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The dialogic turn: dialogue for deliberation

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Much of current debate on deliberative democracy verses on the difficulty of bridging the gap between normative theory and practical development. This article argues that, in order to bridge that gap and facilitate deliberative scenarios, more attention must be paid to the sociological core of deliberative democracy, namely, interpersonal communication. Dialogue scholarship has gained momentum over the past decade, offering a way forward in terms of enlarging the concept of deliberation while enriching its processes. This article proposes some reflections towards an integrated model of dialogue and deliberation (D+D) for collaborative policy making scenarios. The purpose is to explore, from a pragmatic and post-empiricist orientation, this particular crossroads of political science and communication scholarship.

Introduction[1]

> "Participatory democracy […] depends on the quality of communication in which choices are identified and decisions are made. And this quality requires that we treat public communication as more than just a decision-making tool –a means to an end. [...] Participatory democracy works best when there is a complex array of communication patterns available, each intersecting with the others to create a robust and vibrant public sphere."
>
> Spano (2001:27)

The purpose of this article is to bring together, on an exploratory level, two areas of scholarship that have evolved in parallel; namely, deliberative theory and dialogue studies. The former represents one of the most important developments in the democratic theory of the last decades. The latter offers a variety of practical approaches to fostering collaborative communication on the ground. Subsequently, the article is mostly comprised of a review of the literature that is relevant to frame

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areas where these disciplines may be brought together in order to design scenarios for deliberative policy making[2].

The last decades have seen an increased interest in discourses that are at the core of twenty first century democracy: dialogue and deliberation, citizen participation, collaborative policy making or public engagement. This article emphasizes the need for the study of the interpersonal communication processes that underpin the materialisation of such discourses. The purpose is to stimulate debate about the forms of communication that are dominant in the public sphere, arguing their inadequacy for the practical advance of the deliberative ideal. Consequently, I will draw on a perspective based on the dialogic tenets of communication. This perspective is being developed within a variety of social sciences, although it has scarcely been articulated by political scientists. What kind of communication dynamics can foster the aspirations of deliberative democracy on the ground? In order to offer a preliminary response, this article will introduce the practical theory offered by the dialogue studies within communication scholarship.

Let us start by framing the stream of scholarship that underpins our understanding of deliberative policy making. The crisis of positivism, and the impossibility of neutralising value frames within the policy process, has given rise to a post-empiricist approach to policy making and policy analysis (see Fischer, 2000; 2003; 2009). Frank Fischer's work represents a challenge to the technocratic and empiricist orientations that have been pervasive within policy analysis since its foundation (Goodin et al., 2008; Yanow, 2000). He has studied in detail the discursive role of policy, elaborating a theoretical frame for deliberative practice, and emphasizing the need for interpretive inquiry - especially sensible to communicative dimensions - in order to counteract the pretensions of objectivity of a social science still inhibited by the positivistic paradigm of modernity (Taylor, 2001).

This approach does not imply a rejection of the empirical per se, but an epistemological adjustment where "empirical research itself has to be embedded in an interpretive-oriented discursive practice" (Fischer, 2003:69). According to Fischer, the post-empiricist perspective explains better what political scientists do in reality: "the analyst functions as an interpretive mediator between the available analytical frameworks [...] and the competing local perspectives" (Fischer, 2003:138).

Post-empiricist political science originated in the crossroads of social constructivism, critical theory and post-structuralism. The acknowledgement of the inexistence of neutral stances has thrown discursive practices into relief: values, interpretations, meanings and ideas. This means, in line with Torgerson (1986), a pragmatist return of politics to policy analysis. In other words, "the effort to eliminate subjectivity is futile". In trying to do so "the rational-analytic techniques [...] tend more to serve an unwitting ideological function than as a method for assembling empirical truths" (Fischer, 2003:37).These considerations are pertinent, as we will see, in order to rebut certain formulations of the logic of the best argument that underpin daily political talk in the public sphere.

Finally, Fischer (2003:222) highlights the crucial "communicative turn" taken by political science in the last decades, underpinned by an increased attention to language, interaction, context and contingency. That is to say that by means of communication, citizens "construct their social world and the political actions they undertake to influence it" (Fischer, 2003:42). Building on this basis, Fischer

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[2] Although this article is mainly theoretical, it sets the basic framework used by the author to design, facilitate and evaluate small group deliberative dialogue in an organisational policy making process (Escobar, 2009). A forthcoming article will reflect on the empirical data generated.

advocates that political scientists take part in participatory research[3], fostered by practice-orientated theory, capable of proposing scenarios and critical methods for citizen deliberation.

From macro to micro-processes

The tenets of deliberative democracy represent an attempt to counteract the deficits of representative democracy, particularly in terms of legitimacy (Bohman, 1996). Theorists generally agree, as Ryfe (2002:359) puts it, that "a politics communicatively achieved can overcome the fragmentation and stratification that characterize modern life".

Subsequently, many governments have resorted to initiatives aimed at opening spaces for citizen participation (see Fung & Wright, 2001; Spano, 2001; Barnes et al, 2007). Decision makers usually choose the issues carefully - managing the balance between risk and benefit - set the agenda and limit the scope of such participatory processes. Nevertheless, there have been significant examples that contradict the usual critique that these spaces are exclusively opened for decisions on peripheral issues. Let us take as an example the case of the electoral reform in the Canadian province of British Columbia.

In 2004 the government of the province set in course an unprecedented experiment in the practice of democratic institutional design. An assembly of quasi-randomly chosen citizens was charged with the task of analysing and, if appropriate, proposing a reform of the electoral system that would afterwards be submitted to referendum and subsequent legislation. This innovative initiative has then served as a blueprint for other similar processes in Canada, Europe and USA (Warren & Pearse, 2008:xii).

In "Designing Deliberative Democracy", Warren & Pearse (2008) present a case study of the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly that exemplifies the archetype of this sort of deliberative democracy analysis: a focus on institutional, procedural and consensual dimensions. The attention to the communicative texture of the process takes a secondary place, and it is narrowed to determining to what extent the engagement is adjusted to the "ideal speech situation" (Ratner, in Warren & Pearse, 2008:145-65).

For this reason, a number of authors (i.e. Burkhalter, 2002; Walhoff, 2005; Rosenberg, 2005, 2007; Ryfe, 2006; Kim & Kim, 2008; Gastil, 2008) have stressed the need to complement the analysis of the conditions for deliberation, with the investigation of what a deliberation process creates from the perspective of its communication patterns on the ground. That is to say that the study of the institutional, procedural and consensual conditions for deliberative democracy must take into account the interpersonal communication dynamics that shape citizen's participation. As a response, Walhoff (2005:155), based on Gadamer's conversational analysis, has advocated an amplification of the analytic horizon of theorists and practitioners, proposing a shift in focus "from the conditions for deliberation and to the dialogue itself".

Following on this approach, I take the view expressed by Rosenberg (2007) that the communication dynamics embedded in the process determine the feasibility of the conditions for

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[3] For participatory research and its implications for deliberative democracy see Fischer (2000:143-218; 2003:205-37)

deliberation. Therefore, the micro-processes of personal interaction constitute the hard core of the institutional deliberative macro-processes. In other words, the democratic quality of these processes will depend on the quality of the interpersonal practices in which they crystallise.

Communication, social constructivism and political scientists

The "public sphere" has been defined by Habermas (2006:415) as "an intermediary system of communication between formally organized and informal face-to-face deliberations in arenas at both the top and the bottom of the political system". Hence, the public sphere refers to a social space produced by communicative action (Kim & Kim, 2008:63).

