

“Gentlemanly conversation” or vigorous contestation?

**An exploratory analysis of communication modes in a transnational deliberative poll
(Europolis)¹**

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Deliberation is quickly changing face. Recent years have seen considerable conceptual shifts in defining deliberation. The classic approach with its stress on rational discourse is being superseded by an expanded program of deliberation putting the stress on wider forms of communication, including story-telling and (emotional) rhetorics (see Bächtiger et al. 2010a; Mansbridge et al. 2010). In recent years, several scholars (Manin 2005; Urfalino 2005; Bächtiger 2011) have advocated that deliberationists should also take a more dedicated focus on contestation in deliberative processes. Surely, all deliberationists stress the importance of what Habermas (1989) has called “rational-critical debate”, which by definition entails controversial argument and argumentative contestation. Yet, many scholars are still wary of equating deliberation with fully-fledged contestation, as we typically find it in adversarial debate formats. John Dryzek (2009: 3), for instance, notes: “Deliberation is different from adversarial debate. The initial aim is not to win, but to understand.” Indeed, standard accounts of deliberation draw from a “conversation” model of speech (Schudson 1997; Remer 1999) and frequently emphasize communication that entails civility, respect, and constructivity, in combination with a dispassionate attitude, open-mindedness, and a focus on reasons that everyone can accept (see Bächtiger et al. 2010; Mansbridge et al. 2010).

But this gear towards “gentlemanly” and consensual discussion has somewhat obscured contestation’s virtues to realize essential goals of deliberation. In recent years, “epistemic fruitfulness” (or, the acquisition of superior knowledge) has become a focal point in deliberative theory and is frequently advocated as a key goal of the deliberative process (see Mansbridge 2010). Vigorous contestation may be instrumental to this goal (Manin 2005; Bächtiger 2011), and contestatory modes of communication may also achieve it much more effectively than consensual ones. In particular, contestatory modes of communication may help to more fully exploring all sides of an issue, for uncovering unshared information, and for reducing confirmatory bias by focusing on the downsides of specific proposals and arguments (see Schweiger et al. 1986; Schulz-Hardt 2002; Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger 2009). There is also intriguing psychological research demonstrating the epistemological superiority of contestation. In a laboratory study, Schweiger et al. (1986) found that contestatory formats in the form of “dialectical inquiry” and “devil’s advocacy” were conducive to a higher level of critical evaluation of assumptions and better quality recommendations than consensual formats, even though the latter were not geared towards finding easy consensus. To be sure, contestatory modes of communication may have their own problems and pitfalls. Especially when it comes to other deliberative aims such as social acceptability and legitimacy, consensual modes of communication may be better apt to

achieve these goals. Indeed, Schweiger et al. (1986) also found that subjects in the consensus groups expressed greater acceptance of their groups' decisions as well as a desire to continue to work with their groups compared to participants in dialectical inquiry or devil's advocacy groups. But there is full agreement in the literature that good deliberation should reveal all available information on an issue at hand and be conducive to an unbiased evaluation of the merits and downsides of proposals and arguments. Following psychological research, this means that good deliberation requires a healthy dose of vigorous contestation in the deliberative process.

But what does actually happen in citizen deliberations? Do citizen deliberations contain vigorous contestation and "clashes of conflicting arguments" (Manin 2005) or are they instances of "gentlemanly" and consensual discussion? To date, we know surprisingly little about the deliberative process in citizen deliberation. The most prominent format of citizen deliberation, the *deliberative poll*, aims at the systematic elaboration and evaluation of "*competing considerations*" on an issue at hand (Fishkin and Luskin 2005: 285). Random selection of participants combined with random allocation to small group discussions support this goal by creating "cognitive diversity" (see Landemore 2010) and confronting participants with diverse opinions. As such, deliberative polling has in-built mechanisms for contestatory engagement, and should not merely feature "gentlemanly" and consensual discussion. Yet, Bernard Manin (2005: 9) has hypothesized that the "diversity of views" does not necessarily imply "conflicting views". Even in the face of opinion diversity, so Manin, group discussions may entail a number of psychological hindrances for the full deployment of contestation, ranging from conflict avoidance to satisficing logics. So, one wonders how much vigorous contestation there really is in deliberative polls.

