

10-25-2013

## Contemporary Trends Of Deliberative Research: Synthesizing A New Study Agenda

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### Recommended Citation

Beste, Simon (2013) "Contemporary Trends Of Deliberative Research: Synthesizing A New Study Agenda," *Journal of Public Deliberation*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol9/iss2/art1>

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# Contemporary Trends Of Deliberative Research: Synthesizing A New Study Agenda

## **Abstract**

Deliberation is among the most widely acknowledged figures of thought in social theory. Taking the growing interest in the research conducted around deliberative democracy as an initial position, this paper seeks to provide an overview of recent predispositions and paradigm shifts of approaches taken towards the analysis of real-world discourses. Therefore, as a first step three different – nevertheless correlating – trends of deliberative research are identified: (1) an “empirical turn” and an effort to test and “falsify” assumptions of deliberative theories, (2) the consideration of certain epistemic dimensions of deliberative democracy and (3) the conceptual opening towards not fully rationalizable modes of communication. Based on those trends, the task is to make suggestions of how to incorporate those predispositions and paradigm shifts fruitfully into future research designs.

## **Keywords**

Deliberation, deliberative democracy, deliberative research, discourse research

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Jane Parsons-Sauer, André Bächtiger and two anonymous reviewers for their remarks on the article.

## 1. Introduction: the relevance of deliberative ideas

For the last two decades, ideas of deliberative democracy have formed an intensive debate among political scientists and sociologists, as well as judicial and even economics scholars concerning the necessity of reforming democratic decision-making and the appropriateness of possible deliberative implementations in this regard (Delli Carpini | Huddy | Shapiro 2002; Gutmann | Thompson 2004; Schaal | Ritzi 2009: 5; Rosenberg 2005: 212). Unlike any other topic, it has since gained relevance in nearly any contested modern socio-scientific context, like governance and other efforts to reform democratic systems (Goodin 2008; Dryzek 2010).

While it has to be noted that this seemingly attractive power resulting in intensive and extensive debates of *discursive politics* (Fischer 2003) has already been maintained for a long time at a *theoretical* level, it appears to be a rather new phenomenon that deliberative democracy is now increasingly directly influencing the empirically observable “real world of politics” (Bächtiger 2005: 5; Bohman 2009: 28). In the light of a diversity of applied models of such experimental and innovative civic processes (Delli Carpini | Lomax Cook | Jacobs 2004; Fishkin 2009; Goodin 2008), Chambers (2003) even concludes that the term deliberative democracy has undergone a distinctively empirical evolution and has thus alternated from a “theoretical statement” into a “working theory”. In a similar vein, Bohman (2009: 28) notes with reference to deliberative theories that “realist theories without aspirational ideals are empty; but aspirational ideals without empirical inquiry and testing are blind”. Examples like the British *GM Debate* or the Danish *Consensus Conferences* imply that it might especially be the field of ethical and normative issues, which are troublesome and therefore require an adapted form of policy-making more directly involving civil society (Hendriks 2005; Parkinson 2006; Crowley 2009). Graham and Philipps (1998: 2) maintain that, considering that social systems ought to be understood as dynamically changing environments, an altered perception as to what is to be regarded as legitimate or not could be a factor in explaining the need for the adaptation of political systems:

“Citizens no longer see public participation as an ‘opportunity’, graciously granted by the council and administration; it is regarded as a basic service and an integral part of local governance [...] where citizens expect to take part in the planning of service that will be designed around them”.

Following this thought, Fishkin (2009: 97) goes on to prove that this trend can also be traced statistically by showing that such real world implementations

have multiplied since the 1990s in the USA, several European countries and even China. Gastil and Levine (2005: xvi) even go further and suggest that nothing less than modern democracy and the future well-being of Western societies depend on the clear articulation of a theoretical body concerning normative implication and perspectives for a successful implementation.

Realizations of that kind do not only stem from a broadening scientific base on a strictly normative and theoretical level of thought processes, but also consist of intensive methodological and eventually empirical work recently undertaken by several scholars (Mucciaroni | Quirk 2006; Steiner et al. 2004). Given the growing amount of theoretical and empirical literature on deliberation, this paper develops arguments leading to the identification of three *desirable* trends of scientific effort regarding deliberative democracy. Notwithstanding that some of those developments are already partly embraced in recent studies, I shall be arguing that an even more determined effort should be made in order to fully connect those trends fruitfully in coherent research designs. Thus, the aim of the paper is two-fold: On the one hand, it is supposed to provide a review of contemporary theoretical and empirical studies and identify common threads. On the other hand, it attempts to do more than to compile a mere literature review by addressing open questions on deliberative research and methodologically synthesize recent works on deliberative democracy into a holistic research design sketch. This proposed sketch, I try to convey, can assist in the development and specification of modes of an enhanced deliberation measurement agenda.

## **2. Three (desirable) trends of deliberative research**

For a long time, developments in the area of deliberative democracy have created a desideratum of systematic (especially empirical) analyses, by leaving questions about the institutional impact on discourse quality unanswered (Rosenberg 2005: 212; Mutz 2008; Landwehr | Holzinger 2010; Bächtiger 2005: 5; Steiner et al. 2004: 1 ff.). Therefore, the unsurprising allegation of a purely “philosophical concept of deliberation” (Bächtiger | Tschentscher 2007: 105) could be established that was aimed mostly at the socially counterfactual nature of the Habermasian discourse ethics (Fishkin 1995: 40). Currently, however, the scientific debate about this topic appears to retreat from what may be premature conclusions and overturn purely moral-based—and thus hypothetical—interpretations of deliberative concepts. As indicated above, these changes mainly rest on the assumption of the predicted methodological benefit coming from a more practicable approach towards deliberation and can be analytically distinguished into three categories which, however, strongly correlate and should not be comprehended in an isolated manner

(Bächtiger | Pedrini | Ryser 2010). I argue that these observed trends are in fact desirable from a theoretical viewpoint as well as from a positivist, data-based approach and that those drifts should be grasped as a possibility to advance deliberative research. However, my observation is that what appears to be lacking is a coherent connection of those trends, which is going to be addressed in section 3.

**a. Clashes with reality: the “empirization” of deliberative democracy**

The first observed predisposition, that can be summed up as a kind of empirical connection towards deliberative democratic theory (Schaal | Ritzi 2009), contains a number of definition and operationalization efforts of several scholars, embracing different elements of what should be counted as deliberative (Steiner 2008). Obviously, this is no easy task by any means, as it remains largely unclear as to which elements are vital for deliberations and when it is to be regarded as successful by substantial standards (Mendelberg 2002: 153; Macedo 1999). In fact, the number of empirical publications, as Landwehr points out, has recently even quantitatively surpassed the theoretical innovations (Landwehr 2012: 375 f.).

While in the past, scholars have drawn attention towards the “deliberative turn” (Dryzek 2000: 7) of social sciences as a whole, Bächtiger et al. (2010: 32) more specifically hint at the “empirical turn” within democratic, and even more precisely, within deliberative research (Chambers 2003). Alongside possible methodological controversies, e.g. operationalizations, Mendelberg (2002) as well as Gutmann and Thompson (2004) point out that several questions and hypotheses arise from a theoretically-formed cognitive interest towards such an empirical branch of research. Those include the ideal place (institutional mounting) and the type of participants (citizens, representatives etc.) to achieve what Shapiro calls “optimal deliberation” (Shapiro 2002). Following Przeworski’s (1998) definition of deliberation and bearing in mind the requirements of inclusive democratic theory (Warren 2008; Christiano 1997: 246), furthermore one has to ask whether preference changes actually do occur in specific contexts, as the democratic notion of deliberation stems from the fact that a minority may have a sufficient chance to intersubjectively persuade the majority from the legitimacy of their perspective (Martí 2006; Mendelberg 2002: 161; Talpin 2012).

Initially, research in this respect was focused on strengthening the idea that deliberation has a distinct and vital task in politics, thereby hinting at the blind spots of an interpretation of social reality inspired solely by theories of rational choice (Keck 1995). The separation of arguing and bargaining modes of communication exemplifies this agenda, with the former sometimes

even being equated with deliberation itself (Holzinger 2001; Holzinger 2001a). Pioneer studies of Elster (2000; 1998a), Holzinger and Gerhards (1997) happened to show the influence of deliberative ideas for real-life communication as a normative standard (Fishkin 1995: 40), as well as striking occurrences of deviations from the reference of open-minded interaction. For example, Elster and Holzinger managed to extract the socially constituting function of cooperative action by proving the existence of sanctions for discourse participants who justified their demands in individual terms. In other words, purely rational and self-interested speakers become institutionally pressured to subordinate themselves to a collective standard (Elster 1997: 12; 2000; Bächtiger et al. 2005: 228; Stasavage 2007). On the contrary, while looking at macro-perspective public informational exchange transmitted by the mass media, nearly none of Habermas' ethical demands indicating the quality of discourse itself can be found among the acting stakeholders, such as newspapers (Gerhards 1997).

Apart from the qualitative-quantitative difference of methodological approaches, currently, a procedural interpretation of deliberation can be distinguished from a more substantial, or rather “epistemic” approach (List | Goodin 2001). In the empirical field of research, so far, procedural perspectives have received a considerable amount of attention and have already been operationalized quite satisfactorily with the development of the *Discourse Quality Index* (DQI) (Habermas 2005; Bächtiger | Steiner 2005). The DQI incorporates the notion of the specifically *procedural* importance of how decisions come into existence, rather than what they consist of, in order to be counted as genuinely democratic (Grimes 2008: 1; Rawls 1997; Gutmann | Thompson 2000; van Aaken 2004: 4; Habermas 1983; Steenbergen et al. 2003). Therefore, deliberative quality is measured by interpreting if and in what intensity speech acts satisfy the conditions of the discourse ethics which is analytically divided into different dimensions like *justification*, *respect* and *constructive politics*. Although the instrument evaluates the data by quantitative means, the data itself has to be gained by a more qualitatively sound procedure of deciding whether speech acts contain relevant parts and *judging* the dimension-based deliberative performance via numerical codes—hence, technically, it ought to be categorized as a methodical hybrid (Bächtiger 2005: 13).