The analysis of communication by political scientists has predominantly been focussed on the macro dimensions of production and consumption, whether in terms of electoral campaigns, political discourses, or media networks (i.e. Sartori, 2003, 2005). Even within deliberative scholarship, much effort goes into quantitative evaluation, such as measuring opinion change after deliberation (i.e. Fishkin & Luskin, 2005), whereas the analysis of interpersonal communication is often absent and the actual dynamics of the process remain "something of a mystery" (Ryfe, 2006:73).

In many cases, these studies have been based in more or less sophisticated models of "linear transmission" (Penman, 2000:3). In such models, built on or against the original from Laswell (Fiske, 1990:30), the communication process comprises the action of transmitting a message - with the least possible distortion - to a receptor, in order to produce desired outcomes. This rational model implies the premise that communication is an objective stance, and thus instrumental and secondary to other aspects of the social action (Penman, 2000:26-7). This assumption has underpinned the emphasis that the discipline has put in political communication as propaganda, manipulation and rhetoric[4].

In spite of the relevance of the study of macro-processes, its reach is insufficient in terms of interpersonal communication in the context of formal and informal deliberative micro-processes. Particularly with regard to what Kim & Kim (2008:63) call "everyday political talk", which "transforms private spheres into the public sphere", and determines the aprioristic communicative fabric of participative scenarios.

As a response, some deliberative scholars - introduced in the latter part of this article - have started to complement their analysis by drawing on the specialised study of communication, hence recognising the potential of undertaking a multidisciplinary approach to inform the practical advance of deliberative democracy.

This stream of scholarship stems from social constructivism and its sheer development of the seminal work from Schutz (1967) and Berger & Luckmann (1971). Although an exhaustive account of this paradigm is unnecessary, I would like to point out a few ideas that are especially relevant for the enlarged notion of deliberation that will be later outlined.

I would not refer to these ideas if I did not have the perception that what constitutes the bread and butter for communication scholars seems still largely ignored by some of their deliberative

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[4] The term "rhetoric" is used here in its contemporary popular sense, rooted in a long tradition that has washed away its original meaning in classic Athens. This popular sense was clearly synthesised centuries ago by John Locke (1997:452): "All the art of rhetoric [...] are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgement; and so indeed are perfect cheat".

counterparts. I have recently had the opportunity of attending a political science congress, where a specialised group of deliberation scholars seemed overly alien to the constructivist and interpretive turn that social and political science, respectively, have taken over the last decades (Fischer, 2003; Yanow, 2000). This perhaps reflects a certain unease at the difficult task of shifting deliberation scholarship from its theoretical safe havens to its practical challenges (see Mutz, 2007).

In the first place, it is necessary to rebut the Cartesian notion of language as purely representative. In spite of the "linguistic turn" (Rorty, 1967) inspired by Wittgenstein's philosophy half a century ago, the conception of language as a mere instrument that represents objective realities is still predominant within the view of communication as a "neutral medium of social exchange" (Rosenberg, 2007:349). However, language is not a neutral instance; it doesn't represent things but constitutes them and their relationships (Austin, 1990). As Hide & Bineham (2000:214) put it, language has a constitutive quality that "provides the world with its meaning", structuring our ways of understanding and constructing the world around us throughout complex sense-making processes. Following this premise - masterfully developed in political science by the work of Murray Edelman (1972, 1977, 1985, 1988, 1997) - language is not an instrument to express politics, but language constructs and hence *is* politics. For instance, the language used by policy makers to frame a social problem often implies a specific diagnosis of its causes, and hence a particular set of actions to be taken. Accordingly, Edelman (1977:27-8) illustrates how the label 'welfare recipient' was used in the USA's public discourse in the 1970's to connote lack of work ethic, laziness, and the aspiration of the underclass to take illegitimate advantage of the social security system. Subsequent research offered data that countered this widely extended public discourse. However, such 'language game' (Wittgenstein, 1972), and its vocabularies, prevailed and contributed to shape the social perceptions on which the Reagan era was based. Another example of how language is far from being a neutral instrument can be found in the expressions used by British press during the 1991 war against Iraq: 'We have press briefings', 'They have propaganda'; 'We neutralise', 'They kill'; 'Our boys are brave', 'Theirs are fanatical'; 'Our missiles cause collateral damage', 'Their missiles cause civilian casualties' (Browne, 2005:177). The construction of the internal and external enemies of a country is a fertile terrain for the study of the social and political impact of specific language games in mainstream public discourse and policy (see Edelman, 1988:66-89). In a broader sense, Edelman (1985) has explained how language is interwoven with action in shaping our social and individual cognitive structures, as well as in nurturing the negotiation of the meanings that we attach to socio-political phenomena.

In the second place, constructivist scholars understand that "meanings are never inherent in the symbol but are worked out socially between people through interaction" (Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001:215). The idea that reality is co-constructed through personal interaction is the fundamental tenet of social constructivism. Accordingly, taking a communication perspective implies to approach meanings, actions, personalities, relationships, organisations and institutions as "constituted in communication" (Pearce & Pearce, 2004:43). Analytically this invites us to view the "events and objects of the social world as made, co-constructed by the coordinated actions of [...] persons-in-conversation" (Pearce & Pearce, 2000a:408). This perspective challenges traditional top-down social theories, and "is aligned with theories of [...] micro-processes such as ethnomethodology" (Ibid.) and interpretive local inquiry (Fischer, 2000). Values, beliefs, social and economical structures, and power

relations are here understood as constituted in "patterns of reciprocated communicative action" (Pearce & Pearce, 2004:42). Therefore, interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in the creation and negotiation of identities and meanings.

Finally, it is essential to take into account that communication is not only constitutive but also consequential (Pearce & Pearce, 2004; Penman, 2000). Accordingly, the analyst must pay attention to what is *done through* communication, as well as to what is *made by* it and what that is *made of*. In other words, we should be interested not only in what communication achieves, but also in what communication makes.

In order to clarify this notion it is useful to establish the difference between results and consequences. As an illustration, I will tell a short story of a communication process in which a colleague from our *Dialogue Research Project*[5] took part. The case started with a local plan to build a new secondary school in Portobello, Edinburgh. The process unfolded strong polemics around several aspects of the plan and its implementation, including alternative options for its placement. Two parties were formed within the community, and hence two local campaigns took place supporting the two preferred options. The local authorities took part in the polarising dynamic of the process, trying to minimise the political cost of their decisions, as well as mediating between both options, while attempting to carry out their own provision agenda. The process was complex and is the object of an ongoing investigation[6]. However, for the purpose of this illustration, it suffices to point out that one of the options won the battle after the council favoured the recommendation made at the end of a formal consultation procedure. It is especially significant that the whole process unfolded through dynamics of confrontational communication, following the traditional characteristics of public relations' advocacy campaigns; namely, using the local media to mobilise support in the community, signing petitions, setting up meetings of key stakeholders, and inviting into the process influential voices (i.e. a Member of the Scottish Parliament). Eventually, the *winning* side celebrated its triumph, while the *losing* side remains active, concentrating its current efforts to slowing down the construction process.

Without entering into questions of management by the local authorities, it seems appropriate to mention the opportunity missed in terms of fostering a deliberative process, with spaces for constructive forms of communication within the community. This gains relevance if we take into account that even the participants whose option triumphed acknowledge now being satisfied with the result but not with its consequences[7]. The spiral of confrontational communication has left behind a legacy of division and resentment in the community. An environment in which not only it is unpleasant to interact in the neighbourhood, but also anticipates the way in which future issues will be dealt with.

Communication understood as an instrument will produce results that will be interpreted as satisfactory, or not, by the citizens involved. In contrast, communication understood as a relational process will have consequences in terms of interpersonal relationships, and hence with regard to the communicative dynamics that will characterise the development of the community.

