19. Deliberative mini-publics

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INTRODUCTION

The increased polarisation in contemporary societies has become a serious problem in many electoral democracies. Polarisation is intertwined with the rise of extreme political parties, and especially with the new populist radical right (Mudde, 2007). The era of 'frozen party systems' (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967) and rather stable electoral outcomes in Western Europe is over. The electoral earthquakes have made both government formation and governing difficult. At the same time, representative systems should deal with increasingly complex policy problems related, for example, to new technologies, environmental degradation and climate change.

As a solution to the failing capability of electoral democracies to facilitate democratic governance, practitioners and scholars have developed democratic innovations whose aim is to involve citizens in politics and democratic decision-making in new ways (Smith, 2009). Deliberative mini-publics (DMPs) are forums where citizens representing different subgroups are gathered together to deliberate on a particular policy issue in small groups (Grönlund et al., 2014, p. 1). Among democratic innovations, DMPs seem to be especially promising as they have been found to *depolarise* those who participate in them (Fishkin et al., 2021; Grönlund et al., 2015; Strandberg et al., 2019). Depending on how they are designed and by whom they are commissioned, they can also have real potential to bring closer different individuals and groups on a larger basis. Moreover, they seem to be capable of dealing with complex policy issues such as climate change (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2019) and provide constructive policy proposals even in deeply divided societies (Luskin et al., 2014).

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the concept and practices of DMPs. More specifically, we will examine both 'internal' and 'external' aspects of DMPs (see Setälä & Smith, 2018). By 'internal aspects', we refer to patterns of participation and deliberation in DMPs as well as the effects of deliberation on participants' political views, knowledge, and so on. Regarding DMPs' 'external aspects', we explore the functions of DMPs in democratic systems and their impacts on policies, public officials, elected representatives, and the public at large. In the concluding chapter, we evaluate the prospects of DMPs based on empirical and normative studies.

DEFINITIONS AND KEY FEATURES OF DELIBERATIVE MINI-PUBLICS

The idea of lottery as a mechanism of selecting representatives is ancient, going back to Athenian classical democracy where a small group of officials were selected by lot. In modern political theory, authors such as Robert Dahl (1915–2014) and Benjamin Barber (1939–2017) brought up the idea of random selection. Already in 1970, Dahl (1990 [1970], pp. 122–5) advocated for a randomly selected citizen body to help correct different biases caused by soci-

etal class and education level in existing democracies. According to Dahl, a 'mini-populus' could consist of around 1000 randomly selected participants who would meet via 'telecommunications' and deliberate for a year, after which it would announce its choices. Further, there could be a separate mini-populus for agenda-setting and others for separate major topics on the political agenda. He also saw that the mini-populus would not be a substitute for legislative bodies but a complement, and it could exist at any level of government (e.g., national, state and local) (Dahl, 1989, pp. 340–1).

Barber (1984, p. 291) advocated selection by lot, combined with rotation, as a part of his programme for participatory or 'strong democracy'. He refers to historical examples of the use of lot in democratic systems in ancient Athens and early modern Europe. Barber describes the advantages of random selection as follows: 'Since the nurturing of political judgment does not require that every citizen be involved in all decisions, the lot is a way of maximizing meaningful engagement in large-scale societies'.

The first actual practices for randomly selected citizen forums were developed and experimented in the 1970s and the 1980s (Floridia, 2017). Inspired by the United States court jury processes, the first randomly selected Citizens' Jury was organised in 1974 in Minnesota on health-care plans (Crosby, 1995). It is also notable that Peter Dienel, a professor of sociology at the University of Wuppertal, Germany, had developed a model of a randomly selected citizen forum called the Planning Cell a few years earlier (Setälä & Smith, 2018). Moreover, the Danish Board of Technology in the 1980s started to organise so-called Consensus Conferences in the 1980s to assist parliamentary decision-making on technologically complex issues. Overall, these first formats of what are now regarded as DMPs were developed and actually used on technically complex issues, such as urban planning, environmental protection, and technology assessment (e.g., Crosby, 1995; Joss, 1998).

