

International Workshop

The Consequences of Democratic Innovations

Louvain-La-Neuve 9-10 September 2019

General Presentation

The last decades have witnessed the development of democratic innovations –that is, “[new] institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process” (Smith, 2009, p. 1). Democratic innovations (DIs) cover a wide range of attempts to increase citizens’ political involvement: from participatory budgeting to consensus conferences, citizens’ juries, and, for instance, the G1000 in Belgium (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2015; Fung, 2003). Social and political scientists have already studied extensively ‘what is going on’ inside such participatory procedures. By contrast, the analysis of their consequences on the functioning of political systems is still in its early stages of development.

Theoretically, recent scholarship tends to conceive of DIs’ consequences in different ways. Some conceptualize consequences as the degree to which DIs affect formal changes in public policy (Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018). Others think of consequences much more broadly as the extent to which they “‘make a difference’ on collective decisions or social and collective outcomes” (Felicetti, Niemeyer, & Curato, 2016, p. 431). What is lacking in between these two extremes are midrange theories (cf. Mutz, 2008) that formulate clear hypotheses with regard to when and how a DI may have specific consequences on the wider political system.

Methodologically, the measurement of consequences remains a challenge. A key issue is that it is difficult to distinguish the causal effect of a given DI on policymaking amidst the influence of myriad other potential factors. While the field has experienced an increase in methodological diversity recently (e.g. Gastil, Richards, Ryan, & Smith, 2017; Ryan & Smith, 2012), we still lack the required processual evidence that would allow us to draw valid causal inferences.

Empirically, the evidence of DIs’ consequences on policymaking remains largely based on anecdotal evidence. The evidence that is available often draws on single-case studies that

impede comparative judgments. What is more, most of these cases are success stories and we thereby lack insight into why some DIs succeed while others fail to affect policymaking (Spada & Ryan, 2017).

The objective of the workshop is to make progress on the systematization of research on the consequences of DIs –theoretically, methodologically, and empirically. It aims to gather scholars who use different research approaches and focus on different kinds of DIs to study such consequences. The workshop seeks to answer three main questions:

- 1. How can we conceptualize the consequences of democratic innovations?**
- 2. How can we explain that some democratic innovations are consequential and others are not?**
- 3. How can we measure and analyze the consequences of democratic innovations?**

Preliminary Schedule

Monday September 9, 2019

09:30: Welcome and Breakfast

10:00 – 10:30: General introduction

10:30 – 12:00: Session 1

Beyond Utopian and Dystopian approaches to democratic innovation – Gisela Zarembeg & Yanina Welp*

Deliberation as meaning-making: some reflections on transmission and consequences –John Parkinson*

12:00 – 13:00: Lunch

13:30 – 15:45: Session 2

Conceptualizing, measuring and analyzing the consequences of direct democratic and deliberative procedures – Brigitte Geissel*

Investigating democratic innovations and impact – Ank Michels*

Moral Conflict in Electoral Deliberation: Assessing the efficacy of voting aids on an Irish referendum – Jane Suiter*, Lala Muradova*, John Gastil, David M Farrell

15:45 – 16:00: Tea/Coffee Break

16:00 – 17:45: Session 2: Methodological Perspectives

Democratic innovations and the Study of Politics: Are DI scholars going to learn the hard way? – Matt Ryan*

Studying cherrypicking: substantive and methodological reflections – Joan Font* and Graham Smith*

Replacing or complementing representative democracy – Jean-Benoit Pilet*, Camille Bedock

19:00: Dinner

Tuesday September 10, 2019

9:00 – 10:30: Session 3: Empirical Perspectives I

Moral Conflict in Electoral Deliberation: Assessing the efficacy of voting aids on an Irish referendum – Jane Suiter*, Lala Muradova, John Gastil, David M Farrell

Explaining the Unintended Consequences of Intra-Party Deliberation: The Case of Demos in Romania – Sergiu Gherghina*, Victoria Stoiciu