This example also illustrates that there is no such thing as purely technical solutions to policy problems. The Council framed the situation by offering limited alternatives based on traditional policy

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[5] The *Dialogue Research Project* at Queen Margaret University (Edinburgh) is formed by Magda Piecka, Emma Wood and the author of this article.
[6] By Emma Wood.
[7] Remarks made during one of the focus groups held at QMU's Dialogue Forum in June 2009.

analysis, which often relies on cost-benefit considerations (Fischer, 2003). However, building a school entails much more than that. An interpretive policy analyst must uncover the 'architecture of meaning' that surrounds policy options (Yanow, 2000). That is to say that an apparently unproblematic issue, building a new school in a new location, may entail a complex web of meanings that encompass different ways of understanding the past, present and future of the community.

There are numerous arguments to call into question the linear model of communication still pervasive within many policy making arenas. Overall, it seems a counterproductive way of thinking about practice:

> It is a conception of communication that focuses on the individuals and, thus, pushes the notion of community aside; that focuses on the end effect and, thus, ignores the means; and that presumes the possibility of certainty and, thus, denies the open-ended creativity of communication (Penman, 2000:5).

Interpersonal communication in the public sphere: The prevalence of confrontational polarization

> "-I didn't see it like that before. That actually makes sense...
> -It doesn't matter, don't even mention it, or you will weaken our position and we will lose the vote"
> Personal notes from a conversation at an assembly of students of my former Political Science Faculty.

In her review of the latest developments in deliberative democratic theory, Chambers (2003:307) concludes that it "has moved beyond the 'theoretical statement' stage and into the 'working theory' stage". One of the main challenges at this stage is how to design and implement deliberative processes capable of transforming the patterns of interpersonal communication that seem dominant in policy making and public debate. This section draws on the analysis that dialogue scholars have made of such patterns. The intention is to present a sketch of the socio-political and media landscape that shapes the kind of discursive practices which work against the crystallisation of a more deliberative democracy.

A number of authors have illustrated how ritualised polarisation and confrontational modes of communication prevail in the public sphere (i.e. Yankelovich, 1999; Isaacs, 1999; Tannen, 1999; Hyde & Bineham, 2000; Gastil, 2008). The rationale that underpins the battle for the 'best reason' is a legacy of the ideals of the Enlightenment. The confrontation of ideas through logical argumentation has traditionally been considered the best way to inform processes of decision making (Fischer, 2003). However, as both deliberative and dialogue scholarship point out, this approach seems to fall short when it comes to dealing with the complex dilemmas faced by twenty-first century societies; particularly when there are "as many different forms of 'reason' as there are cultural perspectives and ways of speaking" (Burkhalter et al., 2002:408).

In addition, postmodern theory has decoded the rational logic of the 'best reason', linking it to questionable discourses of 'truth' and 'knowledge' that usually cover up power and control agendas (Foucault, 1980; 1995; 2000). The social science paradigm has slowly shifted from objectivism to the post-empiricist conceptualisation of the inter-subjective condition of social reality. The emphasis on interaction as mutual construction of reality has consolidated - within communication scholarship - the notion of the dialogic nature of human being, postulated by the linguistic philosophy of Bathkin (Barge & Little, 2002).

In social theory, Habermas and Gadamer have developed an ontology originated in the process of rebuilding the social and cultural dimensions of the individual. As Linder (2001:656) explains, "...a new opening for dialogue emerges in the post-war era as some philosophers turn away from the Enlightenment metaphysics toward language and experience as alternative bases for understanding". This turning point was crucial in the opening of new scholar agendas: "Ideas about meaning, identity, fulfilment, and reasoning itself, are seen to emerge from intersubjective processes, all of which depend upon communication" (Ibid.).

Despite these epistemological changes, Linder (2001:657) points out that "the atomist view of the individual retains a large following and a privileged position in many of our social and political institutions". In line with this frame of reference of competitive individualism, a considerable part of communication in democratic societies is characterised by what Tannen calls "the argument culture", which

> ...urges us to approach the world - and the people in it - in an adversarial frame of mind. It rests on the assumption that opposition is the best way to get anything done: The best way to discuss an idea is to set up a debate; the best way to cover news is to find spokespeople who express the most extreme, polarized views and present them as 'both sides'; the best way to settle disputes is litigation that pits one party against the other; the best way to begin an essay is to attack someone; and the best way to show you're really thinking is to criticize (Tannen, 1999:5).

This is not to deny that social reality is conflictive, but to assert that the way conflict is often dealt with might be counterproductive and self-perpetuating. It does not allow deep treatment of the issues under discussion, but a "ritualised opposition" (Tannen, 1999:6) that reinforces dramatic antagonism, hindering the possibility of dynamics that foster inquiry into underlying complexity. Isaacs (1999) has shown how confrontational verbal exchange tends to escalate, isolating the participants and relegating to oblivion the question under scrutiny. In other words, the argument culture contributes to blocking dialogic conversations, transforming them into entrenched monologues.

It is fundamental to recognise the historical, legitimate and emancipatory role that logical argumentation and debate play in our societies. What these communication scholars criticise is the apparent consensus around the notion that polarised debate - based on adversarial and confrontational communication - is the best way to deal with every organisational, social and political issue. If we take into account areas such as local and community development, energy policy, environmental sustainability, health policy, education, and so on, it seems appropriate to ask: "How well suited is the familiar bipolar model in a culture whose increasing diversity has dramatically increased the number of voices and perspectives that demand to be heard?" (Hide & Bineham, 2000:209).

Such dynamics seem ill-suited in a social world shaped by competing languages, discourses, worldviews and truths in constant renegotiation. There is a discrepancy between the "multivocality" (Barge & Little, 2002) of our "lifeworlds" (Habermas, 1998), and the bipolar frame of mind with which we readily take a position around an emerging issue. Hyde & Bineham (2000) have reflected - from an educational point of view - on the limitations of public discourse embedded in traditional

argumentation: "...wedded as we are to the tradition of persuasion and debate, how effectively are we preparing them to address the vexing moral conflicts that persist in our public conversations?" (pp.209)

There is an endless list of public arenas where the 'battle of arguments' will not simply produce the triumph of the 'best reasons': abortion, euthanasia, security/civic liberties, gay and lesbian rights, biotechnology, multiculturalism, to name but a few obvious examples. In many cases, multiple 'reasons' are not only present, but legitimate, despite the fact that rarely all the different voices are heard or even articulated (Young, 1996). All in all, what is under question is not debate and argumentation per se, but the context of "blind opposition" where they take place (Hyde & Bineham, 2000:211); or, in the words of Tannen (1999):

> ...using opposition to accomplish *every* goal, even those that do not require fighting but might also (better) be accomplished by other means, such as exploring, expanding, discussing, investigating, and the exchanging of ideas suggested by the word 'dialogue'. I am questioning the assumption that *everything* is a matter of polarized opposites, the proverbial 'two sides to every question' that we think embodies open-mindedness and expansive thinking (pp.10; italics in the original).

It is difficult to cast doubt on the pre-eminence and functionality that confrontational modes of communication have in the macro context of the media within the "society of spectacle" (Debord, 1995). Martin Buber –arguably the foremost philosopher of dialogue- firmly insisted in the impossibility of establishing, within public or media contexts, the quality of communication that dialogue requires (Cissna & Anderson, 2002:108-109). When political, economic or media elites participate in conversations in front of an audience[8], genuine communication is usually rendered to its dramatic functions: it is not about talking, it is about performing.