Although in a parliamentary context, the instrument proved to be very useful, the DQI limits both the width and depth of analysis due to methodological issues. Since the DQI follows the Habermasian discourse ethics, it assesses discourse quality only by procedural means (Steiner 2012; Steenbergen et al. 2003). Furthermore, as Dryzek (2007) has noted, the instrument prescribes the research design to be merely comparative, rather than by any theoretical (or otherwise normatively defined) standard(s): “In applying the

discourse quality index, it is hard to say whether the deliberation in any of the cases analyzed is actually good enough by any theoretical standards. The index is just a comparative measure” (Dryzek 2007: 246). The empirical quest of scholars has yielded quite different results as to whether certain arenas of discussion and interaction manage to meet defined deliberative standards (Dryzek | Hendriks 2012: 41 f.). As such, both optimistic and pessimistic evidence contributes to an enhanced understanding of deliberation in the real world of politics in their own specific way by hinting at differences of discursive performance depending on the arena in which communication takes place (Goodin 2005; Goodin 2008; Chambers 2003).

It may be overly optimistic to simply transfer the Habermasian idea of deliberation in an “anarchic” public to the empirical world (Gerhards 1997), since the absence of rules tends to be dialectical. They may indeed empower unrestrained exchange of information, while, however, simultaneously jeopardize exactly this task through the establishment of potential hegemonic thought patterns and uncontrolled power exercises (Dryzek | Niemeyer 2008: 490). Thereby, Elster’s (2000) analyses also imply, firstly, the influence of so called counterfactual ideas for real-life communication and, secondly, the need for proper institutionalization and framing of organized political discourses (LeSage Jr. 1998; Graham | Philipps 1998a). As it relates to the former, one may be able to extract valuable knowledge from the empirical study of deliberation *for the theoretical body itself* and somewhat relativize the strictly counterfactual nature of the ideal speech situation (Habermas 1976: 339; Habermas 1983: 101; Habermas 1984: 118; Habermas 1982: 136). In this regard, Fishkin has strengthened the argument of referring to discourse ethics as a “benchmark” of measurement for imperfect observable communication between citizens and/or their representatives rather than a realistically achievable goal for intersubjective communication (Fishkin 1995: 40 f.; Thompson 2008)—an interpretation which entails the implication of a gradual model of real world discourse qualities (Steenbergen et al. 2003). It is hard to deny the (at least partial) inadequacy of the discourse ethics to grasp the foundations of some of the most important political arenas, such as parliaments (Steiner 2012; Bächtiger 2005; Steiner et al. 2004; Mucciaroni | Quirk 2006) because of the sheer quality and quantity of necessary procedural preconditions. Despite, this understanding of deliberation may prove to be insufficient and unsatisfying specifically from a theoretical viewpoint. As mentioned above, the most advanced attempt to operationalize deliberation, the DQI, does indeed unfold the theoretical inadequacy of a procedural and comparative form of measurement since it does not take any theoretical references to elucidate in what way the observed discourse quality values do match a certain specified *theoretically sufficient* quality. As Richardson (2002: 136) states in his appeal to

needed normative standards: “Without some fixed points by reference to which to take our initial bearing, we would be unable to orient our political reasoning toward the truth.” Thus, Fishkin’s notion of a gradual (as is the DQI) and simply counterfactual model of the Habermasian discourse ethics does not eliminate the necessity to specify, in which cases we may talk about high or low standards of deliberation.

For these reasons, the empirical progress in this field leaves much to be desired if one does not follow the procedural and comparative reading of deliberation and has a more substantial definition of the common good (Gutmann | Thompson 2004: 23, 39; Thompson 2008). Contrarily to the operationalization on the grounds of the Habermasian discourse ethics, Cohen (1986) theoretically advocates a more content-related perspective on deliberation in what he calls an “epistemic” sketch of democracy (also Cohen 1997a; Bohman | Rehg 1997; Elster 1998). This view holds that deliberating subjects may become empowered not only socially by the experience of the process of open communication (Mendelberg 2002: 156), but manage to increase the chance of objectively consenting to the “truth” on factual issues (Nelson 2008; Estlund 1995, 2008; Caluwaerts | Ugarrizay 2012). While studies show that deliberation *can* help to overcome biases between groups existing on the bases of *normative* assumptions like justice (Mendelberg | Karpowitz 2007; Cohen 1995: 282; Gutmann | Thompson 1996: 18; Rawls 1995), the epistemic hope largely pertains to agreement on *technical* questions, such as how to increase efficacy of administrative bodies. These issues supposedly advantage the rational mode of communication in finding the optimal solution since the absence of emotional freight facilitates the exchange of arguments and justifications (Button | Ryfe 2005: 27 f.). For that reason the common good compatible solution may be defined much less abstractly as is the case in procedural perspectives (Hartz-Karp 2007: 2), but can be comprehended in a Rousseauian fashion as an a priori existing truth a community may attain by democratic means (Cohen 2009; Estlund 1995: 92; Cohen 1997a).

As far as the issue of minority influence goes, some authors advocating a “strong” epistemic construction have even to some extent questioned the very need for the institutional post-discursive impact of numerically inferior groups. In fact, they argue for an existing collective rationality of the majority, as long as the deliberative process itself remains intact in terms of behavior that is truthful to the idea of the discourse ethics (Landemore 2012; Hershenov 2005; Estlund 2008: 36; Pettit 2001). The logic of this argument is derived from the belief that the majority possesses a minor ex-post probability to epistemically have been misguided in their quest for the common interest: “According to an epistemic conception of majority rule, the rationale is that decisions supported by a majority are more likely to be right, not simply that

the process visibly assigns equal weight to the interests of each” (Cohen | Sabel 1997: 320).

In this regard, the conceptualization of an empirically solid mode of measurement of these theoretical implications has yet to progress (Thompson 2008; Dryzek 2007). Operationalizations of the epistemic view on deliberation merely subsume approaches of measuring the level of information *ex ante* and *ex post*. In evaluating a Danish Consensus Conference, Norman Andersen and Hansen (2007), for example, define four dimensions in order to grasp whether deliberation actually makes a difference and increases the competence of citizens. Although the authors include efficacy and efficiency categories, the study focusses the effectiveness of the process itself, rather than the performance of the actual output or outcome (Habermas 2008: 144). That, obviously, does not hint towards any conceptual weaknesses, as long as a procedural perspective on deliberation is followed. In spite of this, as the epistemic dimension indicates, it remains to be shown whether the increase of informational quality attained by pooling sources of knowledge and open communication even has any measureable impact on the performance of the outcome itself (Stokes 1998; Przeworski 1998; 1999). Indeed, some experimental designs have begun to appreciate this epistemical dimension of deliberation, albeit by measuring the superiority of the decision taken in an indirect fashion. The epistemic claim of deliberative democracy is, for instance, supported by the findings of Goeree and Yariv (2011), who note deliberation’s desirable impact of informational exchange and unrestrained communication as it pertains to voting rules and resulting outcomes. Their empirical design concludes that deliberation diminishes the effects of institutional specifications (e.g. voting rules) by showing that it yields identical or similar output of the deciding individuals, independently from the aggregative *modus operandi* (Goeree | Yariv 2011: 919 f.). This hints of a superiority of the decisions made insofar as discourses appear to contain a regulating and “homogenizing” effect on the actors’ preferences.

On the other hand, as for example social choice theory claims, the consistency of deliberation procedures is essentially meaningless, since these ultimately cannot overcome disagreements (e.g. in especially polarized issues) and therefore always face the problem of aggregating preferences (List 2012: 180). These aggregations, as it is argued, may not simply evolve on the basis of a collective wisdom or “democratic reason” as Landemore (2012) puts it, but result in arbitrariness and indifference in terms of democratic legitimacy and efficacy (Miller 1992). Accepting Elster’s (1987: 68) definition of rational judgments, the output generated by collective decision-making bodies may not even fulfill a single criterion of his catalogue due to the negligence of the decisionist dimension of politics and preference aggregation. As deliberation

involves a potential dialectical nature of decision-making, consisting of the exchange of arguments and consensual rationality on the one hand and possible reasonable disagreement on the other, deliberativists can learn a great deal in empirically raising the question of political legitimacy and effectiveness in such consensual as well as pluralistic issues (Mansbridge 2007).

Similarly, the very difference between rationally motivated agreements as a conclusion of an open-minded and open outcome procedure (consensuses) on the one hand, and workaround results of political disagreements (compromises) on the other hand so far have been neglected in the context of deliberative processes (Crowley 2009: 1003; Goodin 2003: 158; Gutmann | Thompson 2004: 28 f.; Lindemann 2002). This should be understood as a major gap of most studies concerning deliberative practices, considering the fact that compromises constitute a major part of mundane legislative work (Gutmann | Thompson 2012). In this case the deliberative turn has seemingly produced to a shift towards the extreme in the way that aggregation and actual decision-making on the merits of majority voting is perceived as an opposing force to the process of deliberative communication (Talisso 2012: 206; Rawls 1996: 385; Manin 2005). As several authors have stated, deliberation does not necessarily entail consensual procedural finalizations, but—because of preference clarification, rather than transformation—may also increase the chances to come to terms with an agreement on disagreement, thereby reinforcing the willingness to engage in interfunctional compromises (Manin 2005; Gutmann | Thompson 1996, 2000, 2012; Lindemann 2002; Mendelberg 2002). Therefore, those aggregative dimensions need to be linked and intertwined with empirical research focusing effectiveness (dis-)advantages not only of deliberative procedures, but their respective collective outcomes. As it pertains to this agenda, Mutz (2008) has promoted a suggestion as to how to approximate such an enterprise by constructing a middle-range theory via the differentiation between normative needs and requirements of successful procedural deliberation and preferable outcomes. As well, these epistemic references directly touch the next perceived alternation in deliberative research.

