iSEED

Inclusive
Science and
European
Democracies

Preliminary
POLICY
BRIEF
Promoting Deliberative
Participation in EU Democracies

ISEED Preliminary Policy Brief

Promoting deliberative participation in EU democracies: Insights from ISEED

ISEED Inclusive Science and European Democracies is funded by EU H2020 Programme, GA 960366. This brief collects preliminary insights on how to promote science-based deliberation and participation in European democracies, organised under each of the Work Packages (WPs) of this research and innovation project.

WP2
From participation to deliberation:
Towards a new model of "public sphere" for knowledge societies

How can we build a public sphere that proves to be inclusive, actively participatory, and competent in addressing problems of common interest?

WP2 research examines this question in both conceptual and empirical terms. It analyses and evaluates key aspects of people's engagement - and willingness to engage - in deliberative processes and public argument by exploring the nature of citizens' participation in science in European? knowledge societies. In other words, this research has been working towards a model of 'the' or of multiple public spheres that can account for - and can help maximize - the active participation of citizens in complex processes of decision-making where scientific and societal aspects are essentially interwoven.

We believe that a specific pragmatist view of "public sphere" proves suitable to answer our main question. According to this view the public sphere can be profitably conceived of as a community of inquirers, made up of both citizens and scientific experts, cooperating in view of solving specific public problems. The inquirers who take part in the process of problem-solving are, each in their own ways and capacities, engaged in 'epistemic' or knowledge-based problem solving, which is deemed successful if it is properly addressing all aspects of the problem situation at hand. Because of this, a community of inquirers so conceived is a flat structure to which citizens can partake from an equal position. The challenge that arises from conceiving the public sphere as a community of inquirers of this sort is to single out those conditions that enable citizens to act as proper epistemic contributors within a public inquiry: Under what circumstances can citizens contribute to public enquiry on equal grounds as experts? To specify these conditions, we will have launched an empirical investigation into the incentives and variables affecting citizens' participation in public debate. We aim to explore empirically how these incentives and variables affect how citizens choose what types of experts prove most suitable to collaborate with in view of building an effective extended expertise in public problem-solving and decision-making.

We are working with three key concepts in building this framework:

1. the idea of 'understanding science' on the part of citizens: we have explored what it means for non-professional scientists – and by comparison with professional scientists – 'to understand' specific knowledge products. We have also addressed the following two questions: a) to what extent is understanding a mutual outcome of scientist/citizen collaboration in scientific research? b) does this type of understanding rely on political types of assessment besides epistemological or knowledge-based ones?

2. the notion of 'lay expertise': Research questions here are: What are the epistemological features of lay knowledge? What are the conditions that allow integration of this type of knowledge into the field of science? What are the practical outputs of this integration?

3. the meaning of 'objectivity': What becomes of 'objectivity' when it is widened to include diverse forms of knowledge, coming from different sources and different epistemic experiences? How does inclusiveness affect the quality of scientific outcomes and the reliability of their use, both

in scientific and social terms?

This framework aims to contribute to the conceptual formulation of an interactive, cooperative, "dialogical" relationship between scientists and citizens, leading to reliable forms of co-production of knowledge. It will also inform whether enforcing a strategy of 'active participation' provides an answer to the growing mistrust towards institutional science and towards democratic institutions by and large.

WP3
Our proposal for citizen engagement in politics:
Bring in parliamentarism!

So far, our work in WP3 has surveyed modes of engagement of citizens within scientific knowledge-making but also theoretical work on the foundations of democratic organisation in *parliamentarism*.

> " We also see a historically lacking focus in the main literatures on extra-parliamentary political participation, including participative and deliberative processes: "There is no common-sense definition of what deliberation is."[i] And so far, "Deliberative systems theorists have not explained what a deliberative system is." [ii] This should come as no surprise: the fields providing theories of democracy are multiple and fragmented. "

Democratic theory is predominantly normative rather than descriptive. It fails to offer a coherent concept of political systems, a comprehensive theoretical exploration of the everyday practices of democracy. We thus lack a general theorization of democratic politics to use as a template for appreciating citizen engagement. We also see a historically lacking focus in the main literatures on extra-parliamentary political participation, including participative and deliberative processes: "There is no common-sense definition of what deliberation is."[i] And so far, "Deliberative systems theorists have not explained what a deliberative system is." [ii] This should come as no surprise: the fields providing theories of democracy are multiple and fragmented. This includes a confusion caused by an intellectual conflation of ideas of parliamentarism and democracy, which historically are to be viewed as separate debates. [iii] "[P]arliamentarism [historically viewed] was manifestly not equivalent to constitutional democracy" [vi]. The conflation of the concepts of parliamentarism and democracy is thus shrouded in political agendas spurred by significant but also convoluted processes in recent European history.[v]

