

The Europolis experiment and its lessons for deliberation on Europe

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The Europolis experiment took place at a time when the worst crisis in the history of the EU began to unfold. There is little confidence that the year 2014 (or any later year in the near future) will bring its definitive resolution that would also have to minimize the risk of the crisis repeating itself. The crisis can be understood as consisting of three interrelated components: the *political economy* of the Euro zone and its dynamics, an inadequate *institutional shell* of the EU polity and its deficient democratic quality, and the widespread *disenchantment* of publics in Europe with the narratives about what ‘Europe’ is good for and what the *finalité* might be that would make its further integration intrinsically desirable.

In a nutshell, the crisis unfolded in four stages. First, as in the US, the financial industries engaged in risky, often frivolous kinds of investments, correctly trusting that, if investments failed on a significant scale, national governments would step in to bail them out. Second, governments, lacking any viable alternative, did as expected, thus causing an economic crisis with sharp (if uneven, given the vast economic differences between Euro zone members) declines in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment. Third, in order to rescue the Euro monetary system and to prevent the depression from becoming ever deeper, governments had to rely on banks (including the European Central Bank (ECB)) to provide deeply indebted sovereigns with the liquidity needed to rescue their economies. Fourth, there is no democratic mechanism in place at the EU level that would allow for the legitimation of the major redistributive effects that any conceivable economic rescue operation would involve. As a consequence, the 18 member states of the Euro zone are deeply divided by a poorly institutionalized transnational conflict over to what extent the surplus countries must practice ‘solidarity’ and to what extent deficit countries can be expected to reciprocate by ‘consolidating’ their state budgets through (manifestly

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counterproductive) austerity measures imposed upon them by ‘donors.’ In the absence of an established mechanism of democratic legitimation (as it is in place in any federal state such as the US), the hundreds of billions of Euros that (uncontroversially) need to be redistributed (across member states, points in time and social classes) remain at the entirely unaccountable (‘technocratic’) disposition of the ‘Troika’ of the ECB, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In the meantime, GDP growth in the EU-28 hovers near the 0% line, the ‘risk of poverty’ condition affects 124.4 million EU citizens (out of a total of 507.7 million), and ratios of government debt to GDP peak above 125% in Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Ireland (with 60% being the upper limit according to the largely obsolete Maastricht Treaty and Growth and Stability Pact).¹ In Greece, as a consequence of drastic austerity measures having affected the health system, ‘the long term fall in infant mortality has reversed, rising by 43% between 2008 and 2010’ and the number of people attempting suicide has increased by 36% between 2009 and 2011 (Kentikelenis et al., 2014). In a word: austerity kills. Shortly before the 2014 EP elections, the EU finds itself in a widely perceived emergency.

While nobody doubts that ‘something’ needs to be done, the rules, procedures and constitutional commitments are missing that would allow for making sure that what is actually being done is the ‘right’ thing to do—the ‘right’ thing in terms of public deliberation, political representation, parliamentary accountability, constitutional provisions of member states, or basic standards of procedural fairness and substantive standards of social justice and human rights to which citizens of European democracies (old ones as well as the new ones in the East) see themselves entitled. The definition of what ‘needs to be done’ is not for the bankers and technocrats to decide; it must ultimately be understood and approved by majorities of the European citizenry.

Indeed, the more *salient* policy decisions are, the more democratic (‘legitimacy-conferring’) the institutional rules and legal guarantees according to which they are being made must be. If the issue is, say, the standardization of permissible ingredients of paints as they may affect the health of workers and consumers, salience is relatively low and legitimacy can be provided by some combination of technical expertise and bureaucratic enforcement. In contrast, if the policy issue has to do with the economic well-being of entire countries and generations, much more is required. Put differently: legitimacy and, in its absence, a ‘democratic deficit’, are *relative* to the intensity with which policies being decided upon affect the core life interests of those being affected by the policies. Concerning the scope and intensity of effects of what ‘Europe’ does (or, equivalently, fails to do), they could not conceivably be much greater than they currently are. As to the consequences of the financial market, budgetary, and economic crises that Europe has allowed to unfold and the Euro monetary system has positively intensified, the supranational non-state of the EU is presently involved in a deep and institutionally unembedded social conflict. The Euro as the common currency of 18 out of 28 member states, tying the hands of national monetary policy makers, exacerbates the economic divergence between—as well as the political divergence within—member states.

