Introduction

The deliberative model of democracy was initially developed at a normative philosophical level.[1] Many claims were made about favorable antecedents and the beneficial consequences of a high level of deliberation. In recent years, some of these claims have been subjected to empirical tests. In this book, I look at the interplay between normative and empirical aspects of deliberation. Empirical data, of course, cannot solve normative questions, but they can throw new light on such questions. I come from the empirical side, so I do not claim to write as a professional philosopher; I will instead take the perspective of an engaged citizen in the sense of the French *citoyen engagé*. I will begin my normative stance not with ultimate philosophical premises but will proceed with pragmatic reflections on what empirical findings may mean for the role of deliberation in a viable democracy. Let me make clear at the outset that it is not my view that a viable democracy should consist only of deliberation. Thus, the concept of *deliberative democracy* in the title of this book does not mean that this form of democracy consists only of deliberation: it only means that deliberation has an important role. Besides deliberation, a viable democracy must have space, in particular, for competitive elections, strategic bargaining, aggregative votes, and street protests. The trick is to find the right mix among all these elements, and this will depend on the context. I will argue that in this mix the role of deliberation is often not strong enough and must be strengthened.

More specifically, empirical analyses should allow answering questions such as the following: To what extent and under what circumstances can the norms and values favored by deliberative theorists be

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[1] According to some readings, Aristotle has already made a normative deliberative argument; see, for example, James Lindley Wilson, "Deliberation, Democracy, and the Rule of Reason in Aristotle's Politics," *American Political Science Review* 105 (2011), 259–74.

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put into praxis? Are there trade-offs among the various elements of deliberation in the sense that, once put in praxis, some elements may be in tension with each other? How might the feasibility of deliberation be improved? Is deliberation compatible with other valuable goals? What are the opportunity costs of deliberation? Does increased deliberation have diminishing returns? How does deliberation causally relate to policy outcomes? What are the alternative democratic models to deliberation? If we have good answers to such questions, it is easier to arrive at a judgment of how moral principles favored by deliberative theorists should be applied in the real world of politics. In this sense, this book should show how empirical research can provoke reflection on normative values. Such reflection is postulated in a concise way by Thomas Saretzki, who writes: "What we can and should try to achieve is critical reflection and cooperative conceptualization of empirical and normative aspects of deliberative democracy."[2] In the same vein, Michael A. Neblo *et al.* expect that "many of the big advances in our understanding of deliberation are likely to come by carefully aligning normative and empirical inquiries in a way that allows the two to speak to each other in mutually interpretable terms."[3] Maija Setälä postulates that thought experiments of deliberative philosophers "should be experimentally testable because they abstract from the real world like experiments."[4] Simon Niemeyer claims that "the 'coming of age' of deliberative democracy requires the interplay of theoretical insight and empirical investigation."[5]

If the empirical world does not correspond to the normative ideals, one may argue that the empirical world has to be changed. One may

[2] Thomas Saretzki, "From Bargaining to Arguing, from Strategic to Communicative Action? Theoretical Perspectives, Analytical Distinctions and Methodological Problems in Empirical Studies of Deliberative Processes," paper presented at the Center for European Studies, University of Oslo, December 4, 2008, p. 38.

[3] Michael A. Neblo, Kevin M. Esterling, Ryan P. Kennedy, David M.J. Lazer, and Anand E. Sokhey, "Who Wants to Deliberate: And Why?," *American Political Science Review* 104 (2010), 566.

[4] Maija Setälä and Kaisa Herne, "Normative Theory and Experimental Research in the Study of Deliberative Mini-Publics," paper presented at the Workshop on the Frontiers of Deliberation, ECPR Joint Sessions, St. Gallen, April 12–17, 2011.