**b. An “epistemic turn” of deliberation? The circular relationship of input, output and outcome**

Like Bächtiger et al. (2010) who have claimed an empirical turn of deliberation, I similarly suggest an “epistemic turn” of deliberation. As discussed above, two general evaluative dimensions for the measurement of democratic performance can be distinguished that may be framed as *intrinsic* (or *internal*) and *instrumental* content of democracy (Elster 1998; Gambetta 1998; Buchstein 2004; LeSage Jr. 1998; Papadopoulos | Warin 2007). For a consid-

erable amount of time, deliberation has first and foremost been conceived as a mode of superior decision-making strictly through the lenses of moral and normative assumptions (Christiano 1996: 16; Cohen | Sabel 1997; Shapiro | Hacker-Cordón 1999). In other words, democracy has popularly been defended by stating its reciprocal nature and promoting the procedural fairness of equal participation (Dahl 1972; Rawls 1996; Fearon 1998: 60 f.).

Despite the intuitively appealing internal value of those principles, proponents of democracy do not necessarily have an inducement to be optimistic from an economic standpoint as it relates to efficacy and efficiency of such procedures (Przeworski et al. 2009). Like Bardhan (1999) notes, as fairly easy as it is to be a democrat in terms of its internal reciprocal values, it can prove to be much harder to combine such an intersubjective fairness with the, as Summers called it, “impeccable logic of economics” (Summers cit. after Johnson | Pecquet | Taylor 2007: 398), if this is even something which can ever be identified in the first place. At a first glance, deliberative democracy may not have much to offer as it pertains to directly touching this issue, especially if one follows a—what could be called—“reductionist” interpretation of legitimacy (Buchstein 2004; Parkinson 2003, 2006). Still, there is indication calling for the appreciation a more complex understanding of the Weberian (1980: 16) “legitimacy belief” (“Legitimitäts-Glauben”) in the context of deliberative democracy.

Within the very idea of deliberation and un-coerced interpersonal communicative exchange, reasons for or against a particular policy instrumentally are thought to “filter” those (irrational) perspectives which cannot be credibly backed up by a sufficient quality and/or quantity of arguments (Fishkin 2009; Pettit 2001; Habermas 2004). The benefit of a more rational decision is, hence, apparently connected to the idea of argumentative enforcement and persuasiveness (Habermas 1998; Cohen 1997). This premise is basically derived from the sophisticated interaction mode of “communicative action” which mundane forms of discussion are unable to provide in the sense that they generally do not operate on the bases of arguing, but bargaining (Torgerson 2004; 119; Outwaite 2009; Holzinger 2001, 2001a). Defining deliberation as a mode of discussion intended to cause preference changes does not necessarily imply a more (say economically) rational outcome, since those shifts are just as likely to occur under circumstances of misinformation, propaganda and manipulative speech (Stokes 1998; Przeworski 1998, 1999; Elster 1998a). But then, how do proponents defend this over-simplified notion of rationalization in the face of undermining real-life factors, such as social inequalities, political apathy, educational problems, irrational and affective political behavior and the like (Pincione | Tésou 2006; Offe 2009) and in what way can this conception benefit research? In order to approach this question, we

need to assess in what way the epistemic conception of deliberative democracy can assist in the quest to rectify the above-mentioned narrowed perspective on legitimacy.

The assumption of existing reasoning mechanisms enforcing good reasoning and leading to epistemically better outputs is generally used to advocate deliberative democracy (Dryzek 2000; Cohen 2007; 2009; Pettit 2001). This argument however, can hardly be defended under circumstances, that restrict the *proper* communication, for example because of insufficient quality of education, information or a lack of critical intrinsic motivation of the participants to even engage in such demanding processes (Morrell 2005; Griffin 2011). Nevertheless, reasoning consists in the way politics not only shapes the rules and practices of social life *directly* by means of laws and other institutions, but it also *indirectly* influences the intrinsic motivation of citizens to develop normative assumptions about what they consider to be the, as Fearon (1998: 60 f.) puts it, “right thing” to do. If one accepts this proposition, then any direct and indirect impact on the lifeworld of citizens entails the enlargement of political legitimacy (Parkinson 2006; Benhabib 1994: 27). If, furthermore, “legitimacy is the *recognition* of the right to govern”<sup>1</sup> (Coicaud 2002: 10), or as Benhabib (1994: 27) puts it, the belief that collectively attained decisions “are worthy of being obeyed”, then such a definition as well implies functional advantages a regime can enjoy through the existence of exactly this perceived legitimacy (Nino 1996: 8). These advantages mainly consist of lower implementation and enforcement costs which, economically speaking, may otherwise occur at a greater scale. As Offe (2009: 45 f.) has argued in the case *democratic* legitimacy,

“the only argument in support of political authority I, as well as my fellow citizens, are likely to accept is the argument that all those who are supposed to obey the law must have an equal right to participate in the making of the law. [...] Thus, legitimacy is not just any positive or supportive ‘belief’ but a belief specifically rooted in certain arguments and principles and, most importantly, a belief resulting in certain *behavioral outcomes*, namely voluntary *compliance*”.<sup>2</sup>

This assumption of democratic legitimation is worth exploring in detail, since it might include the essence of deliberative superiority (or lack thereof) in terms of economically sound effective and efficient policies. Liberal theory disconnects not only analytically, but also factually the input and output di-

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<sup>1</sup> Accentuation added by the author.

<sup>2</sup> Accentuation added by the author.

mensions of legitimacy of the political process, because of the limited structural space for participation and input on the one hand, and the transmission of collectively binding decisions to more or less independent professional politicians on the other hand (Goodin 1989: 86 f.; Habermas 1998; Estlund 1997: 178). Moreover, it denies any possible reconciliation between normatively desirable procedures and the objective problem-solving capabilities of direct citizen participation, and therefore opposes any superiority claims of “collective wisdom” (Landemore 2012; Estlund 2008, 1995).

What deliberative democracy acknowledges, this paper argues, is the internal relationship of input and output legitimacy and, hence, the *holistic* conceptualization of participation and effectiveness of decisions (Nelson 2008; Landemore 2012). This interpretation ought to be understood as a bidirectional relationship: As far as the effect from input to output is concerned, how could a political system manage to be effective and efficient in the long run in terms of policy *output*, if not, a considerable effort is concentrated into including local knowledge of the group targeted by the policy itself? Ultimately, it is only this manner, which allows for the most rationally conducive solution on the grounds of premise and conclusion to be attained (Yanow 2004). On the other hand, how could a political system manage to be effective and efficient in the long run, in terms of legitimacy-dependent *outcomes*, if no commitment towards policies can be acquired through the feeling of having an appropriate impact on the result? This directly involves an appeal to human reason, as compliance in the sense of Benhabib and Offe does not require any kind of affection, but having solved a collective problem in a *sufficiently reasonable and mutually acceptable manner* (Parkinson 2006, 2007: 378; Outhwaite 2009: 109)?

Even under the assumption that citizens’ preferences already exogenously exist and only need to be sampled, minimalistic participatory instruments still need to be installed, in order to accommodate the need to gain information about how to effectively engage a problem occurring on a local level, for example (Landa | Meirowitz 2009: 427 f.; Nelson 2008: 21). However, the same intensity of impact can be assumed for the quality of output and the willingness of the civic body even to be receptive towards participatory mechanisms. It would be unlikely for a politically-engaged collective to be permanently motivated for communicative action, if not a certain minimum of outcome effectiveness and efficiency were met, which again justified the efforts to overcome rational ignorance (Pincione | Téson 2006) and invest individually scarce resources into exertive discourses (Parkinson 2007 : 378; van Aaken 2004; Morell 2005; Cabrera 2010: 225): “After all, participation in democratic decision-making should not be treated only as an end in itself. People will par-

ticipate with the hope of addressing unresolved social problems and rectifying unjust situations” (Peter 2007: 340).

The problem within this conception of legitimacy understood as a capability to ensure the perception of appropriateness of decisions is, as Parkinson (2006: 22 f.) insists, simply that it is likely to involve a merely “submissive” understanding of politics, rather than the reflective acknowledgment that the decision taken is reasonable to achieve the desired goal (also Beetham 1991: 41). Consequently, legitimacy is not simply the result of rational policy content, but is invoked in a complex relationship of decisions and their reasonable traceability to the *way* they come to be. Thus, a further connection of input and output can be traced, if we look at the concept of legitimacy (Offe 2009). Parkinson (2006: 22, 2007), as well as Bohman and Rehg (1996: 81) describe in what way deliberation helps to increase compliance even for polarized issues which remain consensually inconclusive and are decided on the basis of majority. They basically assert that the nature of deliberative processes creates a self-fulfilling prophecy as it relates to, say, regulative policies (Kriesi 2001) by shaping norms of behavior through an eventual increase of perceived input legitimacy, which in turn may diminish the urgency for evasive actions and possible non-compliance. Hence, it entails a surplus of output effectiveness of the deliberatively established rules (Outhwaite 2009: 109; Habermas 1998: 431); a view which, for example, Fishkin (1995, 2009) has promoted in a similar manner.

