

More Than Words: A Multidimensional Approach to Deliberative Democracy

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Abstract: Since its inception, a core aspiration of deliberative democracy has been to enable more and better inclusion within democratic politics. In this article, we argue that deliberative democracy can achieve this aspiration only if it goes beyond verbal forms of communication and acknowledges the crucial role of non-verbal communication in expressing and exchanging arguments. The article develops a multidimensional approach to deliberative democracy by emphasizing the visual, sonic and physical dimensions of communication in public deliberation. We argue that non-verbal modes of communication can contribute to public deliberation when they (1) are used as part of reason-giving processes, (2) enable the inclusion of marginalized actors in public debates and (3) induce reflection and encourage new ways of thinking about the public controversies at hand.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth.

Gospel of John 1:1

Nature, as we say, does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech. ... Speech... serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and what is unjust.

Aristotle

Western societies are characterized by a logocentric culture, in which words, either spoken or written, are seen as the fundamental form of expression. As the above quotes suggest, speech has been viewed as the defining feature of the human subject in both religion and philosophy. Words are considered to be the main medium through which humans can understand and communicate

the truth, contribute to knowledge production and make moral decisions (Rorty, 1967). Words are also central in contemporary political theory (Rollo, 2018); in the conception of 'free speech' in liberal theory, in the development of structuralist and poststructuralist theories (e.g. Butler, 1990) and in normative understandings of democracy, most notably in deliberative democracy (e.g. Habermas, 1992). In fact, deliberative democracy is defined as a 'talk-centric' mode of democracy, where the exchange of arguments (rather than the aggregation of interests or votes) has a normative priority over other forms of political expression (Chambers, 2003). In a deliberative process, participants are required to talk with each other; they are required to articulate and exchange reasons for the positions they hold and listen to the views of others (Bächtiger and Parkinson, 2019).

In deliberative democracy, this process of talking and listening is usually portrayed as taking place in a forum setting, such as citizens' assemblies and parliaments, where participants meet face-to-face, present their views and accept or challenge the views of others through verbal communication. While such face-to-face communication, and a group of participants sitting around tables and talking to each other is a typical portrayal of deliberative democracy in action, it represents only one particular view of deliberation. This 'micro' view of small group, face-to-face deliberation has often been challenged or complemented with a 'macro' view of deliberative democracy. Scholars advocating a macro view rightly argue that deliberation does not only take place in structured forums but also in the broader public sphere (Habermas, 1996; Hendriks, 2006). Here, public deliberation occurs through the contestation of discourses (Dryzek, 2000) produced by a variety of actors, including activists, state institutions, the media and citizens (Mansbridge et al., 2012). Compared to structured forums, deliberation in public sphere involves a richer variety of communicative repertoires, including a range of non-verbal modes of expression such as symbols, images or even silences (Couldry 2010; Papacharissi 2010). In fact, non-verbal modes of expression are becoming increasingly more important in conceiving contemporary public spheres, which inhabit multiple forms of this kind of expression (Dahlberg 2018).

While the modes of expression available to citizens of contemporary public spheres continue to grow, ranging from online to face-face settings, and going beyond verbal or textual expressions, many critical questions remain unanswered especially from a perspective of deliberative

democracy. Is a text and talk based understanding of deliberation still relevant to make sense of what is going on in contemporary public spheres? Or should we expand our understanding of deliberative democracy and make it more attuned to the non-verbal forms of communication? What contribution, if any, can non-verbal communication make to the public deliberation in public sphere? While non-verbal forms of expression have always been part of discursive interactions (Tully, 2016; Doerr et al., 2015; Hill and Helmers, 2009), they have received only scant attention from the scholars of deliberative democracy (Curato, Hammond and Min, 2019; Rollo 2017, Hendriks et al., 2020). In this article, we seek to conceptualise the role of non-verbal expression in public deliberation by focusing particularly on the visual, sonic and physical dimensions of communication and the role they play in public deliberation. Our argument is that non-verbal communication is as important as verbal communication in deliberative democracy. Both forms of communication can be subject to same rules and requirements. They become deliberative only if and when they nurture the formation and contestation of discourses through which societies collectively think about themselves. We do not claim that non-verbal communication contributes to deliberation unconditionally. Rather our argument is that the conditions that apply to verbal, also apply to non-verbal communication. Similar to spoken or written words, non-verbal forms of expression can be used deliberatively or not. And just like words, non-verbal expressions become part of deliberation only under certain conditions, fulfilling certain requirements.

Taking this broader view, in this article we advance three key requirements that are crucial for non-verbal modes of expression to fulfil, if they are to become deliberative: reason-giving, inclusion and reflection. Reason-giving refers to the provision of justifications for one's perspective or preference in public deliberation. Inclusion is about enabling the involvement of all affected actors and to their equal standing within deliberative processes. Lastly, reflection refers to both the collective and individual cognitive processes of absorbing arguments expressed by others, which requires a certain degree of openness and responsiveness. Deliberation, thus, can be defined as a communicative process which is reasoned, inclusive and reflective. We argue that this kind of communication might happen through words just as much as it might happen through other forms of expression. Most frequently, it happens through an overlap of different dimensions of both verbal and non-verbal communication (Smith, 2006). The analysis of the fulfillment of these requirements – for both verbal and non-verbal communication – is challenging for three reasons.

Whether reason-giving, inclusion and reflection come into action depends first, on the intentions of the communicator, second on the interpretation of the recipient and third on the context within which they are interpreted.