In the late 1980s, Fishkin (1988, pp. 16–18) suggested that 'ordinary citizens, when immersed in the relevant materials, can deal with difficult questions' as they do in a jury and that we can 'use the sampling techniques of public-opinion research to represent, to make present, a version of all of us'. Based on this idea, he developed and successfully implemented Deliberative Polling™, which is now a widely used method. Mansbridge (2010) called it 'the gold standard' of DMPs. Deliberative Polls have by now been organised over 100 times in 29 countries (Fishkin, 2018; Stanford Deliberative Democracy Lab, 2024a). During the 2000s, Citizens' Assemblies became a common format of DMPs, especially on climate policies (Boswell et al., 2023).

Being a democratic innovation that involves a diverse randomly selected number of participants in small-group deliberation, DMPs can be linked with the wider theory of participatory democracy, where many parts of our social and political lives are democratised (e.g., Barber, 1984). For deliberative democrats, a similar ideal would be a society where citizens affected by a decision have capacities and opportunities to deliberate in the public sphere (Curato et al., 2017, p. 32). DMPs have been regarded as one way to put such an ideal into practice.

There are several definitions of DMPs (see Ryan & Smith, 2014). Curato et al. (2021, p. 3) define them as 'carefully designed forums where a representative subset of the wider population come together to engage in open, inclusive, informed and consequential discussions on one or more issues'. Because DMPs are intentionally designed as institutions that provide space for lay citizens from diverse backgrounds to reason together, they may be described as 'unusual institutions' (Setälä & Smith, 2018, p. 300). Although the 'myth of intentional design' should generally be avoided when discussing political institutions (see Goodin, 1996,

p. 128), it is notable that the design of DMP procedures has actually been guided by certain prescriptive or normative principles.

In many ways, DMPs aim at creating an 'ideal speech situation' (Habermas, 1989) between equals. This means that everyone should be allowed to participate in a discourse and express their views without any internal or external coercion. In practice, participants in DMPs deliberate in small groups under specific *discussion rules* that emphasise deliberative norms such as mutual respect and justification. These rules may also encourage participants to engage in rational communication and to keep emotions at bay (Landwehr, 2014, pp. 79–80). To make sure that participants stick to the given rules, each group has an 'impartial intermediary', a *trained moderator* who facilitates the small-group deliberation (see Landwehr, 2014 for a wider discussion on different types of moderators).

To some extent, all DMPs share similar goals. They aim to 'educate participants, stimulate public discourse and advise government decision makers' (Brown, 2006, p. 204). Further, Elstub (2014) identifies five ways in which DMPs are used. They are to: (1) clarify public perspectives on complex policy issues; (2) decide on policy priorities; (3) break political deadlocks or arbitrate between policy options; (4) increase public participation and understanding; and (5) generate new policy ideas. The abovementioned goals are demonstrated through a central element in DMPs: information. DMPs have an 'information phase' to build the capacity of participants to process complex information (Curato et al., 2021, p. 71). Thus, participants in DMPs are presented with balanced briefing materials and have opportunities to interact with experts on the issues at hand (Leino et al., 2022).

Even though all DMPs aim to provide a space for citizen deliberation, their outcomes are quite different. Some DMPs formulate written statements summarising relevant arguments and facts, whereas others, such as Deliberative Polls, aggregate individual survey responses to a group level. Most mini-publics, however, try to identify some recommendations on the topic that they have been deliberating. While the consensus has sometimes been regarded as a goal of democratic deliberation, a more common view is that deliberation should recognise pluralism and strive for 'metaconsensus', which involves mutual recognition of the legitimacy of other participants' values, preferences, and judgements (Curato et al., 2017, p. 31). In this vein, most DMPs use voting as a way of finding out which views have most support within the group (Curato et al., 2021).

TYPES OF DELIBERATIVE MINI-PUBLICS

While there are certain features shared by all DMPs (random selection, facilitated deliberation, interaction with experts), there is still plenty of variation between different formats. First, there are differences when it comes to the *size* of DMPs. The first DMPs, namely Planning Cells, Citizens' Juries, and Consensus Conferences, had a relatively small number of participants, only about 15–40 lay citizens (Setälä & Smith, 2018).