In this article, we make a first attempt to systematically explore the amount of contestatory and consensual modes of communication in citizen deliberation. We do this in the context of *Europolis*, a pan-European deliberative poll, which was carried out in Brussels in late May 2009. Almost 400 EU citizens from all 27 EU-countries were assembled to discuss the topics of third country migration and climate change during three days. Focusing on four carefully selected small discussion groups, we explore to what extent ordinary European citizens were engaging in contestation, cooperation, or other forms of communication. In this regard, we mainly focus on the amount of disagreement (representing contestatory modes of communication), agreement (representing consensual modes of communication), and neutral speeches (representing other forms of communication such sharing experiences or the

elaboration of a position). On this basis, we are in a position to judge whether the Europolis small group discussions primed on polite and consensual discussion or whether they featured vigorous contestation.

In the following, we will not explore further which communication mode, contestation or consensus, is ultimately superior. Nonetheless, our article is based on two premises: first, good deliberation requires a healthy dose of controversial argument. If underlying disagreements do not come to the fore, then this must be considered a deliberative failure. Second, in order to systematically evaluate what effects are produced by different communication modes, we first need to lay some empirical spadework and check what actually happens in citizen deliberation. Our exploratory analysis makes a first stab to shed light on this urgent topic. Of course, the specific and somewhat artificial setting of a deliberative poll with no consequential decision-making at the end may not tell us much about contestatory and consensual behavior under conditions of real political costs and real political salience. But given the prominence of DP-style designs for organizing citizen deliberation worldwide, our results may still be highly instructive for practitioners of citizen deliberation events.

Conversation, contestation, consensus: some conceptual nuts and bolts

Modern-day deliberation is frequently rubricked under the “conversation” model of speech (Schudson 1997; Remer 1999; Manin 2005). Habermas was the first to theorize “conversation” in the context of 18th century salons and coffee houses (Manin 2005: 19), and many deliberative democrats have toed this line by conceptualizing deliberation in “conversational” terms. In a nutshell, “conversation” can be defined as “face-to-face communication” combined with a stress on “the egalitarian and cooperative features of ideal conversation” (Schudson 1997: 299). “Conversation” is also frequently equated with the term “interactive discussion” (Manin 2005). The distinctiveness of “conversation” or “interactive discussion”, however, mainly arises from its juxtaposition to adversarial debate formats. In this regard, Remer’s (1999) distinction between the “conversation” model of speech and the “oratory” is instructive. Remer depicts this as follows: “Where the orator aims in oratory to beat his opponent, the speaker’s purpose in conversation is to seek out the truth, collectively, with the other interlocutors.” (p. 49) Moreover, the oratory is distinguished stylistically from the conversational model: in the oratory, a single active speaker delivers to a passive

audience, whereas conversation is dialogical and involves several interlocutors, “reflecting, ideally, the give-and-take of their discussion.” (p. 44) Finally, the oratory also starts from the premise that “average person’s nature necessitates extra-rational appeals” (p. 42), achieved by the deployment of (emotional) rhetorics, while the conversational model is geared towards rational argument. In past decades, deliberative democrats have given the conversational model an additional consensual spin, by emphasizing respect as well as a focus on reasons that other participants can accept. This consensual spin in deliberative theory is based on the premise that “gentlemanly” and consensual forms of discussion provide an alternative to the standard adversarial and aggressive way of discussing public affairs in contemporary politics, which many deliberative democrats view as harmful for a well-functioning democracy (see Tannen 1998). Of course, the “conversational-consensual” model of deliberation is not devoid of contestation, since the very structure of a deliberative process – the succession of arguments and counterarguments – has contestatory elements by design. But the problem here is not one of *presence or absence of contestation*, but one of *basic orientation and quantity*: our hunch is that the “conversational-consensual” model of deliberation privileges communication forms other than controversial argumentation, namely the pooling of information, the sharing of experiences, the elaborations of positions which are not sharply polarized or formally adversarial, as well as the identification of converging arguments and common ground. In other words, the “conversational-consensual” model of deliberation may under-produce conflicting arguments.