Rather than privileging one mode of expression over the other, we propose taking both verbal and non-verbal modes seriously as part of the multidimensional approach to deliberative democracy we put forward in this article. What makes this approach multidimensional is its acknowledgement of different dimensions of communication – both verbal and non-verbal. This is not only about pointing to the relevance of non-verbal forms of communication for deliberation. We contend that non-verbal expression is not secondary to verbal expression. The visual, sonic and physical dimensions do not simply amplify or change the meaning of spoken or written content. Instead, the use of images, sounds and embodied presence is meaningful in itself. They are not primarily by-products or conveyers of words. Furthermore, non-verbal forms of expression can contribute something beyond words to deliberation. The affective dimension in non-verbal communication cannot be expressed simply by relying on verbal communication only (Curato 2019). This is also why deliberative democrats need to pay more systematic attention to non-verbal expression.

In what follows, we, firstly, establish our theoretical argument about the need for taking non-verbal expression seriously in public deliberation. We then distinguish between three dimensions of non-verbal communication – the visual, the sonic and the physical—and illustrate how each of them can fulfil the requirements of reason-giving, inclusion and reflection by drawing on examples of non-verbal communication in contemporary public spheres. In doing so, we seek to generate the first systematic account of non-verbal forms of deliberation and establish an agenda and theoretical framework for future research.

Non-verbal expression in public deliberation

Deliberative democracy defines the core activity of democracy as inclusive, reasoned discussion inducing reflection among equals. Simone Chambers sums up the need for a (more) deliberative democracy in simple terms: ‘It is better to talk through our differences peacefully, when not doing so would result in violence, disorder, disruption, or conflict’ (Chamber, 1996: 2). Similar to

Chambers and following Habermas, most deliberative democrats associate democracy with voice and speech at the expense of other forms of expression (Rollo, 2017).¹ Habermas does acknowledge that communication involves non-verbal components (Habermas, 1983), but in his account of deliberative democracy he explicitly excludes these components to ensure ‘transparency and coherence’ in deliberation (Clifford, 2012: 213; see also Habermas, 2004).

Many deliberative democrats, following Habermas, either fail or neglect to take into account the alternative forms of reason-giving beyond talk and text in their conceptualisation of deliberative democracy. In this article, we argue that it is possible to develop and defend a view of deliberative democracy attuned to non-verbal dimensions of expression. More specifically, we argue that reason-giving can take visual, sonic and physical forms in the context of deliberation taking place in public sphere. In fact, visual, sonic and physical dimensions of communication have always been part of reason-giving practices. We are, therefore, not arguing that non-verbal dimensions should be added to deliberation; rather, we argue that they need to be acknowledged and conceptualized in deliberative terms. As Lupia and Norton (2017: 68) rightly argue, non-verbal expressions always enter the room with us: ‘They are part of the conversation, whether they are formally recognized, whispered in the shadows, or have emerged in others’ consciousness automatically once we are seen’. When someone speaks in front of others, this interaction is marked not only by words but also by gestures, by the way the person looks, by the sound of his or her voice and the presence of his or her body. When reading a newspaper, one has to actually see the words within a specific page layout and experience the texture and affordances of the paper. When one watches a movie, audio and visuals interact in complex ways. This may include vocalized words. However, the meaning of these words is not simply determined by the words themselves but it is co-constituted by the sound of the voice and the visual, sonic and physical context in which they are situated.

Sometimes, all these dimensions are relevant to the construction and communication of meaning,

¹ Habermas laid the ground for deliberative democratic theory with his seminal work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1992 [original 1962]). In this book, Habermas promoted an understanding of deliberation as verbal exchange taking place in European cafés, clubs and associations where the newspaper-reading bourgeois engage in intellectual debate. This notion of deliberation was further emphasized in Habermas’ *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984), especially through his notion of the ‘ideal speech situation’, which is oriented towards freedom from domination. In his later work, Habermas again emphasized speech as a defining feature of the human subject whereby ‘The logos of language embodies the power of the intersubjective, which precedes and grounds the subjectivity of speakers.’ (Habermas 2003: 10).

while, at other times, one or some of them may be prominent. In addition, different historical contexts may weigh these dimensions differently, thus strengthening certain forms of expression to the detriment of others. The early twentieth century, for instance, witnessed a strengthening of the sonic dimension of expression, with the popularization of the radio. Since the late twentieth century, visual forms of communication have become more prominent, with the rise of television and later digital media, enabling rapid and easy circulation of (moving) images.

To be clear, our suggestion to broaden the valid modes of expression in public deliberation is not new. Difference democrats and other feminist scholars have long criticized classical conceptions of deliberative democracy for its narrow focus on rational argumentation (e.g. Pajnik 2006). They suggested expanding the possible modes of communication in public deliberation to include aesthetic-affective modes, such as rhetoric, humour, poetry, theatre and ceremony (Dahlberg 2005). Iris Marion Young (2000), for example, suggested adding storytelling, greeting and rhetoric to the range of deliberative practices. Lynn Sanders (1997) made a case for testimony. Jane Mansbridge (1999) also added everyday talk to the range of communicative practices in public deliberation. The critical interventions of these and various other scholars have been significant for deepening the understanding of deliberative democracy. Nevertheless, this expansion has remained mainly within the boundaries of verbal expression. Even those scholars advocating the need to strengthen the ties between the studies of deliberative democracy and rhetoric focused on verbal articulation (see for example Dryzek, 2010; Chambers 2009; Polletta and Lee 2006; O'Neill 2002). This has been the case despite the existence of an expressive body of literature on rhetoric that acknowledges the role of visuals and sounds in argumentative exchanges in other fields of study (see for example Kjeldsen 2018; Blair, 2015; Hill and Helmers 2009; Olson et al. 2008; Lucaites 2001; Frith 1996).