In fact, democratic theory generally failed to consider parliamentarism as part of their research agenda[vi], something that causes some challenges for democratic theory when addressing inherently parliamentary issues such as the question of coupling public assemblies to parliament: The driver and arguments for such coupling may be addressed by democratic theory but the more technical aspects and implications to the understanding of the state requires the involvement of contemporary debates about parliamentarism. [vii]

What can be argued, however, is that the broad notion of "democratic institutions" contains both elements, but that parliamentarism is mostly viewed as a key foundation of representative democracy. As William Selinger points out in this book, Parliamentarism: From Burke to Weber, "parliamentarism", and not "democracy", stood at the core of many canonical European liberal writers' ambitions regarding freedom and liberty – from Montesquieu to John Stuart Mill. [viii] Over the 20th century, the concept of democracy came to occupy the nodal point of the discussions of political regimes while "the parliamentary style of acting politically has never achieved an equally canonical status. [ix] Maybe this is because parliamentarism over time became viewed primarily as a matter of form, while democracy

is viewed as content in the form of a political program and practices. In other words, parliamentarism was taken for granted, as a general regime form, and the disagreements focused on what to put in it – whereby the politics scholarship took on "democracy" as the pivotal issue. The 20th century battles about citizen rights and political participation were organized around the concept of democracy, not parliamentarism. Parliamentarianism and democracy remain separate concepts and the tension between them has been the subject of fierce intellectual debate. [x]

Yet what is also clear is that, historically viewed, democratic politics as we understand the concept today emerged and matured in the permissible political environment of parliamentarianism. And democratic politics anchors its regime in parliamentarianism. Institutionally viewed, democratic politics stands on parliamentarism, and not the other way around: We can imagine parliamentarism without democracy; but not democracy without parliamentarism. At least, that would be a radical different form of democracy than its contemporary forms. Such regimes do not exist.

In conclusion, WP3 work proposes that engaging citizens in democratic deliberation needs to investigate parliamentarism, which continues to be the spine of liberal democratic politics and thus also the underlying template for citizen engagement and citizen panels.

[i] Ryfe D., (2007) "Toward a Sociology of Deliberation", Journal of Public Deliberation 3(1)
[ii] Mark Bevir & Kai Yui Samuel Chan (XX): 'What is a deliberative system? A tale of two ontologies', European Journal of Political Theory
[iv] William Selinger (2019): Parliamentarism - From Burke to Weber. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 6.
[v] See Pasi Ihalainen (2021): 'Parliaments as Meeting Places for Political Concepts', 30 September 2021
https://intellectualhistory.web.ox.ac.uk/article/parliaments-as-meeting-places-for-political-concepts
[vi] Kari Palonen & José María Rosales (2015): Parliamentarism and Democratic Theory: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives
[vii] The historical intellectual "battle" of parliamentarism unfolded in the Weimar republic between Hans Kelsen and Carl Schmitt.
[viii] William Selinger (2021): *Parliamentarism: from Burke to Weber*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[ix] K. Palonen, Parliamentary Thinking, Rhetoric, Politics and Society, p. 225.
[x] Marx Weber, Carl Schmitt

WP4
Understanding Citizen Engagement

Citizen science is a great example of how regular citizens under favorable circumstances can engage in a non-profit endeavor on a mass scale that leads to knowledge production. Experience shows that knowledge created by joint efforts can have multiple applications, from purely scientific to political. In a sphere of public policy, such knowledge can be used to make informed decisions.

The concept of including citizens in processes of data collection or analysis of existing sets of information is not new but what is quite new is the scope at which people are being attracted by it. Thanks to the proliferation of technological solutions, like smartphones equipped with photo cameras, voice recorders and widely available Internet as well as all sorts of applications, it has become possible to engage almost anyone and anywhere, at least in theory. This technology is a key aspect of citizen science.

 In WP4 task regarding grassroots knowledge production, we investigate two main questions:

1. how much citizens are involved in knowledge production

2. how civic and non-profit organizations use technology to engage citizens in order to create knowledge

We categorize the technologies used and evaluate their usefulness and user-friendliness together with experts. By studying what dominant practices evolved 'spontaneously' in the field of nature protection in Poland we aim to identify key enablers and obstacles on the way to citizen science.

