

Potential for deliberation among EU citizens

Jürg Steiner

University of Bern and University of North Carolina

1. Summary of Project

The project is located in the framework of deliberative theory. In an earlier study funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, our research group at the Bernese Interdisciplinary Center for Deliberative Studies investigated deliberation in parliamentary debates in Germany, Switzerland, the UK and the US. Thereby, we developed an index to measure the level of deliberation of the individual speech acts both in plenary sessions and committee meetings. We call this index Discourse Quality Index (DQI). It is up to now the only such index that has been submitted to successful inter-coder reliability tests.

The index has been used by colleagues in various countries for some smaller projects. It is now a great breakthrough for the application of the index that the research group of the EUROPOLIS project has asked us to help them with the coding and analysis of their data. This project is funded by the European Union within its 7th Framework Program. The last weekend of coming May, 500 randomly selected EU citizens are assembled in Brussels to discuss in plenary sessions and in small groups immigration, climate change, and the future of the European Union. The project is funded including taping the discussions of the various groups. In the grant submission, it was not planned to code the discussions. It was only in fall 2008 that the EUROPOLIS research group came to the conclusion that it would strengthen the project if our Bernese Interdisciplinary Center for Deliberative Studies would code the discussions with the DQI index. **We now ask funding for this coding and the corresponding analysis from the Swiss National Science Foundation.**

Theoretically, a first question will be whether and to what extent the level of deliberation in the individual discussion groups will make participants less nationalistic and more open to the European Union. A second question will be what antecedents explain variation in the level of deliberation both at the group and the individual level. Four questionnaires will be administered to the participants, (1) when they are first contacted, (2) at the beginning of the Brussels event, (3) after the event, and (4) after the election of the European Parliament in June 2009. A control group will not participate in the Brussels event, but it will fill out the first and the last questionnaires.

A strength of the project will be that it involves both philosophers and empiricists so that the interplay between normative and empirical aspects of deliberation can be studied. With regard to policy implications, the hope is that bringing together citizens of all EU countries will be a step to remedy the problem of the democratic deficit of the European Union. From a Swiss perspective, our involvement in the EUROPOLIS project will strengthen the research connection between the EU and our country.

2. Project description

2.1 Current state of research in the field

Up to the 1990's, the field of deliberative theory was in the domain of political philosophy with Jürgen Habermas being the most prominent representative. The theory postulates as its major normative goal for a viable democracy that in political discussions participants should be willing to yield to the force of the better argument. In the last ten years, research on deliberative theory has taken an empirical turn. The hot topic has become the inter-play between normative and empirical aspects of deliberation. The best overview of this interplay is a review article by Dennis F. Thomson "Deliberative Democracy Theory and Empirical Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 497-520. Shawn Rosenberg is the editor of a volume bringing together empiricists and philosophers of deliberation engaging each other in a debate of how empirical work can profit from philosophical questions and how philosophy can benefit from empirical work (*Deliberation, Participation and Democracy*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

2.2 Current own research in the field

In an earlier study supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation, we developed an index to measure the level of deliberation in parliamentary debates, labeled Discourse Quality Index (DQI). We developed this index investigating parliamentary debates in Germany, Switzerland, the UK and the US. We established causal antecedents and consequences of variation in the DQI for the individual parliamentary debates. The results were published as Jürg Steiner, André Bächtiger, Markus Spörndli, Marco R. Steenbergen, *Deliberative Politics in Action. Analyzing Parliamentary Discourses*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

The DQI has been widely noted. Jürgen Habermas writes: "The splendid comparative study of Jürg Steiner, André Bächtiger, Markus Spörndli and Marco R. Steenbergen on the deliberative dimension of four national legislatures reaches just to the centre of the whole approach to deliberative politics."¹ Dennis F. Thompson, comments on our study: "The most systematic attempt to operationalize principles for identifying and evaluating deliberation is at the center of the study of parliamentary debates by Steiner and his associates."² Our index is indeed the only one that has been submitted to successful reliability tests.

