

Oxford Handbooks Online

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

David Estlund and Hélène Landemore

The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy

Edited by Andre Bächtiger, John S. Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge, and Mark Warren

Print Publication Date: Sep 2018 Subject: Political Science, Political Theory

Online Publication Date: Oct 2018 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198747369.013.26

Abstract and Keywords

Recently, some normative approaches to democracy have emphasized its actual or aspirational epistemic value—a tendency to make good or correct decisions. While some accounts explain how such value might arise in a broadly statistical and probabilistic way, other accounts emphasize ways in which interpersonal political deliberation might have epistemic value of the right kind. Epistemic democratic deliberation plays a role in some traditional approaches, but it has been more prominent in recent decades. In this chapter we explain and discuss approaches which consider mechanisms by which democratic deliberation might have epistemic value, and also approaches which focus on the role that such a hypothesized epistemic value might play in an account of the authority or justification of democratic arrangements.

Keywords: democracy, deliberation, epistemic, authority, majority rule, normative, social choice, Condorcet, diversity, inclusiveness

Deliberation, roughly the weighing of reasons, is something individuals do for themselves, but it also has an interpersonal (or “intersubjective”) form—the collective weighing of reasons with others, by communicating, arguing, debating, and persuading. Democratic deliberation is not only interpersonal, but also public and structured in ways necessary to count as democratic, a matter handled differently by different theories of democracy.¹

Deliberation has long been valued by deliberative democrats for reasons that have to do more with its intrinsic properties or the byproducts it generates rather than what some now see (and some saw all along) as its primary point: figuring out the truth. Probably influenced by John Rawls’s famous stance of “epistemic abstinence” (Rawls 1985, as read by Raz 1990), early deliberative democrats mostly focused on the expression of respect and equality that letting everyone speak and exchange reasons for their views before deciding on them was supposed to represent. Others emphasized the airing of grievances, the mutual understanding, the consensus and community-building that deliberating

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

together was taken to allow for. Only recently have so-called epistemic democrats been paying attention to the more purely instrumental value of deliberation: maximizing the chances of getting to the correct or right decision, or at least getting as close to it as possible.

By “correct or right decision” here, or “the truth,” can be meant an array of things, from objective truth of the matter (about facts or morality) to a more intersubjective, culturally dependent, and temporary construct (about more socially constructed facts or moral questions). What epistemic democrats emphasize, on some readings, is merely the Habermasian (and commonsensical enough) point that we wouldn’t be exchanging reasons in the first place if we did not believe that there was something to figure out, whether we call this something the truth, the right, or the correct, just, or socially useful answer (see also Martí 2006).

(p. 114) Epistemic democracy was first articulated in a 1986 article by Joshua Cohen entitled “An epistemic conception of democracy,” which borrowed from Jules Coleman and John Ferejohn’s epistemic interpretation of voting. Cohen’s article was an attempt to defend so-called populist approaches to democracy (such as Rousseau’s² and, on some readings, John Stuart Mill’s) from the liberal conception of Schumpeter and Riker, which supposedly did away with the problematic notion of a “common good” or “general will” notoriously found in populist authors. Cohen proposed an interpretation of the populist view intended to be both coherent and more plausible than Riker’s own interpretation. The main step consisted in showing that Riker’s attribution of a “pure proceduralist” position to populist democrats was a mistake. He instead identified their view as epistemic. Cohen then went on to characterize an epistemic interpretation of voting as having three main elements:

- (1)** an independent standard of correct decisions;
- (2)** a cognitive account of voting (voting is supposed to express views about what the correct policies are according to the independent standard);
- (3)** an account of how people adjust their beliefs in light of other people’s beliefs.

Cohen then proceeded to plug this interpretation of voting into a more general epistemic conception of democracy, applying all these three elements not just to voting but also to other forms of democratic decision-making such as deliberation.

Epistemic democracy was further developed as a distinctive approach to democracy in the work of David Estlund (1997; 2008a). Revisiting the question of political authority, Estlund argued that pure proceduralists (whether deliberative or aggregative) were mistaken in believing they could ignore questions of epistemic competence and performance. He offered instead a new philosophical framework—epistemic proceduralism—to reconcile concerns for procedures and outcomes. Estlund further argued that the minimal epistemic performance one should expect from a political authority must be set at “better than random” and conjectured that democracies met that threshold, though probably underperforming compared to what he labeled

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

“epistocracies” (regimes in which the few “knowers” rule). One epistemic engine he considered obvious was deliberation.

Since then, a number of other epistemic democrats have contributed to the paradigm and pursued the complex philosophical questions opened up by an epistemic approach.³ When it comes to the question of epistemic (democratic) deliberation per se, two dimensions—normative and descriptive/explicative—have been explored. The normative dimension covers questions such as: Does democratic deliberation need to have epistemic properties in order for its outcomes to be normatively authoritative or to have legitimacy? Or is public exchange of reasons among free and equal citizens valuable in and of itself, even if it tends to yield, say, more polarized views? How should we balance epistemic and other properties of democratic deliberation in an overall evaluation? The descriptive/explicative dimension includes questions such as: Does deliberation have epistemic properties? Does democratic deliberation have distinct (p. 115) epistemic properties? If so, could those explain the success of democracies in the real world? What role does consensus or unanimity play in these properties? Should democratic deliberation aim at consensus? What is the relation of democratic deliberation to majority rule?

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. The next section takes stock of the debates in the field of deliberative democracy that have been generated by advocates of the new paradigm of epistemic democracy. We then turn to the epistemic properties of deliberation per se and, specifically, democratic deliberation.

Normative Frameworks

Epistemic Democracy: Why?

There are two distinct ways in which one might speak of an “epistemic element” in a democratic theory. Often, the meaning is that the right or best decision is produced by voters thinking and reasoning about what would be right. This element is clear in Cohen’s account, described above, and such accounts are usefully distinguished from others in which the decisions tend to be good or best, but through the mechanism of some invisible hand—for example, sectarian interests cancelling each other out in the aggregate. A second and distinct sense of “epistemic element” emphasizes the discovery of truths rather than merely the achievement of valuable results. Indeed, as we will see (see also Landmore 2013), some approaches emphasize mechanisms that are held to be truth-revealing quite apart from whether the truths in question also have moral value—as, of course, such accounts also hold.