The impact that EU policies have on citizens is clearly incommensurate to the impact of constituent states and citizens are allowed to have upon the making of those policies. It is this discrepancy that is commonly referred to as ‘democratic deficit.’

In the history of the EU, it was widely believed that ‘ever closer integration’ will be driven by emerging necessities that lead elites to find incremental ad hoc solutions. Whenever a crisis comes up, it will be (and in fact often has been) resolved according to neo-functional theory, through the inconspicuous and quasi-spontaneous stepping up of sovereignty transfers and emergent new modes of cooperation necessary to avoid negative spill over effects. On the basis of a ‘permissive consensus’ of a largely disinterested public, an inconspicuous and path-dependent process of incremental institutional adjustments and innovations has taken place, mostly behind closed doors. In a step-by-step fashion, integration was thought to generate societal actors calling for more integration, making the process halting but irreversible. Yet, this is no longer a viable mode of moving forward. The current banking and associated fiscal, economic, and political crises are the first instances in the history of the EU when the logic of piecemeal adaptation evidently no longer applies, as member state governments, due to the depth of the crisis, were no longer ready to transfer sovereignties, pool resources, and practice cooperation to the extent that seems ‘functionally’ necessary. Trust in quasi-automatic adaptation of a neo-functional sort is no longer warranted. For that to happen, the stakes involved are simply too high, and irreversibility can no longer be assumed or even (as has been argued by Wolfgang Streeck, 2014) desired. Instead of the neo-functional auto-pilot, ‘real’ agency needs to step in and engage in ‘political’ (i.e. strategic, resourceful, and contested rather than adaptive) action. The question is where such agency might come from and what ideas might inspire it.

One answer to this key question of sufficiently motivated and adequately resourceful agency might of course be that ‘the Europeans,’ the citizens of the EU themselves—elites and (majorities of) non-elites alike—are sufficiently committed and interested to do (or allow to be done) ‘whatever it takes’ to overcome the crisis. Yet, since Maastricht and the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and, in particular, under the impact of the crisis, there has been a clear decline in the intensity and degree of identification with which the European ‘project’ of economic, political, and social integration is supported as an intrinsically valuable one, a shared *finalité*.² Such sense of purpose has largely evaporated, and ‘renationalization’ is being called for not just on the nationalist political right, but in some quarters of the left as well. This is understandable yet paradoxical. It is understandable because European citizens rightly feel threatened by the contingencies and uncontrolled interdependencies the EU and the Euro monetary systems have triggered; growing numbers of them respond by advocating the retreat into the protective shells of nation states. At the same time, this reflex is paradoxical as those shells have been irreversibly perforated and cannot possibly provide protection and security any more. These good things must either be rebuilt at the EU level or are not to be had at all. While this basic fact is understood by the majority of

political elites in the EU, they are largely unable and partly unwilling to persuade and convince their mass constituencies of the inevitability of this truth, leaving an increasingly wide space for anti-integrationist political mobilization. It is at this point that mass deliberation about the European polity and its policies are called for.

To be sure, the 'grand narratives' of Europe and the desirability of its further integration have lost much of their motivating force. As to the narrative of the EU being a guarantor of international peace in Europe, the memory of integration as a peace-making force and its accomplishment of Franco–German cooperation has sunk into the mist of the past. There is no 'enemy' any more on the other side of the former Iron Curtain, the fear of which could help Europe bind together. Similarly, the powerful objection to the narrative of the Common Market as the machinery of growth and prosperity is that the prosperity that the market-integrated Europe has managed to generate is very unevenly distributed across member states, regions, and social classes, with all these divisions being massively exacerbated by the uncontrolled dynamics of the EMU and the chain of crises it has triggered or failed to control. Concerning the vision of Europe as the bastion of liberal democracy and rule of law, it is blemished by the post-democratic (Crouch, 2004) experience within member states, the 'democratic deficit' of the EU itself, and the corruption of and dissatisfaction with liberal democracy as a regime form prevailing not exclusively, but most drastically in several of the new (post-Communist) member states that have joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, respectively. Finally, the idea of Europe and its Common Foreign and Security Policy along with the European Neighbourhood Policy being an agency of 'soft' power promoting international peace beyond its borders is so far too insignificant in its credibility to gather much internal credit and support.