Building on the previous attempts to broaden the legitimate forms of expression in public deliberation, we suggest going beyond the talk-centric logic of deliberation and make a case for including non-verbal forms of expression in the deliberative repertoire. We use the term 'deliberative repertoire' to refer to the range of discursive and performative modes of expression available to actors taking part in reasoned exchanges. The multidimensional approach to deliberative democracy we propose seeks to bring performative aspects of communication to the

fore. It makes a case for acknowledging the expression of reasons through a wide variety of performative means.

As such, our argument builds on the work of Toby Rollo (2017; 2018), who has convincingly shown that non-verbal forms of expression can play an important democratic role in a deliberative system. Rollo (2018: 5) argues that an enactive approach to politics “accounts for the ways in which our embodied practices are themselves sites of political reasoning and contestation over rules”. According to him, ‘everyday deeds’ such as enactive protests or the refusal to participate in certain political arenas, are essential to democracy. Yet, they are not deliberative. His account relies on the distinction between ‘deliberative discursive acts’ and ‘non-deliberative deeds’. While we do not take issue with this distinction, we contend that there is a third category. Beyond deliberative speech and non-deliberative deeds, there are also deliberative deeds. Rather than looking at deeds that may contribute to deliberation but are in themselves non-deliberative, we concentrate on those non-verbal deeds that are part of deliberation and at par with verbal expression. Moreover, we claim that deliberative theory needs to pay attention to the multiple dimensions of communication involved in deliberation. While Rollo (2017: 602) is concerned that too much emphasis on deliberation may be dangerous to democracy, we are worried that restricting deliberation to speech may miss the rational nature of other dimensions of expression.

By suggesting to conceptualize deliberative democracy in multidimensional terms, we do not aim to deny the crucial role of words, which, we believe, remain important to reason-giving. Rather, our aim is to show that communication in deliberative democracy involves more than words. We argue that – just like words – visuals, sounds and presence may foster the core deliberative values of reason-giving, inclusion and reflection. More specifically, they become part of the deliberative repertoire insofar as they are used to enable inclusion of marginalized actors and ideas and induce reflective thinking, thus expanding ways of understanding the issues at hand. The deliberative principles of reason-giving, inclusion and reflection are relevant criteria to investigate why and how visuals, sounds and presence play a role in public deliberation.

We do not claim, therefore, that non-verbal communication is necessarily always deliberative. In fact, the non-verbal is often non-deliberative and sometimes even anti-deliberative. But neither are

words always deliberative. As Habermas (2006: 413) puts it, '[d]eliberation is a demanding form of communication.' It is not any type of communication; it requires inclusive processes of mutual justification and an orientation towards the goal of freedom from domination (Hammond 2018). Moreover, it requires a process of reflection in a reciprocal manner and expects deliberators to express their particular experiences in other-regarding ways. The type of reflection required in deliberative democracy is not an individual capacity but an interactive process that emerges from the practices of asking for reasons and providing justifications. Such a process depends on many dimensions of expression.

Besides the deliberative requirements, three other contextual factors are key for rendering both verbal and non-verbal communication deliberative. First, deliberativeness depends on the intentions of the communicator, who must stake what Owen and Smith (2015) call a deliberative stance: "a relation to others as equals engaged in the mutual exchange of reasons" (p.228). Second, deliberativeness depends on the interpretation of the recipient of the communication. The best intentions of the communicator might not prevent the interpretation of a message as demeaning or otherwise un-deliberative. This interpretation depends on, third, the wider context of the communication. Words, images, sounds and bodies can become part of deliberation depending on their relation to other words, images, sounds and bodies.

The cycle involving production, reception and interpretation of signs (whether verbal or non-verbal) is a social process (Müller 2008). Signs, therefore, acquire meaning through a series of associations, that are deeply connected to social and cultural experiences (Müller, 2007). There are, for instance, 'hearing habits' that affect the meanings individuals attribute to certain discourses (Doerr, 2011; Polletta, 2006). An effective analysis of the possible deliberativeness of signs (whether verbal or non-verbal) cannot, hence, be conducted *a priori*, according to immanent properties. The frame of a given image, the rhythm of a sound or the disposition of a body cannot be said to be inherently deliberative, independently of the context of which they are part. Discourse analysis has long shown that text can only be understood within context (Charaudeau 1983), and non-verbal communication should also be thought of in the same way

In what follows, we focus on the visual, sonic, and physical dimensions of non-verbal communication. Our purpose is to set a research agenda for the inclusion of these dimensions into the study of deliberative democracy. We draw on multiple examples to illustrate the relevance and impact of non-verbal communication in public deliberation. For analytical purposes, we structure these examples along the three deliberative principles of reason-giving, inclusion and reflection. While all examples speak to each of these principles at least to a certain extent, we want to assemble the examples that highlight the respective principle the most in order to facilitate analytical clarity.

The visual dimension of the deliberative repertoire: when images speak

Visuality plays a crucial role in contemporary public deliberation (Dahlberg, 2018). Politicians, activists, and everyday citizens employ multiple visual elements such as photographs, street graffiti, cartoons, internet memes, GIF (graphic interchange format) images and profile pictures in various online social networks as a way of participating in public deliberation. The communicative power of images lies in their capacity to go beyond words. While words align meaning in a consecutive order, images assemble complex information and make it perceptible at a glance. This temporal component changes the dynamics of communicative interaction. Images also contain particular emotive qualities and can express reasons that are difficult or impossible to put into words. This quality of images can contribute to the expression of reasons that would otherwise remain unnoticed. Images are also crucial for enabling the inclusion of marginalized groups who may make their arguments perceptible by visual illustration rather than by verbal expression. Apart from diffusing new ideas (Doerr et al., 2015), visuals may also induce reflection on controversial issues. They may afford a better understanding of the positions of others in deliberation and this enhancement of empathy potentially enables reflection.

