in this volume) and the lexical Listening Quality Index, the last step in which is ‘The speaker reports being satisfied with the sincerity of the listener’s listening’ (Scudder, Chapter 8 in this volume). This last step comes close to measuring the subjective feeling of being heard, an experience particularly important to members of marginalized groups (Bruneau and Saxe 2012). Because of its importance to the marginalized, it would be useful if future evaluations could ask directly about being heard, as in, e.g., ‘When I spoke today/in this forum I felt that I was being heard and my opinions considered,’ or simply, in the wording of Roos et al. 2021, ‘In this conversation, I felt heard by the other(s)’.

are important. Some theorists have even proposed standards that incorporate both, such as “meta-consensus,” or agreement on the kinds of reasons and choices involved in the decision, and “intersubjective rationality,” or agreement within sides on the reasons relevant to their arguments (Niermeyer and Dryzek 2007).

Finally, theorists differ regarding the most distant goal, the deepest dependent variable, what we ultimately want to achieve. For many deliberative theorists, that goal is to promote the emancipation of both individuals and communities from domination (Hammond 2019). For many others, traditionally, the goal of good deliberation has been democratic legitimacy (Manin 1987; Cohen 1989).¹¹ To those goals, and compatible with them (possibly even another way of phrasing the legitimacy goal), I add meeting human needs. In an era of increasing interdependence, meeting human needs requires increasing the perceived legitimacy of government coercion, and backing that perceived legitimacy with defensible normative legitimacy.¹² Good deliberation in forums and in systems is a means to each of these ultimate ends: emancipation, legitimacy itself, and meeting human needs through perceived legitimacy backed by normative legitimacy.

In asking, ‘*What produces or hinders what we want to achieve?*’ (and formulating independent variables), we enter a world of plenty. We can analyse variation in existing conditions in the world, variation produced by the plethora of deliberative forums now springing up globally, and variation intentionally produced by practitioners and researchers, in laboratory experiments (Grönlund and Herne, Chapter 11 in this volume), field experiments (Kingzette and Neblo, Chapter 12 in this volume), and innovative forums such as the Deliberative Camp (della Porta and Felicetti, Chapter 32 in this volume). The act of choosing and creating these variations, then studying them, relies on previous normative thought about what we want to achieve, in process and in outcome. It then helps create new normative thought.

Both good process and good outcomes in deliberation are aspirational ideals, meaning that we can rarely or never achieve them fully in practice.¹³ Kant’s ‘ought implies can’ does not apply to *reaching* these ideals. Because we cannot reach the full ideal, we have no duty to reach it. We have a duty to strive towards that ideal; this we

¹¹ For a detailed and nuanced analysis of these issues, see Bächtiger and Parkinson (2019).

¹² The brief logic (see Mansbridge 2014, 2022) is that increasing interdependence creates needs for more ‘free use goods’, that is, goods that, once produced, anyone can use without paying (for example, toll-free roads, law and order, the common defence, clean air and water, a stable climate; ‘free-use goods’ is an umbrella term for what economists call ‘common pool goods’ and ‘public goods’; ‘non-excludable’ is technically incorrect). The free availability of such goods tempts many to use them and not pay, creating ‘free-rider’/collective action problems that result in the goods being under-produced relative to need. When the scale is larger than one in which local and informal sanctions, in addition to duty and solidarity, can induce the beneficiaries to pay, getting high percentages to contribute to producing the good usually requires some government coercion. The provision of free-use goods is thus the main material reason for the existence of a state, and our increasing need for free-use goods entails increasing government coercion. Effectiveness requires that the coerced perceive the force that coerces them as legitimate. That perception is morally wrong if not backed by good normative reasons. Although a goal of ending domination might implicitly suggest that governments, along with oppressive social and economic orders, are the enemy, the goal of meeting human needs sees governments as a required means, with governmental and other powerful actors as, in the right circumstances, allies.

¹³ Kant’s ‘regulative’ ideals; see Mansbridge et al. (2010, note 5).

can do.¹⁴ Accordingly, as we measure and assess deliberative democratic quality, we should realize that failure to achieve the top score, or even perhaps more than just above the lowest score, can be normatively acceptable in some contexts. When we fail to recognize our ideals as aspirational, promulgating those ideals stringently can lower perceived legitimacy.