10:30 – 10:45: Tea/Coffee Break

10:45 – 13:00: Session 4: Empirical Perspectives II

From participation to policy-making: How participatory environmental governance actually changes policy (or not)? Jens Newig, Nicolas W. Jager*, Edward Challies, Elisa Kochskämper

The strange persistence of powerless DI: Understanding trajectories of deliberative tools in policy-making process in France – Guillaume Gourgues* and Alice Mazeaud*

Under what conditions do mini-publics exert an influence on public policy? A Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis of mini-publics in Belgium. – Julien Vrydagh*

13:00 – 14:00: Lunch

14:00 – 15:30: Session 5: Empirical Perspectives III

Media-driven deliberative diffusion on a global scale: The World Citizens' Jury
Simon Niemeyer*, John Dryzek, Nicole Curato

Deliberate then what? Design, Dynamics, and Outcomes of Mini-Publics and the Deliberative System. Andrea Felicetti*, Nicole Curato, Simon Niemeyer

15:30 – 16:00 Concluding Remarks

List of abstracts

Alphabetical order

Beyond Utopian and Dystopian approaches to democratic innovation

Gisela Zaremborg & Yanina Welp

This paper discusses both myths of conceptualization and of assumed consequences that are implicitly or explicitly presented in analyses of the so called ‘democratic innovations’ –i.e. the new institutions addressed to increase public participation beyond regular elections. It is argued that these myths, together with the (fictitious) confrontation between direct (i.e. related to the Rousseauian idea of non mediated participation, as in the model of an assembly) and indirect politics(i.e. through different type representatives, as would be the case in citizens councils), have generated false oppositions and reductionisms that mask the debate and limit empirical approximations to democratic innovation. A research agenda based on the concept of ‘participatory ecologies’ is suggested for an understanding of the mechanisms of participation in a systemic way.

Conceptualizing, measuring and analyzing the consequences of direct democratic and deliberative procedures.

Brigitte Geissel

Participatory procedures such as direct democratic and deliberative procedures are proliferating worldwide. At the same time the theoretical debate on the shortcoming and benefits of these procedures is flourishing and has produced a variety of hypotheses. They are for example expected to deepen democracy in the sense of strengthening the links between public dialog and decision making (policy effects) or to enhance citizens’ democratic attitudes and skills. In contrast, opponents argue that these procedures are often window-dressing, symbolic actions without any policy effects and participants would often develop frustration. Recent studies have shown that this polarizing debate is misleading. It is no longer the question, whether participatory procedures do have effects or not. Scholars have indicated the necessity to examine specifically, which factors are decisive to make these procedures effective in the sense that they have a real impact on policy-making and on enhancing citizens’ democratic attitudes. In my paper I will introduce an analytical framework including indicators of consequences (dependent variables) as well as factors influencing these consequences (independent variables). I will discuss two different methods of data collection, i.e. case study meta-analysis and exploitation of existing data sets, and statistical tools for measuring consequences and analyzing influential factors.

Deliberative mini-publics facilitating voter knowledge and judgement: Results from a Finnish local referendum

Maija Setälä, Henrik Serup Christensen, Mikko Leino, Maria Bäck, Maija Jäske, Kim Strandberg

This paper deals with the use Citizens’ Jury as a source of voter information in the context of a government-initiated (top-down) referendum. Our case is the Citizens’ Jury on referendum options organized in the municipality of Korsholm in 2019. The process followed the model of the Citizens’ Initiative Review (CIR) developed in Oregon. The deliberative process was

bilingual (Swedish-Finnish) and pertained to the complex and polarized issue of municipal merger. The paper analyzes and evaluates the key aspects of the process using three sets of survey data, namely surveys conducted among the participants of the jury, an experimental survey measuring the impact of reading the statement, and a post-referendum survey among voters. We find that participants were quite satisfied with the deliberative process and found it impartial. In addition to the attention of the jury process in the media, our survey indicates that a large majority of voters had read the statement and thought it was useful. Based on the experimental survey, we observe that those who had read the statement were more knowledgeable and had considered the issue from different perspectives. The paper concludes that Citizens' Juries can be used as a source of information also in top-down referendums. Moreover, the need for the kind of impartial information provided by deliberative mini-publics may be especially high on complex issues and in polarized contexts.