It is not hard to see why an epistemic element might be important to a theory of justified (or legitimate or authoritative) political rule. Otherwise, why not have rule by the person or procedure who can best determine what ought to be done? Traditionally, this question

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

is a challenge to democratic thought since elites or experts can seem likely to outperform the body of all citizens consulted together. Maybe no specially chosen subset whatsoever could in fact do better than democratic arrangements, though that is a strong and contestable claim. Some advocates of democracy eschew any epistemic criteria at all, relying for its justification on features entirely apart from claims about the substantive quality of its likely decisions. Many, however, appeal to public deliberation as a potentially powerful epistemic engine—in which case the epistemic and the democratic strands of our thinking might not be in conflict. It would be possible, of course, to argue that democracy could tend toward correct answers on some questions, and even by way of interpersonal deliberation, despite voters not being seen as addressing those questions. This would count as a kind of invisible-hand example, and there are such mechanisms in contexts—such as certain idealized economic markets—that are not democratic. On this approach some plausible mechanism would need to be described for the democratic context.

(p. 116) Normative democratic theory that insists on an epistemic element does not necessarily make any claim about whether democracy (either actual or idealized) has epistemic value. Rather, it claims that unless democracy does have epistemic value there is no adequate case for its legitimacy, or authority, or justification (whereas if it does, then there is). So the interest in epistemic approaches can arise initially out of theoretical difficulties faced by wholly non-epistemic alternatives. That would tempt one to wonder and explore whether introducing an epistemic element could avoid the problems. Then, of course, the further question arises as to how appealing to (the right kind of) epistemic value would solve those problems without raising worse ones. For example, one of the more prominent worries about epistemic approaches is that whatever reasons there are for introducing an epistemic element would also exert theoretical pressure to abandon democracy (partially or altogether) in favor of rule by some wise subset of subjects.⁴

There are non-epistemic but still instrumental approaches, a category mentioned above (Riker 1982, criticized by Cohen 1986). A more popular route is to eschew all appeal to the instrumental value of democracy—including epistemic versions of it—in favor of some value deriving wholly from a decision's origins in a democratic process. An influential line of thought is that voting is a procedure that is fair to all who have the right to participate. For example, a decision made by majority rule might count as fair in that sense, quite apart from whether it is a good decision on procedure-independent grounds:⁵ it might be an unwise or even unjust decision but, in its favor, it is at least the outcome of a "fair" procedure. If the measure of fairness is merely that each participant has an equal chance of influencing the outcome, then this would not commend a voting procedure over choosing the outcome by a random procedure such as a coin flip—which, like majority rule, gives no one more power than anyone else. However, mere procedural fairness of that kind is obviously not enough to be called democracy. Such considerations suggest that a plausible theory would need to give some role to a tendency to make substantively good decisions—at least, say, better than random.

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

A somewhat different approach from that of procedural fairness—but still non-instrumental and so non-epistemic—is to argue that a moral right to participate equally in political decisions is implied by a requirement of social justice whereby all citizens are of one class or status and none is inferior (Christiano 1996; Pettit 2012). Of course, if everyone is equally morally important or deserving, then it would seem to be of high importance that political decisions give everyone what is due to them through decisions that are substantively just and not merely procedurally fair. The equal-status account would need to explain why the equal status of having a vote carries such moral weight that it should be respected even when doing so would, by eschewing more epistemically powerful procedures, lead unnecessarily to social injustice of other kinds—such as invidious discrimination against less favored groups by the majority. Retaining the right to vote is one kind of equal status, but if it were to facilitate unjust relations of oppression or hierarchy through unjust political decisions it might be unclear why it had such trumping weight.

These approaches have variants, and there are other non-epistemic approaches as well. We put them all aside here for the purpose of understanding epistemic approaches, (p. 117) central to which are, characteristically, potential epistemic benefits of interpersonal deliberation leading up to political decisions—epistemic deliberation.

Deliberative and Non-Deliberative Epistemic Approaches

To understand the importance of interpersonal deliberation to epistemic approaches it is helpful to first consider epistemic approaches to democracy that make no appeal to it. One simple view, associated with logical critiques stemming from Arrow's "Impossibility Theorem" (Arrow 1951) is that the process of voting registers and aggregates people's preferences, resulting in a sound measure of what is in a group's aggregate interests. Another approach relies on mathematical theorems such as Condorcet's Jury Theorem to argue that a majority is far more likely to be correct than any individual voter, and under minimally favorable conditions highly likely to be correct—none of this depending on any interpersonal discussion or debate (Estlund et al. 1989). Deliberative epistemic approaches, by contrast, would be those that rely at least partly on epistemic benefits of certain forms of public communication and discourse, especially forms involving offering and responding to practical (what to do) and epistemic (what to believe) reasons.

If the non-deliberative aggregative approach were sound, then an epistemic approach to democracy might not need to query the epistemic value of deliberation. For example, if, even without public deliberation (whatever exactly "no deliberation" would mean), every voter's chance of choosing the better candidate or law were just a bit better than random, and each voter's acts were statistically independent of those of other voters, the Jury Theorem's math alone shows that decisions made by majority rule would be highly likely to be good or correct (where this means only "the better of two").⁶ There is no dispute about the truth of the Jury Theorem as a piece of math, but scholars continue to debate whether the conditions on the applicability of the Jury Theorem are plausibly met in

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

realistic democracies.⁷ If not, then the mere number of voters might not support any claim for democracy to have epistemic value. Although this important point is often overlooked, it is a departure from that approach to introduce ostensible epistemic benefits of interpersonal deliberation. Below, we concern ourselves only with approaches that appeal to deliberation.

How Epistemic?