Large-scale DMPs include Deliberative Polls, with a few hundred participants. The Deliberative Poll *America in One Room on Climate and Energy* in September 2021 had 962 participants (Stanford Deliberative Democracy Lab, 2024b). The G1000 in Belgium was aimed at 1000 participants but attracted in the end 704 people to a Citizens' Summit on 11 November 2011 (Participedia, 2024a; Setälä & Smith, 2018). Citizens' Assemblies usually include 100+ participants. For example, the French Citizens Convention on Climate, organised

in 2019–20, included 150 randomly selected lay citizens, and Climate Assembly UK, organised in 2020, had 108 participants (see e.g., Boswell et al., 2023).

Related to the size, the concept of *representation* varies in different forms of DMPs. When it comes to Deliberative Polls, the idea is to form an idea of informed public opinion, in contrast to the public opinion traditionally measured in opinion polls. Fishkin and Luskin (2005, p. 295) characterise the aim of deliberative polls as follows: 'What is important to us is to get a maximally reliable picture of a counterfactual public forming and revising its opinions under normatively desirable conditions'. From this perspective, the socio-demographic representativeness of the participants of DMPs seems to be the key to their legitimacy as a representation of informed public opinion.

Even though all DMPs have the goal of being representative, almost all DMPs fall short of being representative in a statistical sense and none of them are representative in the electoral sense (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006). Thus, recruitment to a DMP is an important phase in the process (Curato et al., 2021). In large-scale DMPs, the goal is to create a large-enough 'microcosm' of the population, being representative both in terms of demographic attributes and attitudes (Fishkin, 2018). A common approach to selecting participants to larger DMPs is stratified random sampling: a way of randomly selecting people from different demographic subgroups, like age, gender, ethnicity, income, and geography (Breckon et al., 2019). Quota and stratification methods are especially used in smaller-scale DMPs in addition to random sampling. The overall goal is to ensure diversity among the deliberators (Curato et al., 2021) and representation of different viewpoints on the issue at hand (Brown, 2006).

Some DMPs also use processes of stratification or even quotas for marginalised societal groups. In this way, the purpose is to ensure that the participants of the deliberative forum represent the relevant socio-demographic groups (Brown, 2006). The representation of different viewpoints may not appear to be sufficient for those interested in statistical representativeness. Yet, it may be sufficient considering the particular roles and functions these DMPs are expected to have in the wider political system (see the following section).

In addition to the number of participants, the *procedural features* of DMPs vary. There are differences when it comes to the length of deliberation. Deliberative processes may last only a few hours. Some Citizens' Assemblies, including some of the recent climate assemblies such as the French Citizens' Convention on Climate and Climate Assembly UK, lasted several weekends over several months (Boswell et al., 2023). Although all DMPs involve small-group deliberation, there are different ways of organising small-group deliberations and combining them with plenary sessions. Moreover, there are differences in how moderators or facilitators are expected to influence discussions. In some cases facilitators are relatively passive chairs, whereas in other formats they are expected to be more active in enforcing the norms of deliberation (Landwehr, 2014). In cases where DMPs are actually producing joint statements, the role of moderators may be even more active.

DMPs typically include some interaction between lay citizens and experts (Brown, 2006). The mode of *lay citizen–expert interaction* varies between different formats. For example, Consensus Conferences had procedures which allowed participants to influence the set of experts to be heard (Joss, 1998). Expert panels are often heard in plenary sessions as part of the DMP (Fishkin, 2014). Sometimes, deliberators receive an information sheet in advance and hear experts in question-and-answer sessions at the plenary. In order to avoid the risks of expert domination, more interactive styles of expert hearings have been developed, including, for example, experts rotating in small groups (Roberts et al., 2020).

Finally, there is significant variation when it comes to the *outcome of deliberations*. Deliberative Polls survey participants' opinions before and after deliberation to reveal patterns of opinion change. Sometimes participants may also cast a secret ballot. The designers of Deliberative Polls are concerned about group pressure (Fishkin, 2018, p. 19), and therefore they do not involve particular measures of group decision-making in the deliberative process.

Citizens' Assemblies normally cast a public vote on the recommendations they make. Citizens' Juries and Consensus Conferences aim at a written statement, accepted unanimously or by a majority of participants. While such procedures may involve the risk of group pressure as well as undue influence by moderators, there are a variety of ways of alleviating such risks and facilitating participants' co-production of written statements (e.g., Healthy Democracy, 2023).