However, when it comes to develop productive categories for empirically distinguishing among the various communication modes, the existing literature is confusing at best. In this regard, Remer’s (1999) distinction between conversation and the oratory remains underspecified, especially when it comes to citizen deliberation. In particular, it obfuscates that citizen deliberation may entail vigorous contestation as well, while simultaneously lacking the further implications of the oratory, especially its exclusive orientation towards conflict and mobilization, which is clearly at odds with a deliberative approach. Next, Manin (2005) has translated Remer’s distinction between the conversation and the oratory into a distinction between “discussion” and “debate”. In the context of citizen deliberation, however, Manin’s elegant distinction is problematic, for two reasons: first, most deliberative practitioners organize citizen deliberation in a discussion and not in a debate format. Thus, when we speak about contestation in citizen deliberation, we necessarily speak about *debate-style elements within a discussion format*. Second, as mentioned above, there is also strong

current in deliberative theory towards consensus and agreement, requiring that we also capture consensual and collaborative elements within the discussion format. To deal with these various challenges, we propose to distinguish between two variants of the discussion format, a contestatory and a consensual variant, which we treat as poles of a “discussion continuum”. Empirically, we explore to which pole concrete citizen deliberations drift.

First, a consensual variant of discussion is geared towards common understanding and identifying common ground. Its main feature is the search and identification of converging arguments and reasons that other discourse participants can accept. In operational terms, it primes on differentiated argumentation, respect, mediating proposals, and different forms of agreement. From an evaluation perspective, we would speak of a consensual variant of discussion if the high amount of agreement and respect is high. We may also find a substantial amount of other forms of communication such as the pooling of information, the sharing of experiences, or the elaboration of a position. These other forms of communication may be instrumental for finding common understanding and consensus. Finally, disagreement and contestation are certainly not absent in consensual versions discussion (and they may even make up a substantial part of the communication process), but they are mainly done in a constructive and differentiated way with an eye on solving the conflict.

Second, a contestatory variant of discussion is geared towards the clarifications of differences. It has debate-style features, even though it does not conform to a classic debate format. The main difference to a classic debate format (or, the oratory) is that the speaker’s goal in contestation is still related to “truth-finding”, not only to win the debate by means of rhetorical persuasion and by discrediting other debaters (see Walzer 1999: 171). The main feature of a contestatory discussion process is the “clash of conflicting arguments” (Manin 2005). Hereby, we can identify three (interrelated) *modi operandi*: “disputing” which refers a process of argumentative challenges (and counterchallenges); “questioning” which refers to a process of critical interrogation and (cross-)examination; and “insisting” which refers to a sustained process of questioning and disputing (see Bächtiger 2011). Speakers may also use a bold style of communication (such as provocations and open disrespect) in order to create awareness among participants and to stimulate passionate discussions. Moreover, a contestatory variant of discussion may not be fully interactive in the sense that it involves all participants into discussion, but may restrict interactive elements to a few disputants. From an evaluation perspective, we would speak of a contestatory variant of discussion when there is a

high share of disagreement (in the form of disputing, questioning, and insisting); agreement may occur, but this will be a rare event. Other forms of communication such as the sharing of experiences or the elaboration of a position may occur as well, but they will remain marginal. If disputants use such elaborations and experiences, then they use them in order to challenge other disputants.

Communication modes in deliberative polls

The tantalizing question is now which communication mode, contestation or consensus, prevail in citizen deliberation. In this article, we shall focus on the most prominent variant of deliberative mini-publics, deliberative polls (see Fishkin and Luskin 2005; Fishkin 2009). In deliberative polling, the goal is to “weigh” competing considerations in informed, balanced, civil and conscientious discussion (see Fishkin 2009: 33ff.). As such, deliberative polling is neither explicitly geared towards contestation nor towards consensus. With regard to the latter, Fishkin and his associates are even strongly opposed to the idea that citizen deliberation should reach agreement and consensus. In their view, an initial gear towards consensual outcomes vitiates the deliberative atmosphere and leads participants to act in a strategic rather than an authentic way. To be sure, Fishkin and his associates are not against the spontaneous, participant-driven emergence of agreement and consensus; they are just opposed to a “conceptually” prescribed orientation towards these goals. By contrast, there is an opening to contestation. Indeed, the systematic and “balanced” evaluation of “competing considerations” lies at the heart of deliberative polling. Even though deliberative polls – and especially the small group discussions - are not construed as a debate format, Fishkin and his associates seem to be fully aware that a healthy dose of contestation is necessary in order to achieve a thorough evaluation of an issue at hand. In deliberative polls, a number of institutional devices support this goal.

