

**Imaginative Randomocracy:
A General Model of Citizen Decision Making
Applied to Northern Ireland (and the UK)**

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1. Introduction

We elaborate a novel model of democracy: decision makers are a random sample of citizens and they make a decision after imaginatively deliberating.

We normatively defend the legitimacy of our model on the grounds that decision making is high quality and representative. First, imaginative deliberation generates *reflective* (i.e. considered) preferences via enhanced perspective taking and empathy. Second, the random basis of the selection of citizen deliberators, *and* the fact that the deliberation is internal (imaginative) rather than external (talk-based), facilitate inferring that a decision reached is the same decision that would have been reached by *all* citizens if *all* citizens had engaged in the same decision making process.

We specify two possible mechanisms for facilitating internal imaginative deliberation: deliberation prompted by the described distinct competing perspectives on the issue at hand ('described perspectives') *versus* deliberation prompted by the mental simulation of a discussion with someone who holds contrary views ('simulated conversation'). We experimentally test the relative effectiveness of the two mechanisms: Is there an observed effect of (each type of) imaginative deliberation on policy preferences and can this effect be accounted for by enhanced perspective taking and empathy? We

conduct our experiment in a particularly challenging context and on a particularly sensitive political issue: the issue of flag display in the deeply divided context of Northern Ireland.

In terms of decision making rules and procedures, we argue that because of the margin of error in any random sample, a supermajority favouring a proposal to change the status quo among the random citizens is necessary in order to ensure that a simple majority in the wider population from which the sample is drawn would have favoured the proposal if they had imaginatively deliberated. In order to minimise the resulting status quo bias (i.e. the need for a supermajority rather than a simple majority to instigate change) we argue for a large number of random deliberators (say, 2000) which reduces the margin of error and consequent size of the supermajority.

Our overall aim can be simply stated: we wish to make deliberative democracy work. The current dominant approach is the *deliberative polling* approach which is based on face-to-face discussion and is associated with the work of Fishkin and implemented in a number of high profile real world exercises variously referred to as 'citizens assemblies', 'citizens' juries', 'citizens' summits', or 'constitutional conventions'. We argue that this talk-based approach has significant limitations with respect to the legitimacy of decisions reached, limitations that may be overcome by recourse to our suggested imagination-based deliberation approach.

Our paper is organised as follows. We elaborate and defend our general model, experimentally test two modes of imaginative deliberation and make recommendations regarding decision rules. In our Discussion section, we elaborate the implications of our analysis for a possible citizens' assembly in Northern Ireland (and also the implications for a UK constitutional convention). We then conclude.

2. Talking is the problem: Imagination is the solution

The common approach in conventional deliberative democracy exercises is as follows. Randomly selected citizens are given balanced briefing on a particular issue (or set of issues), listen to experts on the issue, engage in face-to-face talk-based deliberation with the other citizens and, finally, indicate a preference on the issue.

This process is seen as resulting in a decision that should be regarded as legitimate for two reasons. First, the preferences at the end are not the type of 'off the cuff' preferences that may often be measured in an opinion poll. Rather they are considered preferences based on good balanced information and also based on a fair minded teasing out of the relative merits of the different proposals via talking with other citizens and discussing the issue. The preferences at the end are of a higher quality (and therefore more democratically defensible) due to the deliberation process which facilitates a careful weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of the different possible proposals.

Second, any decision which is reached at the end is the same decision that would have been reached by all citizens if all citizens had been able to engage in the deliberation and decision making process. Hence, because the randomly chosen citizens are, by virtue of being randomly chosen, a highly accurate microcosm of the entire population who would be bound by the decision, the randomly chosen citizens can act as a reasonable substitute for the entire population.

A significant problem is that the second point is undermined by the mode of deliberation: talking gets in the way of democracy. The talk-based approach means that the randomly selected citizens are not independent of each other: they are actively influencing each other in the face-to-face talk-based deliberation. This is problematic because in order to be able to make clear inferences from any random sample to the larger population from

which the sample is drawn, the sampled persons should remain independent of each other. If they do not, it is problematic to continue to assume that they are a representative microcosm of the entire population. This removes a core plank of the legitimacy argument underlying talk-based forms of deliberative democracy.

Luckily there is an easy solution: the imagination. Instead of talking we can simply imagine. Because imagination occurs independently inside the heads of citizens ('deliberation within') the assumption that the randomly selected citizens are independent of each other is not violated. As well as having these statistically desirable properties, the imagination is also arguably more theoretically core to deliberation than talk is. After all, deliberation is ultimately about thinking; talking may (often) facilitate thinking but it is not the only way to facilitate thinking.

We suggest two non-talk based ways of facilitating deliberation. First, randomly selected citizens may be provided with a written or orally presented description of the perspectives of those real world citizens who advocate specific proposals. So, if there are three real world policy options, a real world investigation of the views of those advocating each option may be conducted and summarised. This would provide the random citizen deliberators with a description of the distinct perspectives that exist on the issue.

Second, the random citizen deliberators could be facilitated in having an imagined (mentally simulated) discussion with a citizen who holds an opposing viewpoint. This imagined discussion could be constructed to encourage a 'back and forth' argument over the relative merits of each particular proposal on the table. How would I defend my favoured position in a discussion with someone holding the opposed view? How do I think they would respond? What would I say back to them? And, similarly, for a discussion of my

imagined companion's view. What do I think he/she would say in defence of their view, how would I respond, what would they say then? And so on.