Deliberate then what? Design, Dynamics, and Outcomes of Mini-Publics and the Deliberative System

Andrea Felicetti, Nicole Curato, Simon Niemeyer

This paper tells the story of two mini-publics: the *Iniziativa di Revisione Civica* in Bologna, Italy and the Sydney Climate Change Adaptation forum in Sydney, Australia. Our comparison focuses on the impact of the design, dynamics, and outcomes of these mini-publics to the broader deliberative system. Inspired by the 'systemic turn' in deliberative theory, we consider mini-publics not only as a carefully constructed forum to promote inclusive and thoughtful reason-giving, but as a tool by which the deliberative capacity of the broader polity can be enhanced. Our findings are straightforward. The Bologna study illustrates a case of a mini-public which follows the 'deliberate then vote' approach. Over the course of three days, citizens were tasked to critically examine the issue of amalgamation of municipalities, and, at the end of the process, the facilitator called for a vote. We find that when the outcome of the mini-public was communicated to the broader community, the vote stripped the mini-public of its discursive content and used it simply as a means of conveying decisiveness. Summarising the outcome of a mini-public to a simple yes/no outcome fails to characterize the complexity of the deliberative process. We also find that this model shuts down, instead of brings forth further deliberation in the broader polity. The mini-public also suffered from legitimacy issues. The Sydney case, on the other hand, did not end up with a vote. Instead it follows the 'deliberate then propose' approach where a group of randomly selected citizens came up with recommendations for the City's Climate Change Adaptation Plan. While the outcome is less decisive, and, at times challenging to summarise, it nevertheless emphasised the discursive content the mini-public generated, and was thus used by policymakers to inform decision-making on that basis.

What then can we learn from these mini-publics? First, we argue that there are trade-offs between the decisiveness of mini-publics, versus their capacity to spark deliberative moments in the broader public sphere. This, we argue, goes at the heart of the debates in deliberative theory about the extent to which mini-publics should and could be empowered. There are no fixed answers here, but we hope to offer lessons from our case study. Second, we argue that mini-publics' success should not only be gauged by the extent to which discrete forums register high levels of inter-subjective consistency and discourse quality, although these of

course are important. But we make a case for a more taxing yet meaningful assessment of mini-publics: how they can enrich the deliberative quality of democratic politics. Overall, this article argues that a citizen jury does not a deliberative democracy make. Deliberative democrats need to demand more from mini-publics to realise deliberative democracy's radical transformative potential in the broader public sphere.

Democratic innovations and the Study of Politics: Are DI scholars going to learn the hard way?

Matt Ryan

'In a new project you can try a new method or learn a new subject but don't try both at the same time!' - That was the sagely advice given to me by a senior collaborator during my postdoctoral years. Of course a bunch of us on the project ignored this advice and regretted it later. That's what's called learning the hard way.

This paper argues that struggles with understanding the consequences of democratic innovations in political systems, may be part of a similar process of learning the hard way. The field of DI has acted as an artistic retreat for ingenious creative political scientists – several new types of democracy have been discovered or invented (Gagnon 2014); innovative methodologies considered obscure or arcane elsewhere in the profession have found acceptance and flourished; and novel political institutions and whole systems have been designed and redesigned with political scientists playing the role of children with all the Minecraft blocks they could ever wish for. But perhaps DI scholars have tried to be too innovative in trying to break away and create new methods and subjects of study. Scientific endeavour is often mundane and if we want to know what the consequence of DIs are, we may need to understand them and study them in more routine ways. If we consider studies that look at consequences of political acts on political systems, their tried and tested theories and methods are conspicuous by their absence (or decreasing presence) in this subfield. Examples include the time-series analysis used by agenda-setting scholars, network analyses used by scholars of policy preferences and debates, game theories employed by scholars of institutions, and many general causal theories in public administration and management. To be even more polemical, I could argue DI scholars do not know about the consequences of DI because they have ignored basic lessons on how to study the influence of political acts and institutions on changes in political systems. Time to turn off Minecraft and dust off the Lego. The paper also speaks to wider problems in political science – most political scientists think engaging with politics and democracy are good ideas or even duties, and therefore approach the subject with prior beliefs that bias their research design. But then most would agree that political science as a vocation is inseparable from endorsing democratic norms (Keohane 2009). How do we investigate our own beliefs? Many of the most influential theories in political science have come from inverting those priors. Perhaps by doing the same we can provide better answers to the research questions we are keen to answer.