Since the moment positions are solidly and strategically closed and rehearsed, contents and messages are pre-packaged and targeted to specific audiences, and instrumental certainty excludes hesitation, curiosity and reciprocal exploration, the possibility of establishing dialogue fades away, giving place to a succession of more or less interrelated monologues[9].The intertwined machinery of mass media and democracy is evident, for instance, in the "construction of the political spectacle" in election time (Edelman, 1988). In this sense, Gastil (2008:93-96) has provided interesting descriptions of electoral media coverage as "ritual dramas" or "horse races".

It is important to point out the role that this spectacle plays in the formation of public opinion in terms of shaping "ideas, attitudes and actions" (Browne, 2005:168), not only with regard to the content, but also to the form of communication - its consequential *how*. Indeed, confrontational communication is not exclusive patrimony of the political and media spectacle. In occasions it may also impregnate the deliberative micro-processes in which citizens participate: "Contentious public

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[8] BBC's Question Time is a clear example of a popular debate program watched by those of us who enjoy the discussion of the public agenda. But it hardly is a model for deliberative practice, in terms of deep exploration of issues. Complex deliberation practice is a natural mismatch for the entertainment standards of the broadcasting industry.
[9] For remarks on the monologic character of persuasion see Heidlebaugh (2008:37).

discourse becomes a model for behaviour and sets the tone for how individuals experience their relationships to other people and to the society" (Tannen, 1999:288).

A caveat is due. I am not establishing causalities or talking about a pattern of simple replication. Indeed, the overall issue begs questions of general political culture and not only elites' behaviour. What is interesting is how these communication practices are systemically reinforced and fed back between macro and micro processes (see Kim et al., 1999). As Huckfeldt (2007) puts it, "politics is driven by conflict and disagreement, not only at the level of elites, but also at the level of citizens and the informal institutions of political communication that lie at the heart of democratic politics" (pp.992). This is not to say that eliminating conflict and division is a desirable or feasible goal. That would amount to putting at risk the very foundations of democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). More pragmatically, the challenge is how to foster the kind of constructive conversations that would advance a more deliberative democracy.

Given that communication networks and micro–environments do not provide safe havens for substantial deliberation, it might be necessary to create alternative spaces and experimental dynamics that allow communication to go beyond the ritualised opposition of the argument culture. Therefore, I would like to build on the idea that we must enrich the communication fabric of public debate (Barge, 2002; Ryfe, 2006; Rosenberg, 2007). Deliberative theory is currently undertaking this task, and dialogue studies and practices may offer a complementary set of ideas.

Dialogue studies

Dialogue studies are far from forming a homogeneous theory. Their multidisciplinary[10] nature and practical orientation determine a diversification of approaches, as well as a constant feedback between theory and praxis. In this sense, it is a "practical discipline" (Craig, 1989; cited in Anderson et al., 2004:11).

The most influential thinkers[11] have been Buber, Bathkin, Gadamer, Freire, Bohm and Habermas, although in the latter, dialogue was not a central concept (Anderson et al., 2004:1-17). The following table attempts a categorisation.

Table 1. Three traditions that converge in dialogue studies

MODEL	Prototype of dialogue	Key ideas	Why dialogue?

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[10] The dialogue field is a crossroads of philosophy, linguistics, political science, organizational development, psychology, sociology, education, social work, public relations, conflict resolution, and communication theory.
[11] For a comparison of concepts in Buber, Bathkin, Freire and Bohm, see Stewart et al. (2004). For common ground between Habermas and Buber, see Kim & Kim (2008). For a list of political scientists that have shown interest in dialogue see Anderson et al. (2004:12) and Cissna & Anderson (2002:13-4).

FORMALIST (Habermas) *Dialogue as Social Deliberation*	Rational argument Deliberative emphasis	Based on reasoned, open, reciprocal and un-coerced arguments, participants reach understanding on how to coordinate their activities through normative commitments.	It serves as a social building block, based on communication rather than manipulation or coercion. It is a source of normative validity.
HERMENEUTIC (Gadamer; Bohm) *Dialogue as Social Reflection*	Social and cultural inquiry; Epistemic emphasis	Questioning, rather than arguing, achieves participant's openness to new insights based on mutual exploration that might foster unforeseen creativity.	It allows a process of creation of shared understanding by widening individuals' standpoints through a process of reciprocal reflection.
PRAGMATIC (Dewey; Freire) *Dialogue as Social Action*	Sharing common experience towards solving problems Action emphasis	Continuous interaction improves the abilities to solve common problems. It gives place to collective intelligence that surpasses specialized expertise and is grounded in diversified experience.	It redefines the role of technical expertise by counterbalancing it with simultaneous reliance on experience and local knowledge. Dialogue builds citizens and communities, rather than assuming them as preconditions to will-forming public talk.

Based on Linder (2001)

The term dialogue has been used at least since Plato, especially in the humanities. However, it has taken new meanings at the end of last century (Stewart et al., 2004:21), increasing dramatically the amount of scholarship about its practice (Penman, 2000:83). Authors such as Anderson et al. (2004:9), situate the origins of this intensification around 1990. A considerable amount of communication researchers started then to specialise in the field, as a response to complex social tensions, and the need to open up spaces for citizen participation and democratization of the organizational arena (Deetz & Simpson, 2004).

Stewart & Zediker (2000) distinguish between two conceptual streams within dialogic communication scholarship. The descriptive, inspired by Bathkin, understands dialogue as a defining quality of human being, "the irreducibly social, relational, or interactional character of all human meaning-making", and thus postulates the "inherently 'dialogic' character of all human life" (pp.225). Secondly, the prescriptive, where dialogue is a communicative ideal achieved through principled practices that foster a "special kind of contact" (pp.227); classic thinkers here are Buber (2004) and MIT's physicist Bohm (2003).

It is useful to make a further distinction within the prescriptive conceptualizations: $dialogue_1$ and $dialogue_2$.

$dialogue_1$	… It is a form of collaborative non-polarised discourse • Amplified and inclusive perspectives allow the tensions of disagreement • Collective intelligence: participants' exploration of common ground and

(Bohm)	difference creates unforeseen possibilities that could not be anticipated from any partial perspective. • Practice focuses on learning, unpacking assumptions, and facilitating communication that transcends ritualized confrontation, fostering deep inquiry.
dialogue$_2$ (Buber)	… It's a relational space • Represents the ontological aspect, the dialogic way of *being with.* • Frankness, trust, presence and understanding emerge from shared humanity. • Its practice is ephemeral and elusive, it cannot be systematised. • It is a state of high quality mutuality

Based on Hyde & Bineham (2000)

These two uses of the term correspond with two main orientations[12] to the practice of dialogue within communication scholarship. The first is having an impact in management and organisational development (i.e. Senge et al., 1994; Isaacs, 1999; Ellinor & Gerard, 1998; Yankelovich, 1999; Dixon, 1998; Shaw, 2002). The second inspires broader initiatives in the public sphere (i.e. Pearce and Pearce, 2000, 2001; Spano, 2001; Littlejohn & Domenici, 2003; Herzig & Chasin, 2006).

Despite substantial differences of approach, the new school of dialogue shares a set of core ideas, which in some cases clearly resonate with deliberative theory.

Firstly, the notion - postulated by Gadamer, Buber and Habermas - that truth is "emergent" (Stewart et al., 2004:35; Kim & Kim, 2008:57). The Cartesian division between subject and object is disputed by dialogic epistemology, which understands truth as constructed in communicative interaction, rather than being given a priori. In this sense, persuasion is *monologic* because it is based on advocating predefined truth (Heidlebaugh, 2008:37). Two ideas are crucial here. On the one hand, our individual perspectives are "partial, local and limited". On the other, it is necessary to realise the conversational value of "remaining in the tension between standing one's own ground and being profoundly open to the other" (Pearce & Pearce, 2004:55), approaching difference and disagreement as places for further exploration, rather than obstacles (Pearce & Pearce, 2001:111). Accordingly, dialogue facilitators put immense effort into engaging participants in active listening.

