

INTRODUCTION

Introducing the *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*

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This editorial introduction provides a statement of our vision for the *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* and an overview of the Special Issue on the Frontiers of Deliberative Democracy.

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Introduction

It is with great pleasure that we present to you the first issue of the *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*. Over more than a decade, the *Journal of Public Deliberation* published 297 articles that not only offer lessons for implementing deliberative practice today, but also a way forward to discuss democracies as they emerge from global crises. This new iteration of the journal builds on the strengths of its predecessor, as we envision a space for ongoing debates, alternative perspectives, critical views and the most recent insights on the theory and practice of deliberative democracy.

The journal's relaunch comes at a critical juncture for democracies around the world. The year 2020 is crystallising the possibilities and constraints for democratic action as the world faces an uncertain time. What is the role of public deliberation in a state of health emergency? How can decision-making include public voice when governments are pressed into swift and decisive actions (Smith 2020)? How should we recalibrate the relationship between citizens and experts (Pearse 2020)? Can the norms and practices of deliberative democracy be part of the world's 'new normal' (Landsell 2020)?

It remains a subject of debate whether deliberative democracy can provide answers to these questions. The last few years, however, has demonstrated how deliberative democracy has risen to challenges of democratic reform, whether in contexts of conflict, crisis, democratic backsliding or deep disagreement.

Our Editorial Vision

The *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* is not an isolated scholarly enterprise. It is an exercise of engaged research that is conscious of the power of scholarly knowledge in

informing policy decisions and inspiring action in the public sphere. By publishing high quality research, we aspire towards a global society sensitive to good reasons (Curato, Bächtiger, Strandberg 2019). The challenge of building a scholarly journal with public impact is not lost on us, but the successes of our predecessor stand us in good stead. The *Journal of Public Deliberation* was founded precisely to serve as the link between the research and practice of democratic innovations around the world – a role that it has indeed fulfilled (Leighninger 2020).

We aim to build on these achievements during our term as editors. We do so by focusing on three commitments: to promote the diverse character of deliberative scholarship, to strengthen our epistemic community, and to promote open knowledge.

We are committed to celebrating diversity. We envision the journal as a home for voices from a range of theoretical, disciplinary, and methodological traditions, and extend that hospitality to critics who wish to engage the field. We will dive deep into contemporary debates and new topics of inquiry. The next issue, for example, curates a series of theoretical and empirical articles responding to Cristina Lafont's critique of minipublics as democratic shortcuts. In the coming issues, we will draw our readers' attention to the relationship between deliberative democracy and civic tech, examine the intersections between deliberation and political psychology and present developments in assessing deliberative quality. We are also keenly aware that there are multiple poles of knowledge production, and recognise that the journal needs to take serious action in decentering the scholarship from the northern hemisphere. Deliberative democracy is a global project. This must be reflected in the scholarship that we publish.

We are also committed to strengthening our epistemic community. While we are cognisant of our de facto roles as gatekeepers of academic publication, this does not preclude an atmosphere of encouragement and support. We put together an editorial board with a track record of providing thoughtful feedback in a timely manner. We envision our journal to be a key driver in fostering a culture of inclusiveness, collaboration and intellectual

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generosity in our academic community. We will also continue the journal's role as a broker of knowledge between scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and advocates of deliberative democracy. To further our goals, we are embarking on a new creative project. Each year, we will release the *Deliberative Democracy Digest* as a companion piece to the journal. The *Digest* will publish summaries of articles in the journal and draw out their implications for deliberative practice. Accompanying these summaries, creative pieces will further facilitate conversations in academic, practitioner and policy circles, including interviews, roundtables, commentary, and reflections. The *Digest* is a work-in-progress. We welcome ideas that can enrich our community's conversations.

Finally, we are committed to open knowledge. The journal will always be available to all. Through our partnership with the University of Westminster Press, and the support of newDemocracy Foundation and the International Association for Public Participation, all articles are published open access. We are also grateful to the support of Samforsk in Åbo Akademi University for covering the cost of archiving the *Journal of Public Deliberation's* back issues. That our articles have never been behind a paywall is one of our journal's proudest achievements. It is a testament to the enduring support of the wider community.