[5] Simon Niemeyer, "Deliberation and the Public Sphere: Minipublics and Democratization," paper presented at the Workshop on Unity and Diversity in Deliberative Democracy, University of Bern, October 4, 2008, p. 2.

also argue, however, that the normative ideals need to be adjusted to the world as it is. I will show that there is always tension between deliberative ideals and the praxis of deliberation. It is exactly this tension that is at the core of this book. In order to render the interplay of normative and empirical questions most visible, each chapter has three sections. The first sections deal with the normative philosophical literature on deliberation; the aim is not to give an introductory overview of the literature but rather to present the most important controversies among deliberative theorists. Having initially been trained as a historian, I will stick as much as possible to the texts, letting the theorists speak in their own words. In the second sections, I discuss the relevant empirical research for these controversies, including our own research. In the third sections, I discuss possible normative implications, relating the empirical data to the philosophical controversies.

(a) The theoretical model of deliberation

In the philosophical literature, the deliberative model of democracy is usually constructed as a "regulative" ideal, which, according to Jane Mansbridge, "is unachievable in its full state but remains an ideal to which, all else equal, a practice should be judged as approaching more or less closely."[6] This follows Immanuel Kant, who defines a "regulative principle" as a standard "with which we can compare ourselves, judging ourselves and thereby improving ourselves, even though we can never reach the standard."[7] Jürgen Habermas writes in this context of "pragmatic presuppositions of discourse."[8] The ideal type of deliberation can best be understood in contrast to the ideal type of strategic bargaining. The real world of politics is most often a mixture of the two ideal types. Before I address mixed types, it is conceptually helpful to present first the two ideal types. In the ideal type of strategic bargaining, political actors have fixed preferences. They know what

[6] Jane Mansbridge with James Bohman, Simone Chambers, David Estlund, Andreas Follesdal, Archon Fung, Christina Lafont, Bernard Manin, and José Luis Marti, "The Place of Self-Interest and the Role of Power in Deliberative Democracy," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 18 (2010), 65, footnote 3.

[7] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1781]), p. 552.

[8] Jürgen Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

they want when entering a political process. They maneuver to arrive at an outcome that is as close as possible to their preferences. They engage in deal-making with the motto, "if you give me this, I give you that." In order to strengthen their bargaining position, they may work with promises and threats. Ideally, strategic bargaining results in an equilibrium win–win situation where, thanks to mutually beneficial trading, everyone is better off than before. In sophisticated models of strategic bargaining, actors are not necessarily always egotistical; they may also, for example, care for the well-being of future generations as personal preference. If new information becomes available, actors may also change their preferences; new research on the hazards of driving a car, for example, may change the preference of actors to give up the car and use public transportation instead. In such sophisticated models of strategic bargaining, the basic point remains that actors are driven by their individual preferences, whatever these preferences may be.

By contrast, in the ideal type of deliberation preferences are not fixed but open, and actors are willing to yield to the force of the better argument. What counts in a political debate is how convincing are the arguments of the various actors. Actors attempt to convince others by good arguments, but they are also open to being convinced by the arguments of others. Thus, a learning process takes place in the sense that actors learn in common debate what the best arguments are. It is not clear from the outset what the best arguments are, but it is rather through mutual dialogue that the best arguments are expected to emerge. In this sense, actors learn to think and act in new ways. Deliberation may bring a rupture with the past. Mansbridge summarizes the essence of the deliberative model in a succinct way: "We conclude by pointing out that 'deliberation' is not just any talk. In the ideal, democratic deliberation eschews coercive power in the process of coming to decision. Its central task is mutual justification. Ideally, participants in deliberation are engaged, with mutual respect, as free and equal citizens in a search for fair terms of cooperation."[9] This definition comes close to the initial meaning of *deliberare* in Latin, where it means to weigh, to ponder, to consider, and to reflect. As Robert E. Goodin points out, such deliberation can also take place individually in the sense of inward reflection. Such individual deliberation Goodin

[9] Mansbridge *et al.*, "The Place of Self-Interest," 94.