To illustrate how images can express reasons in public deliberation, let us turn to the example of graffiti. Graffiti dates back to the ancient Greek practices of scratching and painting images on walls. Already in its early beginnings, graffiti often carried highly political content and expressed dissent against the ruling class (Zadorojnyi, 2011). Today, the streets of many metropolitan areas around the world function as palimpsests on which are inscribed layer upon layer of graffiti. During the financial crisis of 2008 sprayers ‘turn their attention to the creative and expressive potential of

graffiti and articulate cultural heterotopias on the visual landscape of Greek cities' (Zaimakis, 2015). On a house wall, the life-size image of a catwalk supermodel with an amputated leg replaced by a prosthesis carries the caption 'Greece Next Economic Model'. This powerful image captures the state of the Greek economy and its governance as permanently injured and puts this into the context of televised beauty contests. The image works as an argument, equating beauty contests with international economic competition between countries, criticizing the sexist and misogynist aspects of current entertainment culture and associating the hunger that is part of the everyday life of models (often suffering from eating disorders) with the impoverished Greek society. In this image, the disciplinary discourse that establishes particular beauty standards for women, who (in the case of the modelling business) starve themselves in fierce competition for the next job, stands for the disciplinary discourse of EU institutions advising Greeks to 'tighten their belts' through austerity measures.

As the example of graffiti illustrates, visuals have played a crucial role in public debates for centuries, yet, as previously stated, the contemporary dissemination of digital technologies increases their importance even further. Images steer narratives in social networks, circulating easily and quickly in times of communicative abundance (Keane, 2013). Internet memes and GIF images, for example, offer abbreviated forms of expression, communicating certain issues quickly and often spreading rapidly. Several studies show the argumentative power of these visual elements in public debates (Curato, Hammond and Min, 2019; Chagas et al., 2017; Shifman, 2014). Memes are a particularly apt illustration of the reciprocal nature of visual argumentation. The logic of memes consists of creating a visual argument that is taken up and recreated by others. These recreations or recitations often alter the content of the original image. The consistency of the image thus links visual arguments to one another while alteration of the image articulates a response and adds new content to the conversation. Activists of Occupy Wall Street, for instance, created memes using a photograph of a riot policeman in military gear, pepper spraying students sitting on the ground as part of a sit-in protest. The image was then taken up and reproduced in various memes showing 'pepper spray cop' spraying Jesus Christ at the last supper, Rosa Parks sitting in the front of the bus and the protester standing in front of a tank in Tiananmen square. Another version shows 'pepper spray cop' spraying ink over the US constitution (Milner, 2013). Social actors who create and share these memes intend to make a public argument about the dangers of institutional

violence, recurring to signs and figures capable of resonating culturally to their audiences. Both the example of graffiti and memes then illustrate how visuals can be employed to express arguments.

These visually expressed arguments can realize the deliberative value of inclusion. In principle, readily available social media platforms for multimodal forms of communication invert established communication structures in which journalists report to citizens. They turn citizens into everyday reporters. The resulting peer-to-peer exchange of self-created news through digital visualization challenges entrenched divisions of power. This can be illustrated by various incidents of citizens documenting police brutality against members of ethnic minorities and circulating these images and videos via social media (Wall and Linnemann, 2014). The video of a white US police officer kneeling on and ultimately suffocating a black man is the most recent example. The global outrage and protest movement in response to the video makes a powerful claim to deconstructing racial power asymmetries and including the voices of non-white people around the world into public debate (see Carney, 2016).

Visual elements and filters temporarily applied to social media profile pictures are another example of how visibility can contribute to inclusion in public deliberation. Flags and ribbons – referred to as Twibbons on Twitter – or colour filters abound when important political events happen, showing allegiance to civil society groups, support for social causes, specific legislation or political candidates and indignation about politicians. The perception that one's timeline is flooded by certain filters is a powerful demonstration of public support of a certain view (Gerbaudo, 2015). Every year during Pride season, for example, social media users employ colour filters of the rainbow flag over their profile picture to promote LGBTIQ rights. Beyond the visual illustration of support for a marginalized group, social media users call for an open and diverse society that is acceptant of various sexualities, genders and family constellations. Apart from the use of ribbons and colour filters, social media users also, at times, change their profile picture for an image of someone or something else. In the so-called 'Arab Spring', for example, thousands of social media users changed their profile picture for the image of Khaled Said, a 28-year-old blogger killed by the police in Alexandria. Such carnivalesque identity performances in digital engagement can contribute to inclusion by challenging power asymmetries and expressing solidarity with

marginalized groups and agendas (Asenbaum, 2020a).

How the deliberative value of reflection can be realized through visuality can be illustrated by looking at the role photographs play in media discourses. Photographs add an unspeakable dimension to the issues at stake by inducing shock, disdain, amusement or sympathy. To be sure, strong images – including grotesque ones – may push certain viewers away (Halfman and Young, 2010), but they can also draw attention to certain issues, expose suffering in traumatic situations, challenge existing interpretive frames, advance new agendas, evince wrongdoing and mobilize citizens for action (Curato, 2019). By establishing a connection to emotions, images can enhance empathy and induce reflection that would not be achieved through mere verbal exchange.