Also, these two approaches could be combined such that random citizen deliberators are provided with a description of real world perspectives and then engage in mentally simulated discussion with an imagined other with contrary views.

These suggested approaches would seek to maximise the likelihood of random deliberators engaging in perspective taking and being empathetic to those with whom they disagree. Perspective taking and empathy are we suggest core to high quality deliberation. Our preferences are rendered more *reflective* once we have taken seriously into account the viewpoints of others with whom we may disagree. Attempting to see the world from their perspective, putting oneself in their shoes, and getting a feeling of how they may be affected by one's own favoured policy option is a necessary part of the process of defining one's own ultimate considered views and preferences. As many deliberative democrats would argue, democracy is not just about 'the bottom line' of preference aggregation (voting); it is about the quality of preference formation (deliberation). In imaginative randomocracy it is about both: quality deliberation followed by voting (and resulting in law). Hence, after imaginatively deliberating, the random citizens would be asked to indicate their preferences on the issue at hand, and reach a decision on the matter. If citizens decided to support option A on the issue, then option A may be directly implemented in law.

If option A were implemented it is likely that at least some people would be unhappy. What can be said to such people in order to persuade them that they should accept option A (even though they may disagree with it)? It can be said that option A is legitimate in that it is the option that all citizens would have decided upon if all citizens had deliberated on the issue. Crucially, this link between what the random citizens decided and

the population as a whole can be made under conditions of imagined deliberation but not under conditions of talk-based deliberation. Decisions made by imagined deliberation are invariant across sample but decisions made by talk-based deliberation are not. Hence, the former has a greater claim to political legitimacy than the latter.

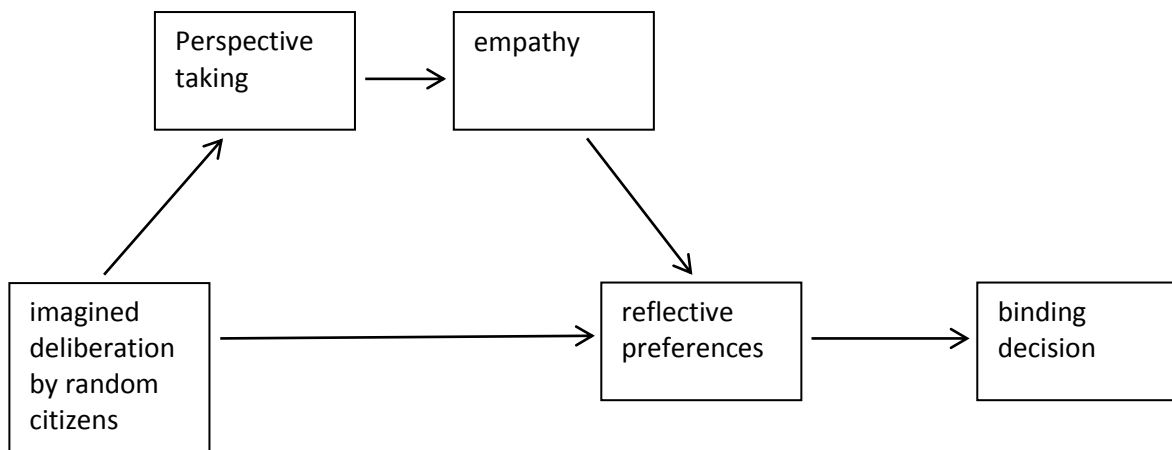


Figure 1: Imaginative Randomcracy: A model of citizen decision making

Talk-based deliberative democrats may respond to this by pointing out that talk-based deliberation has not typically led to the direct implementation of the decisions of the random citizens. Rather, what the random citizens conclude is put to a further decision making mechanism such as a referendum or the elected parliament or a combination of both. This highlights the distinction between being advisory and being binding. If random citizens' decisions are only advisory then there is less need for them to pass strong tests of political legitimacy; legitimacy ultimately rests somewhere else (in the people at a referendum or in the elected parliament). However, our purpose in this paper is to think through how random citizens may make *binding* rather than advisory decisions. A tougher legitimacy test must be passed in this case because what random citizens decide becomes

law. Our general model may be graphically illustrated in Figure 1. In Figures 2a and 2b we specify more precisely in our model a particular mode of imaginative deliberation.

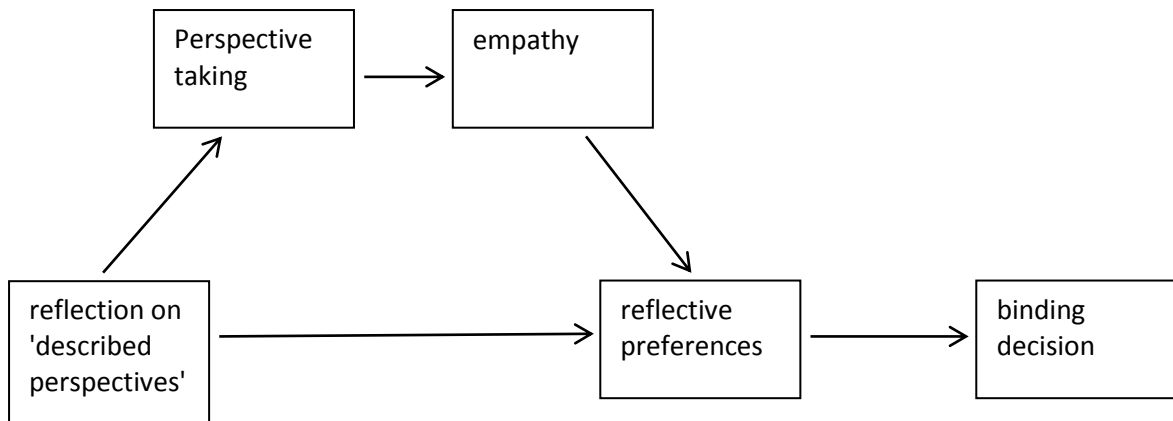


Figure 2a: Reflection of 'described perspectives' generates reflective preferences