By applying this perspective, one also basically follows Peter’s (2007; 2008) conception of “pure epistemic proceduralism” which holds that just outputs and epistemic effects ought to be understood as a result of the *procedure* of decision-making and knowledge production, rather than objectively and exogenically existing prior to the political process (Bohman 2009: 29). She also stresses that—similar to the here identified epistemic linkage between input and output—this idea on a *theoretical* level can be utilized to reconcile the proceduralist and substantialist view on deliberative democracy. In fact, even conducted *empirical* experiments have so far shown the influence regarding this legitimacy perception and epistemic effect on the behavior of subjects *ex posterior* reaching a decision. In their study Delli Carpini, Lomax Cook and Jacobs (2004: 333) find that voting opportunities prior to a decision increases perceptions of procedural and substantial fairness as well as compliance.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this. First and foremost, the elaboration shows the connectivity between input and output flanks of the political process which can be functionally summarized with the overarching concept of legitimacy. In short, it suggests that deliberation reconciles both dimensions by offering a more complex composition of legitimacy (Nelson

2008: 21). There is an indication for the unlikeliness of permanent lack of either input or output acceptance, because of the existing linkage of both, which deliberation appreciates (Cohen 1997). The second conclusion refers to the *end* of the political process and the differentiation between *output* and *outcome*, since ultimately, there appear to be two theoretical reasons in favor for the correlation of deliberative democracy and rational composition of the political result itself. The *output*-related one is located in the mechanism of reasoning which is thought to give rise to the most compelling argument, by which the most truth-immanent solution ought to be established (Habermas 2004: 314; 1999: 332; Warren 2008: 60). Accordingly, the second, *outcome*-related one utilizes the broadened concept of legitimacy to argue for the reduction of costs associated with the implementation and enforcement of the particular rules through the procedural way, by which those rules come into existence (Fishkin 1995, 2009; Bohman | Rehg 1996: 81).

This circular relationship and reciprocal connectivity between input, output and outcome dimensions that can be deliberatively subsumed with the term *holistic legitimacy concept* (Beetham 1991a: 99; Dogan 1992: 122 ff.; Habermas 1999: 332). By taking such an epistemic perspective on democratic procedures, deliberativists can propose a more specific account on how democracy and its ideals possibly contribute to economic development (Dogan 1992: 123). Cohen's and Estlund's epistemological accounts on how deliberation contribute to the generation of output rationality state the existence of an *a priori* existing objectively traceable common good (Cohen 1997; 2009a: 307; Estlund 1997; Bohman | Rehg 1997: xvi). Rather than providing a general objection towards this model, the results expand this epistemological idea via the addition of legitimacy challenges that societies face, even if ones accepts the output-related epistemological effect. Admittedly, as indicated in the former section of this paper, the connection between involvement and engagement on the one hand and possible advantages concerning policy effectiveness on the other hand, has so far largely been neglected in many theoretical and most empirical research attempts. Amongst other reasons, this has been the case probably mainly due to problems of theoretically valid operationalizations (Delli Carpini | Lomax Cook | Jacobs 2004; Dryzek 2007: 246). Hence, it can be argued that herein lies a great desideratum for further empirical inquiries to assess whether the set out theoretical accounts are in fact valid assumptions (Caluwaerts | Ugarrizay 2012).

**c. Broadening horizons of communication: the conceptual opening and inclusiveness of deliberative theory**

Although no general definition of deliberative concepts can be established, it can be argued nonetheless that one might be able to extract certain features shared by most, if not all theoretical approaches of this kind (Mendelberg 2002). As already discussed, the specific *kind* of communication constitutes the most important feature that differentiates deliberation from other forms of interaction (McLaverty | Halpin 2008; Cohen 2007; 2009; Landwehr | Holzinger 2010). The original idea of deliberation as far as the Habermasian discourse ethics go, on the basis of non-hegemoniality, is intended to arrive at the most democratically legitimate decisions through the telos of speech and the associated rediscovery of human reason by which those decisions are made possible (Habermas 1999: 332; Steenbergen et al. 2003). Criteria to measure deliberative communication have, consequently, mainly rested on the logics of premise and conclusion yielding rational justifications for demands inducted to the political discourse (McLaverty | Halpin 2008: 198 f.; Cohen 2007: 228; Mansbridge et al. 2006; Levine | Fung | Gastil 2005; Mansbridge 2007). As it has been argued, the idea behind this mechanism mainly secures the epistemological hope associated with deliberation (Talisso 2012).

In order to attain a discussion “intended to change the preferences on the bases of which people decide how to act” (Przeworski 1998: 140), however, several authors have questioned the contemporary understanding of discourses (Sanders 1997; Young 2001, 2002). In particular, the definition of what constitutes rational communication had the potential to undermine the groundwork of being an open outcome procedure (Torgerson 2004: 120). The problem of exclusion within discursive politics lies in the advantageous procedural position of traditionally privileged social groups for which rational types of interaction are usually more conducive to than, say, immigrants struggling to express themselves (Benhabib 1995; Schaal | Ritzi 2009). While reason is generally believed to be inherently human, the capability to comply with given procedural or institutional standards of expression and speech are strongly associated with levels of education (Young 2002: 38).

With a slight adaptation of an argument brought forward by Buchstein and Jörke (2003) one could even go on to claim, however, that violations of *procedural* justice are tolerable, as long as the *substantial* results remain faithful to some sort of intersubjective common good. They propose to dispose of any normative (specifically participatory) “freight” associated with the term democracy and trace back the concept of representation to its original meaning of output effectiveness and truthfulness to the common good. The objection as it relates to the former section is, apparently, the negligence

of the complex dimension of legitimacy, namely finding an “objective” common good that can be extracted and implemented independently from its social context (Yanow 2004; Benhabib 1994: 29; Bohman | Rehg 1997: xv ff.; Cohen 1997a). If we accept the conclusions drawn from chapter 2.2, the thereby evolving issue with deliberative procedures entails that even if those practices manage to somehow institutionally defeat the universally embracing socio-economical bias of participation (Jörke 2010: 275 ff.; Sanders 1997), then social interaction inside such discursive structures would still be reproducing inequalities by procedurally endogenous means (Shapiro 1999; Bohman | Richardson 2009: 261; Buchstein | Jörke 2003). The danger of communicative mechanisms, thus, consists in the possibility of subtly neglecting decisive factors hidden in condition of the discourse itself, which are crucial for a fair and balanced argumentative contest (Benhabib 1995). In other words: deliberation itself may become a strategic instrument for legitimating political control by the “usual” privileged (Dryzek | Hendriks 2012; Fung 2007; Fung | Wright 2003; Dryzek 2007; Young 2001).

Therefore, it might be worthwhile to distinguish *structural* diversity problems—which to some extent can be countered by institutional design choices (Delli Carpini | Lomax Cook | Jacobs 2004: 336; Johnston Conover | Searing | Crewe 2002)—from *procedural* diversity problems resulting from the mode of communication itself. Especially the latter ought to be of concern here, since it constitutes the heart of critiques brought forward by Young, Sanders, Mansbridge and others, even though the debate about institutional effects on structural inclusiveness is far from finished either (Fung 2003). Indeed, as experiments with deliberating groups have shown, the normatively desired effects of preference shifts are prone to violations of ideal conditions, such as social heterogeneity of groups (Manin 2005; Mutz 2006; Sunstein 2002; Schaal | Ritzi 2009).

Bearing the importance of language in mind, it is understandable why a considerable effort so far has gone into the conceptual opening of deliberation to ensure procedural diversity (Talisso 2012: 215). As Dryzek (2000: 167) has suggested early on, deliberation should embrace speech acts which do not fully meet the demanding standards of premise-conclusion-based argumentation, such as storytelling (Landwehr 2012: 369). But does this display a fruitful attempt to reconcile communicative fairness and maintaining outcome rationality? Does the inclusion of alternative modes of interaction possibly endanger the epistemological effect(s) of deliberative procedures?

As a first step in examining this, it proves to be helpful to reactivate the Rawlsian terminology of *rational* and *reasonable* individual behavior (Rawls 1996: 48 f.; 1995; 1997). If being rational basically constitutes a mental state of egoism and politically exogenous (which ultimately means untoucha-

ble) preferences, then the type of communication—be it deliberative or not—will be actually able to change any preferred perspective on what to do, because the selection of the desired action strictly occurs on individual cost-utility calculations (Rothstein 1998; Elster 1997; Habermas 1998: 408). On the other hand, as Rawls explains, people are reasonable to the degree that they manage to be *reciprocal*, which means acting in

“a *social* world in which they, as free and equal, can cooperate with others on terms all can accept. [...] Persons are reasonable in one basic aspect when, among equals say, they are ready to propose principles and standards as fair terms of cooperation and to abide by them willingly, given the assurance that others will likewise do so. Those norms they view as reasonable for everyone to accept and therefore as *justifiable to them*; and they are *ready to discuss the fair terms that others propose*” (Rawls 1996: 48 f.).<sup>3</sup>

A row of key elements in this definition are of interest in this particular case. Firstly, the reciprocal nature of reason does not imply the abandonment of rationality per se (Benhabib 1996: 72; Rothstein 1998); rather, reason appears to have a dualistic nature ranging between rationality and emotionally grounded compassion (or empathy); the latter of which is necessary to develop the social notion of reciprocity. Secondly, it is important to identify the socially constructed nature of reason itself: the Rawlsian understanding alludes to the possibility of changing the very terms on the bases by which contesting intersubjective validity claims are measured (Rawls 1995; 1997). As Thompson (2008a: 38) clarifies, a group of people may be acting in a perfectly reasonable manner, simply if they have finalized a political decision which “best satisfies the criteria *they* considered most important”,<sup>4</sup> as long as they *mutually come to accept* conveyance mechanisms that do not thoroughly meet the principles of premise and conclusion (Steiner 2012; Benhabib 1994: 43 f.; Dryzek 2010).

Going back to the complex interpretation of legitimacy, we, thus, may argue that this Rawlsian notion of reason, namely the intersubjective capability to question and consent to the fair rules of procedure, rather than agreement on the desired output itself (Gutmann | Thompson 2000), constitutes a key factor for the efficacy of the actual outcome (Nelson 2008; Dryzek | Hendriks 2012: 46 f.).<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, such an understanding of being

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3 Accentuation added by the author.