We have established at the University of Bern the Bernese Interdisciplinary Center for Deliberative Studies. The major ongoing project applies the DQI to experiments on deliberation in deeply divided societies. In Colombia, we finished 28 experiments with ex-combatants of the guerilla left and the paramilitary right. The

¹ Jürgen Habermas, "Concluding Comments on Empirical Approaches to Deliberative Politics," *Acta Politica* 40 (September 2005), p. 389.

² Dennis F. Thompson, "Deliberative Democratic Theory and Empirical Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11 (2008), p. 507.

experiments were directed by Maria Clara Jaramillo and Juan Ugarriza, junior faculty at the Universidad Externado, and now also PhD students at the University of Bern. Another PhD student at Bern, Simona Mameli, formerly at the University of Bologna, has begun experiments in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There are plans for still other countries to follow, in particular Kosovo, Ukraine, Northern Ireland, Turkey, Belgium, and South Africa. This project is financed by national resources of the respective countries.

When I was holding the Swiss Chair at The European University Institute in Florence, I organized together with André Bächtiger, then my research assistant, a conference on *Empirical Approaches to Deliberative Democracy*. The conference papers were published in two special issues of *Acta Politica*, volume 40, number 2 and 3, 2005.

After this empirical research phase on deliberation, I became increasingly interested to draw normative implications from our empirical research, and I work currently on another book for Cambridge University Press with the working title *Deliberation in Politics. Normative Implications of Empirical Research*. An element of this forthcoming book has been published under the title “Concept Stretching: The Case of Deliberation” in *European Political Science*, volume 7 (June 2008): 186-190. I argue that it is normatively problematic to label a discussion as deliberative if lying is considered as rational, as is done in some recent rational choice models. Furthermore, our entire research group has a paper on the interplay between normative and empirical aspects of deliberation to be published later in 2009 in *The Journal of Political Philosophy*: André Bächtiger, Simon Niemeyer, Michael Neblo, Marco R. Steenbergen, Jürg Steiner, “Disentangling Diversity in Deliberative Democracy: Competing Theories, their Empirical Blind-Spots, and Complementarities.”

2.3 Detailed Description of the Project

We have now received the offer to lend our help with the DQI in a massive research project called EUROPOLIS, funded by the European Union within its 7th Framework Program. The background of this project is the widespread critique of a democratic deficit in the EU. The weekend of May 29-31, 2009, about 500 randomly chosen ordinary citizens from all EU countries will assemble in Brussels to discuss climate change, immigration and the future of the European Union ahead of the election of the European Parliament in June 2009. In the initially funded project, it was not planned to code the level of deliberation of these meetings. In the mean time, however, the research team of EUROPOLIS has become aware of our Discourse Quality Index and has extended the invitation to us to join the team. **For this supplementary work, we ask funding by the Swiss National Foundation.** The coding will be done at the Bernese Interdisciplinary Center for Deliberative Studies. In the following, we present first the EUROPOLIS project and then show how the project can be strengthened if the discussions are coded with our DQI.

The EUROPOLIS project

The EUROPOLIS project is based on the idea of *Deliberative Polling* developed by James S. Fishkin and Robert C. Luskin, who are both part of the research team. Fishkin is a philosopher, Luskin an empiricist, which indicates that the Deliberative Polling

enterprise is right at the inter-face between normative and empirical aspects of deliberation, which fits well the interest of our own research group (see 2.2). The coordinator of the project is Pierangelo Isernia of the University of Siena. Other participant institutions are the universities of Essex, Mannheim and Oslo, furthermore Fondation Nationale de Science Politique in France, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas in Spain, European Policy Center in Brussels, Avventura Urbana in Italy, EOS-Gallup in Brussels, and Median Research Centre in Romania. The theory of Deliberative Polling has been tested at a smaller scale over many years. In the project description of EUROPOLIS, the hypothesis derived from the theory of Deliberative Polling is summarized in the following way:

We test the hypothesis that citizen involvement in inclusive, informed, and thoughtful deliberation about the EU increases access to political relevant information, citizens' political engagement in EU public affairs, perceptions of the legitimacy of EU institutions, a sense of belonging to the EU, and voter turnout in EU parliamentary elections.