About the Special Issue

The *Journal of Deliberative Democracy's* inaugural issue features articles that speak to the theme of the Frontiers of Deliberative Democracy. We challenged authors to identify research agendas for deliberative democracy by revisiting some of the field's unsettled questions, including areas where the scholarship is silent. We hope this first issue realises our commitment to promote a multiplicity of voices that push the boundaries of deliberative scholarship.

We begin with a piece by Edana Beauvais (Duke University) on deliberation and non-communication. Beauvais revisits disputes in deliberative theory, particularly the paradox of inclusion and mutual respect. 'If exclusion or a lack of basic mutual respect prevent deliberation from happening in the first place,' she posits, 'how can deliberation be a tool that empowers inclusion and promotes mutual respect?' The solution lies in conceptual precision. Beauvais offers a typology that distinguishes deliberation, political communication, non-political reason-giving and non-political communication. This typology helps us to disentangle how democratic goods can serve as antecedents and outcomes of good deliberation.

William Smith (The Chinese University of Hong Kong) extends the discussion on conceptual precision by calling out deliberative theory's conflation of civil and uncivil disobedience with the 'capacious and nebulous' category of 'non-deliberative' action. He takes issue with deliberative democracy's failure to focus on violence. This view, he argues, undermines the field's critical capacity to assess activist tactics and protest repertoire in greater nuance.

The next three articles invite readers to place deliberative democracy in conversation with ongoing debates in post-colonial studies, populism, and direct democracy.

Leyla Tavernaro-Haidarian (University of Johannesburg) introduces the African philosophy of Ubuntu as a normative foundation that connects media ethics and deliberative democracy in post-colonial societies. She argues that beyond serving as watchdogs, the media can also serve as mediators – 'gate-openers' rather than 'gate-keepers' – in linguistically diverse and hyper-partisan societies. While many scholars have long abandoned consensus as an aspiration for deliberation, Tavernaro-Haidarian reminds us that building consensus remains a meaningful ideal in polities in transition to becoming 'stable democracies'.

Maria Esperanza Casullo (Universidad Nacional de Río Negro) makes a case for critical conversations between research on deliberation and populism studies, in particular the potential of a socio-cultural approach to understanding the role of bodies in deliberation. Casullo's piece begins with a post-colonial critique of deliberative democracy by interrogating its abstract representation of the political subject. She brings in her expertise in populism by presenting four typologies of modes of bodily identification – technocratic, authoritarian, popular and populist – to illustrate how the body speaks even before it talks. She concludes her piece by making a case for a closer conversation between deliberation research and populism studies.

A closer conversation is also needed between deliberative and direct democracy. Alice El-Wakil (University of Zurich) argues this by explaining how referendums can be moments of public deliberation. El-Wakil begins her piece by charting how deliberative minipublics have been used as instruments to add to the deliberative quality of popular vote processes. Beyond the use of minipublics, El-Wakil further argues that referendums can promote recursive representation in mass democracies by changing the opportunity structure for political representatives.

The last two articles chart developments in minipublics research. The first, by Daniel Steel, Naseeb Bolduc, Kristina Jenei and Michael Burgess (University of British Columbia) challenges us to rethink how representativeness is conceptualised in minipublic design. Minipublics have mixed aims and therefore make different demands on diversity. This article offers a 'purposive design approach' which can inform recruitment strategies for future deliberative forums.

Our last research article takes on one of the most topical questions in today's so-called post-fact world: can deliberation reduce political misperceptions? Drawing on a deliberative experiment, Staffan Himmelroos (University of Helsinki) and Lauri Rapeli (Åbo Akademi) present evidence on deliberation's corrective potential. Their findings make a case for measured optimism about the power of deliberative forums in solving pathologies of political communication.

Our Special Issue also presents a series of reviews on five books that challenge, inspire, and prompt reflection on the state of deliberative democracy today.

Concluding our inaugural issue is an afterword by Archon Fung, who further emphasized the scholarly and political challenges deliberative democrats face today.

We hope our readers share our enthusiasm for this inaugural issue. May the scholarship and practice of deliberative democracy continue to rise to the challenge of transforming democracy in these uncertain times.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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