4 Accentuation added by the author.

5 A similar idea can be found in the work of Dryzek (2010a: 108). In what he calls “meta-consensus”, he maintains that agreement can be achieved, if the consensus is limited “on the acceptable range of contested discourses”. Dryzek, hence, opposes the idea of generating,

reasonable does not provide clear hints for the factual problem-solving capability and the resulting superiority of the *output*—that is, finding the objectively optimal option to deal with a practical or technical problem de jure—of the political process itself (Chambers 2009: 325; Elster 2000). In a way, Rawls appears to disconnect the output-related epistemological dimension of deliberation from—and thereby shift attention to—the overarching agreement on the rules by which the output comes into existence. That, in turn, composes the intensity of sensed legitimacy and therefore shapes the efficacy of the actual outcome (Dryzek 2010: 108).

However, it still remains unclear, which exact modes of communication can appropriately be summed up under the term deliberation. As Steiner (2008) has energetically argued, the flip side of deliberative inclusiveness is what he calls a conceptual (over-)“stretching”. Following his argument, recent studies that operationalize deliberation more loosely, entail the danger of making the term become a simple synonym for social interaction itself (Dryzek | Hendriks 2012: 35). Considering the definition of Bessette (1994: 46), however, we may be able to substantiate what should be implemented into the perspective of a more complex image of deliberation: “Deliberation is a reasoning process in which the participants seriously consider substantive information and arguments and seek to decide individually and to persuade each other as to what constitutes good public policy”. Bessette’s minimal requirement for communicating in a reasonable way is the appeal to intersubjectivity consisting of persuasion attempts in terms of exchange of information and arguments. To meet these criteria, one does not necessarily have to exert rational means (Fung 2007, Habermas 1984: 553). What is more, for arguments to be intersubjectively compelling and to generate validity they yet are likely to take into account narrative personal experiences (storytelling) or moral assumptions (Steiner 2012: 57-87; Chambers 2009, 2004: 402 f.).

Following this understanding of reciprocity and reason, storytelling-based interaction does, therefore, not even violate the *Habermasian* (1983: 97) notion that arguments ought to possess the intrinsic intention to be compelling to others (Manin 2005, 1987). In Cohen’s (2009: 308 f.) words, deliberatively valuable reasoning should not be defined in an overarching and uncontextual manner, but rather subsume a plethora of “reasoning” modes if they are procedurally “suited to the case of free political association among equals, understood to include an acknowledgement of reasonable pluralism. This background is reflected in the kinds of reasons that will be acceptable: mean-

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so to speak, “high intensity” preference shifts in the form of completely consenting opinions with regards to particular policy propositions.

ing, as always, acceptable to individuals as free and equal". Despite the legitimate importance not to overstretch the deliberative concept, we encounter the need to appreciate modes of communication that may not entirely equal the demands of the discourse ethics. Instead, they have to be considered conducive to the cognitive comprehension as they support deliberative streams of argumentation in a more oblique manner. As Mansbridge et al. (2010) clarify, stories are always present during deliberative political processes, as they present an adequate soil on which reasonable argumentations can be concretized and displayed in ways that appeal to human cognition and, thus, serve to identify and illustrate perceived injustices and create empathy. According to Offe (2009), who refers to classic political philosophers, the latter task is important, because in the Habermasian discourse rationality—at best—only two of three conditions, that are attached to the political process ontologically, are realized. While Habermas' account of justification strongly appeals to personal interest and human reason, the passionate, or "polarized" element of politics is essentially ruled out (Kriesi 2001; Bächtiger 2005; Sanders 1997).

Looking at the interest-driven branch of political logics, rather than holding onto consensual decision modes of policies, we already discussed the eventual desideratum to analyze compromise-based results of deliberation, as it relates to efficacy effects. This may also include what Mansbridge (2009) has outlined as "deliberative negotiations". I advocate two arguments in favor of Mansbridge's proposal to take these into account. In order to set out the first argument, we need to re-assess the liberal idea of political disagreement regarding actual policy contents and moral assumption (Cohen 2009: 308; Rawls 1995; Ackerman 1989). In cases where several parties (here simply meant as individuals with diverging interest patterns) "agree to disagree" that their norms, e.g. entailing distributive interests and consequences, cannot be consensually reconciled, even if they each mutually accept the interests of other parties as legitimate (Rawls 1996; Gutmann | Thompson 1996). This alludes to the fact, that there are theoretically imaginable situations in which all interests have been suitably justified in deliberative terms—even with contradicting scientific and other expert testimonies—*without* any inducement to believe in the deterioration of the procedural discourse quality (Talisso 2012: 208 f.; Gutmann | Thompson 2004: 20).<sup>6</sup> Yet, in most cases, the

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6 A striking example for such an occasion is the German parliamentary debate of the Bundestag surrounding the legalization of preimplantation genetic diagnosis which observers have attested to have been a "moment of glory" for German parliamentarism. Despite the topic's heavy polarization and resulting moral disagreement, the discourse quality was exceptionally high.

political actors need to decide, which indicates the need to appreciate such deliberative negotiations and bargaining *as part of compromise-finding processes*; otherwise the survey of deliberative quality will be surrounded by severely theoretical and empirical distortions as it relates to the procedural dimension. In the words of Cohen (1995: 272), even the perfect deliberative process can end with a “reasonable pluralism”; a term which once again recurs to the Rawlsian interpretation of reason (Talisso 2012: 209). The second argument is not as much methodically inspired, but instead tries to focus the value of interests for the political process more generally (Shapiro 1999; Sanders 1997). Even the Habermasian figure of thought consisting of a lifeworld that ideally ought to be independent from any systemic “colonization” (Outhwaite 2009: 80) and “normalizing” tendencies suggests the vitality of unhampered individual interest formation and injection into the political process (Cohen 2009a: 304).

Moreover, the reading of Ackerman’s (1989) paper does shed light on the fact that politics itself becomes essentially meaningless, if an “uncontestedness” criterion is to be adopted to distinguish political from non-political issues. Ackerman recognizes the danger of repressive potential of democratic decision-making; while being allowed to individually raise any political issues, in a liberal polity with universalist claims (e.g. no prescribed ideal of the good life) only the ones where we can agree on a solution should be considered “political”: “We should simply say nothing at all about this disagreement and put the moral ideals that divide us off the conversational agenda of the liberal state” (Ackerman 1989: 16).

By effectively demanding a “conversational restraint”<sup>7</sup> for topics which are contested in this polarized manner and by upholding the criteria of disagreement, he seems to be oblivious to the fact that—as inconvenient as it may be—often especially polarized topics are the ones governments desperately need to regulate (Bächtiger 2005). From this, it can be inferred that there is not much to gain by transferring potential or factual disagreements to the private sphere; instead, the questions remains in what way deliberative pro-

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7 While Ackerman frames his idea “conversational restraint” he on the other hand also points out that “[...] a liberal polity must allow any person to raise any question she wants to if its dialogic project is to succeed: If the point of liberal politics is to come up with solutions that all participants find reasonable, how could this possibly be accomplished if citizens are not even allowed to place all their questions on the discursive agenda?”. As it pertains to criticism of this, Cohen (2009a: 304-305) and Habermas (1998) have brought forward some enlightening comments, in which way such an interpretation of private and public spheres might be self-defeating in the way that solidly defined lines of privacy and individualism serve as cornerstones of deliberative success.

cesses can aid with the task of dealing with disagreements by democratically legitimate (which means mutually acceptable) means while maintaining decisive authority (Habermas 1998: 375 f.; Gutmann | Thompson 1996; Estlund 2008). Additionally, what this “anti-conflict” view on politics ironically alludes to is the claim of political irrelevance of matters where parties do not manage to come to a consensus—which essentially means to delegitimize the input of interest, if they are *particular*. Apart from the gap as a result of his spot as it pertains to regulating contested social affairs, Ackerman, however, cannot logically explain why we should even encounter the need to codify the common interest, if it is completely uncontested, and how citizens under such circumstances can maintain the motivation to engage in politics, if not at least a considerable amount of it stems from a representation of their legitimate self-interest (Shapiro 2002; Offe 2009).

An antithesis to Ackerman’s view comes from Manin (2005), who has pointed out the need for conflict in deliberation in an illustrative way by stating: “Diversity of views is not a sufficient condition for deliberation because it may fail to bring into contact *opposing* views. It is the opposition of views and reasons that is necessary for deliberation, not just their diversity” (Manin).<sup>8</sup> For Manin, conflicts and opposing interests not only are unavoidable, but actually serve a vital role for the avoidance of self-reinforcing tendencies of deliberation (Sunstein 2002). In differentiating “conversational” discussions from “oratory” debates, he argues that deliberative theorist should more openly embrace the idea of institutionalizing non-deliberation for the sake of improving procedural as well as substantial democratic quality. The idea thus draws on Sunstein’s argument of deliberative affirmation which Manin (2005: 21 f.) attempts to address by championing a sustaining process of public adversarial debate which is intended to initiate preference *building* of citizens.

But on a second level, personal interests and individual demands constitute the foundation of deliberation, simply because they are the very purpose for arguments and justifications, which are built around them to provide reasons to support or to object to a particular viewpoint according to the principle of fallibilism (Habermas 1984, 1983; Steenbergen et al. 2003: 27)—if preferences are to be touched and eventually altered, they have to be disclosed. To sum up, deliberation would become essentially meaningless, if a society knew a priori how preferences are shaped, that they could not be altered in the process of debate and on which policies an agreement could be reached. Deliberative theories emphasize the contingent nature of politics.

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8      Accentuation added by the author.

For these reasons, I can conclude, deliberation is to be conceived as a concept that should include alternative forms of interaction, as long as the intention of those interactions *can* serve to intrinsically promote the suggested reading of Rawls' reciprocity idea and indirectly fostering and reinforcing mutual willingness to comprehend each other's motives. In this context there are, in my estimation, good reasons to incorporate storytelling, emotional speech and—under the special conditions of disagreement and compromise-building—even bargaining acts into the theoretical body. However, it has to be noted that these inclusions can be contextually dependent and have, therefore, to be defended on the merits of normative standards. Steiner's concern of concept stretching has to be taken seriously, as theorists need to be careful what types of speech acts are “deliberatively valuable”. Consequently, what constitutes deliberation has at least in part to be mandatory in order to allow deliberative measurement in absolute, theoretical terms and avoid the terminological stretching.