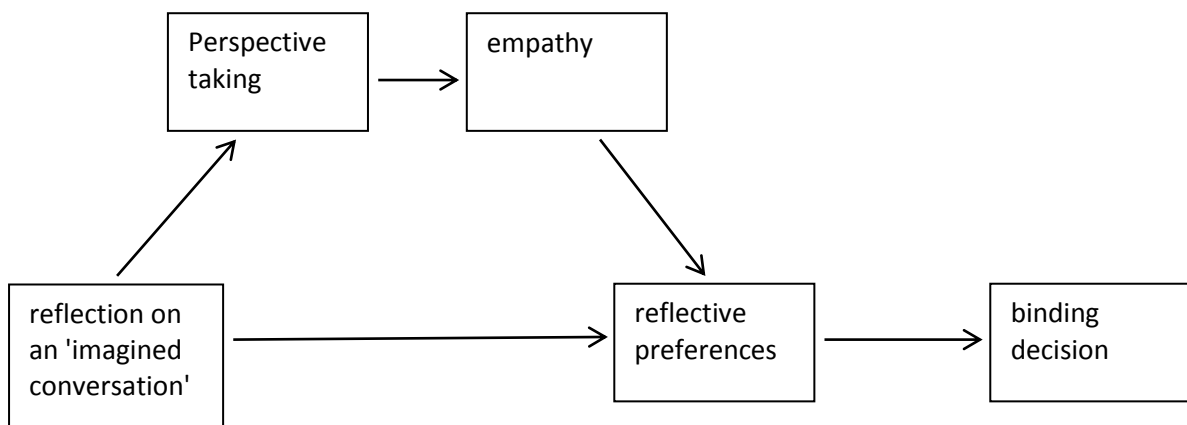


Figure 2b: Reflection on an 'imagined conversation' generates reflective preferences

Figure 2: Two ways of facilitating internal imaginative deliberation

Described perspectives versus simulated conversation? An experiment

We experimentally test the relative effectiveness of models 2a and 2b: Which mode of imaginative deliberation (described perspectives or mentally simulated conversation) is more likely to generate reflective preferences (mediated by enhanced perspective taking and empathy)? We do so in the challenging context of a highly sensitive issue in a divided place.

Context: Flag flying in consociational Northern Ireland

The post-conflict consociational power-sharing polity of Northern Ireland arguably provides a valuable and challenging case. It is valuable in the sense that discussion of political reform is almost a constant in Northern Ireland and criticisms of the imperfect democratic nature of the current political institutions is commonplace. Critics of consociation argue that it is undemocratic because there is no clear distinction between government and opposition, there is an emphasis on elite leadership and bargaining rather than citizen led decision making, and the numerous veto points in the system lead to gridlock on key issues and an a semi-constant sense of crisis. Proponents of consociational power sharing argue that such criticisms are overplayed and power sharing contributed significantly to order and stability and the maintenance of peace in Northern Ireland by providing competing ethno-national groups with veto powers and ensuring a highly proportional and inclusive representation in parliament and in the executive.

However, whether one is a critic or proponent of power sharing, many would agree that there is potential for political reform to help oil the wheels of decision making in Northern Ireland in order to lessen the probability of gridlock (and the consequent vulnerability of the system). Northern Ireland politics has in recent years been beset by

issues which have generated a destabilising stalemate: issues such as welfare reform, flag display, parading and remembering the past. We now focus on arguably the most difficult issue: flag display.

Participants

Later this year an experiment will be conducted with a large sample of randomly selected citizens, examining how they may reach a decision, via imaginative deliberation, on the flag flying issue. As a pilot test, during the week of 9th to 13th March a small scale experiment was conducted on a sample of students in QUB. The findings are suggestive and tentative but also informative.

Experimental conditions

In the experiment there were four conditions. In one condition respondents were provided with written description of different perspectives on how to resolve the flag flying dispute (full details in Appendix A). In a second condition respondents were given the task of engaging in mentally simulated discussion with a member of the outgroup about all of the policy options on flag display (full details in Appendix B). A third condition asked respondents to do both: they were provided with written perspectives and then conducted the mentally simulated conversation. A fourth (control) condition did not ask respondents to read the perspectives or engage in the mental simulation.

Outcome and mediator measures

All respondents (i.e. respondents across all four conditions) were asked the extent to which they supported or did not support each of the flag flying options. Respondents were also

asked the extent to which they would find each option acceptable (ranging from impossible to accept to easy to accept) (full details in Appendix C). All respondents were also asked a range of questions to operationalise the proposed mediator variables: perspective taking and empathy (as well as, intergroup anxiety and general intergroup attitudes) (full details in Appendix D).