Recognizing that our ideals are aspirational is particularly important when we face normative trade-offs. On the most operational level, for example, the larger the size of a deliberative forum, the easier it is to generate representative accuracy, including the representation of greater heterogeneity within subgroups. Large size also improves greatly the likelihood of achieving believable results regarding opinion change (on statistical significance, see Werner and Muradova, Chapter 13 in this volume and Gastil Chapter 14 in this volume). Finally, large size increases the perceived legitimacy of a forum among citizens (Goldberg and Bächtiger 2022; see also Goldberg 2021). Yet, in addition to its considerably greater expense, which must be drawn from other projects that might help the needy directly, larger size impedes participant input into the process. The OECD guidelines on evaluations of deliberative forums (2021), for example, recommend that participants in these forums have input into shaping the process and calling up experts. Such input is far easier in smaller groups, especially if the participants have a relationship to the organizers that lasts more than one weekend.¹⁵ In a separate trade-off, longer time in deliberation often produces better process and better outcomes. Yet the longer the time participants must take from their work and families, even if they are paid, the less representative a sample is likely to become. In Shanghai and Bogota, even relatively short deliberative forums with paid participation have had trouble adequately representing the business classes,¹⁶ and when the pay is low or non-existent, even short forums lose the working class and the poor.¹⁷ Good organizers dig deeper into the lottery to create a stratified sample that reflects attitudinal, ethnic, class, and other forms of diversity relevant to the issue under discussion, but even then, those who self-select to attend and stay through the entire deliberation do not usually fully represent, in other respects, those whose outward characteristics they share. The longer the deliberation, the stronger such selection biases become.

The trade-offs that deliberative forums face derive from plural democratic values and corresponding plural sources of normative and perceived legitimacy. Good deliberative process is one source of legitimacy. So is good output. So is, in the

¹⁴ In Mansbridge (2020), I thank David Estlund for this point. See also Chambers, Chapter 2 in this volume. It is not only because of 'power, interest, and money' that 'the real world will always fall short even of our mediated realistic ideals' (Chambers, Chapter 2 in this volume, p. 35), but also because of plural and competing ideals.

¹⁵ For this reason, amongst others, multiple assemblies of different sizes may be useful (Bouricius 2013).

¹⁶ For Shanghai, Baogang He, personal communication; for Bogota, Felipe Rey, personal communication.

¹⁷ With both government and philanthropic funding, participant pay and the other expenses of deliberative forums must be taken from other good uses of the money, such as funding projects that directly benefit the poor.

non-deliberative realm, the aggregate process of equal and accurate voting. Trade-offs amongst these and other values emerge both in specific deliberative forums and in the larger deliberative system.

Forums

Deliberative forums of randomly-selected/stratified citizens¹⁸ are now the main focus of research on deliberation. The recent explosion of innovation in such forums in Europe and across the globe has emerged in felicitous combination with global gatherings (often via internet) of normative theorists, empirical scholars, and practitioners aiming to process together the lessons from the trial and error of these many experiments and make those lessons available to future practitioners and the world. Some rough version of normative theory always precedes experiments in practice, but that theory may be no more than an intuitive and possibly incorrect conviction that the closer the citizen forum to power, the better.¹⁹ Innovations in practice have generated and will generate more developed innovation in normative theory.

Consider some recent innovations in *structure*. In 2017, organizers designed the Citizens' Assembly on Brexit so that the random sample of fifty citizens from the UK spent one weekend learning from information brochures, experts, and the other participating citizens, then went home for three weeks before gathering for a second weekend of deliberation that ended with votes on several recommendations. The relatively small size of the assembly made it possible for several participants to approach the organizers at the end of the informational weekend to ask if it was correct, as one of the experts had reported, that EU rules allow deportation of non-citizens if they had not found a job in three months. On hearing that this was correct, the participants asked if a option featuring this rule could be included in the set of choices offered to the participants for a vote at the next weekend. The organizers agreed, phrasing the option as 'Free movement within the EU with the addition of these controls.' After the weekend of deliberation, twenty-six of the fifty participants, chosen for attitudinal as well as demographic representation of the population of the UK, supported that option.²⁰ The weekend-break-weekend structure had encouraged reciprocity between participants and practitioners. Normatively, this experience suggests adding

¹⁸ Henceforth the word 'random' will mean 'near random and stratified,' except where otherwise noted.