When, in 2015, the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ erupted with thousands of people seeking asylum in Europe, it was the picture of the dead body of a three-year-old Syrian boy named Alan Kurdi that stirred worldwide discussion and action, fostering reflection on the crisis. Verbal reports of the refugee crisis remained abstract in the heads and hearts of many until they saw the image of the little boy who drowned on the way to Europe (Slovic et al., 2017). The image was soon appropriated by refugee solidarity movements and actively used to express arguments in social media discourses pushing for better treatment of refugees. Lying on his belly with his face in the sand, the image was used to speak of desperation. For many, it spoke of the broken system of EU immigration policy or worldwide inequality. While this image was not in itself deliberative, it had an aesthetic capacity to draw attention to a pressing problem in a compelling way. It succeeded to do so because it was mobilized by social actors who aimed at inducing reflection on a collective problem. In this particular context, it was capable of resonating with audiences’ interpretive frames and cultural patterns. The power of this particular photograph in triggering discussions in the public sphere has to do with its capacity of being used and appropriated through series of associations.

The examples of photographs in journalism, online images, colour filters and graffiti illustrate the possibility of visuals playing a role in reasoned public discourse. Adopting a broad version of public deliberation as advocated by Dryzek (2000), it becomes apparent how visuals take part in clashes of discourses in which reasons are presented to challenge other reasons. In comparison with words, visual communication is usually ambiguous and leaves more leeway for various

interpretations. It needs to be noted, however, that verbal communication is also prone to multiple interpretations as audience studies have long shown (Hall, 1980). Lack of polyphony is not a requirement to consider a form of expression deliberative. The use of visuals also adds new qualities to deliberation. They can make arguments more easily accessible and thus potentially have inclusive effects. In addition, the emotive qualities of some images may make other people's views and realities more comprehensible, thus nurturing other-regarding views. Through images, stories are told in a way that goes beyond words.

The sonic dimension of the deliberative repertoire: reasoning with sounds

A second expansion of the deliberative repertoire brings the sonic dimension of communication to the fore. Many sound elements play a significant role in public deliberation. According to Butler (2015: 58), sounds can be employed to 'signify in common – singing, chanting, declaring, beating drums or pots, or pounding against a prison or separation wall'. Sound can be used to draw attention to the causes of marginalized groups and make them heard. Sounds may also engage with dominant discourses and induce reflection about their meanings. At the same time, it can work to dominate and silence others in non-deliberative ways. Silence also plays an ambivalent role in deliberation. It can have multiple meanings and, as we will argue, it can work as a communicative act that expresses reasons (Vieira et al., 2019; Curato, Hammond and Min, 2019; Dobson, 2014; Keane, 2013; Ferguson, 2003; Bickford, 1996).

How sounds express arguments in public deliberation can be illustrated by the use of drums, claps and whistles in recent protest movements. The logocentric culture of activism, epitomized by the classic megaphone leading a march, can be contrasted with recent examples of a horizontal culture replacing the single megaphone with groups of drummers. In Brazil, the 2013 June protests were marked by groups of young activists who played drums during the marches. Part of the broader, global wave of protest that started in 2011 (including movements as diverse as Occupy, the Indignados and the Gezi Park Protests), the Brazilian demonstrations were triggered by an autonomist movement, protesting against a rise in fares for public transport in the city of Sao Paulo. Over a million Brazilians took the streets in more than a hundred cities in a huge cycle of protest that opened a period of extreme polarization in the country's politics. The protests soon evolved

into multiple and competing agendas, which ranged from corruption to police brutality and the consequences of preparations for two mega sports events in the country – the 2014 World Cup and 2016 summer Olympic Games (Menconça et al. 2019; Alonso and Mische 2017; Bringel and Pleyers 2015; Mendonça and Ercan 2015; Singer 2014). In these protests, drums were used to express arguments, besides cheering on activists. The loud, strong and lively beat of drums opposed the anti-political claims against the public exhibition of left-wing flags and social movements' symbols (Ricci and Arley 2014). In this specific context, drums conveyed a message of plurality and freedom of expression, against those who wanted to avoid the public appearance of left-wing political actors. Drums were intentionally used by social actors to avoid the rise of chants aimed at homogenizing the protests. Contesting the idea of a unified national people that sought to silence critical actors, drums challenged the politics of anti-politics.

Music can work as an important element for inclusion in deliberative processes (Manuel, 2017; Mundim, 2006). Pitch, rhythm and sonic qualities convey meaning beyond words that can work to include marginalized groups. Songs cannot be reduced to the content of their lyrics only (Frith, 1996). Music offers a way of perceiving the world; it 'reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society' (Attali, 1985: 4). The political power of rap music, for instance, cannot be understood merely by a textual exegesis of the lyrics. Sound elements of rap songs often convey intentional contentions and provocations (Schusterman 1998). Rap music functions to express the discontent of disadvantaged groups. Sounds work to vent anger about the injustice of marginalization at the intersection of class, race and age, aiming at promoting the inclusion of certain voices in the public space. It is an attack in the form of defence, amplified by the beat of the drums and the volume of the loudspeakers (see Sanders, 1997). Similarly, rock and roll, emerging as a central aspect of post-war US culture, presents another example of how music can empower those who feel powerless (Grossberg, 1984). In the context of the conservative mainstream of the 1950s, rock emerged as a means for young people to shock by expressing aggression and sexuality. Again, the rebellion expressed through music that was part of young people's everyday life challenged established norms and authority. Listening to Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, or Jimmy Hendrix was associated with the emancipatory movements of the 1960s (Attali, 1985). Rebellious attitudes were then often carried into conversations with parents, teachers and friends and made their way through different channels and

arenas of public debate.