In sum, it must be concluded that the EU has consumed more loyalty and support of its citizens than it has been able to generate. As a consequence of all of these indicators and observations, it is fair to state that the 'project' of European integration (including the EMU) has lost much of its overall mass support and appeal, even in member states where this support was never great, such as the UK. That is of course not to deny that not only investors and commercial elites but also university students as well as arts, media, and professional elites are fully appreciative of the opportunities integrated Europe affords to them, as are business elites who have, however, begun to consider places outside of Europe at least as attractive and promising for doing business than EU member states. It is just to say that there is little reason to assume that the appreciation of Europe and its integration on the part of these elite segments will 'trickle down' and eventually become a mass phenomenon inspiring a sense of inclusive solidarity among fellow-Europeans comparable to that which can be mobilized within the primary reference entity of the nation state. On the other hand, many experience the EU as a mixed blessing that exposes them to competition in all kinds of markets (labor, capital, goods, services) and regulates citizens' lives while remaining cognitively and institutionally remote and inaccessible. Given the disruptions, fears, and complaints over political and

economic injustices that the crisis has given rise to, the future of European integration has come to depend on the ‘subjective factor’ of citizens’ attitudes, preferences, and opinions.

There are two schools of thought about the relationship of European citizens with their Union. One claims that, as the EU gains authority and policy competencies, an increasing number of citizens respond by ever greater awareness of EU issues, become mobilized and polarized—a process aptly described as ‘politicization’ (Zürn and De Wilde, 2012). The other argues that due to the persistent democratic deficits of the EU, (i.e. the absence of a fully developed transnational European party system, the weakness of the EP, the executive federalism practiced through the Council, the lack of accountability of the unelected Commission and the intergovernmentalism embodied in the EC; the embryonic state of a European public sphere bridging nation states’ borders) ‘citizens are disenfranchised... by international organizations’ such as the EU. That is to say, citizens have difficulties in decoding EU politics in terms of political colors that they learned to recognize and identify within their national polities. The EU polity is perceived as an anechoic chamber where the resonance of peoples’ voices is reduced to zero. They may either accept that condition fatalistically or turn to a *negative* kind of ‘politicization’ following the logic that Peter Mair (2007: 7) has explored: because ‘we cannot organize opposition *in* the EU, we are... almost forced to organize opposition *to* the EU—and become intrinsically Eurosceptic.’

As I said, the future of European integration has come to depend on attitudes, ambitions, and commitments that would have to assert themselves at the *mass level*; elite consensus is no longer sufficient. If this rough picture of the situation captures some of the essential features and pathologies, how can the latter conceivably be remedied by the use of all deliberative democratic theory has to offer? What can Europeans learn from the Europolis experiment? How can deliberative processes as catalysts of a Europe-wide political will-formation become part of the institutional architecture of the EU? These are the questions I am going to reflect upon and argue for a number of pointed propositions in the remaining pages of this essay. Let me do so in seven points.

1. The value of the Europolis experiment consists in its *demonstrative effect*, less so in its role as a blueprint for institution-building. The project has demonstrated that a carefully crafted experimental design allows for the coming together of a large group of people from all member states, crossing country, language, generational and social borders, and engaging in rational will-formation on two substantive and salient issues of European policy. The data gathered from the experiment demonstrate that deliberative settings nurture both cognitive and motivational upgrading: participants learn about issues and change their policy preferences accordingly. Whether or not changed policy preferences translate into changed party preferences (apart from some increase in support for Green parties) remains an open question worth further analysis. If they do not, this might be understood as a reflection of parties being poorly