To test this hypothesis, the EUROPOLIS project recruits a random sample of 500 citizens, proportionally stratified according to the number of seats allocated to each Member State in the EU parliament. Assembled in Brussels, these EU citizens will discuss in small groups and in plenary sessions climate change, immigration, and the future of the European Union. Two weeks before the event, the participants will receive briefing material on the topics to be discussed. Policy experts and candidates for the election to the European Parliament are invited to participate in the event to procure further information. Participants speak in their native language, and translators are at hand for simultaneous translation into all EU languages. Surveys are administered to the participants (1) when they are first contacted, (2) when they arrive for the event in Brussels, (3) immediately after the event and (4) after the election of the European Parliament. The first and the fourth surveys are also administered to a control group not participating in the Brussels event.

The construction of the Discourse Quality Index (DQI)

In order to construct the DQI, we had first to establish what we mean by deliberation. We did so in chapter 2 of our Cambridge University Press book. Looking through the deliberative literature, we anchored our definition to a large extent in the rationalistic argumentative approach of Jürgen Habermas. Our goal, however, was not to engage in history of philosophy and to reconstruct in an authentic way the Habermasian definition of deliberation. We rather took Habermas as a starting point and enriched it with other deliberative scholars including some of his predecessors. Therefore, we came up with our own definition of deliberation, a definition with which we felt most comfortable.

In a nutshell, the ideal type of deliberation can be defined in the following way: Ordinary citizens form their opinions on political issues in discussing them in an unconstrained³ way with family, friends, neighbors, at the work place and in voluntary associations. In this way, a large set of arguments are on the table. The individual arguments are justified in a rational, logical and

³ *herrschaftsfrei*

elaborate manner. All participants are truthful in presenting their arguments and the supporting information. The arguments are framed in terms of the common good. All arguments are treated with respect. Preferences are not fixed, and participants are willing to be convinced by the force of the better argument. What a good argument is, is not *a priori* given but must be found out in the discussion. At the end, a consensus results around the best arguments. This short summary of the ideal type of deliberation makes it clear that this type virtually never appears in pure form in real politics. This is also the opinion of Habermas himself, for whom ideal deliberative situations “have an improbable character and are like islands in the ocean of everyday praxis.”⁴ Habermas assumes, however, that at least some amount of deliberation is possible in the real world of politics. This assumption is based on a certain view of human nature with which one may or may not agree. Our position is that the question of human nature can never be solved in any definite way. Therefore, any research project must start from certain assumptions about human nature, and with our DQI we share the assumption of Habermas about human nature and start from there.

The categories of the Discourse Quality Index (DQI)

In our already mentioned study of parliamentary debates, we worked with transcripts of these debates. Our units of analysis were individual speeches. Thus, the entire debate was broken down into smaller units. If an individual delivered multiple speeches in the same debate, each speech was coded separately. Each speech was coded according to the following criteria: (1) Is the speaker impeded to deliver his or her speech? (2) Does the speaker justify his or her arguments in a rational, logical and elaborate way? (3) Does the speaker refer to the common good? (4) Does the speaker show respect towards the arguments of other speakers? (5) Does the speaker yield to the force of the better argument of other speakers?

The entire DQI is published in the appendix of our Cambridge University Press book. For each category of the index, we give an illustration of the parliamentary debates. For the lowest level of respect, for example, the following case serves as illustration: On December 10, 1990, the British House of Commons discussed a bill to upgrade and modernize King’s Cross Railway Station in London. Labour MP Tony Banks makes only negative statements concerning this demand, for example, “It is clear that past errors are vast, so can anyone view with any seriousness the opinions and calculations that British Rail is now making?” At the other end of this respect criterion, we use the following example as an illustration of high respect: On December 5, 1997, special educational needs are discussed in the British House of Commons. Estelle Morris, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Education and Employment, presents a Green Paper by the Labour government in which it is argued that more should be done to help children with special educational needs. Conservative MP Richard Ottaway reacts with the following positive statement: “I am pleased to hear that the Minister’s commitment to special education needs is being developed through the Green Paper. I am also pleased at the tone of her speech.” To establish the reliability of our coding, part of the speeches were coded not only by a single coder, but by two coders, who altogether made 504 coding

⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Die Einbeziehung des Anderen. Studien zur politischen Theorie*, Frankfurt . M.: Suhrkamp, 1996, S.323.

judgments. They agreed on 461 of these judgments, which is an excellent coding score of 91.5 percent.