### **3. Emerging research options**

How can we bring together these three trends of deliberative research into a design that fits theoretical and empirical methodic principles? All this paper seeks to do at this point is formulate a rough sketch of how such a research design might look like without yet providing any details of the exact modus operandi or the investigated object—rather than giving a conclusive design, here the paper briefly outlines an educated guess of the possibilities resulting from the complexity of deliberation.

The foregoing analysis strengthens the idea that we need to concentrate on *four* main imperatives for a meaningful transmission of the concept to a capable research entry. To quote Torgerson (2004: 122), the concept at hand has to pick out as a central theme “[w]ho is to talk policy, with whom, under what conditions, to what effect and purpose”. Championing a *procedural* perspective, these consist of (1) empirical validity and a mode of operationalization that secures the width (inclusiveness) and depth (quality) of deliberation and (2) a theoretical groundwork for this procedural dimension which allows the examination of deliberative quality (also) by means of absolute criteria. However, on the basis of the foregoing analysis and the arising more complex understanding of deliberation, we also need (3) an approach taking the output dimension and the epistemic dimensions as well as (4) outcome-related legitimacy categories into account.

**a. Empirical validity and operationalization of procedural deliberative quality**

A large amount of different operationalizations for deliberations have consequently emerged with the elaborated empirical turn, few of which have been briefly outlined in the paper. For the task at hand, it suffices to concentrate on the DQI, since this instrument displays the most complete image of the procedural dimension of deliberation to date (Habermas 2005). Recently, Steiner (2012) has made a suggestion for an updated version of the DQI which adopts some of the calls for deliberative inclusiveness and draws from experiences with past analyses (Bächtiger 2005; Steiner et al. 2004). This development alludes to the fact that the updated version appears to have

(1)	No deliberative negotiations/not applicable
(2)	“Weak” deliberative negotiations: the speaker provides an argument for a specific compromise proposal, but does not provide a linkage between premise and conclusion
(3)	“Complete” deliberative negotiations: the speaker provides an argument for a specific compromise proposal and does provide a linkage between premise and conclusion
(4)	“Complex” deliberative negotiations: the speaker provides two arguments for a specific compromise proposal and does provide two linkages between premise and conclusion

Table 1: DQI component “deliberative negotiations”

dealt with the demand to widen the concept of deliberation for storytelling. Hence, it provides a limited, but sufficient space for emotionally driven interaction, which may contribute to the reasoning process. Corresponding with the former sections of this paper, however, I propose to expand the DQI by the addition of the category *deliberative negotiations*. By those speech acts, I refer to situations *only*, in which disagreement prevails and the speech act to be coded includes the recognition of reasonable pluralism of interests and consequently provides reasons in favor of a *specific* (policy) compromise (Cohen 2009a: 305 f.). Mansbridge (2007) has fruitfully distinguished the philosophical influence of deliberative democracy from the pragmatic neo-pluralist adaptation of “democratic deliberation”, which interprets deliberation as an enhancement instrument of ultimately aggregative decisions generated by ma-

jority voting. Following this understanding, a deliberative negotiation is double-sided by definition: firstly, it requires a conflict which cannot be pacified by means of unanimity and includes the cognitive awareness of the parties' power relations in order to make an aggregative proposal that may consist of quid pro quo strategies (Mansbridge 2010; Dryzek | Hendriks 2012: 34 ff.). In order for the appeal to be deliberative, on the other hand, arguments for the proposal have to be mutually accessible on the grounds of reason as defined above (e.g. the expected common benefit), which then can be justified gradually with one or more complete or incomplete causal inferences (Bächtiger 2005: 77 ff.). Deliberative negotiations are supposed to operationalize and empirically extract the theoretical results above in the way that it shall, firstly, reflect the participants' intrinsic motivation to reciprocally recognize the rightful and legitimate interest of other participants, ultimately leading to "to acknowledge that some people with whom we fundamentally disagree are not unreasonable" (Cohen 1995: 284). Secondly, we thereby simultaneously provide a space to operationalize the politically important *aggregative* efforts of participants procedurally, apart from the "constructive politics" item in earlier versions of the DQI, which was mainly intended to monitor the intensity of the consensual motivation (Steenbergen et al. 2003).

#### **b. Perspectives for theoretical assessments of deliberative quality**

Taking the DQI as a source measurement of deliberation does include the drawback of maintaining a strictly comparative approach. In accordance with the discussion of Fishkin's proposal for a counterfactual interpretation of the discourse ethics as well as the normatively unsatisfying methodical limitations associated with the DQI—that is the absence of options to evaluate deliberative performance in more absolute terms—we clarified the need to include theoretical criteria to judge whether a certain "deliberative minimum" has been procedurally met. The problem encountered by this agenda, obviously, is how to specify such a normative minimum on what exact theoretical base.

At this point, Goodin's (2005, 2008: 186 ff.) idea of sequencing proves to be helpful in defining what one could assume to be reasonable expectations for the different arenas of public deliberations. Building on the analytical separation of singular dimensions of the discourse ethics (Steenbergen et al. 2003), Goodin champions the view that the plethora of institutional and social contexts implies differing criteria to judge discursive quality. These criteria should be aligned to standards that can realistically be achieved according to the structural conditions on which the different arenas operate. As Bächtiger, Pedrini and Ryser (2012: 3) state as a result of their measurement undertakings, "in the real world, the various DQI components are not strong-

ly correlated”, which calls for a reductionist interpretation of the particular dimensions of the discourse ethics as they pertain to societal discourse spaces. A similar thought has been brought forward by Mansbridge (1999) and Mansbridge et al. (2012) and subsumed under the term “systemic approach of deliberative democracy”. The basic idea consists in the notion that the complexity of modern political systems requires deliberative democracy to adapt its theoretical body to the factual restrictions imposed by the spatial and temporal stretches of discursive processes (e.g. division and specialization of labour):

“Deliberation does have a place, in fact an important place, in democratic politics, but I don't think it has an independent place—a place, so to speak, of its own. There is no setting in the political world quite like the jury room, in which we don't want people to do anything except deliberate” (Walzer 1999: 67 f.).

For some “sequences” or “subsystems” of the political discourse, like plenary debates in national legislative assemblies, very detailed functionally as well as normatively inspired depictions of the expected procedural quality have already been presented and even empirically investigated (Landwehr | Holzinger 2010; Steiner et al. 2004; Mucciaroni | Quirk 2006), whereas for most of them corresponding research has still to progress. As a consequence, the quest to overcome the lack of absolute standards can only be engaged in ways that are contextually, which appears self-contradictory at first. However, not only should it be noted that researchers need to take factual *structural limits* of institutional frameworks into account, but also that an overarching definition of high discursive quality might be unsuitable in a *normative* regard (Healey et al. 2004: 86). As various societal discursive arenas have different *tasks*, these are accompanied not only by certain factual expectations of the feasibility to implement discursive politics, but also because of the yielding normative frameworks of what should count as an appropriate deliberative standard for the arena at hand (Mansbridge et al. 2012: 2 f.; Torgerson 2004: 115 ff.).

To exemplify this, Cohen (1997) and Goodin (2008) have elaborated on the meaning of political parties for the deliberative process. While Cohen's line of thought directly focuses political parties as deliberative bodies through their position in modern legislatures as central and inclusive units that envelope a multitude of issues, Goodin (2008: 211 ff.) argues for the functional dimension mainly in terms of normative points of reference for citizens on which to orient their votes and, thus, the provision of complexity reduction, as well as the formation of collective aims and purposes as to *why* actions are conducted in a specific fashion. Following the idea of sequencing, however, Goodin (2005; 2008: 186 ff.) goes on to show that the deliberative

<b>Discursive sequence</b>	<b>Sequencial societal task(s)</b>	<b>Procedural deliberative expectations</b>
Public media discourse	Information, opinion formation	Variety of displayed opinions, justification of demands
Parliamentary debates	Representation, partisanship, generating accountability, legitimizing decisions, will formation	Justifications of demands, common good references, storytelling, interruptions, foul language
Parliamentary committees	“Problem-solving”, negotiation and bargaining, non-publicity, non-partisanship, sincerity, authenticity, consensus building	Argument exchange, justifications of demands, respectful language, (deliberative) negotiations and bargaining, consensus appeals
Party conventions	Evolution of political leadership, core belief arguing, partisanship	Common good references, foul language
Mediating institutions	Conflict resolution, compromises	(deliberative) negotiations and bargaining, respectful language
Public participatory institutions	Inclusiveness, “democratization”	Variety of displayed opinions, storytelling, participation, respectful language
Political protest	Inclusiveness, exclusiveness, disagreement	Storytelling, foul language, symbolism

*Table 2: Societal discourse sequences, functions and deliberative expectations*

demands towards political parties may differ according to the progression phase of the political process. For the party-dominated, representative political arenas, he distinguishes the four sequences, namely (1) the caucus room, (2) parliamentary debate, (3) election campaign and (4) post-election bargaining, which then are assigned expected attributes of the procedural definition of deliberation (basically consisting of the discourse ethics). For instance, in

the election campaign, political parties would fail their task and the given presumption, if they do not permit open participation, free access to their discursive arenas and merely seem to serve a particular interest. This sophistication indicates that the sequencing of deliberative processes analytically proves to be more powerful than asking for the meaning of specific institutions and organizations, as those tend to be functionally versatile and simultaneously engaged in diverse phases of public policy evolvments (Landwehr 2012: 368; Healey et al. 2004: 85 ff.). Goodin's and Mansbridge's works provide an example of how *procedural* quality measuring of deliberation, like the DQI, can be reconciled with *theoretically* sound standards of deliberative needs, according to the task(s) of the given sequences inside a holistic deliberative system.