¹⁹ See [Arnstein 1969](#). [Lafont \(2019\)](#), however, argues normatively against giving randomly selected citizen forums full decision-making power, a position congruent with that of many citizens ([Jaquet et al. 2020](#); [Devillers et al. 2021](#); [Goldberg and Bächtiger 2022](#)). I suggest elsewhere ([Mansbridge 1980](#) and subsequent work) that normative goals are often contingent on context.

²⁰ The CAB Report is relatively silent regarding the content of these controls, saying with no further detail, 'Single Market rules do not confer an unconditional right on all EU citizens to reside in the UK, but . . . the UK makes little attempt to remove those who do not have a right to remain' ([Renwick et al. 2017](#), 57). This sentence and later broad references to 'exercising the available controls' almost certainly refer to the specific EU rule stating that visitors from other countries have no right to remain in a host country after three months if they have no job and do not have 'sufficient resources not to become a burden on the Host Member State's social assistance system' ([European Parliament 2019](#), 2).

generativity—producing ideas that were not previously on the table—to the process criteria for good deliberation.

In another structural innovation, organizers in Bogota designed an ‘Itinerant Citizens’ Assembly’, meaning that one citizens’ assembly commissioned by the legislature sets the agenda, the next deliberates on and decides the policy, and a third evaluates the results of that policy, creating recursivity amongst the participants that may prove generative and theory-inducing, as well as providing protection from external domination. A future innovation in Bogota may introduce a citizens’ assembly composed only of women as a form of enclave deliberation. That practice would derive from a normative theory regarding enclaves that was itself inductively derived from practice (see [Mansbridge 1994](#) and below on enclaves in the deliberative system).

Many innovations have arisen on another structural feature – the *integration of citizens’ assemblies with legislative decision-making* – without much input from normative theory. The relevant normative tension arises clearly from practice. On the one hand, incorporating elected representatives in the citizens’ proceedings risks both domination and the injection of adversary politics. On the other hand, institutional connections with a legislature (or administrators) may have deliberative benefits as well as costs; these connections also greatly improve the chances that the recommendations of a citizens’ assembly will become law; and the connections increase the perceived legitimacy of the assembly in the eyes of many citizens ([Goldberg and Bächtiger 2022](#)). Hélène Landemore, a theorist whose central normative ideal in this context is citizens ‘representing and being represented in turn’ (2020, xvii), favourably contrasts Iceland, which energetically kept legislators fully separate from the citizen forums, with Ireland, which pioneered greater integration. No theorist or empirical scholar has, as yet, assessed on deliberative criteria the now great variety of relationships between legislative representatives chosen by election and citizen representatives chosen through random selection.

Practice is thus leaping ahead of theory as legislatures experiment with different degrees of legislative integration. In East Belgium (the German-speaking Community of Belgium, population 77,000), the parliament has created a permanent Citizens’ Council of twenty-four citizens, randomly drawn from former Citizens’ Assembly participants and serving on a rotating basis for eighteen months, which selects topics for deliberation by randomly chosen Citizens’ Assemblies one to three times a year. The Citizens’ Council meets afterwards with members of parliament to discuss the Citizens’ Assemblies’ proposals, then monitors how well the parliament implements the assemblies’ recommendations. Parliament must provide a public justification if its members decide not to implement an assembly recommendation ([Niessen and Reuchamps 2022](#)). This model legally mandates integration between two relatively independent bodies, the legislature and the citizens’ assembly. In the Brussels Region, the Francophone Parliament has created mixed legislative committees, each composed of fifteen members of parliament and forty-five

randomly selected citizens.²¹ This model legally mandates integration at the level of the committee.