How epistemically ambitious must such appeals to deliberation be? If the question is why all the people should rule by voting, rather than any subset organized in any other way, there is some pressure to try to show that democratic deliberation outperforms every alternative. In a simple case, certain democratic arrangements could be held to be (actually or potentially) *supreme*: the most reliably accurate procedure on the relevant questions—better than any single expert or panel of experts, for example. On a (p. 118) more epistemically moderate view, democracy's epistemic value is held to be, even if not better than all other sources, at least *sufficient* to justify or require a democratic arrangement given certain additional non-epistemic virtues of democracy. Perhaps certain other values would serve to explain why epistemically better arrangements are not required or justifiable. For example, maybe democratic arrangements are necessary to avoid a morally undesirable social hierarchy, but would not be permitted if they were not at least epistemically adequate. Or maybe there is not wide enough agreement on what would constitute the epistemically best available elite that would provide for enough stability and for the liberal moral standard of acceptability to all reasonable points of view. Indeed, whether the alleged epistemic value is supreme or only sufficient, the justification of democracy might rest on its supposedly true epistemic virtues, or on its epistemic virtues so far as these can be agreed within the politically permissible set of reasons, excluding considerations that are disputable among reasonable citizens. This last idea embeds epistemic deliberative democracy within a form of political liberalism, as developed especially by Rawls. The epistemic potency that is required of deliberation, then, will vary depending on the broader normative theory in which the idea is embedded.

Epistemic About What?

Since the epistemic dimension of a democratic theory is one in which political decisions tend toward being good or correct or true, it is important to say what it is that they might be correct or true about, or in what way they might be good. Some epistemic deliberative democratic theories emphasize the question of arriving at good or correct answers to practical or moral political questions, and this is arguably the main line of epistemic approaches from Rousseau through Rawls, Cohen, Estlund, and others. On that approach, voters might be seen as faced with the question: “Which of the available alternatives best respects or promotes justice?” or “Which of these is the right thing (collectively) to do?” A common complaint about morally construed epistemic approaches of this kind is that (so it is claimed) there is no correct answer to what ought morally to be done in political decisions.⁸ If this is a sweeping skepticism about moral ideas, or even just about moral ideas in political contexts—that they are all mistakes—then it is not any distinctive challenge for epistemic approaches to democracy, since it would deny that there is any answer to the question whether any society at any time ought to be democratic or to respect certain legal rights or engage in wars of conquest, and so on. There are critiques of “moralism” in political philosophy in favor of an approach sometimes dubbed “realism,” though the terms of the debate are themselves under dispute.⁹ Suffice it to say that deliberative epistemic approaches to democracy have been content to assume that some political decisions are morally wrong, and some more than others. Such theories, then, do not aim to go deeper in order to refute the outright moral skeptic.

(p. 119) A different approach to the idea of good or correct outcomes focuses less on correct answers to moral questions, arguing instead in favor of broadly democratic social (not merely political) arrangements on the ground that they are epistemically favorable for the discovery of good or sound actions and beliefs of all kinds, ranging from morality and politics to science and the arts. Classic antecedents for such views would include John Stuart Mill’s theory of the value of broad social freedom of action and expression, and Dewey’s account of human knowledge as a process of identifying and overcoming problems, a value by no means limited to moral or even political problems. (Anderson 2006; Talisse 2007)

Some Critiques and Defenses of Epistemic Deliberative Normative Democratic Theories

There are several common lines of critique of deliberative approaches to democracy, arguments that have nothing in particular to do with the subset that contain an epistemic dimension. They would need to be answered, but they are not especially pertinent to our narrower topic here. Briefly, one obvious line of critique of epistemic approaches is to deny that democratic arrangements really do, or could, have the degree of epistemic value that certain theories would need them to have to render democracy legitimate, authoritative or justified. These debates depend on questions, to be surveyed in the next

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

section, about what the epistemic mechanisms are and how much might be expected of them. But in the background it is important to see that a normative theory is not refuted by the claim that its standards are not likely to be met, unless it (optionally) claims otherwise.

As for objections that are more specific to epistemic versions of deliberative democratic theory, we have briefly encountered one of these already, namely that there is no such thing as a procedure-independent standard on the relevant questions, such as that of what justice requires. A second line of objection is that the epistemic value of democratic deliberation could never be assessed without having independent access to the right answers, in which case the democratic procedure would be epistemically unnecessary.¹⁰ A third line of objection claims that epistemic justifications for democracy seemingly violate the “non-convergence constraint,” namely the intuitive premise that we should not expect political disagreements to disappear once the democratic procedure has issued its verdict.¹¹ A fourth line of objection is that epistemic justifications violate the “evidence constraint” in that while they should provide evidence for voters’ competence or the quality of democratic outcomes, epistemic justifications cannot do so without presupposing disputed political judgments.¹² A fifth line of objection is that focusing on the epistemic as opposed to the intrinsic value of democratic procedures would somehow endanger and perhaps even “disfigure” democracy itself.¹³

(p. 120) Epistemic Mechanisms

What reasons do we have to believe that democratic deliberation, understood as a way of arriving at collective decisions, has epistemic properties—that is, the ability to track a procedure-independent standard of correctness (whatever one may understand by this)? The following aims to give an account of deliberation, and more specifically democratic deliberation, as the epistemic engine of a properly conceived (“deliberative”) democracy. It also aims to clarify the relation of democratic deliberation to consensus and majority rule.

Epistemic Properties of Deliberation

As noted at the start of this chapter, deliberation means, roughly, the pondering and weighing of reasons or an exchange of arguments for or against a given view. In that sense deliberation can refer to an internal dialogue in the vein of “deliberation within” (Goodin 2005), an intersubjective exercise among individuals, or a deliberation occurring among entities larger than individuals, as in system-thinking (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012).

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

The idea that intersubjective deliberation (leaving aside anything about “democratic” for the moment) has epistemic properties is an old one. It can arguably be traced back all the way to Aristotle’s idea that a “feast to which the many contribute” is better than a feast organized by one person only, through to Mill’s emphasis on diversity of points of view in helping the truth overcome falsities and triumph in a free marketplace of ideas. An underlying assumption of these views is that there is a self-revealing nature of the truth, which when made apparent by the exchange of viewpoints is supposed to convince all participants in the deliberation (if not instantaneously then over time, and if not inexorably then at least under favorable conditions). This is something best expressed, perhaps, by Habermas’s idea of the “unforced force of the better argument” (Habermas 1991).