Results

Figures 3 to 6 report the relationship between membership of an experimental treatment group and four outcome variables. Figure 3 shows that those who engage in mental simulation of a conversation with an outgroup member (solely or in combination with written perspectives) have more hardline views on the flay display policy options: they are more likely than the control group to favour the ingroup hardline option than the outgroup hardline option. 'Perspectives' respondents are not different from the control group. Figure 4 shows that 'perspectives' respondents are more willing than all other groups to accept the outgroup hardline option (relative to ingroup hardline option).

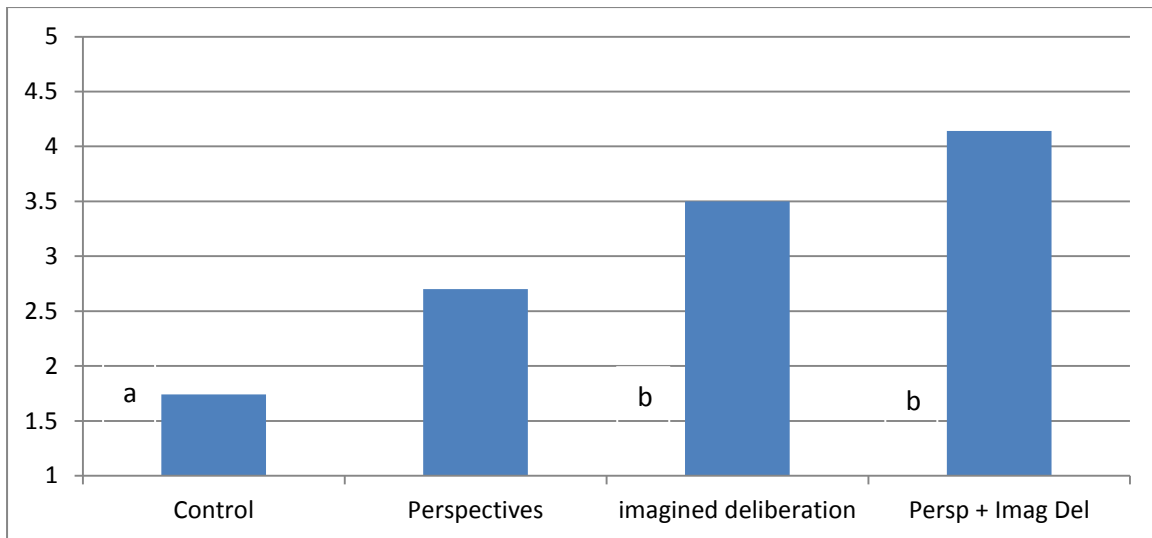


Figure 3
Strength of support for ingroup hardline flag flying position rather than outgroup hardline flag flying position, by experimental group

n=52; overall mean=2.79
different letters denote statistically significantly different at .1 level

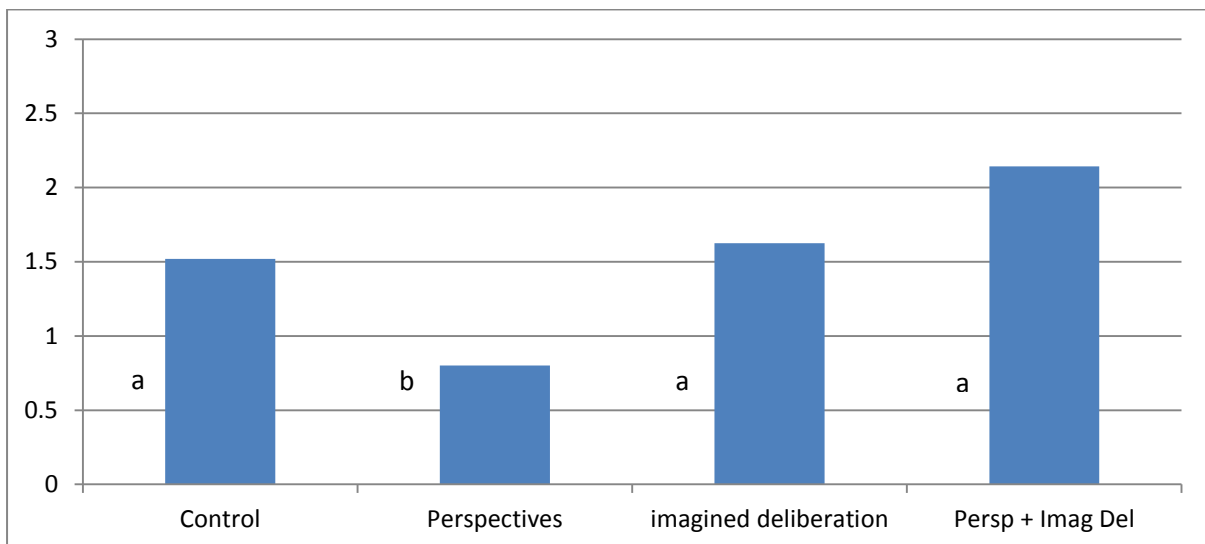


Figure 4
Willingness to accept ingroup hardline flag flying position rather than outgroup hardline flag flying position, by experimental group

n=51; overall mean=1.5
different letters denote statistically significantly different at .1 level

Figures 5 and 6 focus on the compromise designated days option: perspectives respondents are not less compromising than the control group but mental conversation respondents are. In terms of acceptability of designated days the perspectives respondents are more conciliatory than either of the other two groups (and similar to the control group).