Other nations are experimenting with connections between randomly selected citizens' forums and individual members of the legislature. In Germany, legislators from the 299 Single Member Districts in the country are allowed to host Constituency Councils of thirty or more randomly selected constituents meeting for one day to deliberate on a current political issue and develop solutions.²² This model legally sponsors integration at the level of the district. In the US, members of Congress may meet virtually with a randomly drawn sample of 175 constituents for one hour of discussion on a single topic. This model encourages integration at the level of the district, now financially supported by public-spirited NGOs. Although this last form of citizen-representative recursive deliberation lasts only one hour, repeated twice a week it has the potential to reach every US citizen in the course of a lifetime.²³ Only this last process has received extensive empirical and normative study; the other varieties of integration are still too new to have been studied carefully. Practitioners, theorists, and empirical researchers will need to work together to compare these different levels of integration for their effects on epistemically well informed policy, generativity, citizen development, and the perceived legitimacy of government decisions.

Other innovations in practice tackle the problem of *representativeness*. It is by now fairly well accepted normatively that citizens' assemblies should be representative attitudinally on the relevant issues as well as on the relevant demographics. Producing such representation in practice is harder (Kingzette and Neblo, Chapter 12 in this volume). Phone recruitment in many countries is no longer viable because telephone scams and other intrusions have reduced response rates on surveys to the single digits, at least in the US (Gastil, Chapter 14 in this volume). Efforts to improve representativeness include going from house to house with personalized invitations, as in the German Constituency Council model, or establishing paid panels of a representative sample of respondents, on the models of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, which uses these panels for Deliberative Polls, and TESS at the University of Pennsylvania (Werner and Muradova,

²¹ See <https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/RD-Note-Brussels-Deliberative-Committees-Model.pdf>. I thank David Schecter of Democracy R&D for this reference.

²² I thank Katharina Liesenberg of *Es Geht LOS!* (private communication) for these details.

²³ Even in a polity the size of the US, if each elected representative at the federal level met in this way with constituents two hours a week, fifty-two weeks a year, in six years they could have had deliberative discussions with one-quarter of their constituents. Further analyses will show if the elected representatives change their own opinions or actions, perhaps improving the quality of their decisions. If the representatives do not change on the basis of what they learn, the normative arguments against supporting incumbents may carry more weight than the normative gains for citizens. Currently, these samples are not stratified but largely reflect the underlying population. See Neblo et al. (2018); <https://connectingtocongress.org/>; and for the calculation, Michael Neblo personal communication. The Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance at the University of Canberra has replicated this practice with two Australian MPs (<https://connect2parliament.com/townhalls>).

Chapter 13 in this volume, p. 196, note 3. Pay for participation is also now relatively standard normatively, in addition to reimbursements for travel, housing, meals, and childcare. Prevailing norms also mandate interpreters for participants who speak languages other than the one used in the forum, and empirical work in another context shows that these interpreters could also act as advocates for the marginalized (Doerr 2018).

Researchers are now becoming more sophisticated about representativeness. A study of citizens who had decided not to accept an invitation to participate in one forum found amongst their frequent reasons not only competing engagements and desires to spend time on work and family but also scepticism regarding the forum's impact. These factors, along with the less frequent reasons of self-diagnosed lack of competence on the topic, dislike or fear of public situations and others' judgements of self, and dismissal of the event as 'politics' and 'manipulation' (Jaquet 2017), are likely to decrease the representation of disaffected and perhaps other marginalized citizens.²⁴ With representativeness so important normatively, empirical work should continue to investigate not only how to achieve it but also the effects of better representativeness both on process and on the perceived legitimacy of the forum amongst the public.

Empirical and normative work on *representativeness* in deliberative forums will undoubtedly prompt further theorizing on the related problem of *representation*, or the normatively appropriate relation between the citizens in deliberative forums and the public. This issue has provoked some controversy. Landmore (2020), for example, claims that the citizens who are randomly chosen for a deliberative forum and decide to attend represent the other citizens in the polity as well as or better than the elected legislators. Lafont (2019), by contrast, sees such forums as incapable of providing the 'authorship' that democratic citizenship requires; many citizens currently agree (Goldberg and Bächtiger 2022).