At the *Bernese Interdisciplinary Center for Deliberative Studies*, we continue to work with our DQI. As mentioned under 2.2, the main ongoing project involves experiments on deliberation in deeply divided societies. For this new phase in our work with the DQI, we adjusted the index to discussions among ordinary citizens instead of parliamentary debates as in the previous project. We also have expanded the number of categories for the individual elements of the index. In this adjusted and expanded form, the DQI fits well to the Deliberative Poll of the EUROPOLIS project, which also involves discussions among ordinary citizens. This newest version of the DQI has now the following form:

General Remark

As with the initial DQI, the units of analysis to be coded are the individual speech acts. If a speech act is briefly interrupted (just a few seconds), this still counts as a single speech act. The interruptions also count as speech acts.

Nature of speech act

- (1) Interruption: Speaker interrupts another speaker with a few utterances of not more than a few seconds.
- (2) Regular speech act: all other speeches

Participation (length of time)

Length of speech act in minutes and seconds.

Participation (constraints)

- (1) The speaker indicates verbally or by body language that he or she is constrained by the behavior of other participants (interruptions, private conversations, body language such as making faces, yawning, etc.).
- (2) The speaker can speak in an unconstrained way.

Respect (foul language)

- (1) The speaker uses foul language to attack other participants on a personal level. Include also mild foul language, not only statements such as “you are a liar” but also statements such as “you seem a little confused.” Code the names of the participants attacked in this way and give the exact quote of the foul language.
- (2) The speaker uses foul language to attack the arguments of other participants but abstains from personal attacks. Here again include also mild foul language, not only statements such as “this argument is stupid” but also statements such as “this argument is a little weak.” Code the names of the participants whose arguments are attacked in this way and give the exact quote of the foul language.
- (3) No foul language.

Respect (respectful language)

- (1) The speaker uses respectful language towards other participants and/or their arguments. Include also moderately respectful language, not only statements such as “your argument is truly brilliant” but also statements such as “your argument is not bad.” Code the names of these other participants and give the exact quotes of the respectful language.
- (2) No respectful language used.

Respect (listening)

- (1) The speaker ignores arguments and questions addressed to him or her by other participants. Code the names of these other participants.
- (2) The speaker does not ignore arguments and questions addressed to him or her by other participants but distorts these arguments and questions. Code the names of these other participants.
- (3) The speaker does not ignore arguments and questions addressed to him or her by other participants and engages these arguments and questions in a correct and undistorted way. Code the names of these other participants.

Level of justification of arguments

- (1) The speaker does not present any arguments (asks, for example, merely for additional information)
- (2) The speaker only says that X should or should not be done, that it is a wonderful or a terrible idea, etc.. But no reason is given for why X should or should not be done.
- (3) The speaker justifies only with illustrations why X should or should not be done.
- (4) The speaker gives a reason Y why X should or should not be done. But no linkage is made why Y will contribute to X.
- (5) The speaker gives a reason Y why X should or should not be done, and a linkage is made why Y will contribute to X.
- (6) The speaker gives at least two reasons why X should be done and for both reasons a linkage is made with X.

Note: If a speaker argues a position for more than one item, code the level of justification for each item.

Content of justifications of arguments (own group)

- (1) The speaker refers to benefits and costs for own group. Give exact quote of how the group is referred to. Also give exact quote if a postulated improvement of one's own group is justified by its past discrimination in the larger society.
- (2) The speaker does not refer to benefits and costs for own group

Content of justification of arguments (other groups)

- (1) The speaker refers to benefits and costs for other groups represented in the experiment. Give exact quotes of how these groups are referred to.
- (2) The speaker does not refer to benefits and costs for other groups represented in the experiment.

Content of justification of arguments (common good)

- (1) The speaker refers to benefits and costs for all groups represented in the experiment. Give exact quotes of how the groups are referred to.
- (2) The speaker does not refer to benefits and costs for all groups represented in the experiment.