Notwithstanding the serious caveats entered above regarding the tentative nature of this (small N, student-based) pilot study, there is suggestive evidence of the different forms of imaginative deliberation having different effects. In short, inviting people to reflect on different perspectives on the flag issue seems to have the effect of resulting in a greater acceptance of the viewpoints of others. In contrast, inviting people to have a discussion with an imaginary friend from the opposite community seems to have the effect of resulting in less acceptance of the views of others.¹

¹ Note that the reliability of the mediation scales (perspective taking, intergroup anxiety, and empathy) were good (alpha scores over .7 except for empathy, over .6). The moderator variables were typically related to the outcome variables in the predicted manner. However, the experimental conditions were not statistically significantly varying with respect to the mediation variables. Hence, the full mediation model was not empirically demonstrated here. A manipulation check re 'description of perspectives' led to the exclusion of a small number of respondents. All respondents completed the task of writing down brief sentences in the imagined conversation. Only respondents who indicated that they were from either a Catholic or Protestant community background in Northern Ireland were included in the analysis at this stage. Note also that there is variation in the experimental conditions with respect to strength of support for ingroup hardline party over cross community (Alliance) party: specifically, respondents in the 'perspectives' conditions indicated greater support for the Alliance than any other condition (consistent with above discussion in the main text).

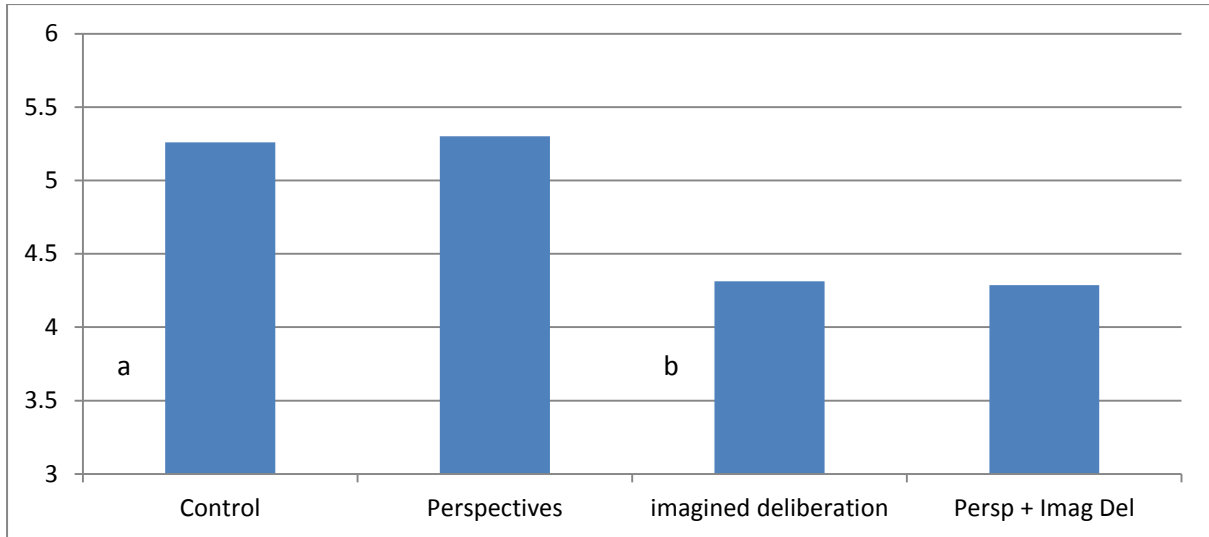


Figure 5
Support for compromise flag flying position (designated days), by experimental group

n=52; overall mean=4.85
different letters denote statistically significantly (.106)

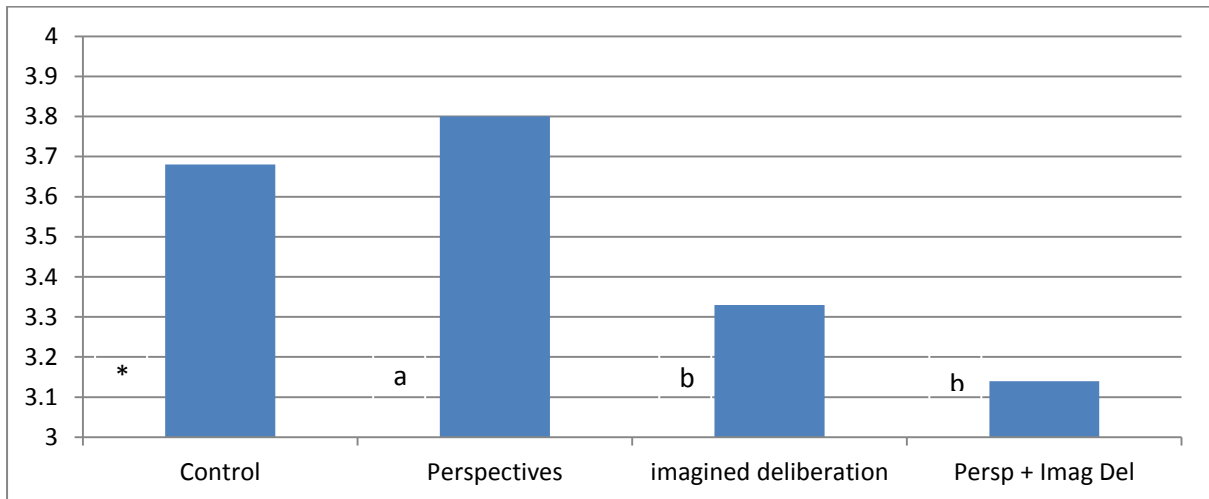


Figure 6
Willingness to accept compromise option (designated days), by experimental group

n=51; overall mean=3.53
different letters denote statistically significantly different at .1 level, * diff from P+ID