Secondly, dialogue is understood as a "particular quality or type of relating" (Stewart et al., 2004:21). As argued above, communication is not neutral, but constitutive and consequential. It plays a central role in shaping personal identity, as it represents "the process through which cultural values, beliefs, goals, and the like are formulated and lived" (Pearce & Pearce, 2004:42). Dialogue processes are based on transparency, inclusion, participation and the creation of safe spaces for personal expression. In this sense, dialogue is not only focussed on the results of communication, but especially on its consequences.

Finally, there is certain consensus about the need for specialised facilitation of dialogue, because this form of public conversation has become a "countercultural process" (Schein, 2003:30; Innes & Booher, 2003:55). Interestingly, policy analysts such as Fischer (2003; 2009) and Maarten (2003) have started to postulate the active role to be played by political scientists as facilitators of deliberative processes or, in other words, to become practical theorists.

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[12] See Pearce & Pearce (2000b) for an introduction to the debate between these two orientations.

Dialogue practices

The table below offers a synthesis[13] to illustrate some key contrasts between the discursive practices of adversarial and dialogic communication. Let us make clear that they refer to ideal types. In reality, these two orientations appear mixed along the complex communication spectrum, forming what Barge & Little (2002:379) call "conversational hybrids".

The left column represents dynamics that typically appear in public relations' campaigns, advocacy coalitions and party politics, media debates, and traditional policy making processes. In contrast, the right column focuses on principles and practices that underpin a dialogic orientation to public dialogue and deliberation, and it illustrates some of the common themes shared by dialogue and deliberative scholarship.

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[13] Based on Burbules (1993); Isaacs (1999), Yankelovich (1999), Ellinor & Gerard, 1998), Tannen (1999), Dixon (1998), Littlejohn & Domenici (2001), Anderson et al. (2004b), Pearce & Pearce (2004), Cissna & Anderson (2002), Shaw (2002), Fischer (2000, 2003, 2009); Innes & Booher (2003); Burkhalter et al. (2002); and Herzig & Chasin (2006).

Table 2. Adversarial vs. Dialogic Communication

	ADVERSARIAL	DIALOGIC
P R I N C I P L E S	Dominant conversational mode: ADVOCACY 1. Confrontational forms of communication: • Talking in representation of a wider group • The priority is to win • The clash of arguments is the best way to approach an issue • Emphasis on performance: rhetorically generative 2. Certainty: • Assuming that there is one right way of framing an issue • Justifying/defending assumptions as truth 3. Expertise as superior knowledge (Objectivism/ Empiricism) • The role of experts is to enlighten "non-experts" about an issue • Hard data are objective and speak for themselves 4. Outcome orientated • Strategic agendas are taken for granted • Communication as message transmission • Emphasis on gaining agreement around one position	Dominant conversational mode: INQUIRY 1. Collaborative forms of communication: • Talking is grounded on personal experience • The priority is to work together to find common ground and explore difference • Inquiring into all positions allows emergent new options and learning • Emphasis on relationship: dialogically generative 2. Curiosity / Openness: • Assuming that there are multiple significant perspectives • Revealing assumptions for re-evaluation through mutual inquiry 3. Multiple ways of knowledge (Constructivism/ Post-empiricism) • The role of experts is to interact with "non-experts" towards mutual exploration of an issue • Hard data depend on interpretation (values, worldviews) and is just one among various forms of knowledge: local, emotional, tacit, experiential. 4. Process orientated • Transparent agendas: participants disclose their intentions and must be aware of the context, purpose and impact of the process • Communication as co-creation of meaning • Emphasis on gaining understanding of an issue by creating shared meaning and exploring differences
P R A C T I C E S	• Use of spaces suitable for performance • Dynamics of persuasion • Defending one's own views against those of others (hesitation and openness are weaknesses) • Focus on proving the other side wrong; automatic response • Listening to make counterarguments: searching for flaws in others' positions • Speech contents are usually predetermined and argument lines pre-packaged • Seeking a conclusion or vote that ratifies your position	• Creation of safe spaces for personal voicing and storytelling • Learning through inquiry and disclosure • Holding one's own position but allowing others the space to hold theirs • Focus on re-examining all positions; suspending certainty and disbelief • Listening to understand: searching for value in other's positions, co-exploring causes, rules and assumptions that underlay different framings of an issue • Speech contents are emergent and contingent: arguments might evolve after different perspectives shed new light on an issue • Insights and options enable new collaborative platforms

In practice, the challenge is to facilitate communication dynamics that balance advocacy and inquiry (Ellinor & Gerard, 1998). This conceptual separation serves only as an illustration of different orientations to conversational interaction. It helps us to grasp the underpinning of broader themes before finally understanding that

> When communicating dialogically, one can listen, ask direct questions, present one's ideas, argue, debate, and so forth. The defining characteristic of dialogic communication is that all of these speech acts are done in ways that hold one's own position but allow others the space to hold theirs, and are profoundly open to hearing others' positions without needing to oppose or assimilate them. When communicating dialogically, participants often have important agendas and purposes, but make them inseparable from their relationship in the moment with others who have equally strong but perhaps conflicting agendas and purposes (Pearce & Pearce, 2004:45).

Creating spaces for dialogic communication is an evolving craft rather than a fixed technique. It requires discipline and time, and it demands willingness to reflect on communication habits and power relationships, as well as determination to experience different ways of relating to each other.

The dramatic increment of dialogue studies is parallel to experimentation on the ground. If deliberation is naturally bound to the public sphere, the dialogue revival includes broader initiatives and fields. Cissna & Anderson (2002:12-4) group them in projects to build new senses of community, to foster personal and interpersonal growth, to bring disparate groups and cultures together, to invigorate organizations and corporate life, to expand the processes of political participation, to inspire civic journalism, and to define new literary and philosophical insight.

The preceding sections have only attempted an introductory outline. However, they anticipate the potential synergy between dialogue and deliberation studies, and the utility of overcoming their current framing as separate rooms. Such synergy seems promising as deliberative theory moves into the "working theory stage" (Chambers, 2003:307). A number of deliberative scholars have already shifted the research agenda towards the practice of deliberation on the ground (i.e. Dryzek, 2009; Warren & Pearse, 2008; Mansbridge et al., 2006; Fishkin & Luskin, 2005; Fischer, 2003; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Ryfe, 2002, 2006). Parallel developments in dialogue scholarship offer a complementary wealth of data and expertise, particularly with regard to the design and facilitation of public dialogue processes with a clear focus on the quality of communication[14].

Dialogue for Deliberation: D+D as a process

> "Public deliberation is dialogue with a particular goal"
>
> Bohman (1996:57)

<u>Enriching the meaning of deliberation</u>

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[14] These are a few case studies that exemplify the difficulties and possibilities of the dialogic approach on the ground. They are a good starting point for deliberative scholars interested in exploring how their dialogue counterparts frame participatory processes from a communication's perspective.

- Citizen and community participation: the best documented example of a local level public dialogue process is the Cupertino Community Project (Spano, 2001; Pearce & Pearce, 2000); for an analysis of how a dialogue process can become counterproductive see Zoller (2000); for an educational setting see Pearce & Pearce (2001)
- Conflictive issues: the Public Conversations Project in Watertown dealt with abortion conversations (Gergen et al., 2001); on organizational conflict see Isaacs (1999; 2001); on biotechnology policy making see Roper et al. (2004)
- Collaborative network and policy making: the Sacramento Water Forum (Innes & Booher, 2003).