First, participants are presented with balanced information material, listing pro and con arguments of an issue at hand. This should confront participants that there are competing arguments and an “other side” that they need to consider. Second, with regard to the small group discussions, the goal is to attain a systematic and thorough evaluation of the issue under consideration, whereby “competing considerations” – presented to participants in the information material in the form of pro and cons toward - are put to discursive scrutiny. In addition, random selection of participants combined with random allocation to small group discussions ensures that participants are diverse, facilitating the emergence of divergent

opinions and interests. Finally, facilitators are also supposed to keep the discussions on-topic and focused on all arguments. Third, in the “plenary sessions”, competing experts and policy-makers answer participants’ questions. Fishkin and Luskin (2005) depict this process as follows: “The panelists in the plenary sessions respond to the questions formed in the small groups. These are not simple questions of fact, to which there are undebatably right and wrong answers. Rather, they concern the policy alternatives’ consequences and costs, the tradeoffs they may entail, and the like.”

Yet, there are several reasons why the full deployment of contestation might be constrained in deliberative polls. Actually, this might apply to all three institutional pillars of deliberative polls, the information material, the small group discussions, and the plenary sessions. In this article, however, we concentrate on respective problems in the small group discussions. There is batch of subtle psychological and other factors which may hinder the full deployment of contestation. First, since stakes in deliberative polls are low (i.e., no consequential decision-making and no consensus is required at the end) participants generally do not enter group discussion with a competitive mindset, trying to convince others that their ideas are superior and win the debate. In Europolis, our study object, more than 80 percent of the participants stated that it was important or very important to getting to know people from different backgrounds. This emphasis on “getting to know others” may spark a logic of mutual understanding: participants may want to know and understand what others think, share experiences, learn from others, bridge differences and identify common ground rather than entering into controversial and heated discussion with others and insisting on their positions. Regarding Europolis, Olsen and Trenz (2011) also note that the two topics under discussion, third country immigration and climate change, were discussed as topics that required collective choices and that invited the single participants to speak as a “we” in defense of collective goods and not of personal interests. From a psychological point of view, finding out what “we can do” may have the consequence that the amount of controversial arguments becomes restricted even further. Second, when discussions are not organized according to a debate format, vigorously disputing other positions and insisting on one’s own position may be frequently seen as stubbornness as well as violating the norms of good discussion. This may again curb the contestatory character of discussion. Third, the interactive structure of group discussion and the emphasis of allowing every participant a turn may hinder proper debating as well. Empowered participants may want to speak up and contribute to the discussion. The consequence may be that an ongoing confrontation is interrupted, the focus of the debate shifted and an evolving controversy defused. In sum, despite the clear conceptual

openness of deliberative opinion polls towards contestatory forms of engagement, it is not clear how much this will pan out in practice. But to date, almost no one has taken the trouble to systematically investigate what is actually going on in deliberative polls (one of the few exceptions is Siu 2008). Our article sets out to change this.