Discussion of experimental results

Despite the small N, effects were observed. The effects are somewhat surprising as the different ways of facilitating imagined deliberation seem to pull in opposite directions. People are more likely to be conciliatory after reflecting upon a set of described perspectives. However, if people are asked to imaginatively engage in a discussion with a member of the outgroup with hardline outgroup views this does not lead to any movement in a conciliatory direction. This is intriguing. It may be that the discussion with an imagined other is negative rather than positive because the respondent builds a picture of Andrew/ Declan based on stereotype or prejudice. It may also perhaps be that the imagined other (Andrew/ Declan) is not constructed in a way that he can change his viewpoint as a result of being influenced and persuaded by the participant's argument. As an imaginary friend, Andrew/ Declan might be seen as quite unyielding and inflexible, with the result of hardening the participant's views rather than rendering them more conciliatory.

An additional speculation is that these results might in fact be quite problematic for conventional talk-based deliberative democrats. In our imagined conversation context, we construct an almost ideal deliberative encounter. It is simply the force of ideas at play and we essentially control for the myriad of (non argument-related) human interaction effects that occur in talk-based deliberation. If ideas in the abstract encounter (i.e. in our experimental mentally simulated conversation condition) do not have a positive effect it may be that it is not ideas in the non-abstract (in talk-based deliberation) that are having a positive effect. Rather, talk-based effects may merely be a consequence of direct human contact (and nothing to do with policy arguments).

At this stage, there are numerous questions raised. However, although very indicative and very provisional, the findings do tentatively suggest that described

perspectives may offer greater potential for imaginative deliberation than mentally simulated conversation. We await our large N study to be able to make a serious empirically defensible claim on this matter.

As well as identifying which particular approach is most effective at facilitating imagined deliberation, there are a host of institutional design related issues pertaining to putting imaginative randomocracy into effect. We address some issues now which are particularly important with respect to maximising the legitimacy of any decisions reached: number of randomer deliberators, decision rules, and compulsoriness or otherwise of participation.

Institutional randomocracy design to maximise legitimacy: Large, supermajority and compulsory

A large number of participants is necessary in order to ensure accurate estimates. As is widely known if an opinion poll of 1000 reports that 40 percent of (randomly selected) respondents support party A, this really means that somewhere between 37 and 43 percent of the wider population from which the sample was drawn support that party (given the + or – 3% margin of error). If an opinion poll was carried out of only 100 respondents and it was found that 40 percent supported party A, this would really mean that somewhere between 30 and 50 percent did so (given that the margin of error is much wider on a poll with 100 people compared to a poll with 1000 people). In the random parliament in order to be sure that a majority of the wider population from which the sample was drawn would support a proposal (under the same deliberative conditions) a vote of 54 percent in favour would be needed rather than simply a vote of 50 percent plus one as in normal majority decision making in a parliament. Having a supermajority rather than a simple majority

makes it more difficult for a proposal to pass. Hence, to avoid a conservative (pro status quo bias) the number of random decision makers should be large in order to keep the margin of error (and consequent size of the supermajority) small. A chamber of 1000 may do this.

Compulsory attendance is attractive in that if participation were voluntary a skewed sample made up of those interested in politics, highly educated and professional may occur. A high quality sample demands cooperation. An alternative to compulsory attendance is to incentivise attendance such that full cooperation is approached. If the sample quality is compromised the ability to make the inference to the wider population (and what they would decide under the same conditions) is lessened, with consequent legitimacy problems.

Discussion of implications

We briefly discuss the implications of our discussion for a potential citizens assembly in Northern Ireland and also a constitutional convention in the UK.

A citizens' assembly in Northern Ireland?

We advocate an assembly where assembly members do not talk to each other. Assembly members act independently of each other and have no need to ever meet. Each Assembly member individually engages in imaginative deliberation. Taking the issue of flag display, we advocate a version of what occurred in our 'described perspectives' experimental condition. Civil service officials, in tandem with a market research company, would randomly select a sample of respondents (as they would do in the case of any high quality survey). An agreed short film could be shown to each respondent in their own home (or a local official office close to their home). The film would consist of an agreed presenter presenting a set of distinct perspectives on the issue at hand. Each individual respondent would then make a

decision, choosing one or other flag display policy options. This process is logistically straightforward and financially cheap. It would yield a decision that would have legitimate weight, we argue.

A UK constitutional convention?

Proponents of a UK constitutional convention, we suggest, would have to be very clear as to whether they wished the convention to make binding decisions or not? If advisory rather than binding, it might seem – as described above – that the need to demonstrate the legitimacy of the advisory decision is less pressing (than the need to demonstrate the legitimacy of a binding decision). That may be so, but it is still of very significant import. If a constitutional convention comprising random citizens 'advised' that the House of Lords be abolished this advice has, presumably, some desired weight. In a real world referendum on the issue of the House of Lords a prospective voter may conclude: a set of sensible and informed random citizens have encouraged me to vote Yes and so I think I'll vote Yes. If the claim to legitimacy of the 'advice' of the randomly selected advisory convention is that all citizens would have come up with the same advice under the same conditions, then the citizens' convention is holed below the same legitimacy waterline as any other talk-based deliberation exercise. The prospective real world voter is being misled if they think any sample would have advised a Yes. The problem of talk bites at all levels: advisory or otherwise.