The 'mirror' form of descriptive representation that most forums provide is also relatively inert vis-à-vis the public. It does not involve actively reaching out to constituencies, as many elected representatives now do. It lies far from the ideal of 'recursive' representation in which, aspirationally, the representative is in ongoing, mutually responsive communication with constituents (Mansbridge 2022). In most deliberative citizens' forums, the citizens are engaged for too short a time to communicate at all with the public at large or with any subgroup who might be considered their 'constituents'. They also did not sign on for this task and may not be good at it. Yet representation without constituent communication is normatively thin.

²⁴ Because one bias now is that these forums attract the more civic-minded, the effects of greater representativeness on the quality of internal deliberative processes might not be all positive. E.g., in one forum efforts to include extreme climate sceptics resulted in two of the three sceptics walking out (Hobson and Niemeyer 2013). The current biases in descriptive representation within randomly selected citizens' forums are of course many orders of magnitude smaller than those in assemblies of elected representatives, but elected representatives derive their legitimacy primarily from their direct authorization by, and accountability to, those who voted for them, not from their descriptive similarity to the population.

Can deliberative citizen forums provide sufficiently good representation to make the coercion that results from their decisions more legitimate than it is today? At least so far, because the world of practice is innovating so rapidly, this question cannot be answered definitively either normatively or by empirical scholarship on perceived legitimacy. We can say, however, that whether or not these forums have the authority to make decisions themselves, their contribution to legitimacy rests in large part on their connection to the larger deliberative system.

Systems

In contrast to deliberative forums, many researchers in this volume and elsewhere agree that the quality of deliberative systems is hard to assess. In introducing the concept of a ‘deliberative system’ in 1999, I did not try to operationalize its key variables for the purpose of empirical assessment. I focused on normative assessment and argued that although one should judge the deliberative *components* of a system, including forums and everyday talk, primarily on the qualities of their *process*, one should judge the deliberative system as a *whole* on its *outcome*:

If a deliberative system works well, it filters out and discards the worst ideas available on public matters while it picks up, adopts, and applies the best ideas. If the deliberative system works badly, it distorts facts, portrays ideas in forms that their originators would disown, and encourages citizens to adopt ways of thinking and acting that are good neither for them nor for the larger polity. A deliberative system at its best, like all systems of democratic participation, helps its participants understand themselves and their environment better. It also helps them change themselves and others in ways that are better for them and better for the whole society—though sometimes these goals conflict.

(Mansbridge 1999, 211–212)

I concluded that ‘How one judges a deliberative system thus depends heavily on what one believes to be a “good” or “bad” way of thinking or acting and what one judges to be a better or worse understanding of self and environment. Such judgments will always be heavily contested’ (Ibid.) Because outcomes like these are essentially contestable (Gallie 1955–1956), they are intrinsically resistant to ‘objective’ empirical analysis. Even the boundaries of the ‘political’ are ‘explicitly a matter for contest’ (Mansbridge 1999, 215).

Just over two decades later, however, a wide variety of methods for assessing deliberative systems have arisen, as captured in this volume. In normative theory, subsequent analyses have advanced dimensions for assessing deliberative systems other than the epistemic and developmental considerations I argued were so deeply contested as to be almost impossible to measure persuasively. Most of these new proposed assessment dimensions refer to process, not to outcomes. Dryzek (2009),

for example, has argued that we should assess deliberative systems on the degree to which they are ‘authentic’ (induce reflection, be non-coercive, and connect particular interests to general principles), high on ‘reciprocity’ (make arguments in terms others can accept), ‘inclusive’ (involve a large range of interests and discourses), and ‘consequential’ (have impact on collective decisions or social outcomes). Mansbridge et al. (2012) concluded that although deliberative systems could be assessed on many contested dimensions, three are relatively uncontroversial: the ‘*epistemic*’ function (inform the public; take relevant considerations from all corners; air, discuss, and appropriately weigh those considerations); the ‘*ethical*’ (promote equal respect); and the ‘*democratic*’ (include multiple voices, interests, concerns, and claims on the basis of feasible equality). All of these are process concerns, although the epistemic function bears heavily on outcomes. Niemeyer (2014), going back to first principles, argued more generally that deliberative systems should, in the end, be judged on the degree to which they promote legitimate decision-making in which ‘citizens get to decide, in light of reasons, what should be done’ (citing Chambers 2012 citing Cohen 2007; see also Curato and Böker 2016). Dryzek (2017, 630) added that deliberative systems should be ‘judged in terms of the degree to which they facilitate or obstruct competent, critical, inclusive, and egalitarian communicative action in the development of integrative norms’. Empirical scholars may be able to devise approximate measures for some of these characteristics for assessment, but none is easily operationalizable and the measurements may be heavily contested.