Based on this idea, table 2 displays some selected public and non-public discursive arenas, in which deliberation measurement can be achieved in a comparatively as well as theoretically sound fashion. The table distinguishes the normative and systemic “task” of the arena (*what* should happen and what is the anticipated substantial result?) from normative theoretical deliberative expectations (*how* should it happen in procedural deliberative terms?). The DQI does not allow for a direct translation of any of the measured quality values into a comprehensible theoretical frame of deliberative performance sufficiency. Nonetheless, for most of the items, it offers a gradual resemblance of the respective discourse ethics dimension(s) that enables the researcher to compare different components of the DQI as it pertains to institutional backgrounds (Bächtiger 2005; Steiner et al. 2004). Following this understanding, the second column formulates a *substantial* imperative pertaining to the respective societal sequence (Mansbridge et al. 2012), while the third column translates this notion into *procedural* indicators. In this sense, the DQI focuses on the third column of the table and—by its inherent instrumental separation of discourse dimensions—thus in a way provides an operationalized proposal of what should count as temporally and spacial “relevant” quality criteria for the particular arenas. Still, a downside of this approach is the schematization of the political process into separate units, whereas networking environments regularly do not follow this logic, but instead should be “understood as a complex, fluid and evolving ‘infrastructure’” (Healey et al. 2004: 86). Much more importantly, however, it now becomes even more visible that we do not gain much by remaining at this strictly procedural level of deliberative quality measurement, since it is still unclear, if, say, a mean value of 3.95 in the item *level of justification* for a parliamentary debate proves to be theoretically sufficient, which means that it would indicate the fulfillment of the normative societal task to argumentatively legitimize and justify collectively binding decisions (Dryzek 2007; Bohman 2009: 28 f.). Rather than to theoretically derive numerical threshold values in order to evaluate the meas-

ured DQI values on the grounds of those abstract functional statements of discursive sequences, a more fruitful approach lies in combining the procedural measurement approach with the question as to whether deliberative practices affect the output of political processes (Mackie 2006). This is because the term “quality” already implies that the assessment of a process remains meaningless, as long as it is not linked with the question whether it actually “makes a difference” (Fishkin | Laslett 2006: 4). Because of this interdependency, one important finding of this section is the methodological limit resulting from procedural approaches, which means that the issue of theoretical sufficiency will have to be re-addressed in the context of output-related investigations of deliberative democracy.

### c. Epistemology and output-related investigations

As earlier sections of the paper have outlined, the epistemic dimension of deliberative democracy claims that the decisions made by discursive politics are epistemically superior as a result of deliberation’s truth tracking capabilities. While the theoretical importance to include the substantial dimension has already been stated, it undoubtedly is by no means an easy task to validly operationalize whether deliberation actually “makes a difference” (Fishkin | Laslett 2006: 4)—still, I should like to emphasize there are some possibilities to explore in this regard.

A first approach may consist in utilizing a most similar cases design and comparing different institutional factors with regard to the differences of the respectively achieved outputs. As it relates to such a method, Georee and Yariv (2011) have indicated, deliberation appears to homogenize outputs independently from the institutional background in which it is conducted. On the other hand, Sunstein (2000, 2002) and others have shown that social group composition is vital to ensure the moderate nature of the discursive result and to avoid radicalizations. After all, the indication of equalized institutional outputs does not necessarily lead to the conclusion of an eventual “epistemic quality surplus”, but could as well be a pathologic consequence of group homogeneity (Schaal | Ritzi 2009).

A second attempt could be the application of a more content-related evaluation of the output itself. In its most radically epistemic form, this entails the prerequisite *qualitative assessment* of possibilities to engage a problem a priori and single out an optimal solution uncoupled from ideological convictions—which proves to be a demanding axiom, since in times of a scientific evidence for the beneficial effect of virtually every political position, even so-called “technical” questions are hardly accessible by means of, say cost-benefit criteria (Peter 2008: 45 f.; Mackie 2006; Steiner 2012: 63; Miller

1992: 56). Additionally, qualitative methodology tends to have the disadvantage of allowing more room for interpretation, which means that it will be less likely to intersubjectively evaluate a given discourse situation in a valid manner (Mucciaroni | Quirk 2006: 9).

Thus, it is perhaps impossible to assess output quality in an “objectively exogenic” way, but instead should be conducted on the merits of discursively endogenic cognition. In other words, the posed question then is not so much if the epistemic dimension of deliberation can be measured in absolute and content-related criteria, but whether high quality deliberative procedures (on the bases of sequential discursive accounts) correlate with outputs that have been *perceived* as supreme during and because of the reason-based communicative interaction. This relates to the proposal put forward by Mucciaroni and Quirk (2006) who have suggested legislators should consult practical and scientific evidence and base their decision on this appraisal of consequences (Bächtiger et al. 2010). Thus, according to them, good policy-making and the utilization of epistemic advantages can be attained by deciding on the bases of expert knowledge that is best suited to actually “ponder” the associated costs and benefits (Pincione | Tesson 2006; Steiner 2012: 63). Mucciaroni’s and Quirk’s approach of “effect claims”, as they call it, does provide a way to evaluate deliberative quality by the usage of substantial information, when it comes to formulating conclusions and decision-making:

“We are not arguing that democratically elected legislators are somehow obliged to defer to ‘the experts,’ or that the presumed experts are always correct [...]. Nevertheless, we assume that in most instances deliberation will be better informed, and intelligent deliberation better served, if legislators take seriously the empirical conclusions of those generally presumed to be most knowledgeable about a subject” (Mucciaroni | Quirk 2006: 7).

The problem with this view, though, is that it might be prone to trade the genuinely democratic idea of sovereignty for the “rationality” of output dimension of the political process, because of the elite-centered view on politics (Peter 2007: 340; Martí 2006: 28, 38; Bohman 2009; Landemore 2012). Although Mucciaroni and Quirk accentuate this epistocratic danger, their emphasis on expert knowledge is likely to ignore the constructivist nature of knowledge production as well as the social truth tracking function of political discourses as a consequence of the context dependent character of legitimacy and effectivity (Peter 2007: 340, 2008: 43, 46; Beetham 1991a: 100). Bohman (2009: 28) has argued that “[while proceduralism] lacks standards of judgment, [substantialism] might lead us to think that rule by experts and not by the people is the most reliable way to achieve certain outcomes”. Similarly, it does not take into account the above-mentioned inclusion of alternative per-

suasion-generating mechanisms, such as storytelling and appears unreceptive towards reasonable disagreements that rest on the grounds of deviating normative premises, as Cohen (1995) has outlined. Therefore, the proposal followed in this paper is to combine the less demanding substantial perspective on deliberation by Mucciaroni and Quirk with the procedural methodology of the DQI in an attempt to ensure the balancing of disadvantages.

Reverting back to the issue, whether deliberation makes a difference, what we *can* do to reconcile the procedural and substantial dimension is to asking if the decision made by a legislative or consultative body actually equals the proposal, which could be endogenously defended by a quantitatively and/or qualitatively measurable superiority of arguments during the course of interaction. Consequently, this approach does not follow the radical, “thick” epistemic view on deliberation, which means the final decision—by whatever standard—does not necessarily entail “objective correctness” or factual truth tracking (Miller 1992: 56). Instead, what it takes into consideration is whether deliberation possesses the capability to create outputs on the merits of individual, contextually generated and “enlightened” judgments (Granstaff 1999; Mucciaroni | Quirk 2006: 8). This “thin” epistemic view is also more likely to fit into the holistic conception of legitimacy outlined above, since the latter implies that the question of what *output* eventually proves to be the “best” *outcome* is not an issue of objective measurement, but contextually dependent on the perception of legitimacy. Nonetheless, it is required to monitor the content-related diversity of problem resolution suggestions during the discourse in order to be able to apply this model of epistemology.

Apart from the avoidance of empirically problematic and contextually dependent criteria of efficacy, there are several advantages of this form of epistemic operationalization. First and foremost, by means of the DQI, this procedure can be relatively easily realized, since the qualitative superiority (that means level of persuasion on the bases of logic as it pertains to premise and conclusion) of arguments for a proposal can be assessed via the items *level of justification*, *content of justification* and *storytelling*. The quantitative superiority can simply be measured by counting the number of arguments in addition to their actual depth of justification (Steenbergen et al. 2003). Thus, the *endogenously preferable* solution should be relatively easy to identify. Secondly, this notion of epistemology appears to be compatible with a desire to establish a theoretical quality standard. As already discussed above, discourses can hardly be evaluated in a satisfactory manner by procedural criteria alone. The addition of such a “minimalist” definition of epistemology, however, creates the opportunity to test, whether comparatively high performing, sequential discussions simultaneously increase the possibility to decide on the proposal which, according to the reason-based principles of intersubjectivity

(that is *asking for* and *giving* reasons), is *most likely* the “right thing to do” (Pettit 2001: 281; Cohen 1997; Fearon 1998).

Consequently, by asking if deliberative proceedings make a difference in terms of output also connects deliberation to aggregative problems crystallized by social choice theory (Miller 1992). If it appeared that the qualitative and/or quantitative quality of arguments had an impact on the output, it would counter the claimed aggregative arbitrariness of “democratic” decision-making and insist that the deliberative procedure of how decisions come to be actually matter as it relates to the content of the output. Thus, this approach of epistemology is neither privileging the substantial dimension, nor does it state the irrelevance of the output for the evaluation of deliberative quality and for the permanent reproduction of legitimacy (Bohman 2009: 29).

#### **d. Circular legitimacy and outcome-related investigations**

A large part of the work has concentrated on the fact that the epistemology of deliberation cannot simply be perceived under the impression that discursive politics *objectively* produce “better” *outputs*, as such an approach (apart from measurement difficulties) would fail to acknowledge the outcome-related dimension of legitimacy. Thus, the outlined legitimacy dimension needs to be implemented in the multi-dimensional evaluation of deliberative quality.