Hence, a putative UK constitutional convention would be on safer grounds, with respect to legitimacy, if it prohibited its members from meeting, had 1000 members, provided them with a film of different perspectives and asked them to vote on what 'advise' to give, and ensured that this vote demanded a supermajority to take into account the

margin of error. This might sound more complicated than a conventional deliberative exercise. It is likely, however, to be a lot simpler and a lot easier to interpret.

One of the great advantages of this suggestion is that it facilitates much greater transparency than talk-based deliberation. After the random deliberators have voted, the film they viewed (articulating the different perspectives) can be publicly easily available for anyone to view. This movie is the open black box of deliberation: a lot easier to grasp compared to wondering what on earth happened in any talk-based deliberation.

Conclusion

We argue that imaginative randomocracy as a model of citizen decision making is, in terms of legitimacy, an advance upon conventional models of deliberative democracy (a la Fishkin and contemporary exercises). Experimentally, we find that there is more potential for 'described perspectives' than 'imagined conversation' to facilitate imagined deliberation. We make recommendations with respect to number of random decision makers, decision rules and obligation to participate. We outline implications of our discussion for citizen-based decision making in Northern Ireland on sensitive issues and also for discussions of a constitutional convention in the UK.

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Appendix A

A description of the different perspectives on flag flying

There is a long history of disagreement in Northern Ireland on the flying of flags.

The issue dramatically came to prominence in December 2012. Belfast City Council voted to stop flying the Union Flag over City Hall every day and instead only fly it on 18 days of the year – what are called 'designated days'. The decision led to months of protests and demonstrations by people from a Protestant/unionist background. At its peak there were thousands of people involved in the protests. The police recorded almost 3,000 incidents and the cost of policing the protest was £22 million. Many people, often from a lower-income background, received criminal records or prison sentences. Cross-community relations have deteriorated. The Northern Ireland economy, and tourism, have suffered.

In an attempt to address the flag issue, and other related matters, Dr Richard Haass and Professor Meghan O'Sullivan chaired talks between the political parties. However, no comprehensive agreement was reached by the end of 2013, and the flags issue proved to be the most difficult to resolve.

Further attempts were made to reach agreement in the multi-party talks leading up to the Stormont House Agreement in December 2014. While progress was made on welfare reform, the flag issue remained unresolved. It was decided to establish, in June 2015, a new Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition to try to address the issue over an 18 month period.

Before that Commission produces its report, the flags issue is likely to become controversial again. Each of the 11 new Super Councils, established on 1st April 2015, will need to decide its policy on flag display.

What exactly are the most realistic options for flag flying? They can be boiled down to three:

1. The Union Flag should be flown from all public buildings all the time.
2. The Union Flag should not be flown at all from any public building.
3. The Union Flag should be flown on designated days only from all public buildings, that is 18 days a year.

What do people feel about the different options? In a recent in-depth report about the flag dispute and people's attitudes, the following reactions to each of the three options were identified:

1. The Union Flag should be flown from all public buildings all the time.

Many people from a Protestant and unionist background are in favour of flying the Union flag all the time. The flag is a symbol of the United Kingdom. It simply represents the reality that Northern Ireland is part of the UK and it is therefore reasonable and acceptable to fly the flag.

As well as being a constitutional symbol, the Union Flag also represents a cultural symbol. It represents a core part of the identity of Unionists. To stop the flag flying all the time would undermine that sense of identity and make them feel they have suffered a loss.

This is particularly so for many lower-income Protestants who feel that no-one listens to their concerns and they are often unfairly ridiculed for their emotional attachment to their identity and the Union Flag. They feel that Catholics and Nationalists have benefitted from the Peace Process and the only people losing out are Unionists.

2. The Union Flag should not be flown at all from any public building

This is the belief of many nationalists and Catholics. They believe that the 1998 Good Friday/ Belfast Agreement guaranteed parity of esteem and equality between unionism and nationalism. One way to put that equality into effect is to remove all flags – the Union Flag should not be given priority.

The Union Flag is seen as being alienating for Catholics and a symbol of the cultural dominance of unionism that should be ended.

Also, the idea that unionism is losing out is not accepted: Unionism has gained a lot in the Peace Process, in that Northern Ireland's status as part of the UK is accepted and can only be changed with a majority vote in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.

The 1998 Agreement gave respect to both traditions. In the interests of fairness and equality the Union Flag should not be flown at all from public buildings.

3. The Union Flag should be flown on designated days only from all public buildings (18 days a year)

This is seen by many people as a compromise option.

On the one hand it recognises that Northern Ireland is part of the UK and so some expression must be given to that constitutional reality. Flying the Union Flag on particular days of the year, many of these associated with the birthdays of members of the Royal family, is in fact the practice of many local authorities in other parts of the UK.

To fly the Union Flag every day is not acceptable as it gives unfair priority to one community. In order to have equality between communities and parity of esteem it is necessary to limit the flying of the Union Flag because the flag is culturally associated with the identity of only one community.

In the interests of being balanced to both sides, the best option is the following compromise: flying the Union Flag on certain designated days.