In another task in WP4, Mosaic is running experiments with citizen science projects. In specific, Mosaic is testing the added value of citizen science in political decision making on a city-scale. Mosaic has launched a participatory platform at which citizens can explore their individual relation to darkness through an observation protocol. They can ask questions about public light impacts, and make recommendations on turning it off, based on the community shared experience. based on individual and collective experience (spot-libourne.org/ and spot-melesse.org/). The platform has been created

to inform public administration in Libourne and Melesse, two French cities, about recommendations of the inhabitants on a new policy of turning off public lights at night that the two mentioned cities are considering implementing.

The new policy lies in line with ecological transition of the cities. ISEED's aim in pursuing this experiment is to investigate how inhabitants as well as local public administration evaluate citizen science methods as possible tools for stimulating citizen participation and making informed decisions. Special consideration will be given to the issue of legitimacy of such approaches in public policy. We will inspect how information from the platform will be used in decision-making processes as well how citizens perceive the representativeness and reliability of data on the platform.

Participative democracy cannot be decoupled from evidence-driven decision-making. Thus, a sufficient understanding of data issues that impact participative decision-making is a prerequisite for citizen scientists' effective engagement, especially at the local government level. How best to enable such expertise in the citizen science community remains open. But acquiring such expertise is essential also for practices of inclusion and responsiveness envisioned within Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI).

A further task within WP4 is dedicated to study citizen observatories and data cooperatives. This actively seeks to establish several baselines so that remedial courses of action can be identified and implemented. Specifically, ISEED engages with experienced participants in citizen science and data cooperatives and seeks to capture their understanding of norms in data management practices and principles.

Data quality is usually determined at the data collection stage and is often correlated with training. For example, dissemination of both data and the information derived from it demands competency in licensing and GDPR. Valorization of data is often accomplished through its alignment with other external data sources. Many such external repositories exist throughout the EU. An awareness by the participative science community of such repositories, how to access them, and how to effectively utilize them remain open questions. Thus, a snapshot of what affects awareness and usability for a small spectrum of repositories will further inform measures for enabling local participative democracy.

There is one more aspect of utilizing citizen science in deliberative democracies which WP4 is developing insights in: scientific experience as a baseline for better understanding what ensures equality, social justice, and representativeness in democratic process, but also attitudes towards science and knowledge-based deliberation itself. Therefore, one of WP4 tasks investigates the work of science clubs in Uruguay. Uruguay has a great experience in the field as it has been running science clubs for kids and teenagers for more than 30 years. In science clubs, students are taught? the research process by practice from selecting and stating a research question to disseminating research results. The educational strategy used seeks that students learn by building knowledge and competencies as individuals and active citizens of the 21st century. The topic of the investigation is chosen by students and very often it connects to the challenges they experience as a community. In that way, young people learn what science and scientific process can have to offer in tacking the problems that are often like problems that public administration faces. Led by ISEED partner, Uruguay's Ministry of Education, WP4 is studying the effect of participation in scientific research on young people's? attitudes toward science, their trust in science and trust in deliberative processes.

WP5
Understanding deliberation online:
Developing synergies across computational and discourse analysis

WP5 is developing and applying the tool of 'the argument extractor', a computational social science tool that is meant to support researchers in their understanding of online public opinion dynamics.

The possibility of collecting large quantities of data represents a challenge and an opportunity for social scientists: the use of computational methods is the answer that the community has thus far produced. The dynamics of online public opinion debates, and instances of polarization, are not simple

to analyze and require sophisticated methods and studies. WP5 is contributing to this context with an analysis of what occurs in online debates about scientific issues that have generated controversies.

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always a risk that it gets interpreted as a form of censorship. However, there is increasing evidence of the gap between people's understanding of online social spaces and their actual functioning. One of the most important messages from current research is that social media has sent false polarization into hyperdrive. Data from nationally representative surveys, as well as stories of individual social media users explain why extremists enjoy an outsized role in discussions about most topics but especially politics on social media.

The gap between perception and reality also causes widespread apathy or political disengagement among moderates. In 2016, a group of fourteen scholars examined the gap between perceived and actual polarization in ten countries. Though the researchers found mixed evidence about whether consuming information in legacy media (for example, television news, newspapers, and magazines) contributes to the perception gap, they discovered that online news consumption was the strongest predictor of false polarization in nearly every country. Social media also exacerbate mass media's contribution to false polarization. Journalists often use social media to monitor public opinion, and this distorts their reporting on polarization even further. It's a vicious cycle. Research indicates that becoming more aware of how your political views relate to those of others can have a depolarizing effect, no matter where you fall on the spectrum.