Modality is an issue that has attracted attention and led to empirical analyses. Conducting deliberation in small groups is time-consuming and costly, especially in the larger DMPs with several hundred participants. Thus, online deliberation has risen as a feasible and much less costly alternative to the traditional face-to-face endeavours. By now, we have evidence that online deliberation with moderators via online platforms such as Zoom work in a similar manner as deliberation at a physical location (Grönlund et al., 2022; Strandberg & Grönlund, 2018). In comparisons between face-to-face and online modes, the outcomes regarding opinion change and knowledge gains are largely similar (Fishkin, 2009; Strandberg et al., 2019). Moreover, there are attempts to automatise moderation in online public deliberation, which would make large deliberative events, such as the suggested nationwide Deliberation Day, possible (Ackerman & Fishkin, 2004).

An automated moderator is a computer algorithm which mimics a human moderator. Some Deliberative Polls, e.g., *America in One Room on Energy and Climate Change*, have already been conducted totally via the automated moderator platform of Stanford University (see Stanford Deliberative Democracy Lab, 2024a, 2024b). In this respect, artificial intelligence might lead to fast advancements in the near future.

Table 19.1 summarises some basic features of the most common DMPs. It distinguishes between Citizens' Juries, Planning Cells, Consensus Conferences, Citizens' Assemblies, and Deliberative Polls. For each type, the main 'inventor' and the first-known empirical use of the method is presented, after which the typical number of participants is listed. Table 19.1 also shows how long deliberations last in each DMP model, and what the major output is. Finally, an example of each model is listed.

STUDIES ON DELIBERATION IN MINI-PUBLICS AND THEIR IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS

Some DMPs have been organised as purely scientific experiments, but most have been part of the policymaking process in some way. Scientific DMP experiments are most likely popular because they allow for the testing of various aspects, including opinion change, discussion dynamics, and 'side effects' of deliberation, such as political and social trust, issue knowledge, or political efficacy (Grönlund, 2016; Grönlund & Herne, 2022; Grönlund et al., 2010). Most DMPs, whether they are experiments or not, involve survey questions as a means of documenting people's knowledge, preferences, and attitudes before and after deliberation to see how they change in the deliberative process.

Table 19.1 Key features of different deliberative mini-publics

	Citizens' Jury	**Planning Cell**	**Consensus Conference**	**Citizens' Assembly**	**Deliberative Poll®**
Developer and first instance	Ned Crosby, USA, 1971	Peter Dienel, Germany, 1970	Danish Board of Technology, Denmark, 1987	Gordon Gibson, Canada, 2002	James S. Fishkin, UK, 1994
Typical number of participants	12–26	25 in each cell but can include hundreds in parallel	10–25	50–160	100–over 1000
How long do deliberations last?	2–5 days	2–7 days	7 to 8 days (3 days plus preparatory weekends)	20–30 days (series of weekends)	2–3 days (often a weekend)
Output	Policy commendations; summaries of arguments	A report that collates findings from different cells	Recommendations (collective position)	Policy recommendations	Aggregated survey results
Example	Citizens' Initiative Review in Oregon	Planning Cells on energy policy in Germany	Danish Consensus Conferences	Ireland's Citizens' Assemblies	America in One Room

Source: Breckon et al. (2019); Elstub (2014); Participedia (2024b); Setälä and Smith (2018); Stanford Deliberative Democracy Lab (2024a, 2024b).