Empirical analysis

We analyze the different communication modes on the basis of Europolis, a pan-European deliberative poll which took place in Brussels in May 2009. The topics of discussion were migration and climate change. The Europolis project started with interviewing a random sample of about 4'300 European citizens in April 2009. About 3,000 of them, randomly selected, were asked at the end of the interview whether they would be interested in participating in a deliberative event to be held in May. The other 1,300, randomly assigned, never received such an invitation to the event and constituted a control group. Out of the 3,000 randomly selected to be part of the test group, a random sub-sample of 348 actually attended the Deliberative Poll event. This group was proportionally stratified according to the number of seats allocated to each Member State in the EU Parliament (see Isernia et al., forthcoming). During the three-day event in Brussels, the 348 participants were randomly assigned to 25 small discussion groups. The groups were created by “randomly varying the languages spoken” (Isernia et al. forthcoming). The discussions were simultaneously translated in all languages spoken in the respective small groups. The small group discussions were led by trained facilitators. The task of facilitators in Europolis included the promotion of civility and boost participants’ “Europeanness”.

Selection of Discussion Groups. As mentioned before, a total of 25 small group discussions took place in Europolis. Since transcribing and analyzing deliberative processes empirically is highly demanding and time-consuming, we refrain from analyzing all 25 small groups. In this article, we selected a purposive sample of 4 groups for an in-depth evaluation of different communication modes and forms. Moreover, we limited ourselves to the general discussion on migration and the more specific discussion on policy options that address third country migration. Our selection criteria have mainly a demonstration purpose, rather than fulfilling representativeness. First, all groups selected should have serious underlying disagreement on the immigration topic in advance of the small group discussions. Second, we wanted to have some groups where we knew in advance that they comprised “devil’s advocates”, either in the

form of participant devil's advocates or in the form of a facilitator who questions participants. This concerns group B (involving a participant devil's advocate) and group A (involving a facilitator questioner). Admittedly, the facilitator in group A may not fully conform to the concept of a devil's advocate, since he only interrupted participants and insisted on clarifications. Even if the critical side of questioning was not fully deployed, the facilitator in group A nonetheless tried to provoke a more focused and dedicated debate on the topic of migration. Third, we wanted to have groups with underlying disagreement where we knew that no devil's advocates were present, neither in the form of participant devil's advocates nor in the form of facilitator questioners. This concerns groups C and D. The four selected groups included 14 to 15 participants and were composed as follows: group A consisted of participants from France and Hungary; group B consisted of participants from Germany, Poland and one participant from Austria; group C consisted of participants from Germany and Spain as well as one participant from Austria; and group D consisted of participants from France, Germany and one participant from Austria and one from Luxembourg. In the pre-deliberative questionnaire, all four groups displayed considerable diversity of views regarding crucial attitudinal questions on migration.

Operationalization

To measure different communication modes empirically, we draw from established research in communication sciences. Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger (2009) have developed a useful scheme for capturing disagreement and agreement via content analysis. In this scheme, disagreement refers to argumentative challenges and highlights contestatory forms of engagement, whereas agreement highlights cooperative and consensual forms of engagement. In order to identify and capture agreement and disagreement in discussion, Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger (2009) use so-called "thought types" as the unit of analysis. We proceed in a slightly different way: our unit of analysis is a *speech*. In so doing, we omit the onerous task of (reliably) identifying "thought types" in the first instance. In addition, focusing on whole speeches also eases the subsequent aggregation of the data.

Following Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger (2009), "disagreement" is defined as a statement signaling disagreement with what a prior speaker said. Cues of disagreement include statements such as "I don't agree", and "that's not correct". Moreover, disagreement also concerns statements which contain counterarguments to a specific position (a participant says

‘p’ and the following participant says ‘not p’). We also created an additional category dubbed “partial disagreement”. This contains statements where speakers say “I partially agree”, or “that is correct, but”. “Agreement”, in turn, is defined as a statement that expresses alignment with what a prior speaker said. Cues of agreement include statements such as “I agree,” “that’s right”, and “true.” However, with regard to statements signaling agreement, we confront a serious problem. There may be instances where speakers align with a one side in a debate, and in so doing explicitly say that they “agree” with this side. Such statements are clearly not expressions of proper “agreement”; actually, they fall under the rubric of “disagreement” and are coded likewise. Finally, speeches that do neither contain agreement nor disagreement are coded as “neutral”. We conducted a test of intercoder reliability with an independent coder assessing a total of 30 speeches. Results reveal that the reliability of our coding is satisfactory².