The use of arguments and counterarguments can also have a depolarizing effect. Large-scale studies using this approach are appearing and can be very informative for public policy interventions. A recent study by French and Dutch researchers tested the use of a chatbot to present arguments in an online debate about GMOs. The rationale was that discussion is more convincing than standard, unidirectional messaging, but its interactive nature makes it difficult to scale up, hence the introduction of the chatbot. Their results reveal that participants changed their minds more as they spent more time reading counterarguments and tended to spend more time when all the counterarguments were available (counterarguments condition) than when they were offered the possibility of only selecting the most relevant counterarguments (chatbot condition). Moreover, being exposed only to the counterarguments that participants had selected, by contrast with all the counterarguments, did not make the counterarguments more efficient.

In addition to the above, WP5 is working to illuminate the mechanisms of decision making, persuasion and deliberation online from a philosophical point of view. As a key focus for our work package are the roles played by 'reason' and 'emotions' in online deliberation, we are compiling a cross-disciplinary literature review that situates the dichotomy of reason versus emotion both in the history of ideas and in contemporary research. WP5's work within affect theory, feminist science and technology studies, neuroscience, decision theory, democracy and deliberation, will bring new insights on the role of reason and emotion in deliberation online. This review will offer an overview of approaches and inform upcoming work in WP5, but also feed into ISEED work overall. The report will also inform our policy recommendations on behalf of ISEED.

We are furthermore working to collect narratives in social media that relate moments of change of mind/heart on science informed topics, such as climate breakdown. We have dubbed these moments 'conversion narratives, and if this work is successful, we hope to be able to make recommendations regarding which communication strategies are more conducive to conversation around polarizing

science-informed topics.

WP5 findings contribute to understand cases of real and false polarization in the context of science-informed debates online, which adds value as these phenomena have been studied mainly in the case of political debates.

WP6
From citizens and science to citizens and democracy: scaling up and policy recommendations

WP6 is a scaling-up work package, whose main objective is to draw systematic lessons from the deliverables produced by both the conceptual and experimental WPs in the project. It aims to identify the potential for the project's delivered results to inform a better understanding of deliberative and participatory democratic processes, and to be used fruitfully in wider context of democratic societies and their institutions.

In particular, this WP provides a better understanding of:

1. how practically to implement a participatory model of "public sphere", led by a community of autonomous and equal inquirers;

2. what methods and policy scenarios can appear most suitable to make possible for citizens to re-evaluate their involvement in public debate and;

3. how to identify arenas of public discussion where citizens can actively participate in a deliberative and inclusive manner.

The contribution of this WP in the policy brief are crucial. The main objectives of the WP are closely related to taking the results of the project further, something that in turn is fully aligned with the objective of the policy brief. A good part of the results can be adapted to be included in recommendations. For example, the Multi Stakeholder Panel (MSP) constituted by WP6 will advise project partners and bring a diversity of perspectives (industry, academia, policy and civil society) to ISEED work. Specific recommendations from each of these participatory processes will be integrated into proposals on translating ISEED project results in other contexts. Surely a good part of the recommendations of the Multi-Stakeholder Panel can also be incorporated into the project's policy brief.

WP6 will systematize project results to identify key deliberative and participatory models as emerging from the WP3 and WP4 experiments. This will information first set of scenarios which envision models and strategies that complement traditional democracy systems and increase inclusion in knowledge-based deliberation. The information collected will result in a set of critical variables and indicators that will be used for the development of explorative scenarios for the future of democracy. Form these models we aim to extract some recommendations for citizens, governments and science and technology institutions to enhance participation. These recommendations will form a key part of this policy brief.

WP6 includes a specific task to propose global recommendations extracted from citizen participation in science to guide citizen participation in democracy. This task will conclude with a deliverable with an emphasis on the global recommendations and an ambition to strengthen democratic practices by means of such new methods and policies. These recommendations will be included in the policy brief.

Finally, WP6 will also assess the effectiveness of the "argument extractor tool" for public controversy resolution. The overall goal is to assess the potential of this tool to empower communities of participants to contribute to a knowledge-based manner to political debate. Our results will also be shared in the policy brief.

ISEED maps and explores how inclusive science can support

European democracies.

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