If songs, drums, chants and tone of voice have deliberative relevance, the absence of sound can also be employed for deliberative claim-making (Vieira et al., 2019; Dobson, 2014; Keane, 2013; Ferguson, 2003). As the following examples demonstrate, silence can unravel powerful dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Silence in the context of deliberation is often understood as a precondition for listening, but it may also be an indicator of or response to exclusion (Dobson, 2014). Mansbridge (1983) and, more recently, Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2014) have shown that silence in deliberative forums can signal subjugation when participation by members of marginalized groups is suppressed. However, silence can also signal power through the subject's refusal to participate (Rollo, 2017). Those who speak least in deliberative settings can express disagreement of what has been said or make a claim for inclusion through communicative withdrawal. Silence may function as an argument against the communicative process itself, fostering reflection about it and thus inducing more inclusive processes. Silence may be used as 'a mode of communicative action' (Vieira et al, 2019: 428) and challenge the situation in a more acute way than vocalization of discontent would.

The 'sound of silence' in response to an uttered argument should not, therefore, be thought of as empty or blank but as powerful expression (Göker, 2013). Silence is most powerful wherever talk is expected (Kanngieser, 2012). As diplomacy shows, the refusal to engage in talks functions as a strong sanction. Silence also plays a role in protest movements. The 1917 Silent Parade in New York City is a telling example. When around 10,000 African Americans marched down 5th Avenue to protest against racial hate crime, lynching and everyday discrimination, it was their silence, the absence of chants, claps, cheers and speeches, that conveyed their argument for inclusion. Like a funeral march mourning the death and injuries endured by many, the demonstrators raised a voiceless voice for an inclusive society that does not only respect but embraces diversity (Diggs Colbert, 2017).

The power of sounds to induce reflection in public deliberation can be illustrated by the political intervention of the Brazilian music band Planet Hemp in the public debate about decriminalization of cannabis. Combining rock and rap in innovative ways, the band's 1995 song 'Legalize já'

(legalize now) expressed the argument for legalization of marijuana through music. The rebellious music of the band played an important role in generating a debate on a topic that had received little public attention up to that point. It induced reflection on a topic long considered a taboo. The media gave broad coverage to the topic and rallies for the legalization of cannabis were inspired by the song. The band triggered much controversy over the right to talk about this topic as discourse in favour of the legalization of cannabis in Brazil is often seen as an incentive to a criminalized behaviour. Some of the band's shows were prohibited and its members were arrested in 1997. In 2011, the Brazilian Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision, declared the rallies for the liberalization of cannabis to be legal in the exercise of freedom of speech. The band was mentioned in these debates. This shows that these songs, in this particular context, succeeded in inducing reflection on a controversial topic not just for the fans of the band but in the broader public (Mundim, 2006).

Beyond the examples of music, drum beats and silence, sound also affects deliberation in subtler ways. Sound is inherent in all non-written linguistic expression as talk does not only consist of mere words but of voice and its sound as well. The way a voice sounds may make words more or less comprehensible and compelling.

The communicational and world-making capacities of voices exceed their capture by the words and meanings they articulate. The acoustic qualities and inflections of voices – the timbres, intonations, accents, rhythms and frequencies – impact on how we speak and listen to one another; the voice, and how we hear it, is produced by, and reproduces, codings of power, class, gender and race. (Kanngieser, 2012: 339)

The sound of a human voice tells a story. It can bring the speaker closer to listeners because the voice speaks of life experience and social positionality. In this way, the tone of voice may contribute to reflection. In establishing a connection between deliberators, the tone of voice can promote emotional qualities that invite a more thorough consideration of the articulated content.

As the above examples illustrate, sound and silence can express arguments in deliberation. Again, they are not deliberative per se (or non-deliberative per se), as if they had intrinsic qualities that led to (or hindered) deliberation. They may play a role in deliberative exchanges, if they nurture an inclusive and reflexive give and take of reasons. They can do so when actors adopt a deliberative stance and this can only be assessed in particular contexts. Drums can express arguments and music

can articulate claims for inclusion. Pitch, intonation and the timbre of speaking voices can induce reflection by adding qualities to deliberation that are beyond the content of the words themselves. The production of meanings by actors take these elements into consideration. Silence can also be used to express arguments, demonstrate resistance, signal domination and open possibilities for meta-deliberation.

The physical dimension of the deliberative repertoire: embodied meaning

The third expansion of the deliberative repertoire that we suggest focuses on the physical dimension of argumentation. We are particularly interested in how embodied presence – the simple act of being there – may serve as practice of reason-giving, not through vocal utterances, but through corporeal performances (Curato, Hammond and Min, 2019: 7; Curato, 2019).

Recently, some scholars have begun to unpack the role of presence in public deliberation by considering the role bodies play in deliberative encounters (Rollo, 2017). These scholars question the Habermasian notion of ‘subjectless’ discourses, which appear to develop their own agency as they move between institutions, state actors, activists and the media. They challenge the notion of the reasoned, dispassionate deliberator who judges arguments from a position of impartiality according to universal standards of truth. In her study on the inaccessibility of deliberative settings for people with speech impairments, Clifford (2012: 211) contends: ‘By neglecting alternative modes of non-verbal and embodied communication, deliberative theorists disable the speech of multiple populations’.