considers to be particularly fruitful before and after group deliberation.[10] In the same vein, Thomas Flynn and John Parkinson argue from the perspective of social psychology that inward deliberation may be helped if it confronts imagined *ideal* deliberators.[11] Bernard Reber insists in a particularly strong way that individual deliberation should come before group deliberation, since otherwise argumentation risks lacking coherence. First, actors have to become clear about their ethical standards before they can engage with others in fruitful deliberation.[12]

For a long time, scholarly interest was predominantly in the model of strategic bargaining. In recent years, however, the deliberative model has attracted more attention. As Alain Noël puts it:

Predominantly, the study of politics has been a study of interests, institutions and force, focused on bargaining and power, with some attention being occasionally paid to ideas, considered as intervening variables. In recent years, the study of democratic deliberation has brought back a more traditional understanding of politics as a forum, where ideas and arguments are exchanged, evolve over time, and matter in their own right.[13]

There are still many political scientists who insist that politics is nothing but strategic bargaining. How can a case be made that deliberation is not simply an ideal philosophical concept but is actually present in the real world of politics? Let me illustrate this question with the conflict in Northern Ireland, specifically with the 1998 Belfast Agreement and its implementation. Ian O'Flynn offers the following interpretation:

At bottom, Irish nationalists endorsed it because it held out the promise of achieving a united Ireland, whereas British unionists endorsed it because it held out the best opportunity of reconciling nationalists to the union. The important point about the agreement, however, is that both sets

[10] Robert E. Goodin, *Reflective Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 38.
[11] John Parkinson and Thomas Flynn, "Deliberation, Team Reasoning, and the Idealized Interlocutor: Why It May Be Better to Debate with Imagined Others," paper presented at the Workshop on the Frontiers of Deliberation, ECPR Joint Sessions, St. Gallen, April 12–17, 2011.
[12] Bernard Reber, "Les risques de l'exposition à la deliberation des autres," *Archives de philosophie du droit* 54 (2011), 261–81.
[13] Alain Noël, "Democratic Deliberation in a Multinational Federation," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 9 (2006), 432.

of aspirations are underpinned by a shared commitment to principles of self-determination, democratic equality, tolerance and mutual respect. It is those principles that give the agreement legitimacy, in the eyes of both ordinary citizens and the international community, and that sustain the hope for enduring peace and stability.[14]

How does O'Flynn know that not only interests and power but also deliberation with tolerance and mutual respect played a role? He immersed himself in the decision process, studying documents and doing interviews. Other scholars, however, based on similar sources, see only interests and power at play.[15] Who is right? It is my view that neither side can prove its argument in any definitive way. One's analysis always depends on one's world-view, and how one sees the world depends to a large extent on how one was socialized. Some have cognitive schemata making them see politics as a pure power game. For others, their cognitive schemata are such that they also see some deliberation at play. I do not claim that the axiom of politics as a pure power game is not plausible. I only claim that the axiom that politics is not exclusively about power has plausibility. It just happened that while writing this book, I read the autobiography of Nelson Mandela; I was struck that in his concluding chapter he offers his world-view that the human heart is open for others:

I always knew that deep down in every human heart, there is mercy and generosity. No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. Even in the grimmest times in prison, when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to reassure me and keep me going. Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.[16]

[14] Ian O'Flynn, "Divided Societies and Deliberative Democracy," *British Journal of Political Science* 37 (2007), 741. See also Ian O'Flynn, *Deliberative Democracy and Divided Societies* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

[15] See, for example, some of the papers in Rupert Taylor (ed.), *Consociational Theory: McGarry and O'Leary and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[16] Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 622.

This world-view of Mandela is precisely the type on which the delibera-
tive research agenda is built. Even when Mandela was treated cruelly
by the white guards in prison, he was able to see sometimes a glim-
mer of humanity in these guards. He never completely gave up on the
flame of humanity's goodness. I acknowledge with Mandela that quite
often this flame is hidden, although it will never be fully extinguished.
A hope in this flame is the basis for a rewarding research program, at
least for me and many of my deliberative colleagues.