- distinguishable and somewhat opaque in terms of the policy packages they advocate. Given the considerable costs and efforts involved, the Europolis experiment will perhaps have little chance of being repeated, at least not in the same form; nor need it be repeated, as its detailed documentation, in the contributions to this issue and elsewhere, allows future institution-builders to draw upon the knowledge and inspiration it has generated.
2. The experiment sheds a lot of light onto one major dark spot of liberal democratic theory. The latter is predominantly interested in how people with their 'given' interests, values, preferences, and attitudes *express* themselves and are *represented* by elites in political life. Accordingly, much of the current discourses on how the EU polity can be democratized focuses on ways to make citizens' voices heard more directly, more often, on more issues, and with more immediate impact upon policy. Along these lines, the use of referenda on substantive policy issues is advocated by, among others, populist parties and protest movements. In contrast, deliberative theorists are interested in a logically antecedent process. Before preferences can be *expressed*, they must have been *formed*. As preferences are neither 'given' nor fixed, they are subject to ongoing formative dynamics. Deliberative democratic theory is interested in understanding these *formative* forces that shape citizens' political volitions and in designing the context of will-formation in ways that make it and the resulting judgments and preferences adequately informed, taking into account both the relevant facts in the world 'out there' and the views and arguments of fellow-deliberators 'in here.' While liberal democratic theory relates to peoples' desire to *voice* their preferences, deliberative democratic theory concentrates on how people *arrive at* the 'right' preferences and conceptions of interest—preferences, that is, that are adequately considered and have passed the test of controversial argument and dialogue. The analysis of data that were generated in the experiment shows how many of the participants traveled a considerable distance not just in geographic space but also from their original to their final position in search for their 'right,' i.e. discursively validated preferences. (Whether it was the quality of deliberation or simply the repetition of certain positions that led to a change of preferences is an interesting issue that the contribution by Gerber et al. raises.)
 3. A core feature of experiments and designs for deliberative will-formation is the *random selection* of participants. Randomization serves three purposes. First, it makes sure, to the extent this is at all possible, that participants and results concerning (agreed-upon or persistently controversial) policy preferences are not systematically biased. The neutralization of bias is likely to engender a measure of trust among participants. Not knowing each other and having no reason to anticipate that any post-deliberation interaction will take place, participants have no reason to suspect each other's intentions, to doubt the authenticity of anyone's utterances, or to strategize by building alliances against those with alternate views. The social setting of randomized deliberative mini-publics is strategy-proof to an ideal extent. Second, as the composition of deliberating mini-publics is *statistically* representative of the underlying population (rather

than *politically* representative in terms of participants being picked as representative ‘delegates’ of pre-established positions, political camps, interest groups, political parties, ideologies, or fields of expertise), the chances are that participants and their findings will be trusted and recognized with respect by non-deliberating outsiders too. Randomness can serve to convey a sense of authenticity and the authority deriving from it.

4. Participants in deliberative mini-publics are not just expected to refrain from sloganeering and other forms of sterile political expressivism. It is the role of moderators/facilitators to see to it that minimal standards of civilized discourse are complied with at all times and by all participants. Participants are also, beyond that, supposed to make a serious, perhaps even painful, effort to find out, with the help of and in response to others, what the best solution(s) to the problem at hand is, and the best arguments to support it. I would expect that the seriousness of that effort and the willingness to sustain it over an extended period of time would greatly benefit from some kind of formal guarantee that, whatever deliberators come up with, will play a significant role in subsequent policy decisions.³ At the very least, both the process and outcome of deliberation should be documented and made publicly accessible by the media. Such a promise of ‘to-be-taken-into-consideration-by-policy-makers-and-the-wider-public’ was absent from the Europolis experiment, which may be due to all kinds of constraints and justified by the short duration of the debate. Yet, if we think about making deliberation a component part of the EU polity, a minimum of institutional recognition, expectability, and public attention seems to be a *sine qua non*.⁴ Without such formal status granted to deliberators’ efforts and contributions, the chances are that the discourse will degenerate into a playful exchange of views and opinions.
5. What are the *kinds of issues* that can and should be debated and (co-)decided in deliberative settings? Three types of answers come to mind. Option 1 is to convene deliberative forums whenever a specific policy decision is put on the agenda. An example would be the decision on whether a temporary ban on transnational asset mobility should be permitted in case of a banking crisis in one of the Euro zone member states in order to prevent the crisis from deepening due to capital flight. While there is an obvious tension between such a move and one of the four freedoms enshrined in the Treaties, a reasoned and well-considered judgment of a deliberating mini-public (or several of them consulting independently) may well conclude that an exception must be granted, given the nature and impact of a specific emergency. Option 2 is what Europolis was basically about: guidelines for a broad and salient policy area, in this case migration and climate. Option 3 concerns quasi-constitutional issues regarding ‘decisions on how to decide,’ e.g. the choice of an electoral system⁵ or the design of a federal system. While all three of these policy categories can provide plausible cases to be subjected to deliberative forums and mini-publics, they seem particularly appropriate for cases belonging to the third category, deciding on decision rules. Here, proposals emerging from deliberation (which subsequently