Dialogue scholarship is increasingly interested in analysing how it can contribute to deliberation processes (see Barge, 2002; Burkhalter et al., 2002; Heidlebaugh, 2008; Kim & Kim, 2008; Black, 2008; Gastil, 2008:33-38). A dialogic take on deliberation can help to design, implement and analyse deliberative scenarios from a communication's perspective.

In political communication, John Gastil (2008; Gastil & Black, 2008; with Mansbridge et al.,2006; with Burkhalter et al., 2002) has developed an amplified concept of face to face deliberation that accommodates elements from dialogue theory. It intends to transcend the traditional notion of deliberation as mere exchange of reasons in the name of public interest (Black, 2008:109). In essence, Gastil's concept maintains the basic tasks of practical deliberation, adding new nuances:

- Creating a solid information basis, which includes the post-empiricist take on multiple ways of knowledge.
- Prioritising the key values at stake, inviting self-reflection and mutual exploration.
- Identifying a range of alternatives, inviting collective intelligence.
- Weighting pros, cons, and trade-offs, exhorting to understand the limitations of each alternative and the advantages of the others.
- Making the best possible decision, inviting updating of positions in the light of the learning process, and advising against consensus determinism (Gastil, 2008:20).

In addition, it includes the usual requirements of inclusion and equality, adding an emphasis on quality listening, and the acknowledgement of the authenticity and uniqueness of the other participants' experiences. These latter elements are a clear reference to a wider debate within deliberative scholarship, namely, the rational versus relational approaches to deliberation (Ryfe, 2002).

According to Ryfe (2002), some deliberative scholars postulate that deliberation must be rational, and thus based on the judicial-like modus operandi of claims, evidences, counterfactual data, and so on. The alternative view understands that deliberation is less rational than emotional, and denounces "the sexism inherent to many models of rational argumentation" (Ryfe, 2002:360), as well as the imposition of formal discursive barriers to participation (Ryfe, 2006).

The relational approach to deliberation clearly resonates with the tenets of dialogic practice. This is especially clear with regard to the creation of spaces for personal narratives and storytelling (see Young, 1996, 2002):

> Narrative constructs a relational form of deliberation in which participants appeal to common values and experiences through telling stories. In this manner, narrative supports a form of deliberation that stresses equality, respect for difference, participation and community (Ryfe, 2002:360).

Relying on critics of deliberative democracy such as Young (1990, 1999), Nussbaum (1995, 2001, 2004), and Mouffe (1999), Fischer (2009:82:272-94) has argued that too much theoretical effort has gone into trying to neutralise emotions, passions and identities in the name of rational reasoning and the logic of the better argument. In a similar vein, Sanders (1997) postulates that the rational weighting of reasons connoted by the traditional notion of deliberation has historically excluded those

who do not master the method of logical debate. Accordingly, Mansbridge et al. (2006:5) conclude that "[R]equiring legitimate deliberation to be 'reasoned' […] implicitly or explicitly excludes the positive role of emotions in deliberation". Fischer (2009:276-81) takes the argument farther and explains how, according to neuroscience, certain emotions trigger rather than prevent reason. In addition he argues that citizen's commitment to participation and deliberation may actually depend on emotional dispositions.

This increased attention to the emotional side of deliberation aims to complete our understanding of the social dimension of the individual engaged in a deliberative process. It also provides a more complex take on communication, in line with constructivist dialogue scholarship. Rosenberg (2007) maintains that some cognition and reasoning assumptions made by deliberative theory have been notably discredited by empirical research. Individuals do not generally think in a logical, reasonable and rational way (pp.344), and neither can we understand communication without the emotional dimension that is at the heart of interpersonal relations:

> exchanging narratives about personally significant life episodes, sharing meals together and participating in activities designed to create a sense of group identity may be necessary to creating the emotional connection needed to motivate the kind of argument desired. The key here is to recognize that deliberation also requires conditions that foster emotional engagement, mutual nurturing and an affective tie to one's community (pp.348-9)

This is the background to increasing calls for considering deliberation spaces in a richer fashion. Rather than simple stages for the free and equal enactment of citizenship, deliberation forums should be understood as places for the "construction and transformation of citizenship" (Rosenberg, 2007:354; see also Young, 2002). Such scenarios should embrace experimental practices that welcome alternative ways of engaging, thus helping to remove the elitist veil that surrounds traditional deliberative processes[15].

Personal storytelling is already entering an enlarged deliberative room (i.e. Young, 1996, 2002; Harrist & Gelfand, 2005). Research from Ryfe (2006) shows how it contributes "to lower the structural, psychological, and social barriers to deliberation" in small groups. It also helps "to develop and sustain situated identities", which determines whether individuals feel compelled to engage in the process or not. Stories contribute to sense-making around complex issues, as the participants understand how these "play out in the real world even when they lack full information". Finally, it helps with the relational aspects, and "allow individuals to manage politeness issues in a context that privileges disagreement" (pp.80)

It seems, therefore, that a response to Barge's (2002) call for enlarging the practical meaning of public deliberation is under way. His original argument was that the concept should be expanded to include "alternatives to the language game that has traditionally dominated the playing field", namely, confrontational communication (pp.166). For Barge, debate is appropriate when participants share a formulation of the problem and agree on the criteria for choosing between alternatives. But it is precarious when participants maintain incommensurable perspectives, or articulations of interests

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[15] For a discussion of some of the points made by theorists of difference with regard to elitism and exclusion see Dryzek's (2002) chapter "Difference democracy: The consciousness-raising group against the gentlemen's club".

based on "intractability" (Bohman, 1996:75-80). In a similar tone, Littlejohn & Domenici (2001:188), insist that deliberation is characterised by systematic proceedings, once the issue and the alternatives have been clearly defined. The difficulty is that public issues rarely appear in a neat, homogeneous fashion. Instead, they are a complex amalgam that embodies differing visions of reality, justice and feasibility.

Burkhalter et al. (2002:408) acknowledge that "when participants bring with them divergent ways of speaking and knowing, public deliberation must include some measure of dialogue", so that, at least provisionally, participants transcend the clash between competing worldviews and collaboratively reflect on them. This is why Schein (2003:27) postulates the need to use generative dialogue to improve group reflection, especially when a common formulation of the issue is a priority.

Following Burkhalter et al. (2002:410-1), the dialogic component of deliberation can serve a threefold purpose. Firstly, it fosters meta-linguistic reflection, through the creation of shared meaning and productive management of differences. Second, it entails deep analysis of issues and alternatives. Finally, it increases the democratic nature of the conversation.

The latter might be interpreted in terms of the opening of spaces for the renegotiation of identities (Black, 2008:96), and the "challenge of the status quo" (Innes & Booher, 2003:46). In the words of Innes & Booher (2003:55), "the tension between cooperation and competition and between advocacy and inquiry are the essence of collaborative policy making".

Enlarging the process: dialogue before deliberation

The unpredictable nature of dialogue, its fluid structure and open end have made critics like Tonn & Welsh (2005, 2002; in Heidlebaugh, 2008:27-34) question its role within the deliberative process. They fear that too much emphasis on dialogue diminishes the role of classic models of advocacy which contribute to challenge the dominant cultural vocabularies and meanings, thus opening new dimensions for debate. A possible response is to conceive deliberative processes where these two forms of conversation coexist without becoming hegemonic.

Therefore, it is useful to separate methodologically, spatially and temporarily the processes of dialogue and deliberation (Yankelovich, 1999). In the end, the purpose of deliberation is to debate options and make decisions about them, whereas dialogue deals with inquiry, relationship and collective thinking. To illustrate this distinction of objectives and ways of orienting the conversation, I would like to propose the following table.