As Mauro Barisione has pointed out to me,[17] it is at the very basis of
the deliberative model that all assumptions must be open to being chal-
lenged. Therefore, the assumption of human goodness cannot be taken
as an unchallenged meta-assumption. In this way, however, the logic of
deliberation puts in danger its very basis. Barisione is certainly correct to
make this point because it is indeed a basic assumption of deliberation
that everything must be open to challenge. My response is that every
research agenda must start from some basic assumption about human
nature, and the assumption of my research agenda is that despite all the
evil in the world, at least some humans have, some of the time, a sense
of goodness in truly caring for the well-being of others. It is fine for me
if other researchers do not accept this assumption and create their own
research agenda. After all, good research benefits from competition,
including competition on basic assumptions about human nature.

Having established why working with the deliberative model makes
sense, I now look more closely at the model. First I address a question on
terminology. Some theorists like Dennis F. Thompson,[18] Joshua Cohen,[19]
and Claudia Landwehr and Katharina Holzinger[20] use the term "deliber-
ation" only for forums where a decision has to be made, such as parlia-
mentary committees, but not, for example, for discussions on television

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[17] Personal communication, July 30, 2011.
[18] Deliberation for Thompson means "decision-oriented discussion." Dennis F.
Thompson, "Deliberative Democratic Theory and Empirical Political Science,"
Annual Review of Political Science 11 (2008), 503–4.
[19] Deliberation for Cohen means "weighing the reasons relevant to a decision
with a view to making a decision on the basis of that weighing." Joshua
Cohen, "Deliberative Democracy," in Shawn W. Rosenberg (ed.), *Participation
and Democracy: Can the People Govern?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan,
2007), p. 219.
[20] Claudia Landwehr and Katharina Holzinger, "Institutional Determinants
of Deliberative Interaction," *European Political Science Review* 2 (2010),
373–400.

or among neighbors. Mansbridge proposes "to use adjectives to make the important distinction between deliberation in forums empowered to make a binding decision and other forms of discussion."[21] For situations in which a binding decision has to be made, she coins the term "empowered deliberation." If no binding decision has to be made, Mansbridge uses other distinctions with the help of further adjectives such as "consultative deliberation" for "a forum empowered only to advise an authoritative decision-maker," or "public deliberation" for "a forum that is open to the public but makes no binding decisions, such as a public hearing."[22] Mansbridge uses still other adjectives to make further distinctions of deliberation. I agree that Thompson, Cohen, Landwehr, Holzinger, and Mansbridge make important distinctions. I prefer, however, to use the term deliberation in a generic form and then to verbally characterize the forums in which deliberation occurs. When I write, for example, in Chapter 8 about deliberation in the media, I do not use a term such as "media deliberation," but I rather characterize the specific media in which I am interested, for example, deliberation in elite newspapers, deliberation in boulevard newspapers, deliberation on the Internet.

Having settled this terminological issue, I take a closer look at the model of deliberation in its various expressions. Although there is consensus among deliberative theorists on the general principle that arguments should matter in a political discussion, there are quite strong disagreements on how this principle should be implemented. Mansbridge points out that these disagreements have become greater in the last few years.[23] Today, deliberation has become quite a fluid concept. Jensen Sass and John S. Dryzek see deliberation as a cultural practice "with a meaning and significance which varies substantially between contexts and over time … Thus, the forms of deliberation seen in North America or Western Europe look quite different to those appearing in Botswana, Madagascar, or Yemen."[24] Given such

[21] Jane Mansbridge, "Everyday Talk Goes Viral," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, September 2–5, 2010.

[22] Mansbridge, "Everyday Talk Goes Viral."

[23] Jane Mansbridge, "Recent Advances in Deliberative Theory," paper presented at the Max Weber Workshop on Deliberation in Politics at New York University, October 29, 2010.