would have to be endorsed or rejected through a referendum taken by the entire citizenry) can claim the legitimacy of some version of *pouvoir constituant*. The ‘veil of ignorance’ may also be thickest in deliberating on such basic principles of shaping the political community and its mode of operation. Moreover, all conceivable alternative modes of making such choices are arguably tainted by the fact that they would be made by powers (elected parliaments, federal governments, constitutional courts, etc.) already *constituted*, which implies that they may not be beyond the suspicion of being biased by their institutional self-interest when making their choices.

6. The single most urgent and clearly thorniest problem of European integration (or of preventing European disintegration) can be, somewhat simplistically, stated as follows: citizens of the EU are categorically bearers of a *dual* citizenship—they are EU citizens and at the same time citizens of their respective member states (Habermas, 2012: 20–37). Technically, the relationship between these two citizenships is hierarchical: according to the ‘direct effect’ doctrine, European secondary law, as codified in the *aquis communautaire*, trumps national legislation, and many policy areas are exclusively ruled by laws made at the supranational level.⁶ At the same time, however, at the level of social and political perceptions and preferences ‘on the ground,’ the *inverse* hierarchy prevails and persists: most EU citizens code themselves as nationals first and Europeans second (and often third, as some subnational regional identification intervenes). In other words, *Europeans are involved in an unresolved identity conflict with themselves*. To illustrate, it is a common understanding in Europe, often referred to in the media (and particularly so in the German media), that ‘Greece’ has been the beneficiary of two rescue packages (May 2010, February 2012) paid for by ‘national’ taxpayers of the Euro zone. The dominant frame is that of country versus country. At the same time, it is far less often mentioned (in fact virtually unknown) that the major burdens that tax payers have to bear as a consequence of the financial market crisis consist in credits and subsidies paid for rescue operations destined to their *own* (national) banks. Also little known is that the large majority of funds transferred to ‘Greece’ ended up, in fact, in the accounts of ‘national’ (e.g. German or French) banks as creditors of the Greek state that are being threatened by the prospect of a default of the Greek sovereign—not with investors or consumer demand (down by 38.5% since 2010) or workers (unemployment being forecast at 28.4% in 2014) in the Greek economy. This illustration shows how the prevalence of the ‘national’ frame in perceiving and interpreting economic facts and events serves to scandalize trans-national transfers and to de-emphasize (or ‘de-scandalize’) ‘inter-class’ payments made from the national budget (i.e. tax payers) to national banks. Needless to say, such frame-induced misperceptions, propagated and cemented as they are by interest groups and the media, powerfully shape policies and politics both between and within member states of the EU. If deliberative methods of engendering adequate understanding and forming well-considered preferences are good for anything at all, it is exactly the

demolition of such frame-induced misperceptions and their political implications. The question remains how they can be put to use in this function in the European context.