Table 3. Communication and process

		Communication mode	
		Advocacy	Inquiry
Process	Orientated to decision making	Deliberation	Deliberative dialogue[16]
	Not orientated to decision making	Debate	Dialogue

From this perspective, dialogue constitutes a programmatic complement to deliberation. If deliberation is the art of analysing and weighting alternatives in order to make decisions, dialogue plays the role of facilitating such scenario through its practice in the previous stage: the open exploration of worldviews, value frames, experiences and assumptions that shape the alternatives. Furthermore, dialogue formats strive to build safe spaces for dissent and difference, and to foster the creation of shared meaning on the basis of disparate forms of knowing and experiencing. In doing so, as Isaacs's (1999) work shows, dialogue processes stimulate unforeseen collective creativity through reciprocal inquiry into the normative and experiential aspects that underpin complex issues. According to Cissna & Anderson (2002), this is already happening on the ground. Dialogue

> ...is increasingly being proposed as a practical move for diagnosing potential problems, exploring imaginative alternatives, averting a crisis mentality, acknowledging the valid identities of multiple voices within a larger community, providing important information and sensitivities for later decision making, and creating a symbolic environment that reinforces the notion that change within complex and interlocking communities is possible (pp.227).

In a similar sense, Fischer (2003:206-10; 2000:221-41) writes about the process of learning and "civic discovery" that deliberative policy making entails. Dryzek (2009:3) has recently written that "Deliberation is different from adversarial debate. The initial aim is not to win, but to understand. Deliberation allows that people are open to changing their minds". But can public deliberation, as we find it on the ground, perform such an exploratory function? The confrontational communication that is at the heart of polarised debate does not seem to foster such dynamics. Instead, that function may be better served by the spirit of inquiry that guides public dialogue processes (i.e. Spano, 2001).

Heidlebaugh (2008:34) has pointed out that "neither dialogic models of the public nor rival advocacy models can stand alone, either to account for or to lead to enriched public discourse". This

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[16] This is one of the "hybrids" that Barge & Little (2002:379-80) invite to study.

strengthens the argument to enlarge deliberative processes so that they are understood and designed as a communication continuum, where different forms of conversational discourse act complementarily. A simplified figure illustrates the idea.

Figure 1. The D+D process

DIALOGUE

Inquiry process:
Reciprocal exploration
Creation of shared meaning
Relationship
---------------------------------------   +

                 DELIBERATION

                 Advocacy process:
                 Weighting alternatives
                 Making decisions
                 -- →

Kim & Kim (2008) have started to theorise in the same vein. Public deliberation should be understood not only as a tool for using public reasons and making collective decisions, "but also as a process of producing public reasons and reaching mutual understanding" (pp.51). Consequently, they mention two indispensable dimensions: "instrumental deliberation", characterised by procedural mechanisms for negotiation and decision; and "dialogic deliberation or dialogue", in which identity and difference, sense of community, and public reason are constructed (pp.66).

This requires the creation of communication spaces for dialogically generative dynamics. Some deliberative scholars are moving in this direction. For instance, Burkhalter, Gastil and Kelshaw find that, in practice, deliberation often entails "the pervasive advancement of a priori opinions", and hence it is "rhetorical rather than dialogically generative" (2002:408). Accordingly, their definition of deliberation acknowledges that some deliberative processes may first require a period of dialogue, understood as an open-ended conversation in which participants strive to understand their experiences, languages, and ways of thinking and arguing. This kind of process can tap into "previously unrealized or unacknowledged perspectives within the group" (p. 411). In addition, leaving decision making for a later stage frees the participants from the urgency of entering advocacy dynamics, and thus it fosters a spirit of reciprocal inquiry that allows them to bring

> different epistemologies to bear on a common problem, and that can result in a more sophisticated analysis of any public issue. At the same time, dialogue promotes fairness and inclusion by opening up conversation about alternative ways of speaking and knowing (Ibid.)

In this sense, a D+D process would entail dialogue formats geared towards the exploration and co-production of public reasons, and deliberative formats that make possible their use and crystallization.

In addition, dialogue before deliberation can help to construct a safe space for relationship building in the group. This is important because it can enable communication dynamics that allow a permanent update of meanings, positions and compromises (Karpowitz & Mansbridge, 2006), in order to create consensus without obscuring conflict and difference. Here consensus must be dealt with in terms of "discursive construction of perspectives in competition" (Fischer, 2003:131). Given that deliberative processes rarely verse about the data per se - but about underlying perspectives, values and interpretations - it is important to take into account that "well before plausible alternatives and recommendations can be delineated, the very determination of what 'the problem' is depends on deeply rhetorical and interpretive practices" (Fischer, 2003:183; see also Yankelovich, 1999:188). Such deliberative practices often require high quality of dialogic communication, where the participants feel safe to question their own assumptions and to be open to change.

The early stage of a deliberative process is crucial. It seems appropriate to try to enrich its communication fabric by including alternative ways of producing collective learning[17] and public reason.

Dialogue and power: initial remarks

The challenge for the development of deliberative democracy is to "resolve the increasingly common conflicts without surrendering the political equality of citizens, the non-tyranny of outcomes, and the publicity of dialogue" (Bohman, 1996:69).

The principles and practices of dialogue entail communication dynamics that go beyond the controlled citizen participation with which many are comfortable. Wood (2004:xx) warns that "those who enjoy power and privilege often feel no motivation to interact dialogically with those who do not benefit from the same status and advantage", and quotes Mouffe: "no amount of dialogue or moral preaching will ever convince the ruling class to give up its power".

The conceptualisation of dialogue practice as a challenge to the status quo (Innes & Booher, 2003:46) and as a critique of power (Heath, 2007:150) demands further empirical research on the communicative dimension of participatory processes. In this sense, it is useful to consider two aspects. Firstly, the contrast between 'invited and invented spaces' (Cornwall, 2002; Miraftab, 2004) helps to draw the limits imposed on participatory processes by governmental agents, in opposition to more open initiatives developed collaboratively from the bases.

Secondly, it is crucial to notice the distortion produced by the abuse of the term 'dialogue', which is often used to name almost any kind of public process, regardless of its actual practices. Wierzbicka (2006:691) has warned that the transformative potential of the concept is at risk, and may end up meaning "manipulation, propaganda or pseudo-communication".

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[17] When talking about collective learning, dialogue scholars often borrow the concept of single and double loop learning from the work of Chris Argyris (see Argyris and Schon, 1978). In reference to conversational interaction, single loop learning entails understanding *what* the others think. In contrast, double loop learning also involves understanding *how* the others think, namely, their taken for granted assumptions and cognitive frames. This kind of second order learning broadens the perspectives of the participants and opens up spaces for reciprocally amplified views and change. When dialogue formats and dynamics succeed, some kind of double loop learning is likely to occur (see Ellinor & Gerard, 1998; Isaacs, 1999; Yankelovich, 1999).

Issues regarding power within dialogue formats resonate strongly with the kind of exclusionary discursive practices pointed out by Young (2002) to stress the importance of analysing not only the procedural but also the communicative dynamics that occur within deliberative settings. These and other important related issues are left for a different article. Nevertheless, there is a critical element I want to sketch before finishing.

Both dialogue and deliberation scholars share concerns around how to counter the dominance of expert knowledge in traditional policy making arenas. Citizens' juries are a good example of a deliberative format designed to give the participants control over the process. The expert's role here is to answer questions and challenges, to present evidence, and to provide advice when it is required by the members of the jury. The underlying principle is that taking only into account the knowledge of the experts "is inadequate to the resolution of policy problems, since the issues such problems raise are also political and ethical" (Barnes et al, 2007:36).