[24] Jensen Sass and John S. Dryzek, "Deliberative Cultures," paper presented at the Workshop on the Frontiers of Deliberation, ECPR Joint Sessions, St. Gallen, April 12–17, 2011, p. 4.

variation, it is appropriate for Sass and Dryzek that we do not use a one-size-fits-all definition of deliberation but adapt the definition to the respective historical and cultural context.[25] Given this broad orientation of research, it is not surprising that increasingly there are disagreements on the exact definition of deliberation. I give a first overview of these definitional disagreements, which I will discuss in greater detail in the respective chapters.

One disagreement concerns the question of how strongly ordinary citizens should be involved in the deliberative process. On one hand, you have the position that ordinary citizens should participate as much as possible in the deliberative processes. In their everyday life, they should discuss political matters in their families, with friends and neighbors, in the workplace, and in their clubs and associations. In this sense, they are also political actors, and for them, too, the principle should apply that they are willing to be convinced by the force of the better argument. Thus, at the citizen level, opinion-formation takes place in a reflective way. These reflected opinions are communicated to the political leaders through a variety of channels like personal encounters, public meetings, the media, and the Internet. On the other hand, some theorists consider this position of deliberative participation of all ordinary citizens as utterly unrealistic. In their view, it would be more realistic to expect that all citizens have the *opportunity* to participate, while in praxis only a small number would participate on a regular basis in political deliberations, for example in randomly chosen mini-publics.

One further disagreement on what is meant by deliberation concerns the justification of arguments, whether they all need to be justified in a rational, logical, and elaborate way or whether narratives of life stories can also serve as deliberative justifications. When actors present their arguments in a rational, logical, and elaborate way, their arguments can be evaluated on the basis of formal logic. To allow only rational, logical, and elaborate arguments raises the critique from some theorists that such a definition discriminates against persons with little rationalistic skill. Given the inclusionary spirit of the deliberative model, such persons should also be allowed to participate in the political process. If there is, for example, a public school board meeting in a local community, it should also count as a deliberative justification if

[25] Sass and Dryzek, "Deliberative Cultures," p. 11.

parents tell the stories of how their children have severe drug problems. Telling such personal stories will involve much emotion and empathy not allowed in a purely rational approach to deliberation.

There is also disagreement on whether in deliberation all arguments must refer to the public interest or whether arguments referring to self-interest or group interests also count. Clean air is an example of a public interest, since everyone profits from this good. Some theorists argue that only such public interest belongs to a deliberative discourse. Other theorists, however, would also allow self and group interests, for example that tighter clean air standards would cause unemployment and suffering for workers in the automobile industry. Generally speaking, it is not easy to make the distinction between the public interest and group interests. Group interests like those of workers in the automobile industry may cut across national borders, for example between the US and Canada. For some issues, several countries or the entire world share a common public interest. Therefore, the concepts of public interest and group interests cannot be seen only within the narrow borders of nation states.

Do all arguments have a place in deliberation? Here again there is disagreement. Some theorists take the position that all arguments, however offensive, should be listened to with respect and taken seriously. A criticism of this position is that if an argument violates core human rights, its merits should not be considered at all. If someone argues, for example, a racist position, this should not be substantively discussed because racism violates a core human right. Although the position should not be discussed, one would still have the obligation to justify why the position is racist and therefore should not be discussed.

A further disagreement concerns the question of whether deliberation does necessarily have to end with a consensus. On the one hand, there is the expectation that reasonable people will ultimately agree on the strength of the various arguments so that consensus will naturally result. This view is based on the assumption that behind all individual preferences there is a basic core of rationality that is self-evident if people use only their reasoning skills. Therefore, consensus would be built on the same reasons. A weaker form of the consensus argument is that actors may have different reasons to arrive at consensus. On the other hand, there is the view that some deep-seated values may turn out to be so irreconcilable that, despite all references to rationality, consensus is not possible nor even desirable. There is also the