Two major findings from DMPs are that (1) *participants gain more knowledge* on the issue or issues at hand; and (2) *their opinions change*. These processes go hand in hand. The briefing materials and interaction with experts lead to higher levels of issue knowledge among many participants, and this increased knowledge is then evident in the subsequent deliberations, leading to a corrective effect in terms of epistemic beliefs (Luskin et al., 2002; Setälä et al., 2010). Gaining more knowledge will already start a process of 'deliberation within' among the individuals who participate (Goodin & Niemeyer, 2003, p. 635). Deliberation also leads to an understanding of the rationales of those with differing viewpoints (Andersen & Hansen, 2007; Luskin et al., 2014). Opinion change is a well-documented phenomenon in DMPs (Fishkin, 2018; Fishkin et al., 2021; Grönlund et al., 2015; Himmelroos & Christensen, 2014; Niemeyer et al., 2024; Setälä et al., 2010; Strandberg et al., 2019; Suiter et al., 2016b). Opinion changes are often reflected by an increased common understanding of the different values and opinions in the group – a 'metaconsensus' (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2006). Opinion changes may be regarded as an empirical implication of a normative goal according to which deliberation should 'launder preferences' in the sense that arguments based on false beliefs and prejudice should be given less weight than arguments based on knowledge and appealing to generalisable moral principles (Goodin, 1986; for empirical evidence in a DMP context, see Grönlund et al., 2015).

Empirical evidence suggests that deliberation might be a solution for group polarisation in like-minded environments. Group polarisation is a phenomenon where members of a group end up at a more extreme position in the same general direction as their inclinations before they started the discussion (Sunstein, 2009, p. 3).[1] Two separate population-based lab-in-the-field experiments in Finland show that like-mindedness at a small group level does not lead to group

polarisation, when the groups discuss under deliberative norms with facilitation by a trained moderator (Grönlund et al., 2015; Strandberg et al., 2019).

In our own research, we have also found that participation in a DMP leads to positive side effects or 'civic virtues', such as willingness to engage in collective action and political trust (Grönlund et al., 2010). In a controlled mini-public experiment on immigration, people who initially were restrictive toward immigration showed an increase in outgroup empathy when they deliberated in cross-cutting groups, facing arguments from permissive participants (Grönlund et al., 2017).

IMPACTS OF DELIBERATIVE MINI-PUBLICS ON POLICYMAKING

In recent years, there has been a certain hype around DMPs. For example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020, 2021) has produced guidebooks for public officials and policymakers on how to institutionalise citizens' assemblies and other deliberative bodies. However, there are still many open questions – both empirical and normative – regarding their possible roles and functions in political decision-making. The aim of this section is to highlight the key issues pertaining to these 'external aspects' of DMPs.

Most DMPs are actually advisory processes, often linked to some administrative structures involved in preparing policies. It is notable also that non-democratic governments may use DMPs to help resolve particular complex policy problems (Woo & Kübler, 2020). While resolving policy problems can improve the quality of citizens' lives in authoritarian societies, there are certainly normative questions pertaining to the use of DMPs to increase the problem-solving capacity of authoritarian governments.

Yet, it seems undisputable that DMPs should have *some kind of role* in public decision-making and deliberation if they are organised in the first place. In this section, we will review research on the impact of DMPs on elite-driven policymaking processes, as well as on policymakers' attitudes. Thereafter, we will review DMPs' potential to have impacts among citizens and the public at large.

DMPs are often coupled with different representative and administrative policy processes, typically initiated by governmental actors to advise policymaking on a particular issue. If DMPs are regarded as a way to improve the epistemic quality of decisions, it seems necessary to examine whether DMPs actually have an impact on policy decisions. There are a few cases where governmental authorities have committed to implementing the recommendations of DMPs. For example, such a commitment has been made in some Citizens' Assemblies in Gdansk, Poland, for recommendations supported by a supermajority of the participants (see, e.g., Gerwin, 2018, p. 22).

Sometimes, policymakers have made other types of commitments to promote DMP recommendations. For example, the French President Emmanuel Macron pledged that he would take the recommendations of the French Citizens' Convention for Climate 'unfiltered' to the appropriate level, that is, for governmental action, to the parliament or to a referendum (Giraudet et al., 2021). While the Convention undoubtedly had an impact on French climate legislation, only a handful of its proposals have actually been adopted (Courant, 2021).

This example already shows the problem with advisory DMPs: it is very easy for policymakers to dismiss their recommendations when they are not in line with their policy agendas

or pre-established views. Compared to advisory referendums, for example, the recommending powers of advisory DMPs seems very low. The processes of citizen deliberation can provide useful insights and ideas, from which policymakers can freely 'cherry-pick' those that seem appropriate (Font et al., 2018).