Appendix B

Instructions relating to imagined deliberation with an outgroup member

In relation to the issue of flag display in Northern Ireland, there are three main options on the issue of flag display are as follows

1. The Union Flag should be flown from all public buildings all the time.
2. The Union Flag should not be flown at all at any public building.
3. The Union flag should be flown on designated days only from all public buildings, that is 18 days a year.

Please imagine that you are having a very positive conversation with someone about the issue of flags. Imagine that the person you are talking with is called [*Andrew/ Declan*]. He is 35 years old and works in a bank in Belfast city centre. In his spare time he helps out with training a youth football team. He is from the [*Protestant/unionist community / Catholic/nationalist community*] and **he thinks that the Union Flag should be flown all the time / not be flown at all from public buildings**. Please imagine that the conversation that you have with [*Andrew / Declan*] is a very positive and constructive one in which you are sharing your views and thoughts sincerely with each other in an open-minded way that is respectful and friendly.

Please imagine that you are discussing Option 1 with Andrew:

1. **The Union Flag should be flown from all public buildings all the time**

Andrew agrees with this option. He believes that the Union Flag should be flown all the time. What kind of things do you think Andrew might say in support of his view that the Union Flag should be flown all the time. **[please write down one or two short sentences briefly describing what you think he might say]**

How would you respond to Andrew?

[please write down one or two short sentences briefly describing how you might respond to what he said]

What might Andrew reply to you?

[please write down one or two short sentences briefly describing what he might say]

Now imagine that you are discussing Option 2 with Andrew:

2. **The Union Flag should not be flown at all from any public building**

What do you think Andrew might say about this option?

[please write down one or two short sentences briefly describing what you think he might say]

How would you respond to Andrew?

[please write down one or two short sentences briefly describing how you might respond to what he said]

What might Andrew reply to you?

[please write down one or two short sentences briefly describing what he might say]

Now imagine that you are discussing Option 3 with Andrew:

- 3. The Union Flag should be flown on designated days only from all public buildings (about 18 days a year)**

What do you think Andrew might think about this option? *(Remember: Andrew is in favour of the Union Flag flying all the time)*

[please write down one or two short sentences briefly describing what you think he might say]

How would you respond to Andrew?

[please write down one or two short sentences briefly describing how you might respond to what he said]

What might Andrew reply to you?

[please write down one or two short sentences briefly describing what he might say]

How do you think, in a friendly and amicable way, you might conclude the discussion?

Appendix C

Outcome variables on flag display

Support for different flag flying options

In these questions you are asked your view on each of the possible options on flag flying: should the Union Flag fly all the time from public buildings, or should it not be flown at all, or should it be flown on designated days only (18 days a year)?

Taking each option in turn please indicate how much you agree or disagree with that option...

A. On a scale of 1 to 7, how much do you agree or disagree with the following option on flag flying:

The Union Flag should be flown from all public buildings all the time

B. On a scale of 1 to 7, how much do you agree or disagree with the following option on flag flying:

The Union Flag should not be flown at all from any public buildings

C. On a scale of 1 to 7, how much do you agree or disagree with the following option on flag flying:

The Union Flag should be flown on designated days only from all public buildings (18 days a year)

Response options are 1=very strongly disagree, 7=very strongly agree

Acceptability of different flag flying options

This question asks how you would respond to each of the different possible ways to address the flag flying issue...

A. If it was decided that the Union Flag should be flown from all public buildings all the time, how easy or difficult would it be for you to accept this decision.

B. If it was decided that the Union Flag should not be flown at all from any public building, how easy or difficult would it be for you to accept this decision.

C. If it was decided that the Union Flag should be flown on designated days only from all public buildings (18 days a year), how easy or difficult would it be for you to accept this decision.

Response options for each question are:

I would find this almost impossible to accept

I would find this hard to accept

I would not agree with it, but I could accept it and live with it

I would quite easily accept it

Appendix D

Mediator variables

Intergroup anxiety

We would like to ask you now about how you would feel mixing socially with complete strangers who were members of the *[Protestant/unionist community / Catholic/nationalist community]*. Imagine you were the only person from your community and you found yourself with a group of people from the *[Protestant/unionist community / Catholic/nationalist community]*. How would you feel compared to an occasion where you found yourself with people of only your own community?

To what extent would you feel...?

relaxed / defensive / happy / awkward / self-conscious / confident

Response options are: not at all, a little, some, quite, extremely (defensive, awkward and self-conscious are reverse coded)

Intergroup perspective taking

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I believe I have a good understanding of how *[Protestants/unionists / Catholics/nationalists]* view the world
I think I am able to see the world through the eyes of *[Protestants/unionists / Catholics/nationalists]*
I believe I understand what it is like to be a *[Protestants/unionist / Catholics/nationalist]* in this society
I cannot seem to grasp the *[Protestants/unionist / Catholics/nationalist]* perspective on most issues (R)
I can easily put myself in the place of *[Protestants/unionists / Catholics/nationalists]* when I want to understand their viewpoint
I don't understand the way *[Protestants/unionists / Catholics/nationalists]* view the world.(R)

Response options are: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree

Intergroup empathy

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I feel very sorry for people from the *[Protestant/unionist community / Catholic/nationalist community]* when they are having problems

When I see someone from the *[Protestant/unionist community / Catholic/nationalist community]* being treated unfairly, I feel sympathetic towards them

Response options are: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree

General intergroup relations

How positively do you view different groups in society...?

Protestant/unionist community

Catholic/ nationalist community

Response options are 1= not at all positively, 5= very positively