As already discussed, legitimacy can neither be understood as a simple input-driven mechanism, feeding off fair and equal participation opportunities, nor purely output-related as a resource generated by the epistemic expectation of democracy. For example, as it relates to the input dimension, “[i]ndeed, fairness is simply too weak a criterion to carry the full burden of legitimacy”. This means that “[l]egitimacy judgements involve assessing the substantive quality of decisions, not just the status of the decision-makers, which means that democracies should exercise deliberative judgement on all proposals for public action” (Parkinson 2007: 378). Deliberation, then, can aid in providing a more complex sense of legitimacy as it pertains to modern democracies, operating on the circular dependence of both ends of the political process (Beetham 1991a: 99). However, from an empirical point of view, there are serious obstacles for a valid measurement of legitimacy. A first major problem lies in the operationalization of this legitimacy, because it involves the measurement of an “amorphous” and a—in itself—multi-dimensional and diffuse research object (Dogan 1992: 120; Castillo 2011: 56). A second difficulty can be located in the context dependency of the concept of legitimacy, since the benchmark of what should count as an empirical “evidence” of legitimate actions may vary strongly (Castillo 2011).

However, as Zelditch (2001: 9 f.) points out, pluralist societies cannot be expected to function properly on the bases of such consent expressions alone. In most cases, policies bring dissent among different social groups, yet there is legitimacy. In order to explain this consensus-dissensus duality, Beetham (1991a) comes to the conclusion that legitimacy needs to be conceptualized with regards to different and partly intertwining dimensions. He differentiates subtle forms based on and traditional rules from procedurally derivable justifications on the grounds of shared norms and beliefs of both super- and subordinate actors as well as expressive and open mechanisms of legitimacy by conscious acts of consensus. Rather than displaying isolated or even mutually exclusive indicators, such a conceptual division most likely gives rise to correlations of individual conscious and subconscious signals of legitimacy (Beetham 1991a: 98).

Therefore, on the one hand, for a complex modern democracy, the requirement of legitimacy providing entails the problem of assessing diverse subsystems, each of which may involve particular theoretical and normative needs of what should actually be considered as consenting behavior of the subordinates (Dogon 1992). However, on the other hand, as especially deliberative democrats have outlined, the ideal of democracy does appear to imply a relatively specific set of indicators in that regard that is closely associated with Beetham's conception (Nino 1996). Habermas (1998: 242 ff.) points out that modern democracies integrate the principle of *justifiability* as their central motif of decision-making during the various stages of law establishment and interpretation (Zelditch 2001: 6 f.). Thus, in most arenas of democracy, signs of public acceptance are—at least normatively—expected to embrace more than subordination resulting from traditional normalization, but based on constant subjective evaluation of individuals and the public as a whole (Nino 1996: 8; Goodin 2000). In other words, whereas the acceptance of the *system* (e.g. the procedural rules of politics) “are not up for grabs every single time” (Parkinson 2006: 23), the nature of the democratic rules still demand a receptive audience of the particular *political demands and policies*, since those constitute the core of social reality construction. This diagnosis also corresponds with empirical findings of parliamentary discourses which indicate a relatively high public pressure to reasonably justify the decisions taken (Bächtiger 2005: 138). Even considering real-life limitations of premise-conclusion-based individual evaluations of policies in a modern society, Beetham's justification and consent dimensions are hence more appropriate to access the specifics of *deliberative democratic* legitimacy, as it has a stronger normative relationship to the *consciously reason-based* support of a certain output which enables the public to assess the substantial dimension of decisions:

“The claim of common interest itself requires substantiation by leaders against two benchmarks: the degree to which policy outcomes match the substantive goals of the society in question; and the degree to which they achieve *normatively justifiable* or desirable ends. Thus, legitimacy includes a concern about the ends of political life, not just its procedures” (Parkinson 2003: 182).

While it is true that support can remain “diffuse” as it relates to subordination on the grounds of tradition, the impact of deliberative discourses can only be accessed through “specific” support as to why one should favor a decision (Easton 1965). According to Easton’s logic, this also entails that the latter source of legitimacy tends to be more volatile and fragile because it strongly relates to concrete *policy* support, whereas the former touches the *systemic* rules of politics in general (Nino 1996: 8; Zelditch 2001: 9 f.).

In a somewhat different, though quite fruitful effort of operationalization, Fuchs (2011: 57 ff.) distinguishes objective and subjective accounts of legitimacy: Objective legitimacy is measured from a top-down perspective of political theory via applied normative criteria. For example, depending on the normative viewpoint, these can include standards of freedom, equality and justice of the legislative process (Parkinson 2003: 183; Pettit 2001) and from a deliberative standpoint justifications *objectively* serve as an instrument of *legitimation*. Within the concept of subjective legitimacy, in contrast, legitimacy criteria are defined bottom-up by those affected by the decisions of the political system or regime. As a result, this conceptualization corresponds more strongly to the Weberian logic of legitimacy perception—here, the question is whether justifications *subjectively* generate de facto *legitimacy*.

What can be extracted from these lines of thought is that if the cognitive interest is to examine whether deliberative processes increase the legitimacy of the outcomes, the operationalization of this agenda needs to be context-sensitive. Since the very concept of the term is conflicting and dualistic in itself, it is impossible to find a generic operationalization that fits the needs of all subsystems of a labour-divided society: “Swearing an oath of allegiance, joining in acclamation, concluding an agreement with a superior party, voting in an election or plebiscite: any of these may provide evidence of consensus according to the context” (Beetham 1991a: 41). Hence, the adequacy of any indicator for legitimacy also rests on the *normative framework* that the scholar builds around the analysis.

To illustrate the point, consider the example of the role of the citizen: while most of the normative democratic principles are related to diverse forms of participation—like voting, party engagements, membership in political organizations or even direct decision-making at the local level—in a liberal democracy, it would probably be misleading to postulate that people who do

not participate automatically perceive the political system as illegitimate. Moreover, lack of participation does not even necessarily contradict the generally quite demanding central idea of deliberative democracy: as Goodin (2000) and Parkinson (2003; 2006) indicate, a considerable part of deliberation and weighing reasons takes place *within the mind* of citizens who delegate the representation of their interests to politicians. Those politicians in turn present policy solutions that are deliberatively evaluated by the public (Chambers 2012: 70) and—in this context more importantly—its individuals. Bearing in mind the deliberative problem of scale in mass democracies, for the most common political issues at hand, the application of high participatory standards of measurement are inappropriate for the majority of arenas of the public deliberative system (Habermas 1998; Chambers 2012).

But how can legitimacy be measured under conditions that are restrictive without compromising the terminological depth of deliberation? As far as public policy deliberation at a large scale is concerned, Goodin (2000: 83) has promoted the idea of including “internalized” reflexive processes of citizens to the substantial core of deliberative democracy: “My suggestion is that we ease the burdens of deliberative democracy in mass society by altering our focus from the ‘external-collective’ to the ‘internal-reflective’ mode, shifting much of the work of democratic deliberation back inside the head of each individual”. That is not to say the external dimension of public debate and consideration does not play an integral part of politics. On the contrary, the substantial deliberative quality of politics are undividedly connected to the degree that subjective opinions are exposed to argumentative scrutiny (Chambers 2012: 70). Despite, in—as Habermas (1998: 433) calls it—*regular* modes of political problem solution, the largest portion of this process is performed on the grounds of individual media consumption and interpersonal political talk, as opposed to actual institutionalized high-quality discourse forums. Here, I agree with Chambers (2012: 71) who reflects on the usefulness of public opinion polls and concludes it would be simplified to assume that such polls only contained epistemically problematic raw and uncontested preferences. Instead they may also serve as a *reflective* carrier of information of “what citizens actually think” and, hence, are particularly useful in dealing with the assessment of legitimacy patterns regarding concrete policy issues. Consequently, it can be argued that the subjective reflection of discourses and internal processes of opinion building more validly operationalizes legitimacy than “strong” expressive feedback (e.g. demonstrations) in most common contexts of a mass society without conceptually compromising the main idea of the careful scrutiny of rationality arguments presented (Steiner 2008).

Therefore, in order to operationalize the cognitive interest of whether procedural deliberative quality strengthens and enhances legitimacy,

this elaboration suggests to deploy a method that consists of three different methodological steps and are all directed at a specific policy field. The first one is the DQI-related coverage of the *procedural* and *substantial* (output-oriented) discourse quality as already discussed above. Second, the data collected could then be related to opinion polls statistically which allows for an interpretation of the hypothesized correlation of discourse quality and citizen opinions about the issue at hand. This should give hints as to whether high degrees of discourse quality actually correspond with *internal* deliberative reflexive processes. However, the associated problem with this is that this does not provide evidence for the correlation of subjective opinions and the compliance of the regulative policy. Therefore, as a third step it might be thinkable to conduct a qualitative analysis of the final policy output with regard to the actual outcome, that is whether a regulation has had the intended social effect from the perspective of political control and planning theories (Braun 1995: 617).

#### **4. Conclusion and outlook**

The aim of this paper was directed at the discussion of current perspectives for the development of enhanced tools of analysis for the normative ideal subsumed under the term *deliberative democracy*. For this purpose, I have reviewed current desirable paths of deliberative research and tried to unfold ideas for a research agenda consisting of a multi-leveled approach to deliberative democracy. Contemporary empirical studies still struggle to find a mutually acceptable definition and interpretation of deliberation and have weaknesses relating to a mostly procedural mode of measurement which will not permit theory construction and testing of output- and outcome-related questions of the political process. As shown, such a procedural perception of deliberation is flawed, because it fails to recognize the internal holistic relationship between input, output and outcome, or in short: it excludes the problem of legitimacy. Albeit with the acceptance of more or less problematic disadvantages, I have argued that it is possible to extend the empirization tendency of deliberative democracy beyond procedural analyses and include questions of effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy when it comes to decision-making. Including those categories should be more than an optional feature surrounding the investigation of communicative processes, since the rationality claim does constitute deliberation's normative core. Thus, the extension of theoretical and empirical research in this area can help to approximate the question of whether the high discursive levels and deliberation actually make a difference.

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