7. The bringing together of deliberators from all member states has been an almost heroic design feature of the Europolis experiment, one that seems unlikely to ever be repeated in the same form, considering the costs involved and its relatively short duration necessitated by those costs. It can hardly serve as a model of how a deliberative process can actually be *institutionalized* at the EU level, making it an iterative event taking place, say, once a year under the legally mandated sponsorship of the Commission. Let me suggest a few ideas⁷ about how it might actually operate and cleanse the political process from frame-induced misconceptions. (a) Three topics of current relevance in EU policy-making need to be identified and publicly announced (*after* the selection of national ‘teams’) as the subject of next year’s regular European Deliberative Citizens Forum (EDCF). The topics must include at least one belonging to option (3) in paragraph (5) above. In addition, it would make sense to provide the EP with the option to call an ad hoc EDCF to deliberate on option (1) type issues. (b) The crucial choice of topics is to be made by a cartel of the, say, five editors-in-chief (its composition changing every year) of Europe’s main quality newspapers; they would thereby be given an incentive to report on the process and outcome of the deliberative debates they have been endowed with the right to initiate. (c) As to the composition of participants, they must be multi-national but cannot be, for the above reasons, pan-European. I suggest the following intermediate solution: The Forum consists of an equal number of deliberators coming from three EU member states, with the proviso that two of them should be geographic neighbors with common land borders and one (including all four island member states as candidates) should be located in a more distant place within the Union. (Without doing the math here, I estimate that there at least several hundreds of possible triplets constituted by these rules.) A random procedure determines the country composition of next year’s EDCF. Once a member state has been part of an EDCF, it is eliminated from the pool for the coming two years. (d) ‘Representatives’ of countries (15 of each country) must, in line with point (3) above, be randomly recruited according to methods that maximize statistical representativeness along socio-demographic characteristics and minimize self-selection effects—methods for which the Europolis design provides rich experience and suggestions. (e) The deliberative phase of one week follows upon an information phase of another week, with the instructors active during the latter being nominated by (thematically relevant) European academic associations and appointed by federations of European political parties in proportion to their strength in the EP. (f) Each of the three topics is the subject of deliberation of one group of 15 members each (five from each country), working under a trained moderator/facilitator. Groups are encouraged to come up with a consensual policy proposal with as much detail as possible. If disagreements persist in the group, the diverging arguments that

they are based on must be documented in the form of a second-order agreement. Regardless of whether a policy consensus emerges, a before-and-after survey of participants' policy preferences must also be submitted to document the extent and direction of preference change that has occurred in the process (cf. para. (2)). (g) The deliberations of the three groups are publicly accessible for real-time audio streaming. However, members of the team must remain (externally) anonymous (or otherwise hard to access) for the duration of deliberation in order to bar them from external interference, as is the case with most juries while they deliberate on court cases. (h) In accordance with the considerations under (4) above, the European Parliament is instructed to hold one plenary session on the issues that have been debated within six months of the submission of the three conclusions. The Commission is mandated to issue a position paper on the policy initiatives it intends to adopt from the conclusions arrived at; it also provides a detailed argument in case it decides not to take any such initiative.

The normative considerations inspiring the EDCF design are straightforward. It introduces a strong 'non-professional' or civil-society element into policy debates without turning in any way plebiscitarian or populist. It puts on stage the procedurally generated figure of the 'ideal citizen.' It establishes a channel of will-formation that is institutionally tied to other relevant sectors, such as the media, political parties, academia, the EP, and the Commission. It also confronts political actors—both at the elite and the mass level—with the detailed evidence of what happens when ordinary citizens from different EU member states think carefully about issues, the answer to which affects all EU citizens. Perhaps most importantly, participants do not only find out what their well-considered (as opposed to 'raw') policy preferences are. In addition, *everyone else* knows—and everyone else knows *that* everyone else knows—a condition that is unlikely to fail in making an impact upon border-transcending policy debates by bringing to bear the soft pressure of informed and well-considered argument presented by non-strategic actors trying to find out what is, for 'all of us,' the right thing to do.

(7) The big issue in theories about deliberative democracy is the question of the micro-macro-link: 'In the real world mini-publics can have political influence on actual policy choices only to the extent that they may persuade the bulk of relevant decision-makers – be it officials, agencies or the citizenry at large – to change their minds' (cf. Lafont, 2014: 19). Beyond the insignificant effect of a few participants in deliberation (perhaps) changing their voting decisions, how can a bridge be built between what happens in small deliberative face-to-face communication and the politics and policies of a large supranational political entity such as the EU? Even asking such a question may be seen as a display of quite unwarranted optimism. The design just outlined can at least highlight three critical points on which a viable micro-macro linkage seems to depend.