How does this “unforced force of the better argument” work in practice? Let us look at the way deliberation functions in a nicely idealized (but not *too* idealized) model: The deliberations of jurors in the film *12 Angry Men*.¹⁴

One of the turning points in the deliberation comes when Juror 8 produces a copy of the murder weapon, a cheap switchblade that he said he was able to buy for a fistful of dollars around the corner of the tribunal, disproving at once the unusualness and identifying nature of the weapon. Another argument is produced by Juror 5, who grew up in a violent slum and can explain the proper way of using a switchblade, raising doubts in the process about the plausibility of the eyewitness’s description. The eyewitness’s reliability is further put in doubt when it becomes clear that she usually wears glasses (as evidenced by red marks on the side of her nose observed by the jurors (p. 121) when she came to testify to the bar). Ultimately a unanimous consensus emerges that the young man should be found not guilty.

The story illustrates the epistemic properties of deliberation. First, it allows participants to weed out the good arguments, interpretations, and information from the bad ones (e.g. the switchblade is not as unique a weapon as previously thought and can only be used a certain way). Second, deliberative problem solving can also produce synergies, that is create new solutions out of the arguments, information, and solutions brought to the table (e.g. making sense of the red marks on the eyewitness’s nose in a way that proves decisive to the interpretation of her reliability). Third, hearing the perspectives of others may entirely reshape a person’s view of the problem and introduce possibilities not initially considered (e.g. the eyewitness testimony cannot be trusted after all). Finally, in the ideal, deliberation produces unanimous consensus on the “right” solution (“not guilty” in this case).

The example also illustrates the specific merit of deliberation among a diverse group of people. In the story all twelve jurors mattered, in all their differences, because it is only through the interplay between their conflicting interpretations of the evidence and arguments—colored as those are by their personal history, socio-economic background, type of intelligence, and so on—that something like the truth ultimately emerges. The epistemic properties of deliberation importantly manifest in spite of the fact that the

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

protagonists are far from ideal human beings. One juror just wants to be done with the deliberation and go to a baseball game, one is a racist, another is biased by irrelevant fatherly emotions ... Deliberation, in other words, can overcome a number of moral and cognitive limitations.

The logic of epistemic deliberation is well captured by a theorem by Lu Hong and Scott Page, the Diversity Trumps Ability Theorem, which states that under certain conditions¹⁵ “a randomly selected collection of problem solvers outperforms a collection of the best individual problem solvers” (Hong and Page 2004, 16388; Page 2007, 163). In other words, “diversity trumps ability” and our twelve angry men are better than twelve clones of, say, juror number 8 (arguably the smartest of the lot) would have been. Diversity here refers to *cognitive* diversity, which is roughly the difference in the ways different people will think about a problem in the world. On this model, cognitive diversity is not diversity of fundamental values or goals, which would actually harm the collective effort to solve a problem, though it is compatible with degrees of less fundamental value-diversity.

This counterintuitive result can be made more comprehensible through the spatial metaphor of the passing of the baton between variously resourceful climbers on a rugged landscape. Whereas smart but homogeneously thinking problem-solvers will tend to get stuck at high but local optima, the diverse group is more likely to have members guide each other from lower optima to the global one, because as a group of diverse individuals they explore more of the rugged landscape.

It is worth emphasizing that this account of the epistemic logic at work in problem-solving among cognitively diverse groups is distinct from the statistical logic behind the Condorcet Jury Theorem or the Miracle of Aggregation (or another one of Hong (p. 122) and Page’s results, the Diversity Theorem) in that *it has nothing to do with the law of large numbers*. The point here is not that a clear signal will emerge out of the noise of random errors that cancel out, even though the good and bad input alike get aggregated. It is that deliberation will weed out the bad information and arguments from the outcome entirely.

Epistemic Properties of Democratic Deliberation

While the arguments above may account for the epistemic properties of deliberation among cognitively diverse people, it does not quite justify democratic deliberation in the sense of deliberation that (1) involves all and (2) involves all on an equal standing. Democratic deliberation can indeed be specified as intersubjective deliberation that takes place specifically in a “public” manner “among free and equal individuals” (adapted from Cohen 1989) and is also inclusive of the entirety of the relevant group, though this condition is generally left implicit in a lot of the literature in deliberative democracy.¹⁶

Democratic deliberation, in order to count as plausibly democratic, thus requires publicity of its exchanges, full inclusiveness, and equal standing and equal opportunities for participation among participants (“free and equal”). Theorists appreciative of the epistemic value of deliberation may not necessarily see the epistemic value of *democratic* deliberation thus understood. Mill, after all, though a deliberative democrat on most readings, was also an advocate of a plural voting scheme that gave more voice (in the form of votes) to the learned. Clearly one can believe in the value of deliberation and not think that all involved should have an absolutely equal right to be heard.

Landemore (2012; 2013) proposes a missing link between the epistemic properties of deliberation and democracy per se, at least when it comes to the inclusive and egalitarian features of democratic deliberation (the publicity element has yet to be shown to have epistemic properties of its own). Landemore argues that more inclusive assemblies are simply more likely to be cognitively diverse. To the extent that cognitive diversity is a key ingredient of collective intelligence, and specifically one that matters more than average individual ability, the more inclusive the deliberation process is, the smarter the solutions resulting from it should be, overall. Numbers, in other words, function as a proxy for diversity (“Numbers Trump Ability Theorem”). Where all-inclusiveness is not feasible, a second-best solution is delegation to a randomly selected sample of the group. A key assumption of this argument is the radical uncertainty faced by political decision-makers when it comes to issues of the common good. This fundamental uncertainty (which is an assumption about the world, not necessarily the subjective epistemic stage of the deliberators) is what renders all-inclusiveness on an equal basis epistemically attractive as a model for collective decision-making. Given the complexity of the world, which generates this uncertainty, egalitarian inclusiveness is “ecologically rational” (Landemore 2014).