Moreover, we also investigate the amount of informational vs. critical questioning. Informational questions are questions posed by participants who ask for more or better information. These are instances of conversational and consensual modes of communication. Critical questions, in turn, are challenging questions, where participants question and probe the validity of another participant’s arguments or claims. These represent instances of contestatory modes of communication.

Next, we present a batch of indicators that allow us to take an in-depth look at the communication style. Following Hänggli (2012) we distinguish between a “bold” and a “polite” style of communication. A “bold” style of communication would be indicative of contestatory process of discussion; a “polite” style of communication would be indicative of consensual process of discussion. A first indicator of “bold” style is the amount of provocative statements. By provocative statements, we mean statements where people make exaggerated claims that aim at provoking reactions from other participants. A second indicator of “bold” style is the amount of disrespect. Disrespect refers to speeches where participants explicitly degrade the contributions and arguments of other participants. Next, we focus on “polite” styles of communication. A first indicator of “polite” style is the amount of “differentiated” argumentation. In concrete, this means that participants address the issue from different sides, ‘weigh’ pros and cons, or make self-critical statements. Frequently, differentiated argument occurs in the context of partial disagreement, even though the

² Four tests of intercoder reliability were performed for the various communication modes (with the corresponding levels of agreement in parentheses): Ratio of Coding Agreement RCA (73.3%); Cohen’s kappa κ (0.638); Spearman’s r (0.822); standardized Cronbach’s alpha α (0.889).

relationship is not constitutive (i.e., partial disagreement do not always entail differentiated argument nor is differentiated argument limited to the former). A second indicator of “polite” style is the amount of explicit respect. Explicit respect refers to speeches where participants value or acknowledge what other participants have said, even if they do not fully agree with the latter’s viewpoints or arguments.

Finally, we also investigate whether there are sequences of direct confrontational exchanges in the small group discussions. As mentioned before, direct confrontational exchanges are the hallmark of the debate format, and a high amount of direct confrontations would be indicative of discussion drifting towards debate. By direct confrontational exchanges we mean that two (or, several) speakers engage in sustained controversial argumentation. It goes like this: speaker A makes a challenge, which is taken up by speaker B who makes a counterchallenge, followed by a response of speaker A or another speaker defending speaker A’s position. In idealized notions of debating, such challenges and counterchallenges would entail “insisting” and go over several rounds. Thus, we count how many “rounds” confrontational exchanges exhibit. A particular point interest is also how direct confrontational exchanges end. We investigate whether participants are really going into the ‘heart of the issue’ and insist on their claims or quickly ‘take back’ their claims and agree with the other disputant (or, questioner).

Results

Let us first look at the amount of agreement, disagreement, and neutral speeches. In three discussion groups (B, C and D) the percentage of clear-cut disagreements ranges between 20 and 24 percent (see Table 1). In group A, despite the presence of a facilitator questioner, the relevant percentage is only at 13 percent. The amount of partial disagreements (including speeches containing both agreement and disagreement) is smaller, hovering around 11 to 17 percent for all four groups. While partial disagreements do signal conflict, they do this in a more polite, open and differentiated way than clear-cut disagreements. The amount of explicit agreement, in turn, is quite substantial: in group A and C, explicit agreement is around 16 and 20 percent of the speeches. In group B and D, the respective share is lower, hovering at 11 and 12 percent respectively. The large majority of speeches, however, is “neutral”, with respective shares of 47 and 55 percent. “Neutral” speeches entail informational statements, the sharing of experiences, and the elaboration of positions (which are neither polarized nor formally adversarial). It is also quite striking to see how participants produce multiple streams

of arguments and “storylines” around the immigration topic, which are complementary and additive rather than controversial and confrontational. Finally, the amount of critical and informational questioning is generally low. These figures indicate that the four Europolis discussion groups did neither drift towards a contestatory nor towards a consensual variant of discussion. But to further qualify this finding, let us first take a more in-depth look at the *style of communication*.