There are some empirical methodologies and studies to analyse the policy impacts of deliberative DMPs. When it comes to individual DMPs, it is possible to analyse their impact by methods such as the Sequential Impact Matrix Framework (Vrydagh & Caluwaerts, 2023). From a more systemic perspective, it is possible to compare the determinants of the fate of DMP recommendations (e.g., Font et al., 2018). These studies seem to confirm the overall picture of the weakness of advisory DMP policy impacts.

In addition to policy impacts, DMPs may have more subtle impacts on policymakers' beliefs and attitudes on policy issues, the quality of justifications given to policies, and the perceptions of policy processes. Such impacts may be difficult to observe directly, and interviews are therefore often used to gauge policymakers' views on DMPs. For example, Hendriks (2016) shows how interaction with a DMP facilitated the emergence of new perspectives in parliamentary work, while the actual policy impact of advisory DMPs depends on champions. It is notable, however, that while there are several studies on how interaction with DMPs or exposure to their recommendations may affect citizens' political knowledge, efficacy, and so on (e.g., Knobloch et al., 2020; for a more detailed review, see below), there are very few studies on DMP impacts on policymakers.

Obviously, there are different ways to strengthen the impacts of DMPs on representative policymaking. For example, it would be possible to require policymakers to give public and justified responses to the recommendations of a DMP. Such practices of 'iterated deliberation' (Setälä, 2017) could help enhance deliberative accountability of policymakers and facilitate public deliberation on the issue at hand (see Thompson, 2008b).

There are also other types of institutional designs aimed at enhancing DMP policy impacts. One possibility is mixed or hybrid deliberations, including both randomly selected citizens and elected representatives. The Irish Constitutional Convention is a proto-type of such deliberative process since it involves 66 randomly selected citizens and 33 representatives of the Irish Parliament (Suiter et al., 2016a). It seems that in the Irish case there were sufficient measures preventing professional politicians from dominating the deliberative process (Farrell et al., 2020).

Another example was an online local DMP in the city of Turku (Åbo), Finland, commissioned to deliberate about future transportation planning for the city centre. In this DMP, half of the small groups consisted of lay citizens only, whereas the other half included two local councillors from different parties (Grönlund et al., 2020). The results show that politicians did not dominate the discussion, and that they partly took a role of expert in small-group deliberations. The participants' changes in opinion were similar in both treatment conditions (Grönlund et al., 2022).

Involving elected representatives might be regarded as an efficient way of ensuring the policy impact of DMPs. By deliberating with citizens, elected representatives are exposed to a variety of viewpoints and engage in reasoning processes together with lay citizens. While the Irish case shows the capacity of mixed deliberation to bring about policy changes, it also had its limits. Notably, it did not help achieve policy changes on issues such as electoral systems where elected representatives had strong vested interests (Farrell et al., 2020).

Deliberative Mini-Publics and the Wider Public

DMPs can have an impact on opinions and attitudes among the public at large. They may also change public perceptions of the policy process, for example, by increasing perceived legitimacy of policy processes or trust in political actors. Different types of vignettes or conjoint designs have been used to examine the effects of design features, such as the number of participants and recruitment methods, on the perceived legitimacy of DMPs (e.g., Goldberg, 2021). Survey experiments based on hypothetical scenarios show that DMPs can enhance perceived legitimacy and trust in policymaking (Jacobs & Kaufmann, 2021). As for policy opinions and attitudes, there are some studies showing that people use DMPs as trusted proxies and adjust their policy opinions based on the recommendations given by DMPs. Sloman et al. (2023) find that communication about opinion shifts in a Consensus Conference has a significant impact on people's opinions on the issue at hand. However, experimental evidence also suggests that DMPs can backfire when their recommendations are not followed by policymakers (Van Dijk & Lefevere, 2023).

In addition to hypothetical experiments, there is also evidence on the impacts of actual DMPs. For example, a study by Boulianne (2018) shows that awareness of DMPs may enhance external efficacy among the public at large. In particular, the effects of the Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) procedure have been studied extensively. The purpose of the CIR is to help voters make judgements on ballot initiatives (Gastil & Richards, 2013). The CIR entails a Citizens' Jury that formulates a statement on a ballot measure, which is sent to all voters before the ballot. The CIR model has been developed and experimented in Oregon and other states in the United States and more recently in Finland (Setälä et al., 2023b) and Switzerland (Geisler, 2022).