(p. 123) **Measuring The Epistemic Quality of Democratic Deliberation?**

Empirical research on deliberation was not until recently framed in epistemic terms and to that extent has yet to fully prove or falsify the claims of epistemic deliberative democrats. It was, however, always understood as empirical research about a specifically

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

democratic type of deliberation (as defined above) and thus in what follows we use “deliberation” and “deliberative” as shorthand for “democratic deliberation” and “democratically deliberative.”

There are various ways one could go about measuring the epistemic quality of outputs generated by (democratic) deliberation, from the more indirect to the more direct. A first proxy for the substantive quality of deliberative outcomes is, for example, the objective level of information people have post-deliberation, as compared to their pre-deliberative beliefs and preferences. This is in some respects what Jim Fishkin’s deliberative polls measure (e.g. Fishkin 2009). The presumption here would be that as people’s views are more informed, they are also more likely to be right—although there is of course no guarantee.

Another route is to measure the procedural properties of deliberation, as in the Discourse Quality Index (DQI) (Steenbergen et al. 2003; Bächtiger, Pedrini, and Ryser 2010), which codes, among other things, for how equal, respectful, and argumentatively sophisticated people’s speech acts are. Yet other routes are the index of intersubjective consistency (Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007), the index of “cognitive complexity” (Wyss, Beste, and Bächtiger 2015), or the measurement of adequate support for given conclusions (Friberg-Fernros and Schaffer 2017).

Finally, one may also want to measure the quality of deliberative outcomes in terms of the corresponding decision’s impact on the world. Are the solutions put forward “validated” by the outside world, i.e. actual empirical success? At a first level of intuition, the fact that democracies (more “deliberative” regimes than their known alternatives) have been doing well by multiple standards both in Ancient Greece (Ober 2008) and over the last 250 years—even causing economic growth on some readings of the available evidence (Acemoglu et al. 2014)—would seem to at least not contradict this prediction. Small-scale lab experiments involving problems with mathematical, logical, factual, or otherwise uncontroversial answers also support the case that deliberating groups solve riddles faster and better than less deliberative ones (Clément et al. 2013). Experimental evidence obtained in the developing world, finally, suggests that deliberation promotes a certain number of uncontroversially good outcomes, such as efficiency (Goeree and Yariv 2011) or the reduction of clientelism (Fujiwara and Wantchekon 2013).¹⁷

Should (Democratic) Deliberation Aim at Consensus/Unanimity?

The ideal of consensus as unanimous agreement on a decision resulting from a deliberative process lies at the heart of early theories of deliberative democracy (Cohen 1986, 22; Habermas 1991, 66; Elster 1986, 112; Young 1996, 122).

(p. 124) Does consensus form a promising normative horizon for epistemic deliberation? In order to answer this question, Landemore and Page (2014) suggest first distinguishing between at least three meanings of consensus as a normative ideal: consensus as (i) a goal, (ii) a stopping-rule, or (iii) an outcome. While consensus can be two or three of these things at once, it need not be, and these analytical distinctions clarify the debate. First, consensus can be a goal—that is, a direct aim that deliberators seek or should seek to achieve when discussing with each other—in contrast with, say, truth or the promotion of certain interests. Second, consensus can also be interpreted as a stopping-rule, that is, the rule by which deliberation is brought to an end and a group decision considered taken. On that interpretation, consensus is equivalent to unanimity rule and to be contrasted with other stopping-rules, such as simple majority rule or super-majority rule. Lastly, consensus can be interpreted as an ideal outcome—that is, the result of an ideal deliberation. Being an outcome rather than a goal, consensus in that sense is not something that deliberators necessarily pursue directly. It happens instead as a byproduct of something else, like pursuing the truth.

Distinct lines of criticism questioning consensus can be identified in light of these distinctions. The first criticism of consensus is aimed at the stopping-rule that requires unanimity—equivalent to each individual having a veto, thus giving undue weight to minorities' preferences (see Rae 1975 and McGann 2006). Another line of criticism objects to consensus as a direct goal of deliberation, because rational consensus may be hard in practice to distinguish from compromise (Steiner et al. 2004); because defining consensus as a goal distorts incentives for participants in a deliberation, creating pressure to reach an agreement (e.g. Mackie 2006, 285); or, conversely, because defining consensus as a goal invites strategic conformism¹⁸ (Feddersen and Pesendorfer 1998). These criticisms suggest that the only way consensus should ever be considered a “goal” of deliberation is in the sense of being an indirect goal of deliberators, namely a hoped-for by-product of their argumentative exchanges, while they are directly aiming for something else, such as the truth or a better understanding of the issues (Fuerstein 2014).

The third, most important line of criticism, however, is directed at consensus as the ideal outcome of deliberation. Gutmann and Thompson (2004) thus argue that there is no agreement among deliberative democrats that consensus should be the goal of deliberation (by which they mean the “indirect goal” of deliberators or their ideal “outcome”). Indeed, some claim that at the level of principles, other components of the deliberative democracy ideal, such as reason and public justification, point away from rational consensus, not towards it (e.g. Gaus 1997, 207). Still other objectors point out

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

that when it is reached, consensus as an outcome often signals something less than ideal, for example polarization—a post-deliberative reinforcement of previously held beliefs—rather than rational consensus (see e.g. Mendelberg and Oleske 2000; Sunstein 2002).

While not all of the objections to consensus prove decisive, their cumulative effect has been to generate discomfort with the ideal of consensus among deliberative democrats (a discomfort shared early on by some philosophers, e.g. Rescher 1993). Symptomatically, influential deliberative democrats have recently gone back to embracing the full legitimacy of stopping-rules for deliberation that used to be considered regrettable

(p. 125)

second-best of consensus, such as majority rule or even the kind of non-communicative agreement reached through bargaining (e.g. Mansbridge et al. 2010). In this approach, the ideal termination of deliberation is not agreement but disagreement, followed by a non-deliberative decision rule.