Empirical assessment of specific *features* of deliberative systems has developed imaginatively and rigorously, as this volume indicates. Web-scraping and inductive clustering techniques can help greatly with measurement and topic comparison for online talk (Franco-Guillén, De Laile, and Parkinson, Chapter 16 in this volume). Narrative analysis provides insight into the trajectories of different arguments over time and on the broad scale (Boswell, Chapter 23 in this volume). We can also measure to some significant degree the deliberative quality of online deliberation (Kies, Chapter 10 in this volume).

Empirical assessment of the deliberative system as a whole is more difficult. Assessments of ‘macro-deliberation’ (Fleuß, Chapter 9 in this volume) and assessments of the deliberative system are not quite the same thing. The assessment of macro-deliberation investigates the deliberative quality of important deliberative nodes in the system, then aggregates them. It does not include the contributions of non-deliberative nodes, such as protest. Social network analysis can identify some of the pathologies of deliberative systems.²⁵ Discourse analysis based on Q-sort methodology also helps in understanding patterns in the deliberative system (Parry, Chapter 21 in this volume; Niemeyer and Veri, Chapter 7 in this volume). Yet none of these modes of assessment helps measure normative systemic outcomes such as filtering out and discarding ‘the worst ideas’ while picking up, adopting, and applying ‘the best.’

²⁵ E.g. too tight coupling, as when in some Brazilian councils many members represent civil society and public authorities at the same time, or decoupling, when networks have no overlapping connections (da Silva, Ribeiro, and Higgins, Chapter 15 in this volume).

Nor are these forms of assessment likely to be able to assess the benefits and harms to the deliberative system of nodes such as protest. One such problematic node is what I called an “enclave” model of democratic deliberation,²⁶ describing communities of discourse of the likeminded or those similarly situated within a larger deliberative system (Mansbridge 1994, 64, 55). On the negative side, enclave deliberation can reinforce lines of division and enmity between the enclave participants and others. On the positive side, it can have, particularly for marginalized groups, the functions of promoting clarity in understanding interests and preferences, creativity in generating new ideas, and mutual support in getting those ideas before the public. Thus, as with protest, even when the discourse in the enclave is far from deliberative, it can contribute positively to the quality of deliberation in the larger system (Mansbridge et al. 2012; also Karpowitz, Raphael and Hammond 2009).

For what we may call the ‘forum-system link,’ or the connection of citizens’ assemblies and other forums to the larger deliberative system, the norms are still in flux. On the broad normative front of what to measure in the forum–system link, Niemeyer (2014) argues that deliberative citizens’ forums should have the two functions of what he calls ‘deliberation-making’ (in contrast to ‘decision-making’) and ‘capacity building’ within a larger framework of building legitimacy. In ‘deliberation-making,’ the citizens’ forums should distil and synthesize for the public different ways of thinking about an issue, acting in the best case as trusted knowledge brokers on the basis of the time, expert resources, and deliberative opportunities to which the forum participants have privileged access. They might even contribute to a public ‘meta-consensus,’ or larger agreement on the range of legitimate considerations on that issue. In ‘capacity building,’ a forum should help the larger system to ‘host inclusive and authentic deliberation,’ in part by acting as exemplars of deliberation.

On the forum–system link, Curato and Böker argue further for a normative ‘obligation of seeking legitimacy’ (2016, 177) and a consequent ‘obligation to persuade’ the public outside the forum (178), because such forums will succeed in producing legitimacy ‘only by convincing the public that their conclusions are valid and their recommendations are worth pursuing’ (177–178).²⁶ These formulations of obligation raise several questions.