The CIR statement includes the key findings and most important arguments for and against the measure. In the process of drafting the statement, the CIR jury evaluates different factual arguments as well as the arguments for and against a ballot measure by their relevance and reliability. It is notable that the CIR statements used to report the numbers of jury members for and against the proposal, but this is no longer the case (Healthy Democracy, 2023). The function of a CIR is to provide reliable information and to clarify the conflict by summarising the arguments in support of and against a ballot proposal. While Citizens' Juries have been criticised for being too small to be representative of the whole population, they seem to be apt for this specific purpose.

Another key aspect of the CIR procedure is that the statement is sent to all voters before an upcoming popular vote, which motivates people to learn about the issue. Obviously, voters have a variety of sources of information in mass participatory or direct-democratic processes such as referendums – some reliable, others less so. Given the fact that voters are prone to seek information that supports their pre-existing view, they may become biased and even polarised during the campaign. By reading the CIR statement, voters will receive some basic information as well as summaries of the arguments on both sides, which helps them to learn about and reflect on the pros and cons of the ballot proposal. As sources of information, CIR-type procedures are thus very different from partisan shortcuts. Indeed, Gastil (2014, p. 156) argues that the CIR should be regarded as a voting aid rather than a voting cue.

There is evidence that reading a CIR statement can enhance factual learning among the public at large (Gastil et al., 2018; Setälä et al., 2023b). Knobloch et al. (2020) suggest that learning about jury statements can increase voters' internal efficacy. Reading a CIR statement

can also affect people's attitudes on the issue at hand (e.g., Christensen et al., 2022). Moreover, a study by Már and Gastil (2020) indicates that by reading a CIR statement, voters learn information that is not supportive of their views based on partisan identification, which suggests that the CIR process could counteract the effects of partisan-motivated reasoning. In addition, reading CIR statements induces learning and reflection on the arguments supporting different viewpoints even in polarised contexts where trust in all public institutions is low (Setälä et al., 2023a). Reading a statement including arguments from both sides can actually increase voters' trust in political actors on the 'other side'.

While there is evidence that CIR-type procedures can help voters make informed and better-reflected judgements, it is important to identify the psychological mechanisms behind these impacts. Suiter et al. (2020) have investigated the effects of reading a citizens' statement on knowledge and perspective-taking, disentangling different elements of the informational exposure. They find that reading the justifications for DMP recommendations together with a short description of the process increases individuals' knowledge on the topic.

The CIR may have significant impacts because voters are motivated to learn about policy issues and the CIR statement is sent to all voters before a popular vote. Yet, from a systemic perspective, the overall impact of CIR-type procedures may remain modest unless they are institutionalised and systematically used. Although there is a legal provision for the CIR in Oregon law (Healthy Democracy, 2023), it is still weakly institutionalised and lacks funding. The institutionalisation of the CIR procedure could mean, for example, that it is required on all popular votes or referendums, or that it is routinely used to evaluate arguments made in electoral campaigns.

Deliberative Mini-Publics and the Institutional Setting of Democratic Systems

Apart from a few exceptions such as the CIR, advisory DMPs remain relatively weak institutions with little impact. Therefore, it seems appropriate to ask how the current practices could or should be developed. The primary justification for the use of DMPs and other randomly selected forums is based on their epistemic benefits, that is, their capacity to bring about more informed and reflected views on policy issues in comparison to many other policy processes. Dahl's (1989, pp. 340–1) idea of a 'mini-populus' was motivated by the need to address the increasing complexity of political problems. The current tendencies of polarisation and populism in democratic systems further stress the need for new avenues of participation which help citizens to form informed and considered judgements on policy issues. There is also an important normative argument for the use of DMPs on issues dealing with the design of political institutions because of elected representatives' vested interests on such issues (e.g., Thompson, 2008a).

Although DMPs seem to have the potential to enhance the epistemic quality of policymaking, there is also an ongoing debate among theorists of deliberative democracy on what kinds of impacts DMPs should have on policymaking. There are deep disagreements among deliberative democrats regarding the ideal roles and functions of DMPs, ranging from radical proposals for replacing elected representative institutions with randomly selected bodies (Van Reybrouck, 2016) to those warning against the use of DMPs as 'shortcuts' for informed public opinion (Lafont, 2015). Obviously, replacing elections with random selection would transform the way in which democratic systems function entirely, including the role of political parties and the patterns of democratic accountability, for example.