It is possible, however, that the epistemic appeal of consensus will vary depending on the context and task at stake. In problem-solving contexts, consensus as an ideal outcome of deliberation retains an epistemic appeal as a “marker” of truth, signaling that no one knows or can construct a better idea. In predictive contexts, however, consensus has almost no normative appeal as a stopping-rule and little normative appeal as an outcome. Instead, when relatively equally compelling logic and evidence support multiple models, the group members should cultivate “positive dissensus,” a form of disagreement that is epistemically beneficial for the group and ultimately leads to more accurate aggregated predictions (Landemore and Page 2014).

Deliberation and Majority Rule

Deliberation and majority rule have sometimes been pitched as rival mechanisms for decision-making, one being championed by the deliberative democracy camp, the other by so-called aggregative democrats. Recent research in epistemic democracy tends to portray them as complementary decision-procedures and emphasize their distinct epistemic properties. Whereas deliberation is more adapted to pure problem-solving contexts, majority rule is a faster and more accurate tool for purely predictive tasks.

Empirical Objections

Some critics have suggested that intersubjective deliberation (democratic or not) may in fact have no tendency to improve outcomes, and may even make them worse. Robert Goodin and Simon Niemeyer (2003) have thus suggested that “deliberation within” is in fact doing all the work in observed deliberations, as opposed to the intersubjective deliberation going on in various mini-publics that they observed. For them, it is the internal pondering of reasons that people engage in when reading briefing material that changes people’s minds, not the exchange of arguments that takes place in small groups or plenary discussions. However, given the likely evolutionary reasons behind human use

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

of reasoning and the well-documented motivation bias of individual reasoning, it can be argued that deliberation is more likely to produce the truth when it is intersubjective, i.e. social, rather than internal (Mercier and Landemore 2012).

Cass Sunstein has made the stronger argument that deliberation can make things worse because the “law of polarization” dooms even slightly like-minded groups to become more entrenched in their pre-deliberative beliefs. Deliberation as celebrated by deliberative democrats, Sunstein concludes, is overrated. In his view, the underlying mechanisms of group deliberation “do not provide much reason for confidence” (p. 126) (Sunstein 2002, 187). He further suggests that in the context of groups engaged in so-called enclave deliberation (Mansbridge 1994), one is better off aggregating judgments as they are rather than make things worse by encouraging people to talk things out.

The gist of the answers to Sunstein so far is to deny that the “talk” that went on in the experiments he reports on amount to genuine deliberation, because participants fail to engage conflicting arguments as opposed to merely diverse ones (e.g. Manin 2005, 9; see also Thompson 2008, 502 and Landemore 2013, 123–42 for similar points). It has also been argued that while Sunstein’s evaluation of group discussion is too pessimistic, his evaluation of prediction markets and Internet devices is too optimistic, markets being imperfect and the Internet being vulnerable to astroturfing by the powerful and wealthy (Mackie 2009).

Others conjecture that the difference between talk that polarizes and talk that does not lies in the enforcement by trained moderators of deliberative norms such as speaking one’s mind, listening to others, behaving respectfully, and learning and persuading others through reasons. This conjecture is supported by experimental results (Grönlund, Herne, and Setälä 2015). Discussion following deliberative norms arguably *reverses* polarization tendencies within like-minded groups (Strandberg, Himmelroos, and Grönlund 2017).

Conclusion

As we have seen, the topic of epistemic democratic deliberation has gained its prominence in recent democratic theory partly from close interpretations of the seminal normative works in the broader research paradigm of “deliberative democracy,” such as Cohen and Habermas, and partly out of critiques of normative democratic theories emphasizing certain purely procedural values such as procedural fairness or other symmetrical ruling relations. But the underlying issue of how well democracy can perform is, and always has been, also central to a reflective political engagement in broadly democratic culture. As we write in 2016, though this is nothing new, just as some ostensible political disasters are chalked up to insufficiently democratic political procedures (for example, critiques of widening material inequality), others are put down

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

to an excess of democracy (such as the rise of Donald Trump or other demagogues, or abrupt momentous changes by referendum such as “Brexit”).

Are some forms of politics to be preferred to others on grounds of their being expected to make better decisions at all, or is that issue (somehow) to be put aside? If it is not put aside, is democracy the site of a separate value that might compete with such an epistemic criterion? Is democracy to be recommended partly on epistemic grounds, and if so, what institutional features of democratic arrangements might drive the epistemic value, and by what mechanism? And is the epistemic democracy paradigm wholly aspirational, at best, or are real political choices already properly informed by these matters? If no version of democracy could perform as well as some specified non-democratic (p. 127) alternative, how are the non-epistemic procedural values that democracy might instantiate (or is that just as unrealistic?) to be weighed against the values by which the alternative would perform better—values ranging from matters of basic health, welfare, education, distributive and relational equality, anti-bigotry, equitable infrastructure, cultural climate, limiting state and non-state violence, incarceration, economic monopoly, accumulation of economic and political power, and much more? Procedural fairness and equality plausibly have some intrinsic value, but so do outcomes that are up for political decision (or political default, as in an anti-state position), and they are presumably not easily outweighed. If democracy is held to have an epistemic response to this challenge, it needs to rely at least partly on epistemic effects of interpersonal, public, democratic deliberation, a set of topics on which there is much work being done, and much left to do.

References

Acemoglu, D., Naidu, S., Restrepo, P., and Robinson, J. A. (2014). Democracy Does Cause Growth. NBER Working Paper No. 20004. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w20004>.

Anderson, E. (2006). The Epistemology of Democracy. *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology*, 3: 8–22.

Arrow, K. J. (1951). *Social Choice and Individual Values* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

Bächtiger, A., Pedrini, S., and Ryser, M. (2010). Prozessanalyse politischer Entscheidungen: Deliberative Standards, Diskurstypen und Sequenzialisierung. In *Jahrbuch für Handlungs- und Entscheidungstheorie*, vol. 6: *Schwerpunkt Neuere Entwicklungen des Konzepts der Rationalität und ihre Anwendungen*, ed. J. Behnke, T. Bräuninger, and S. Shikano (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften), 193–226.