Content of justification of arguments (abstract principles)

- (1) The speaker refers to abstract principles without mentioning any groups (for example "need for social justice," "need for quality of life," "need for peace"). Give exact quotes of how these principles are formulated.
- (2) The speaker does not refer to any abstract principles

Force of better argument

- (1) The speaker indicates a change of position. Gives as reason for change arguments heard during the experiment.

- (2) The speaker indicates a change of position. Does not refer to arguments heard during the experiment.
- (3) The speaker does not indicate a change in position. But does acknowledge the value of other positions heard during the experiment.
- (4) The speaker does not indicate a change in position. And does not acknowledge the value of other positions heard during the experiment.

In the initial DQI, we omitted the aspect of *truthfulness*, which is very difficult to get an empirical handle on. We have now come to the conclusion that to measure directly the level of truthfulness is impossible in political science research and that the only feasible way is to study the *perception* of truthfulness,⁵ using responses to the following items:⁶

- (1) Overall, I feel that people expressed what was truly on their minds.
- (2) I cannot escape the feeling that many participants were hiding their true beliefs from the discussion.
- (3) I feel that I can trust the other participants on their words.
- (4) Overall, strategic motives were more important in the discussion than true openness about one's ideas.

Of course, perceived truthfulness may not correspond to actual reality of truthfulness. But if most participants feel, for example, “that people expressed what was truly on their mind” (item 1), this perception is also an important social reality. It is even the only reality that counts for what is going on in a discussion group. Perhaps, there are some participants who actually lie, but if they hide their lying in such a clever way that nobody notices, such lying has no significance for the group. On the other hand, if most participants answer to the questionnaire, for example, that they do not “trust the other participants on their words” (item 3); this perception is also an important social reality. Perhaps they are not truthful themselves, so that they project this behavior to the other participants. If most everyone expresses the view that much lying goes on in the group discussion, this reveals a very different group atmosphere than if the perception is one of mutual truthfulness. We have already successfully used the four items in our experiments in Colombia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and we plan to use them also for the EUROPOLIS project.

Application of the Discourse Quality Index (DQI) to the EUROPOLIS project

As already mentioned, the EUROPOLIS project is funded by the EU, except the coding of the discussions with our DQI and the corresponding analysis, **for which we now ask funding by the Swiss National Science Foundation**. For the research interests of the Bernese Interdisciplinary Center for Deliberative Studies it is a most fortunate situation because the entire data collection is funded by the EU, and we get for free very valuable data that we merely need to code and analyze. The research team of the EUOPOLIS is responsible for the audio taping of all the sessions. There will be 30 small groups of 16-

⁵ Jürg Steiner, “How to handle truthfulness in deliberative theory?” Unpublished paper, Bern 2009.

⁶ The response categories are as follows: agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly, cannot choose.

17 participants. Each group will meet five times for three hours to discuss climate change, immigration, and the future of the European Union. In addition there will be several plenary sessions. The result will be a massive amount of discussions to be coded. For the coding it will be crucial that we are able to identify the individual speakers. Based on our experiments in Colombia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, we have developed an elaborate system to identify the individual speakers. At the beginning of the Brussels event, we will instruct the moderators of EUROPOLIS to use this system.

As already mentioned, participants will speak in their native language and translators will be at hand for simultaneous translation into all EU languages (in the small groups, of course, only for the languages represented in the group). For German, French, English, and Italian, we will have coders who can code directly from the original speech acts. For all other languages, we will have to code from the translations into one of these four languages. If difficulties come up with interpretation of the translations, we will contact colleagues in the respective countries to clarify the translations.