Explaining the Unintended Consequences of Intra-Party Deliberation: The Case of Demos in Romania

Sergiu Gherghina and Victoria Stoiciu

Over the last two decades several Romanian political parties advertised inclusive and open candidate selection but often ended up with decisions taken by central level elites. Demos, a party formed in 2018, is the first to use deliberative democracy for candidate selection. The deliberation included the party members and took place online in December 2018 – January 2019, with moderators and facilitators coming from the party ranks. The deliberation resulted in better communication with its electorate, weakening of intra-party cohesion and broad contestation of candidate selection procedures. The latter two were unintended consequences of deliberation. This paper seeks to explain the occurrence of these consequences. The qualitative analysis uses semi-structured interviews conducted with party members who coordinated or were actively involved in the deliberation process.

From participation to policy-making: How participatory environmental governance actually changes policy (or not)?

Jens Newig, Nicolas W. Jager, Edward Challies, Elisa Kochskämper

Citizen and stakeholder participation is often expected to contribute to the democratic quality of political decisions and to improve the environmental standards of outputs and outcomes of public governance. Little attention has been paid so far in the literature to whether participatory decision outputs actually inform policy decisions and get implemented, i.e. their policy consequences (for a notable exception see Font et al. 2018). This study reports on findings from a case survey meta-analysis of 307 cases of public environmental decision-making mostly across North America and Europe, which has been conducted as part of the European Research Council funded project ‘EDGE’. The paper addresses the following questions: (1) What kind of outputs do participatory decision-making processes (as opposed to less participatory ones) produce? (2) What are the key contextual conditions under which binding policy outputs are produced – and implemented? (3) What are the key process features (e.g. open dialogue and deliberation, power delegation; participation of citizens versus organized stakeholders) that foster binding policy outputs and their implementation?

Our initial results indicate that politically binding decisions tend to be slightly less environmentally favorable than the participatory process outputs on which they are based. The degree of knowledge elicitation appears to be a clear predictor for whether or not a process leads to a politically binding decision that closely matches that produced through the participatory process. This indicates that those processes where participants are taken seriously as co-creators of knowledge will also more likely feed into a political program than those where participants do not have this active role. Yet, other hypothesized factors pertaining to the process itself, its output characteristics, and the context did not prove significant in our sample. Furthermore, we observe a significant effect in situations where ‘NIMBY’ problems are apparent, i.e. where particular interests have to be weighed against wider benefits. In NIMBY contexts, political decision-makers were less likely to adopt the recommendations developed during a participatory process to address these situations. These insights also highlight that NIMBY situations pose very particular problems for environmental and participatory decision-making, where decision-makers are faced with strong tensions between individual and wider, societal interests and the need to balance these.

Insights into the fate of the outputs of these processes are, thus, relevant, first, from an instrumental perspective, to understand how the ‘instrumental claim of participation’, i.e. that participation enhances the environmental quality of political decisions, translates on the ground; and, second, from a democratic perspective, tracking the embedding of participatory processes in the wider political process and its consequences for the democratic legitimacy of decisions.

Investigating democratic innovations and impact

Ank Michels

Although democratic innovations have been proposed to strengthen democracy, little is known about their impact on politics, public policies, and society. This paper develops a framework to systematically assess this impact, differentiating between direct and indirect forms of impact, between political and social impact, and between democratic and public governance impact. I will discuss how these different forms of impact can be measured. Findings of two research projects on mini-publics and democratic innovations in the Netherlands will be used to illustrate how the framework can be applied. The approach in this paper leads to several points of discussion on which I will briefly reflect, including normative democratic implications of the conceptualization of impact; empirical questions about the measurement and data collection; and a discussion of the conditions that mediate the impact of the forum.