As Fischer (2000) argues, the tension between professional expertise and democratic governance is a crucial dimension of our time. Hence, it is necessary to create scenarios where citizens' voices are not neutralised by asymmetric relations with the experts. Privileged expertise prevents the inclusion of local knowledge and normative interpretation in the policy making process (Fischer, 2003:219). In contrast, opening spaces where professional knowledge and lived experience are combined helps to form an interpretive community which seeks - through mutual discourse - "a persuasive understanding of the issues under investigation" (pp.222). For this to be possible, traditional policy making must relinquish its "elaborately constructed aura of expertise" and "the reluctance to include lay citizens in technical policy deliberations" (DeLeon, 1995; cited in Clarke, 2002:5).

This change in the role played by experts requires not only a change of values, attitudes and practices, but the abandonment of the privileges afforded by the traditional hierarchy of knowledge (Yankelovich, 1999:187-200). Traditional public debate, where the voice of the experts is often venerated and dominant, prevents a more comprehensive take on social issues. An enriched dialogic approach should bring to the decision making table a combination of data, values, normative interpretations, and local and personal experiences. In the words of Yankelovich (1999:191), "The methods of science and professional expertise are excellent for generating factually based knowledge; the methods of dialogue are excellent for dealing with this knowledge wisely".

Dialogue facilitators usually invest a considerable amount of time in stimulating the participants to discover common ground, overcome language barriers (i.e. style, articulation, specialised jargon), and co-create shared meanings (Isaacs, 1999). In dialogue, skilful facilitation helps the experts to transcend what Miller & Rose (2008:34-5) call the "shared vocabularies" of their networks. In such situation, experts become co-facilitators of the process of inquiry, assisting non-experts in the "problematization and exploration of their own concerns and interests" (Fischer, 2003:216; see also Fischer, 2000:193-218; and Freire, 1996). Likewise, there is a new role to be played by political scientists working on deliberative processes and dialogic communication:

> This postempiricist facilitator also accepts the task of working to embed such an inquiry in actual organizational and policy processes. This involves developing arenas and forums in which knowledge can be debated and interpreted (Fischer, 2003:222).

Collaborative dialogue within small groups of equals has always existed. However, its practice is still at the experimental stage in deliberative policy making which involves participants - with different power and knowledge - dealing with complex and conflictive issues (Innes & Booher, 2003:55). If as Heidlebaugh (2008:47) affirms, "Dialogue is clearly suited to providing opportunities to generate new articulations of an issue or to challenge the vocabularies of dominant ideologies", both the cynicism expressed by Mouffe and the suspicion of dialogue as manipulation must be put to the scrutiny of future action research.

Karlsen and Villadsen (2008), in a critical study of dialogue as governmental technology, remind us of the *foucaldian* notion of the "tactical polyvalence of discourse" (pp.360). That is to say that the discursive practice of dialogue can also be used tactically, by those who were originally to be manipulated, to serve new emancipatory functions. In this sense, the discourse of dialogic communication "may dislocate or open up relations of power" (Ibid).

Conclusions

> "Young suggests that assuming that deliberation has to be based solely in reason – which is usually defined as neutral and dispassionate, and conducted solely through rational argument – will exclude many people"
>
> Barnes et al. (2007:38)

At a time when empirical research from Sustein (2006) and Mutz (2007) is starting to challenge core arguments in favour of deliberation – respectively, that it produces better decisions and that it fosters participation – some scholars of deliberation[18] continue to put their efforts into distilling the normative quintessence of the rational logic of the best argument. This detachment from the real world where deliberative processes take place limits the necessary feedback between theory and practice. Furthermore, it strengthens the misrepresentation of deliberation as an elitist game.

Fortunately, a new stream of empirical work has already started to pin down the sociological deficits of such traditional understanding of deliberation (Rosenberg, 2007, 2005; Ryfe, 2002, 2006; Mansbridge et al., 2006; Gastil & Black, 2008), and as mentioned before, deliberative theorists have effectively shifted the research agenda to practice on the ground. For instance, Ryfe's analysis of sixteen deliberative organisations confirms that "there is no such thing as one form or format of good discourse. Deliberation is inherently rooted in context, and different kinds of contexts demand different kinds of conversations" (2002:369).

Criticism against narrow conceptualisations of what constitutes an 'acceptable public reason' often relies on a constructivist approach to classic epistemic dilemmas. When thinking about deliberative practice, notions of truth and knowledge are perhaps better understood as "consensually accepted beliefs" within evolving conversations (Fischer, 2003:131). This constructivist – inter-

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[18] I am referring here to some of the academics whose papers where presented at the Deliberative Democracy Group of the 2009 Congress of Political Science in Spain. For instance, Cabra Apalategui (2009), Sanchez La Fuente (2009), and Rico Motos (2009). I thoroughly enjoyed their very different papers, which have been published in the Proceedings of the conference. However, in the case of the first two authors, I was struck by their overall rationalistic take on deliberation, highly dependent on the underpinnings of formal logic and argumentation. In contrast, the interesting paper by Rico Motos, a disciple of Joshua Cohen, is less reliant on such tenets, although it does rely heavily on a traditional understanding of the 'force of the best argument'.

subjective - approach is not new to deliberative theorists, insofar as they apply a discursive concept of rational argumentation (i.e. Dryzek, 2002). In the words of Habermas:

> ...actors should be open to 'the unforced force of the better argument'. What the better argument is, is not a priori given, but must be searched for in common discourse. It is through such discourse that participants find out what counts as a good argument (1996:305)

In order to have such discursive encounters, the emotional dimension of human interaction must be allowed into the conversation. Empirical research has shown the central role played by bonds and relationships in deliberative processes (Ryfe, 2002; Innes & Booher, 2003; Mutz, 2007). As Rosenberg puts it:

> Depending on how it is structured, communicative interaction can foster empathy, reciprocity and self-reflection, or it can produce indifference, dislike or aggression. In sum, the structure of communicative exchange contributes to the constitution of the individuals involved, both as cognizing subjects and as motivated agents (2007:357).

Dialogue practical theory is orientated towards high quality interpersonal communication. It offers a way of enriching deliberative processes by paying more attention to relational aspects and inquiry dynamics. We have not considered here the range of complex debates and challenges within current dialogue scholarship. Neither have we mapped the diverse approaches to practice. The attempt was to introduce the interdisciplinary ground where dialogue stands, as well as to propose a rationale for introducing its discursive practices within deliberative schemes. Future research into such integrated model should confirm or dispute its actual functionality.

All in all, the intention of this article was to suggest that there is value in connecting two disciplines that have evolved in parallel as a response to interrelated socio-political issues. Deliberative studies can easily tap into the increasing amount of case studies developed by dialogue practical-theorists. It can be helpful in order to face the challenges posed by real life interpersonal communication patterns, particularly in terms of designing and facilitating deliberative scenarios. In turn, dialogue scholarship can benefit from the solid frameworks developed by deliberative theorists (and their critics), especially in order to address the issue of power, which is remarkably absent in dialogue studies.

I have argued that an enlarged notion of deliberation, rooted in communication studies, might contribute to the task of bridging the gap between deliberative theory and practice. As we have seen, a number of authors are already enriching the concept of deliberation to encompass storytelling, personal narratives and emotions, interpersonal bonding and post-empiricist notions of knowledge. The objective is to nurture a relational conceptualisation of deliberation practice, opening up spaces for complex conversations. Spaces designed for civic inquiry, where the participants are invited to experiment discursive dynamics capable of overcoming the blockage that is often produced by adversarial modes of communication in public discussions. I hope this article has shown, on a preliminary level, how a dialogic orientation could contribute to open and maintain such spaces.

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