Barry, B. (1965). *Political Argument* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).

Brennan, J. (2016). *Against Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

Clément, R. J. G., Krause, S., von Engelhardt, N., Faria, J. J., Krause, J., and Kurvers, R. H. J. M. (2013). Collective Cognition in Humans: Groups Outperform Their Best Members in a Sentence Reconstruction Task. *PLoS ONE* 8(10): e77943.

Christiano, T. (1996). *The Rule of the Many: Fundamental Issues in Democratic Theory* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press).

Cohen, J. (1986). An Epistemic Conception of Democracy. *Ethics*, 97: 26–38.

Cohen, J. (1989). Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy. In *The Good Polity: Normative Analysis of the State*, ed. A. Hamlin and P. Pettit (Oxford: Blackwell), 17–34.

Coleman, J. and Ferejohn, J. (1986). Democracy and Social Choice. *Ethics*, 97: 6–25.

Elster, J. (1986). The Market and the Forum. In *Foundations of Social Choice Theory*, ed. J. Elster and A. Hylland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 103–32.

Estlund, D. (1994). Opinion Leaders, Independence, and Condorcet's Jury Theorem. *Theory and Decision*, 36: 131–62.

Estlund, D. (1997). Beyond Fairness and Deliberation: The Epistemic Dimension of Democratic Authority. In *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, eds. J. Bohman, and W. Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 173–204.

(p. 129) Estlund, D. (2008a). *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Estlund, D. (ed.) (2008b). *Episteme*, 5 (1), special issue.

Estlund, D. M., Waldron, J., Grofman, B., and Feld, S. (1989). Democratic Theory and the Public Interest: Condorcet and Rousseau Revisited. *American Political Science Review*, 83: 1317–40.

Fishkin, J. (2009). *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Feddersen, T. and Pesendorfer, W. (1998). Convicting the Innocent: The Inferiority of Unanimous Jury Verdicts under Strategic Voting. *American Political Science Review*, 92: 23–35.

Friberg-Fernros, H. and Schaffer, J. K. (2017). Assessing the Epistemic Quality of Democratic Outcomes in Terms of Adequate Support for Conclusions. *Social Epistemology*, 31: 251–65.

Fujiwara, T. and Wantchekon, L. (2013). Can Informed Public Deliberation Overcome Clientelism? Experimental Evidence from Benin. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 5: 241–55.

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

Fuerstein, M. (2014). Democratic Consensus as an Essential Byproduct. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 22: 282–301.

Gaus, G. (1997). Reason, Justification, and Consensus: Why Democracy Can't Have It All. In *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics.*, ed. J. Bohman and W. Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 205–42.

Goeree, J. K. and Yariv, L. (2011). An Experimental Study of Collective Deliberation. *Econometrica*, 79: 893–921.

Goodin, R. E. (2000). Democratic Deliberation Within. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 29: 81–109.

Goodin, R. E. (2003). *Reflective Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Goodin, R. E. and Niemeyer, S. J. (2003). When Does Deliberation Begin? Internal Reflection versus Public Discussion in Deliberative Democracy. *Political Studies*, 51: 627–49.

Grofman, B. and Feld, S. L. (1988). Rousseau's General Will: A Condorcetian Perspective. *American Political Science Review*, 82: 567–76.

Grönlund, K., Herne, K., and Setälä, M. (2015). Does Enclave Deliberation Polarize Opinions? *Political Behavior*, 37: 995–1020.

Gutmann, A. and Thompson, D. (2004). *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Habermas, J. (1991). *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. C. Lenhardt and S. Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).

Habermas, J. (1996). *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. W. Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).

Hong, L. and Page, S. E. (2004). Groups of Diverse Problem Solvers can Outperform Groups of High-Ability Problem Solvers. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 101: 16385–8.

Ingham, Sean. (2012). "Disagreement and Epistemic Arguments for Democracy," *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 12(2) (2013): 135–154

Landemore, H. (2012). Democratic Reason: The Mechanisms of Collective Intelligence in Politics. In *Collective Wisdom: Principles and Mechanisms*, ed. H. Landemore and J. Elster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 151–89.

Landemore, H. (2013). *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

(p. 130) Landemore, H. (2014). Democracy as Heuristic: The Ecological Rationality of Political Equality. *The Good Society*, 23: 160–78.

Landemore, H. (2017). Beyond the Fact of Disagreement? The Epistemic Turn in Deliberative Democracy. *Social Epistemology: A Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy* 31: 227–95.

Landemore, H. and Page, S. E. (2014). Deliberation and Disagreement: Problem Solving, Prediction, and Positive Dissensus. *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics*, 14: 229–54.

Luskin, R. C. (2002). From Denial to Extenuation (and Finally Beyond): Political Sophistication and Citizen Performance. In *Thinking about Political Psychology*, ed. J. H. Kuklinski. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 281–305.

Mackie, G. (2006). Does Democratic Deliberation Change Minds? *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics*, 5: 279–303.

Mackie, G. (2009). Astroturfing Infotopia. *Theoria*, 56: 30–56.

Manin, B. (2005). Deliberation: Why We Should Focus on Debate rather than Discussion. Paper presented at the Program in Ethics and Public Affairs Seminar, Princeton University, October 13, 2005.

Mansbridge, J. (1994). Using Power/Fighting Power. *Constellations*, 1: 53–73.

Mansbridge, J. with Bohman, J., Chambers, S., Estlund, D., Føllesdal, A., Fung, A., Lafont, C., Manin, B., and Martí, J. L. (2010). The Place of Self-Interest and the Role of Power in Deliberative Democracy. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 18: 64–100.

Martí, J. L. (2006). The Epistemic Conception of Deliberative Democracy Defended. In *Deliberative Democracy and Its Discontents*, ed. S. Besson and J. L. Martí (Aldershot: Ashgate), 27–56.