Table 1: Agreement, Disagreement, and Neutral Speech in 4 Europolis discussion groups

	Disagreement (%)	Partial Disagreement (%)	Neutral (%)	Agreement (%)	Critical Questioning (#) (%)	Informational Questioning (#) (%)
Group A (Number of speeches=54)	9.3	16.7	53.7	20.4	2 (3.7%)	3 (5.6%)
Group B (Number of speeches =129)	23.3	14.9	51.2	10.9	9 (7.0%)	7 (5.4%)
Group C (Number of speeches =43)	20.9	16.3	46.5	16.3	2 (4.7%)	4 (9.3%)
Group D (Number of speeches=65)	21.5	10.8	55.4	12.3	5 (7.7%)	4 (6.2%)

The style of communication in our four Europolis groups is generally very “gentlemanly”. As table 2 displays, the amount of provocations, i.e., making exaggerated claims, is absent or very low, with the partial exception of group B where this amounts to almost 8 percent. Disrespect, too, is at a very low level, hovering between 5 and 8 percent. Here, parliamentary debates might serve as a useful contrast foil: the amount of disrespect in parliamentary debates generally exceeds 20 percent (see Bächtiger 2005). At the same time, the amount of speeches with differentiated argumentation is quite substantial – in group C it even exceeds 20 percent - and is clearly higher than shares of provocations and disrespect. Interestingly, the amount of explicit respect is not very high, ranging only between 5 and 8 percent. Again, parliamentary debates may give context to these figures: in non-public committee debates with the goal of finding a common solution, the amount of explicit respect is much higher at around 30 percent (see Bächtiger 2005). But the fact that the percentage rate for provocations

and disrespect are below 10 percent in all groups is quite telling and surely indicative of the polite character of the discussion.

Table 2: Communication Styles in 4 Europolis discussion groups

	Provocation (%)	Disrespect (%)	Differentiated Argument (%)	Explicit Respect (%)
Group A (Number of speeches=54)	0.0	5.6	9.3	5.6
Group B (Number of speeches =129)	7.8	8.5	14.7	5.4
Group C (Number of speeches =43)	2.3	4.7	20.9	7.0
Group D (Number of speeches=65)	1.5	7.7	15.4	7.7

The small group discussions do not entail much direct confrontational exchanges either. As mentioned before, direct confrontational exchanges are the hallmark of the debate format and imply that there is a direct “clash of conflicting arguments”, either in the form of a direct challenge and subsequent response of the addressee, or in the form of a critical question and a direct response of the addressee. In groups C and D, there are only 2 respectively 3 participant-induced direct confrontational exchanges. Moreover, these are not sustained but die out almost immediately: the average number of rounds in the direct confrontational exchanges in group D is 2.3 (the minimum is 2 rounds). In group A, there are 10 facilitator-induced questionings. The facilitator in group A repeatedly asked critical questions which forced participants to further substantiate (and defend) their statements. However, facilitator-induced questionings were not at all conducive to a subsequent unfolding of a controversy: participants responded to the facilitator in a neutral way by providing additional justifications, with no participant engaging in controversial argumentation.

Table 3: Direct Confrontational Exchanges in 4 Europolis discussion groups

	Direct confrontational Exchanges (#)	Participant-induced (#)	Rounds (average) (#)	Resolution (take back) (#)
Group A (Number of speeches=54)	10	1	2.4	0
Group B (Number of speeches =129)	7	7	4.0	3
Group C (Number of speeches =43)	2	2	4.5	0
Group D (Number of speeches=65)	3	3	2.3	2

In group B, we find two longer instances of direct confrontational exchanges out of a total of seven. Both confrontational exchanges were initiated by a participant “devil’s advocate” (person A, a male participant from (Western) Germany). Let us give a taste of one of these confrontational exchanges. In the following example, person A confronts person D, a female participant from (Western) Germany.

A (1): “I’d like to ask the lady next to me what she would do when she would receive unsolicited visit. When she returns and there is somebody, right inside her apartment. What would she do?”

B (male, (Western) Germany) (2): “Illegal in her apartment?”

A (3): “Right.”

C (male, Austria) (4): “In this case I’d like to ask how you can compare an apartment, meaning intimate living space, with a country that has far more space.”

A (5): “Isn’t it the same? Do you see any difference? This guy (in the apartment) I will kick out or arrest or whatever and to the other one (irregular immigrant in a country) I say “you can stay”.