First, who is obliged to seek legitimacy and persuade —the citizens selected for the forum who have agreed to serve, the organizers of the forum, or both? The philosopher Wendy Salkin (2021a, 2021b) has plumbed the obligations of citizens who become informal representatives of other citizens both when they are ‘witting and unwitting’ and when they are ‘willing and unwilling.’ The randomly chosen participants in citizen deliberative forums occupy a half-way role between informal and formal representatives. They are also both ‘conscripts’ and volunteers. Some participants may wittingly and willingly take on the citizen duty to represent others (see Jaquet 2019, 648 ff), to seek legitimacy, and to persuade, but some might hesitate even to participate in a forum that came with such obligations. Any normative obligation to persuade seems thus to fall on the organizers.

²⁶ See also Beauvais and Warren (2019) for the deliberative forum’s functions of inclusion, communication and deliberation, and decision-making in the larger deliberative system.

Second, are reasons better than mere trust? Empirical scholars could measure probable success in a forum's persuasiveness by comparing Time 1 versus Time 2 differences in opinion amongst members of the public who have heard about the forum's conclusions versus those who had never heard of the forum. Yet such differences might arise simply from trust in the forum participants, not from weighing the participants' distilled reasons (Warren and Gastil 2016; Curato and Böker 2016). Simple trust might be cost-efficient for citizens and normatively acceptable. Karpowitz and Raphael (2014), however, argue that in the forum–system link, 'deliberative publicity' should focus on the reasons citizens on both sides of an issue give for their positions. Studying the formal reports of ten deliberative citizens' forums, of which only one used a randomized selection of citizens, they find that only two, not including the one randomized forum, gave significant attention to reasons. They argue that a focus on reasons would contribute more to the deliberative system.

Third, are reasons better than storytelling? Karpowitz and Raphael also caution against forms of deliberative publicity that solely present citizens telling stories about their own experiences. A focus only on the 'authenticity of citizens' experiential evidence as expressed in their own voices' risks one specific and one general harm. Specifically, the stories often describe pain and distress, so the practice and reporting of storytelling tends to cast marginalized groups in a 'victim' role. More generally, storytelling de-emphasizes citizens' capacities to generalize, analyse, and connect their experiences with the common good (2014, 262, 264–265). Although reasons are not intrinsically better than storytelling, deliberative publicity, they argue, should present citizens primarily as reasoning beings.

Fourth, are reasons given by identifiable people better for legitimacy and persuasion than mere numbers? Maia and Choucair (Chapter 26 in this volume, pp. 381–2) point out that in general 'images and visual elements remain underexplored in studies on deliberation' (see also Mendonça et al. 2020). Equally underexplored are the possible positive effects on the public of watching video clips from deliberative forums that feature 'people like me' giving the reasons they changed their minds on salient issues. When it is possible to collect pre- and post-deliberation surveys on a computer-linked tablet rather than by pencil-and-paper (or even just to ask all participants on leaving if they changed their mind on any issues), it should be easy to identify participants who have changed their minds on salient topics and, before they leave the forum's venue, have volunteers interview them with mobile phone cameras on the reasons for their changes of mind, using those videos for the subsequent deliberative publicity. Admittedly, current research leads one to predict little change amongst disaffected members of the public, especially if the results of the citizen forum are contrary to the direction the disaffected citizen prefers (Goldberg and Bächtiger 2022). Yet hearing the *reasons* for such changes amongst citizens in the forum might have greater impact on the public than reading numerical reports of which demographic groups were more likely to change, in which direction, and to what degree. And videos of particular *individuals*, especially 'people like me', explaining their reasons might have even greater impact.

Fifth, should evaluations be considered part of the persuasive process? Participant evaluations designed to bring out criticisms of the deliberative process help practitioners distinguish believable from tawdry processes and provide guidance for future designs. Yet they may also tend to leave participants in a critical frame of mind. Evaluations designed to allow participants to keep intact their enthusiasm for the process are more likely to enhance the public's perceptions of the legitimacy of that process. In one of the few empirical studies to measure emotion in a deliberative forum, self-reported 'happiness' peaked on the final day (Johnson et al. 2019). Participant evaluations usually reflect this end-of-process enthusiasm. If the perceived legitimacy of these forums rests at all on the later communications of participants with other citizens, evaluation questions right at the end that raise doubts and stress potential flaws in the process might decrease the forum's legitimacy.²⁷