McGann, A. (2006). *The Logic of Democracy: Reconciling Equality, Deliberation and Minority Protection* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press).

Mendelberg, T. and Oleske, J. (2000). Race and Public Deliberation. *Political Communication*, 17: 169–91.

Mercier, H. and Landemore, H. (2012). Reasoning Is for Arguing: Understanding the Successes and Failures of Deliberation. *Political Psychology*, 33: 243–58.

Niemeyer, S. and Dryzek, J. (2007). The Ends of Deliberation: Meta-Consensus and Inter-Subjective Rationality as Ideal Outcomes. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 13: 497–526.

Ober, J. (2008). *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

Page, S. E. (2007). *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Parkinson, J. and Mansbridge, J. (eds) (2012). *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Pettit, P. (2012). *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Rae, D. (1975). The Limits of Consensual Decision. *American Political Science Review*, 69: 1270-94.

Rawls, J. (1985). Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 14: 223-51.

Raz, J. (1990). Facing Diversity: The Case for Epistemic Abstinence. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 19: 3-46.

Rescher, N. (1993). *Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Riker, W. (1982). *Liberalism Against Populism: A Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice* (San Francisco, CA: W.H. Freeman).

(p. 131) Rossi, E. and Sleat, M. (2014). Realism in Normative Political Theory. *Philosophy Compass*, 9: 689-701.

Schwartzberg, M. (2015). Epistemic Democracy and its Challenges. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18: 187-203.

Strandberg, K., Himmelroos, S., and Grönlund, K. (2017). Do Discussions in Like-Minded Groups Necessarily Lead to More Extreme Opinions? Deliberative Democracy and Group Polarization. *International Political Science Review*, online, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512117692136>.

Sunstein, C. (2002). The Law of Group Polarization. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 10: 175-95.

Steiner, J., Bächtiger, A., Spörndli, M., and Steenbergen, M. (2004). *Deliberative Politics in Action: Analyzing Parliamentary Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Steenbergen, M. R., Bächtiger, A., Spörndli, M., and Steiner, J. (2003). Measuring Political Deliberation: A Discourse Quality Index. *Comparative European Politics*, 1: 21-48.

Talisse, R. B. (2007). *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy* (New York: Routledge).

Talisse, Robert. (2012). Deliberation. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Philosophy*, ed. D. Estlund (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 204-22.

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

Thompson, D. (2008). Deliberative Democratic Theory and Empirical Political Science. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11: 497–520.

Urbinati, N. (2014). *Democracy Disfigured: Opinion, Truth, and the People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

Waldron, J. (1999). *Law and Disagreement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Wyss, D., Beste, S. and Bächtiger, A. (2015). A Decline in the Quality of Debate? The Evolution of Cognitive Complexity in Swiss Parliamentary Debates on Immigration (1968–2014). *Swiss Political Science Review*, 21: 636–53.

Young, I. M. (1996). Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy. In *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. S. Benhabib (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 120–36.

Young, I. M. (2000). *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Notes:

(1.) Contrary to a common critique of “deliberative democracy,” none of this implies that democratic deliberation must take the form of explicit appeals principles, logic, etc. Young (e.g. 1996) has emphasized the importance of other modes of expression such as stories, songs, and performances, and deliberative accounts of democratic theory can (arguably) agree. For an instructive critical discussion of the evolution of this strand of Young’s thought, see Talisse (2012).

(2.) Brian Barry (1965) was an early interpreter of Rousseau as having, in part, an epistemic conception of democracy, including nascent reference to Jury Theorem reasoning. Grofman and Feld (1988) developed the Jury Theorem reading of Rousseau. See replies by Estlund and Waldron, with a rejoinder by Grofman and Feld (Estlund et al. 1989).

(3.) For a sampling see special issue of the journal, *Episteme* devoted to “Epistemic Approaches to Democracy,” (Estlund 2008b) and references therein.

(4.) Jason Brennan (2016) follows this line of argument to what he claims is, indeed, its anti-democratic conclusion. A crucial question for epistemic deliberative democracy is how that slope might be made less slippery.

(5.) One important account of the value of democracy in terms of procedural fairness, for example, is Waldron (1999).

(6.) For an accessible sketch of the proof, see Estlund 1994, 132–7.

The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation

(7.) For a critique of the Jury Theorem's use in democratic theory, see Estlund 2008, chapter 12, "The Irrelevance of the Jury Theorem." For a more detailed treatment of the theorem and its prospects in democratic theory see Goodin (2003), esp. chapter 5, and his discussion of the Bayesian variant in chapter 6. Both Estlund and Goodin contain reference to further sources as well.

(8.) "[S]urely democracy must be largely occupied with questions that are not plausibly truth-apt" (Schwartzberg 2015, 199).

(9.) For a review of recent literature see Rossi and Sleat 2014.

(10.) Waldron 1999, 252-4.

(11.) Ingham 2012.

(12.) Ingham 2012.

(13.) Urbinati 2014, 81-127; see Landemore 2017: 292-3 for a defense.

(14.) Here we borrow from Landemore (2013).

(15.) There are four distinct conditions for the Diversity Trumps Ability Theorem to apply (Page 2007, 163). Whether or not they all translate neatly to the real world of politics and democratic citizens is a contested issue. See Anderson 2006 and Landemore 2013 for application to the democratic context.

(16.) This is less true of Habermas (1996) and Young (2000) who both make use of the all affected interests principle to define the appropriate scope of inclusion. Neither, however, theorizes this condition with the degree of elaboration it probably deserves.

(17.) None of this evidence, however, fully answers the "evidence constraint" according to Sean Ingham (2012). More still needs to be said about how we can extrapolate from the cases where all reasonable people agree that democracy does better than a random to the vast majority of political questions where disagreement subsists.

(18.) Aiming for unanimity gives individuals an incentive to vote against their preferences to produce what, given their information, is likely to be the better outcome.

David Estlund

David Estlund Lombardo Professor of the Humanities, Brown University

Hélène Landemore

Hélène Landemore Associate Professor of Political Science, Yale University