In response to this problem, Amanda Machin (2015) draws a picture of deliberation as physically embodied encounter. She argues that ‘Deliberation is enflashed by fidgeting, flirting, fascinating and fragile bodies that empathize and disregard each other and identify and empower themselves’ (58). Their identifications mark sites of inclusion and exclusion as ‘bodies contribute to political interaction by opening up spaces for interrogation and by unsettling conventional norms’ (Machin 2015: 56). Body language, gestures, winks, smiles, nods and shrugs are to be understood as a communicative aspect of deliberation (Machin, 2015: 47). In addition to body language, clothing is also a mode of performative self-presentation, which conveys content in deliberative forums:

We have spoken before we speak, we have been read before we write. The people who enter a room carry not only the inscribed body, but the many texts they have written on that body: when they shaved or didn't shave, when they put on makeup, when they dressed. The people who deliberate do so clothed in texts that speak of their place: of their wealth or poverty, their religion, their level of education, their regions, their preferences and politics. The uniform and the political T-shirt carry messages, but so do headphones and Birkenstocks. The clothes a speaker wears inflect the speech. (Lupia and Norton, 2017: 68)

In this way, bodies cannot only express content generally, but also particular arguments. By sitting down in the front part of a bus in the Alabama of the 1950s, Rosa Parks spoke through her body and represented others with racial bodily attributes that are associated with hers. Through her body, she made an argument for equality and justice. In the context of protests, the very act of taking to the streets and forming a collective body can be seen as a practice that makes conflict visible (Doerr et al., 2015). Recent demonstrations, such as the Indignados in Spain, the Gezi Park protests in Turkey or Black Lives Matter in the USA illustrate the physical arguments that bodies can make (Butler, 2015). Camping in a public square, sleeping in a school for several days and cooking within a state building are ways to physically occupy space as a means of political expression. When protesters assemble, their gathered bodies perform a collective statement. Similarly, in squatter movements or in the sit-ins of the US Civil Rights movement, occupation of space with the physical body claims individual and collective rights and opens up other possible futures. Appearance may become an illocutionary act that embodies popular sovereignty (Liou, 2017: 353).

Such corporeal performances can tribute to deliberative democracy when they articulate claims for inclusion. The caravans of Central American migrants who walked for thousands of kilometres in 2017 and 2018 point to the inclusive effects of presence in deliberation. Through these marches migrants made a claim for acknowledgment of their existence, which is so often ignored. The effort required by their embodied performance indicates the magnitude of the problems experienced in their home countries. Public sight of children and the elderly evinces their despair and triggered debates over their situation and future possibilities. Through their bodies, these individuals speak loud. This corporeal enactment of demands is becoming more common when the livelihood of bodies is threatened through rising precariousness: 'Bodies assemble precisely to show that they are bodies, and to let it be known politically what it means to persist as a body in this world' (Butler, 2015: 63). Inclusion is vindicated and warranted through corporal performances.

The key role physical presence can play for inclusion is the focus of the politics of presence (Phillips, 1995). Calling for gender quotas in parliaments, Mansbridge explains: ‘Even when the descriptive legislator is silent, his or her mere physical presence reminds the other legislators of the perspectives and interests of the group of which he or she is a descriptive member’ (2005: 626). It is the physical body itself, perceptible through vision, smell and touch, that expresses content. By drawing attention to marginalization, embodied presence is employed to articulate arguments for inclusion. This seems to be particularly evident for members of social groups that mainstream discourses stigmatize as abnormal, such as people with disabilities and transgendered people. The mere presence of these marginalized individuals may challenge naturalized views of what is normal and acceptable. Rather than representing a person or a group of people discursively through words, the physical presence of a particular person ‘makes him or her real’.

The politics of presence, however, should not be misread in essentialist terms. Bodies in deliberation are not as fixed entities that reify identities, but performative enactments of the self. Rather than expressing a pre-given identity, they are produced through participatory interaction both by the subject itself and its audience. Bodies are continuously in motion. They are simultaneously deliberating agents and products of deliberation in a politics of becoming (Asenbaum, 2020b). This can be illustrated by the performative acts of SlutWalks. Here, exposure of the body is used to claim the right to openly display sexuality. In SlutWalks, women protest against the argument that rape victims provoke sexual violence by dressing ‘provocatively’. While SlutWalks are criticized for reproducing gender stereotypes it is important to note that participants in these protests show a particular side of their multiple selves. Among the many identities as professionals, family members, religious affiliations, and racial and sexual identifications, they perform “sluts”. They do so in an attempt to include marginalized actors in a process of challenging dominant interpretive frames (O’Keefe, 2014). In doing so they make evident the absurd of blaming the victim for the violence suffered, inducing reflection over a very recurrent pattern of action in contemporary societies.

Just as exposure of the naked body can function as a claim for inclusion, covering the body and concealing its identity markers can also be employed to champion the same cause. Frequent use of

Guy Fawkes masks in recent protests around the world, for instance, challenges governmental surveillance and defends freedom of speech. This needs to be understood in the context of the proposal and implementation of new laws around the world, banning concealment of the face in public places.² The state thus claims uninterrupted access to individual personas in public places. Donning masks in street protests then works as a denial of such identification. In groups such as Anonymous, Pussy Riot and the Zapatistas, masks facilitate a performance that temporarily conceals individuality, suggesting visually that it really does not matter whose body it is; rather, it is the ideas collectively shared by those wearing such masks that matter most (Asenbaum, 2018a; Cruz 2018). Such anonymous identity performances gain new currency through the emergence of online politics. Going online, however, does not mean leaving the body behind as commonly held. Rather, digital communication provides new means of enacting the body through avatars, profile pictures, digital body images or emoticons (Asenbaum, 2019). This happened, for example, when a swarm of stereotypical African American-looking avatars blocked several entrances in the virtual Habbo Hotel in response to allegations of racist actions by Habbo Hotel moderators (Asenbaum, 2018b).