In order to save time, we will code directly from the tapes. For more complex discussions, however, it may be necessary to do first transcripts. Based on our coding experience with the DQI, we will need about one week to code a session of three hours. With 30 groups and each group meeting five times, there are 150 small group sessions to be coded. Adding the plenary sessions we arrive at about 160 sessions. If we take a random sample of 20 sessions to be coded a second time for reliability tests, we arrive at a total of 180 weeks of coding time. Some of the coding will be done by the Bern research team of André Bächtiger, Marco Steenbergen and Jürg Steiner. In addition we will need *funding for one assistant and two "Hilfsassistenten."*

Analysis

The EUROPOLIS research group expects a great media interest for the results of the project. They will be able to do a first analysis quite quickly. They have simply to compare the questionnaires before and after the event in Brussels and to check to what extent participation in the event has changed values, attitudes, and preferences of the 500 invited EU citizens compared with the control group. All this is funded by the European Union. Our own research part in Bern, for which we hope for funding by the Swiss national Science Foundation, will begin with the coding of our Discourse Quality Index (DQI) of all the discussions at the Brussels event. *Our first research question will be to what extent the level of deliberation in the individual discussion groups (measured with the DQI) influences changes in nationalism, respectively openness to other EU countries.* For this first research question, we will be able to make comparisons with our experiments in deeply divided societies, where the same items were used. In Colombia, for example, we are able to investigate to what extent the level of deliberation in the experiments influences the openness of the ex-combatants to the other side. Specifically, we look both in the experiments in deeply divided societies and in the EUROPOLIS project at potential changes for the following items:

1. I would rather be a member of my country than any other EU country.
2. There are some things about my country that make me feel ashamed of it.
3. The EU would be a better place if other countries were more like my own.

4. People should support their country even if they disagree with its actions.
5. I often wish national identities would be less important in the EU.
6. Other EU countries are generally good for my country's economy.
7. Other EU countries take away jobs from my own country.
8. Other EU countries improve my own country by bringing in new ideas and cultures.
9. Please indicate whether you have ever felt the following about the EU (pride, hope, fear, worry, anger, hate).

These items will be included for the EUROPOLIS project in the questionnaires administered immediately before and after the Brussels event. They have to be answered for the specific small group sessions in which the individuals did participate. The hypothesis is that a high level of deliberation will decrease nationalism and increase openness to other EU countries. By contrast, a low level of deliberation will increase nationalism and decrease openness to other EU countries. Thus, when deliberation is high, more persons would agree, for example, with the item "I often wish national identities would be less important in the EU." With a low level of deliberation, on the other hand, there would be a change to fewer agreements with this item.

We will get a handle at the level of deliberation not only with our DQI but also with the perceptions of the participants of how deliberative the discussion was. To get at these perceptions, the following items are added to the questionnaire after the Brussels event (some of these items refer to perceived truthfulness, discussed earlier).

1. During the discussion, I had ample opportunity to express my views.
2. I did not bring up some of my ideas and viewpoints out of fear of being ridiculed.
3. During the discussion, many people just stated positions without justifying them.
4. Most participants seemed to care only about the well-being of their own country.
5. Overall, I feel that people expressed what was truly on their mind.
6. I cannot escape the feeling that many participants were hiding their true beliefs from the discussion.
7. Overall, people were treated with respect during the discussion.
8. No matter how hard I tried, the other participants seemed unwilling to listen to what I had to say.
9. Most people had made up their minds and the discussion did little to change them.
10. Even if they didn't agree with me, my fellow participants respected what I had to say.

Adding these items, will allow us to investigate, for example, not only how our coding of respect but also how the perception of respect influences changes in nationalism and openness to other EU countries. Sometimes, these two respect measures may differ, and it will be part of our analysis to see what was going on so that perceptions of the participants differ from our coding. Perhaps a slang word in a speech such as "rubbish" was interpreted differently by some of the participants than by the coders. This example illustrates that it will always be to some extent a subjective matter of how to establish the level of deliberation of a particular speech.

In addition to our own items that we were allowed to include into the questionnaires of the EUROPOLIS project, we will also be able to rely for our analysis on items already included in the initial questionnaires of EUROPOLIS. These additional items refer to immigration, climate change, and the future of the European Union, the three topics to be discussed at the Brussels event, as already mentioned above. For our own analysis, the items referring to immigration will be of particular interest. Will a high level of deliberation in the discussion groups about immigration cause more openness to immigrants? It would have been more relevant for this question if EUROPOLIS would have pitted EU citizens against immigrants. But even discussions among EU citizens themselves will shed light on our research question. The hypothesis is that a high level of deliberation about immigration will increase understanding for the problems of immigrants. The potential change in the following items will be of particular interest for our analysis:

“For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with it, using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means that you strongly disagree with it, and 10 that you strongly agree with it. 5 means that you neither agree nor disagree.”