Media-driven deliberative diffusion on a global scale: The World Citizens’ Jury

Simon Niemeyer, John Dryzek, Nicole Curato

There is growing evidence of the potential for minipublic deliberation to impact on wider publics, both in terms of policy opinion and building deliberative capacity. However, the future success of such a possibility is contingent upon a number of factors. This includes a reconfiguration of how we understand the role of minipublics, with a need to emphasise their role in speaking to wider publics in deliberative systems, rather than discrete decision-making exercises. The success of such a reconfiguration depends on a growing status of minipublics as trusted mediators in important public issues, a critical mass in terms of the number conducted on a particular issue, networking these minipublics together as part of a larger whole, and finding creative and effective mechanisms for communicating their determinations across these different sites as well as to a wider public audience. This paper discusses these opportunities and challenges. It also advances an example of one solution to these challenges in the form of the World Citizens’ Jury, which is being developed to bring the public into the conversation regarding future research and application of genetic technologies. The project networks national-level citizens, which feeds into a global event, providing both participants and feeder information. The whole exercise will also be filmed in conjunction with a science documentary, and the issue communicated through the ‘drama’ of citizens across the globe deliberating the issue and coming together to consider the topic as global citizens.

Moral Conflict in Electoral Deliberation: Assessing the efficacy of voting aids on an Irish referendum

Jane Suiter, Lala Muradova. John Gastil, David M Farrell

This paper tests the efficacy of utilising a voting aid in order to embed the benefits of deliberation within a wider voting public. Specifically we test whether a statement such as those derived from “ citizen initiative reviews” (CIR) can impact voters who did not themselves participate in the official pre-referendum deliberative phase. This experiment was implemented in advance of the 2018 Irish referendum on blasphemy, which was one of a series of social-moral referendums conducted in Ireland following the recommendations of a deliberative assembly of citizens — The Irish Constitutional Convention (2012-14). This is the first application of a CIR-style voting aid in an Irish context, and also the first to be applied to an issue that is principally a moral or symbolic question. We find that both the key findings of the Convention and the statements for and against the removal of Ireland’s blasphemy ban have significant impacts not only on empathy and understanding but also on vote intention.

Replacing or complementing representative democracy

Jean-Benoit Pilet, Camille Bedock

The paper examines how citizens evaluate democratic innovations when they are meant to replace or to complement elected politicians. Based upon a study of Belgian citizens, the paper analyzes which citizens support democratic innovations as complement to representative institutions and democratic innovations that could replace elected politicians for shaping public policies. By contrasting supports for both scenarios, the paper investigates into what role citizens are really calling for when it come to adding participatory bodies into our contemporary political systems.

Studying cherrypicking: substantive and methodological reflections

Joan Font and Graham Smith

The Cherrypicking project <https://cherrypickingproject.wordpress.com/>, we developed an innovative methodological strategy to assess the policy consequences of participatory processes. This led to a number of publications on the determinants of the fate of citizens’ proposals, amongst other considerations. The completion of the project marks an opportunity to reflect critically on our methodological choices and the substantive findings from the research. The aim of this paper to reflect on what we have learned from the project and how this relates to on-going debates about methodological strategies to analyze the consequences of participatory processes. To what extent do the methodological choices adopted condition the results reached? What are the theoretical and practical implications of our findings? Is the evidence we uncovered generalizable to different social and political contexts?

The strange persistence of powerless DI: Understanding trajectories of deliberative tools in policing-making process in France

Guillaume Gourgues and Alice Mazeaud

In the last decades, more and more scholars attempt to conceptualize and measure the effects of deliberative innovations (DI) on public policies. Recent works made some original theoretical or methodological proposals, sometimes assuming a normative purpose (strengthening substantial influence of DI on policymaking). Yet, despite these efforts, this

conceptualization run the risk becoming a never-ending scientific project, partly disconnected of the “real life” of policymaking process.