When protestors come together, their ‘act of assembling does more than disagree: the bodies that gather also reclaim time and space’ (Ahmed, 2014). The newly won time and space can serve not only protestors themselves but also societies at large to reflect on given problems. The power of bodies to induce reflection can be exemplified by the Australian protest group called ‘Knitting Nannas Against Gas (KNAG)’. This group consists of elderly women protesting against the mining of coal seam gas in Australia by gathering and knitting in public spaces, such as outside the offices of members of parliament. During their weekly ‘knit-ins’, KNAG members knit black and yellow beanies, tea cosies and long scarves, which are then displayed on gates, roads or trees. The group uses verbal and textual means of communicating their protests too. For instance, they organize petitions to demonstrate public objections to the coal seam gas industry. Yet it is their regular and visible presence in public spaces, the bodies they display silently, the identities they perform and the material practice of knitting, which articulate their messages. Their presence highlights ‘the basic principle of democracy, forcing their representatives to listen, or at least see’ (Clarke, 2016: 301). The public that spectates these performances of meditative knitting either on site or online is

² This article was written before the Covid-19 pandemic, which re-signifies the public use of masks.

then stimulated to reflect on the arguments expressed through knitting.

Another example from the city of Belo Horizonte in Brazil helps illustrating the reflective impact of presence. In 2010, a recently elected mayor published a decree prohibiting public activities in a square traditionally used by social movements for demonstrations. The immediate reaction was the occupation of the square through a ludic performance in which the square (*Praça* in Portuguese) was transformed into a beach (*Praia*). As an inland city, Belo Horizonte acquired its first ‘beach’ when citizens occupied the square wearing swimsuits and bringing surf boards, buoys and beach toys. A water truck made sure that the activists remained wet. By simply ‘being there’, demonstrators expressed opposition and triggered broader discussions in the public sphere about the right to use the city’s public spaces (Berquó, 2015; Albuquerque, 2013). In that context, their reinvention of a public space intended to induce reflection over the appropriate uses of a collective space and invited audiences, through humour, to re-imagine their urban environment.

All these examples suggest that citizens can engage in public deliberation through embodied performances. By being there, individuals and groups may induce reflection and shed light on neglected issues related to the bodies they represent, which can contribute to inclusion. The caravan migrants, Knitting Nannas and SlutWalk feminists made themselves ‘heard’ by being somewhere. Embodied presence can challenge and displace other views and can be a valid and relevant part of deliberative processes.

Conclusion

In this article we sought to challenge the logocentric conception of deliberative democracy as a verbal exchange of arguments, and argued that deliberation also has visual, sonic and physical dimensions, which are crucial for enabling reason-giving, inclusion and reflection. While these dimensions have always existed, they have gained further relevance in contemporary public spheres where public discussions are held in various platforms (both online and face-to-face) featuring diverse forms of communication. Visuals, sounds and embodied presence play important roles in public argumentative exchanges and hence demand particular attention by deliberative democrats. They may promote inclusion, foster discursive clashes and induce reflexivity. This is

not to say that these three dimensions are inherently deliberative. In fact, no single form of expression can be considered unconditionally deliberative. Deliberation is a relational process; it requires the give and take of reasons in inclusive and reflective ways. This can be achieved through words, but also through images, sounds, presence and other possible means.

If the communicative dimensions highlighted here have similarities when compared to the verbal dimension, they also have specificities. The non-verbal dimensions of communication we focused on may convey messages quickly; they can bring to light discourses and actors frequently neglected or ignored; they may engage with and challenge alternative perspectives that are beyond words. In addition, non-verbal communication often adds affective qualities to deliberation and can enhance the experience of other perspectives. Visuals, sounds and embodied presence may, therefore, have deep political implications and should be considered more seriously and systematically from the perspective of deliberative democracy. The non-verbal dimensions can convey meaning independently of the verbal dimension, although the most common situation involves a complex interplay between these dimensions.

Consideration of the non-verbal dimensions of communication from a deliberative perspective also requires attention to their possible anti-deliberative consequences. Non-verbal forms of expression, like the verbal ones, can be mobilized to make public debate inviable. Images, sounds and bodies can be employed to generate exclusion, spread lies, mute marginalized voices, hinder the emergence of alternative perspectives and consolidate stereotypes. Their manipulative aspects can be used to discriminate through emotionalization, to advance hate speech and misogyny and to galvanize people against one another, posing severe threats to deliberative ideals. It is important to consider these through deliberative lenses, investigating why, how and when they become part of deliberative processes, i.e., why, how and when they play a role in processes through which discourses clash publicly, inducing reflection on collective issues in an inclusive manner.

This article sought to advance a research agenda which is attentive to the multidimensionality of communication in deliberative processes. The multidimensional deliberative approach we suggest in this article emphasises the need to pay attention to the diverse dimensions of any form of communication, and to the conditions under which these dimensions become part of

deliberative processes. Building on the existing accounts in this direction (Rollo, 2017; Curato, Hammond and Min, 2018; Curato, 2019; Hendriks et al., 2020), we presented a variety of examples where nonverbal communication enhances the deliberative capacity of the public sphere. By investigating reason-giving, inclusion and reflection in nonverbal of communication and paying attention to the intentions of deliberators, the reception and the context, we provide a theoretical framework for future research.

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