In total opposition to such radical proposals, some deliberative democrats have warned against *any* kind of use of DMPs in public policymaking. For these authors (e.g., Hammond, 2021; Lafont, 2015), DMPs are shortcuts which may undermine the role of critical civil society and public discourse on policymaking. Admittedly, such criticisms of DMPs are based on rather idealised views of how representative democracies function, especially considering the complexity of modern governments (Warren, 2020). Nevertheless, their critique shows that from a normative perspective there is no straightforward answer to the question as to what kind of role – if any – DMPs should have in democratic systems.

Other theorists of deliberative democracy (e.g., Gastil & Wright, 2019; Setälä, 2017) represent a 'middle ground', which tries to explore better ways of using DMPs as part of electoral representative systems. For example, Gastil and Wright (2019) propose institutionalisation of a randomly selected second chamber and provide a rather detailed account of how such a system might be organised. They argue for a bicameral system where the elected chamber and the sortitioned chamber would have equal powers, and both would have the right to initiate legislation and vote on laws passed by the other chamber.

Such ideas of institutionalised and empowered DMPs have not yet been implemented anywhere. However, there are already some examples of the institutionalisation of DMPs. The most interesting example is the so-called 'Ostbelgien model' in Belgium, in which permanent citizen deliberation processes are coupled with the regional parliament (e.g., Niessen & Reuchamps, 2020). The model allows assemblies to recommend issues to be considered by the parliament (agenda-setting), they provide policy recommendations for parliament (collective will formation), and the parliament needs to provide a justification for its decisions on these matters to the assembly (deliberative accountability). As the first permanent forum for citizen deliberation, it could serve as a model for the institutionalisation of DMPs elsewhere.

CONCLUSIONS

There is already plenty of evidence of the capacity of DMPs to help make more informed and reflected political judgements. Moreover, there is growing evidence that there are ways to 'scale up' such effects among mass publics (e.g., Niemeyer, 2014; Warren & Gastil, 2015) and at least to some extent among elected representatives. However, such effects depend on institutional designs, which help the transmission of the reasoning and effective coupling of DMPs with policymaking processes. While the Ostbelgien model is still a rather unique experiment, there have been various different proposals by scholars and advocates to institutionalise randomly selected deliberative forums, transforming them into a 'real' pillar within a political system. This would complement electoral representative institutions such as the legislature (e.g., Gastil & Wright, 2019).

Yet, such institutional reforms are likely to encounter resistance by elected representatives and policymakers. There are surveys gauging political elites' attitudes towards DMPs. Based on Finnish data, Koskimaa and Rapeli (2020) find that political elites are much less positive than citizens about the use of DMPs in policymaking. Both politicians and officials were particularly critical of any ideas of empowering DMPs and prefer them to have purely advisory roles. Admittedly, the Finnish case may be extreme in this respect since it is a representative system with a very limited experience of democratic innovations. However, similar results have been obtained in Belgium, which in many ways is a frontrunner in the institutionalisation

of randomly selected citizen forums. Based on a survey by Jacquet et al. (2022, p. 302), a clear majority of Belgian members of parliament were against the empowerment of randomly selected bodies such as sortitioned second chambers and municipal councils, while citizens were much more open to such proposals. Moreover, 66.7 per cent of members of parliament were fully or rather against mixed chambers, which is a stark contrast to 25.2 per cent of citizens.

Based on results showing hesitancy among political elites, the prospects of institutionalisation and empowerment of DMPs seem rather remote. In this respect, the situation is more or less the same as with other democratic innovations, which often remain weakly institutionalised. Nevertheless, it is still possible for scholars and advocates to explore and experiment different forms of DMPs and their potential to improve the quality of public discourse, democratic decision-making, and hence representative democracy.

NOTE

1. Sunstein (2009) uses the term 'deliberation' instead of discussion but we think that in the context of this chapter it is important to distinguish between organised deliberation and free discussion.

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