First, let me note that no author in the vast deliberate democracy literature of the last two decades has, to the best of my knowledge, advocated the idea that

deliberative procedures should *replace* established institutional rules at the national or (to the extent they exist) supranational level. In other words, these procedures are meant to complement and improve the operation of the latter. But established political institutions can also be used to empower deliberation: they can enact them through legislation, strengthen them by being receptive to deliberative outcomes, and, as suggested above in point (4), commit themselves to integrating deliberation into the process of regular policy formation. Arguably, political elites governing those institutions (parties, governments, parliaments, bureaucracies) even have good reasons of their own to do so and ‘pay them [the results of deliberative polls, CO] heed’ (Luskin et al., 2014: 133) in their institutional self-interest. As political alienation of mass constituencies is on the rise, distrust in elites has become a mass phenomenon, and the ‘political class’ has become an object of cynical suspicion. Consequently, the readiness of elites to *listen* to people as they actually think about public affairs (rather than to unilaterally exploit the frozen artifacts of opinion surveys for their own strategic ends) may appear to them as a wise move to counteract distrust and the loss of their own legitimacy.

Secondly, a partial solution to the micro–macro bridge-building problem can consist in the reliance on (preferably non-commercial) media that would have to be ready to serve as amplifiers of the deliberative processes. If deliberation was institutionalized along the lines suggested by my EDCF design above, reporting of what happens in and emerges from deliberative discourses could become a routine item on the agenda of both print and electronic media (cf. Fishkin, 2009: 194). The media might even find the documentation and analysis of informed debates and the ongoing upgrading of preferences of lay participants at least as interesting a format as political talk shows and comments by prominent politicians or credentialed experts. However that may be, reports and evaluations of EDCF sessions would generate *attention*, spread information, and could lead political elites to take positions on the issues and outcomes of deliberative debates that would become an element of ordinary public life, just as campaign statements, party conventions, and the government’s press conferences are now.

Finally, much depends on the ‘moral prestige’ of the very ground rules of deliberative mini-publics, the credibility of their claim to authenticity, and the attention and trust they can engender in the wider public. There are two intrinsic appeals by which such moral prestige can be built, and trust encouraged. One is basically *egalitarian*: if the people deliberating can be considered, due to their random selection, as people roughly ‘like you and me,’ then they can be credited with a measure of trust that ‘ordinary people’ do not easily extend to elite members or ‘experts.’ The other derives from the ambition, built into any deliberative design, to persuade through complying with standards of ‘*rational*’ (that is: comprehensible, consistent, informed, unbiased, respectful) argumentation. People who gather for the sole purpose of engaging in finding out what they *should* want done in public policy are more easily trusted—at least for the negative reason that they clearly do *not* seek to enrich themselves, gain power over us, or manipulate ‘us’ as we follow their exchange of arguments.

Notes

1. EuroStat data for the fourth quarter of 2013, see http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-GL-13-004/EN/KS-GL-13-004-EN.PDF (accessed 16 February 2014).
2. It has rightly been remarked that the EU has two constituencies: internally, increasingly disenchanted populations of the EU-28 who 'have' Europe and, externally, those who do not (yet) have it but are enthusiastic about the prospect of one day becoming part of it (such as the hundreds of thousands persistent demonstrators on Kiev's 'Euromaidan' and elsewhere in Ukraine in early 2014).
3. An example of this guarantee was the promise given to the participants of British Columbia Citizens' Assembly that the conclusion they had reached and the proposals they had agreed on would be submitted to a referendum.
4. The model I have in mind is the institutionalized Deliberation Day as proposed by Ackerman and Fishkin (2004).
5. The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly is the most famous example in the category. Cf. Warren and Pearse (2008).
6. This hierarchy is also symbolically expressed by the fact that the front page of every EU passport lists 'European Union' first and the name of the member state second.
7. Responding to the question Isernia and Fishkin urge us to answer in the Introduction to this issue: 'how might [reason-based collective will-formation] be institutionalized or sited so as to have some influence on decisions in the EU?'

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