- Immigrants enrich the cultural life of our country
- It is better for a country if almost everyone shares the same customs and traditions
- The presence of immigrants increases unemployment in our country
- The arrival of immigrants in Europe can efficiently solve the problem of Europe’s ageing population
- Immigration increases the crime rate in our country
- Immigrants contribute more in taxes than they cost in health and welfare services.
- Richer EU countries have a responsibility to accept people from poorer non-EU countries
- Many asylum seekers abuse and benefit economically from a system that was set up for humanitarian purposes.
- Amnesty given to illegal immigrants would only encourage the arrival of more illegal immigrants.
- Non-EU immigrants damage social cohesion in our country

Our analysis will also have a qualitative component. Telling the story of a particular session, we will get at the dynamic of how the discussion evolved. For example, were there turning points where the discussion became less or more respectful, what participants were involved in such turning points, which of their words and sentences caused these turning points? It will be of particular interest to investigate the dynamic over the five sessions of each group. Did the level of deliberation in an earlier session influence the level of deliberation in a later session?

Coding the discussions with our DQI, we will be able to address a second research question. *What are the antecedents that explain variation in the level of deliberation?* We will address this question both at the group and individual level. At the group level, we can study how the composition of the group influences the level of deliberation. Has the gender mix, for example, an influence on the level of deliberation?

At the individual level, we can study, for example, whether women more deliberative than men? The questionnaires of EUROPOLIS contain a wealth of background information of the participants in the Brussels event that will be useful to explain variation in the level of deliberation, in particular gender, age, education, social class, religion, religiosity, trade union membership, place of birth, left-right location.

In order to make a causal linkage between such background variables and the level of deliberation, our analysis will theoretically be embedded in new developments in psychological literature. One of its prominent representatives, Arthur Lupia, has pointed out that deliberation does not necessarily unfold simply because one has created an opportunity for deliberation.⁷ A number of psychological factors may hamper deliberation, in particular citizens' ability and willingness to wield to the unforced force of the better argument. While Lupia focused primarily on cognitive obstacles to deliberation, we believe that affective and motivational forces may be of greater importance.

By its very definition, deliberation requires that citizens enter the debate with an open mind. They should be willing to revise prior opinions and preferences if there are compelling arguments and/or evidence to do so. To be sure, in true deliberation participants are allowed, even encouraged, to speak their minds and to defend their positions. But, they should do so while being respectful of and open-minded to opposing views. No preference should be fixed, no opinion should be unchangeable.

However, political psychologists have amassed a sizable number of studies showing that there are clear limits to citizens' open-mindedness. Over the past decade, at least two distinct literatures have uncovered behavioral patterns that seriously undermine one of deliberative theory's key premises—that citizens will listen to good arguments. The first of these literatures focuses on *motivated reasoning*. The key premise is that all reasoning is goal-oriented. The goals of people are multifarious, but one distinction that can be drawn is between accuracy and partisan/directional goals. Individuals motivated by accuracy goals are set on making correct judgments and decisions. They are open-minded about new evidence and arguments even if it contrasts with their original beliefs. They will give this information a fair evaluation and will change their beliefs if the new data is compelling. In seeking out information, accuracy-motivated individuals are even-handed, willingly exposing themselves to what might challenge their beliefs. By contrast, individuals driven by partisan/directional goals are intent on protecting their existing beliefs and attitudes. They seek out information that is likely to confirm those attitudes and beliefs (confirmation bias). When placed in a situation in which counter-attitudinal messages cannot be avoided, they will discount those messages or counter-argue them until they have lost all persuasive effect (disconfirmation bias). If anything, these individuals are closed-minded. And they may not be able to help themselves: their existing beliefs and attitudes may be activated automatically, flying in below the radar of conscious awareness, yet coloring all aspects of how counter-attitudinal information is processed.