Our argument is that this risk is partly due to the specialization of researches on DI and to their disconnection with policy analysis and policy sociology. Indeed, DI scholars mainly want to demonstrate that the expected (democratic) effects of DI are real, and consequently marginalize the issue of DI influence on public policies.. On the contrary, policy analysis or sociology mainly highlight the weakness of DI on policy process, underlying the pre-eminence of other processes that constraint and reduce democratization (iron triangles, rise of the unelected, market-oriented policies, winner-take-all processes, networks and advocacy coalitions influences...). DI are almost presented as a zero sum game for policy takers and policy makers.

According to this point of view, we argue that the question of influence of DI on public policy should be reformulate: if DI are powerless, how could we explain their persistence? Why policy-makers still (punctually) supports their implementation? How DI are concretely integrated (or not) in policy-making?

Based on empirical researches we made on DI in France since 2006, concerning various scales, territories and policy sectors, we would like to propose an analytical framework for the study of concrete influence of DI on policy-making. Our theoretical background is deeply rooted in political sociology: we consider that policies are framed and determined by political and sociological configurations, that engage interests, beliefs and (unequal) resources of public and private actors. DI influence on policy-making could be analysed with the intellectual tools and notions of these academic field.

Our contribution relies of three main insights.

Firstly, we argue that DI become a policy itself: top down “public participation policies” gather various DI, budgets, civil servants, experts, professionals, laws. The implementation of these polices become an autonomous element of the policy-making process. It means that the design of DI, and ‘what is going on’ inside such procedures, must be analyzed in straight relation to the process which leads to their implementation. Uses and effects of DI on other sectoral policies must be analyzed within both institutional and individual resources and strategies.

Secondly, we show that demonstrating the influence of DI on political system or public policy is not only a scientific issue, but also an administrative and political issue. In this way, one on the most obvious effect of DI on public policy is the bureaucratization of participatory and deliberative democracy. This bureaucratization creates a strong institutional filter that must be analyzed.

Thirdly, it seems fruitful to evaluate the influence of DI not only inside the micro-political process of public policy but also inside the macro-political process. We try to maintain a multi-level analysis: beyond the effects of DI on some public policies, we need to take their broadest influence on institutional and political frames of policy-making seriously.

Under what conditions do mini-publics exert an influence on public policy? A Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis of mini-publics in Belgium.

Julien Vrydagh

Scholars have devoted close attention to the internal effects of mini-publics on participants. Yet, we still know little about their effects on the political system, especially their influence on the public policy. Existing research tends to opt for case-study in order to understand why mini-publics achieve having an influence. However, it remains unclear to which extent we can generalize their results. This PhD project intends to go a step further by comparing a larger number of cases and therewith searching for causal patterns across mini-publics. It therefore asks: under what conditions do mini-publics exert an influence on public policy? To answer this question, I first develop a theoretical model accounting for the policy influence of mini-publics. Combining insights from literature on democratic innovations, legislative studies, and public policy, two main clusters of conditions are identified. On the one hand, I examine the mini-publics' characteristics, namely their size, length, and agenda openness. On the other hand, we consider the broader context in which the mini-public occurs and, more exactly, its proximity to elections, governance scheme, and the participatory experience of the public authority. I apply this model on the whole population of mini-publics that took place in Belgium between 2001 and 2019. The idea is to avoid only selecting successful mini-publics and, in so doing, to evaluate the full picture within a single country. I have compiled a dataset with new and uncovered cases that I analyze with a multi-method research design, which consists of a Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fs-QCA) and a Process-Tracing. For this workshop, I would like to present the first paper of my PhD featuring the fs-QCA's results. Thanks to its combinations of various literature, this paper brings innovative insights into the reasons why policy-makers take up mini-publics' recommendations and sheds new lights on the use of mini-publics in policy-making processes.

Location

Conference Room

Salle Oleffe

<https://intranet.uclouvain.be/fr/myucl/administrations/arec/salle-oleffe.html>

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