Sixth, must deliberative publicity give proportional time and space to the reasons both for and against the deliberative forum's final conclusions? On the one hand, the greatest obligation of forums to the deliberative system may be to provide nuance, including the range of opposing opinions, in order to invigorate the public debate. On the other hand, giving time in deliberative publicity to arguments against the forum's final recommendations, especially in proportion to the numbers in the assembly holding the opposing opinions, might well undercut the task of convincing the public that those recommendations are worth pursuing. In this instance, Niemeyer's norm of 'deliberation-making' (give the public both sides of the argument) seems to conflict with Curato and Böker's norm of 'legitimacy-seeking' (persuade the public that the forum's conclusions rest on good reasons).

In the current state of flux regarding the micro-norms of the forum-system link, practitioners play a key normative role. Advised of the tensions, they will have to make their own best normative judgements on design as they go along. Their experience may then give rise to insights to which neither normative theorists nor empirical researchers now have access. All the better, then, if practitioners are in ongoing recursive contact with normative theorists who have the inclination and intellectual contacts to help think these issues through as well as empirical scholars who can help operationalize and measure the possible outcomes of both greater deliberative depth in the public and greater legitimacy for the forums' conclusions.

Process tracing can help us understand patterns of impact in the forum-system link (Pickering, Chapter 20 in this volume). But Pickering reminds us that at the moment we have little hard evidence that the carefully constructed citizen forums dedicated to deliberation enhance debate amongst members of the public. This lack of evidence usually arises because of the currently weak causal links between what goes on in these forums and the public.²⁸ The disaffected already find reasons to reject

²⁷ The "peak-end rule" in psychology derives from retrospective pain and pleasure ratings being based on a combination of the peaks and final moments of the experience (see summary of evidence in Do, Rupert and Wolford 2008).

²⁸ E.g., Devillers et al. (2021). See also Goodin and Dryzek (2006), cited in Werner and Muradova, Chapter 13 in this volume; Elstub et al. (2016), cited in Pickering, Chapter 20 in this volume; and Gastil, Chapter 14 in this volume.

the conclusions of deliberative citizen forums when they do not like the outcome. If such forums tend to lead citizens to favor more liberal outcomes (see Grönlund and Herne, Chapter 11 in this volume; and Gastil, Chapter 14 in this volume, p. 210.) conservative members of the public may also come to see the forums as suspect.²⁹

On the test issue for perceived legitimacy of so many citizens feeling not heard by either government or other citizens in their nations, deliberative forums seem not to have made much of a dent. Better deliberative publicity would probably help. So would elected legislatures, administrative agencies, and NGOs with policy influence consulting regularly on specific issues with randomly-selected deliberative citizen forums (Mansbridge 2022 on recursive representation).

Improving the deliberative system in practice is hard. Understanding theoretically what norms are appropriate for a system's improvement and assessment may be harder still. Assessing a system empirically may be the hardest task of all.

Conclusion

The environmental problems we face seem almost insurmountable, the shadow of nuclear catastrophe looms, and the 'free rider' problems that governments must solve, in large part by increasing government coercion, multiply every year. Yet human ingenuity has not diminished. On the contrary, new methods of communication are linking idealistic, intelligent, and inventive young people around the world. When a new technology arises, such as deliberative citizen forums with their capacity to strengthen democracy, the young have jumped to implement and adapt it. This volume bursts with novel, exciting ideas, peaking in the sections on Exploring and Adapting. Practitioners, political theorists, modellers, survey researchers, experimentalists, qualitative interpretativists, and the mix that is grounded theorists—all represented in this volume—together are lending their energy and insight to making deliberative democracy work: for better solutions, better citizens, and greater legitimacy. We need it all.

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²⁹ Civil society organizations that deliberative forums to some degree bypass also have an interest in delegitimizing those forums (see Parkinson 2006; Ravazzi 2017, cited in Pickering, Chapter 20 in this volume). These and other sources of potential opposition may provide incentives to a particular forum's organizers to aim at higher quality, but overall, the reputation of deliberative citizen forums is a 'free-use' good that some may use for their benefit without paying the costs of upholding that reputation.

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