Partisan/directional reasoners are hardly the stuff that makes for good deliberation. If these individuals do not opt out of deliberation altogether, given that it puts them at risk of exposure to counter-attitudinal information, they may be unmovable

⁷ Arthur Lupia, "Deliberation Disconnected: What It Takes to Improve Civic Competence," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 65 (2002): 133-150.

by the force of even the best arguments. In fact, they may be so effective at counter-arguing that they become even more convinced of their beliefs, producing polarization effects. Moreover, partisan/directional reasoners can be a sizable group on divisive issues that have long legacies of acrimony. For many of those issues, attitudes are tied into deeply held convictions and identities that may make unbearable the very thought of seriously listening to the other side, let alone changing one's opinion.

A second literature in political psychology makes predictions that are equally dire for deliberative theory. Studies of *emotions* have uncovered several effects that seemingly undermine open-mindedness. Perceptions of threat from other groups increase expressed intolerance toward those groups, not a fertile ground for open dialogue with those groups (need cites). Furthermore, feelings of aversion cause similar behaviors as those found in partisan reasoners. Again, such feelings can be quite prominent when an issue is divisive.

The upshot of these findings is that the deliberative potential may be greatest when mutually agreeable groups debate an issue that is not particularly divisive. As a tool for conflict resolution, however, deliberation seems unlikely to yield much fruit, at least if we believe the literatures discussed so far.

There are other psychological factors to consider, however. First, ambivalence appears to favor open-mindedness. A person is ambivalent if he or she simultaneously favors and disfavors an object. Torn between two sides of an issue, ambivalent citizens do not have the same directional drive as those who univalently favor or disfavor the object. Indeed, there is compelling evidence that ambivalent attitudes lack the automatic quality that is likely to produce biased information processing. Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that ambivalent citizens tend to be systematic processors of information, a quality that is entirely consistent with the deliberative ideal.

On the affective side, feelings of anxiety can cause people to suspend their standing decisions and dispositions. In the right environment, this can make people more open-minded to new information. That is, they may display a greater willingness to expose themselves to counter-dispositional messages and are likely to process such messages with greater equanimity. When we take these findings into consideration there might be hope for deliberation yet. That is to say, certain individuals under certain circumstances may be disposed toward the kind of open-mindedness that deliberative theory assumes.

2.5. Significance of the project

Empirically, the project is a breakthrough for the international application of our Discourse Quality Index (DQI). Thanks to the invitation of the EUROPOLIS research group to supplement their work with the DQI, we will have a mass of data available to test hypotheses about antecedents and consequences of variation in the level of deliberation. Comparisons can be made with our earlier work on parliamentary debates and the currently running project on the potential for deliberation in deeply divided societies.

Normatively, the expanded empirical work on deliberation can be used to draw more solidly based normative implications for democratic theory, the topic of my forthcoming second book with Cambridge University Press.

Policy implications are far reaching. As noted in section 1, the EUROPOLIS project is driven by the desire to do something about the democratic deficit in the European Union. Bringing together 500 citizens from all 27 EU countries to discuss important policy issues will show how the EU can work at the citizen level. Since these citizens are randomly chosen, they constitute a mini-public of the European Union. The media interest in Brussels for the EUROPOLIS project is already great so that the Brussels event of the end of May is likely to get great attention not only from a scholarly but also from a political perspective.

Research on deliberation in general gets increasingly political attention. As one of the reviewers of my book prospectus for Cambridge University Press writes: “There is an increasingly sophisticated audience of practitioners in government, diplomacy, and the NGO/INGO world that is now absorbing the practical academic work. This book should have plenty of applied lessons.” With the participation in the EUROPOLIS project, these lessons will be put on a broader basis.

Finally, there is the *Swiss perspective*. As a non-EU member, our citizens are not invited to participate in this European wide citizen dialogue. If we get the grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation, we can at least participate in the scholarly aspect of this very important enterprise. From my experience as Swiss Chair at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, I have first hand experience of how much such Swiss cooperation is appreciated in Brussels. When Federal Councilor Pascal Couchepin was visiting the EUI in 2004, he stressed the importance of such cooperation also from the Swiss perspective.