And that is, that – you cannot do that, can you? Aren’t that double moral standards?”

(...)

D (9): Well, I owe you an answer to your question. I see a very clear difference between my privacy sphere, between my apartment, and... First of all, I move in my private sphere – in my own rooms, I have my family, they are my closest. And then I am part of a community (...) and then I am a German national and furthermore, Germany is a country within the EU. Thus, we need to differentiate and I really cannot just say: “This is my home, I close the boundaries and devil-may-care – this is not as simple as that. Let’s turn the whole thing around: In Germany, we are the ones driving cars, possessing warm homes, power plants, making greenhouse gas emissions. We just release that in our beautiful environment. Thus, we actually need to build the wall high enough, such that our waste and everything stays with us. We cannot say on the one hand that we

want to life a good live but when it comes to the people, we close the door and say: Here's the boundary. Thanks and bye.”

(...)

Interestingly, the discussion changed considerably after this confrontational exchange. Before the confrontational exchange, there was quite a bit off-topic discussion with participants. After the confrontational exchange, participants focused on one particular aspect of immigration (which was aligned with the confrontational exchange): how a regular status of an immigrant can slide back into an irregular status. In order to discover the relevant facts, participants even consulted the briefing material. Following this systematic exploration of the topic, some participants came up with proposals on how to improve the legal situation of irregular immigrants. Thus, the direct confrontational exchange had highly “productive” implications.

However, even in group B, three direct confrontational exchanges ended with an “immediate” “take back” of previous claims. This means that challengers were not insisting and instead tried to charter consensual ground. This may be illustrated by the following example in group B, an exchange between two (Western) German participants (person A male, person B female):

A: “(...) In my opinion, the EU should care more that its external borders are closed, in order to monitor that no illegal immigrants may infiltrate the countries and, yes, maybe even take away jobs from the native inhabitants. (...)”

B: “According to me, it shouldn't be the EU's task to close the borders because – we need to look at that a bit more globally – we are one world and the world does consist of a multiplicity of countries and then we need to care that all the people that we exploited for so many years are feeling well in some way. (...)”

A: “That's not what I meant by “closing borders”. I think that a selective migration may indeed be reasonable but: We have to concentrate (...) on letting people in that dispose of adequate working experience, not that they take away the jobs from the lowest income class. (...) And concerning people from poor countries, of whom you say that they have been exploited in the times of colonialism; we should give them the opportunity to build up something in their own country and not as refugee (...). They should develop themselves at home in order that they do not need to migrate and to drown.”

This is a familiar scenario in our Europolis discussion groups. Even though there was clearly underlying disagreement, participants acted in a very constructive way by taking up the concerns and trying to propose a solution that both disputants could possibly agree with.

Evolving controversies are also hindered by the fact that other participants frequently act as “mediators”, shifting the controversy in other directions and thus defuse it at the same time. One such example can be found in group D. Here, participant A (female, (Eastern) Germany) argues for increasing development aid in developing countries in order to prevent immigration to Europe. In the following, person B (female, France) contradicts by saying that preventing migration is the wrong solution. In so doing, she highlights the importance of a better cultural understanding and refers to the student exchange program Erasmus. Then, person C (male, France) jumps in the discussion by taking B’s side by emphasizing the importance of multiculturalism and tolerance and arguing against development aid. In reaction to that, person D (female, Luxembourg) intervenes with the following statement:

“I think there is already a fundamental difference by referring to certain projects. For some people that are already in a privileged situation and can afford tertiary education and the luxury of profiting from the Erasmus program and living abroad – if you compare this contemporary situation with the people that suffer and feel bad – well, I wouldn’t say that those people should absolutely stay home, but they should in their country already have good future perspectives, wealth. And this has to be said and repeated with regard to development aid in their countries, in that they do not sense the urge to emigrate.”

Without taking sides, D uncovers that the participants A and B were probably talking of two different immigration situations. In the second part of his speech, D searches for consensual ground. On the one hand, D implicitly refers to something that B mentioned, in saying that he does not see the solution in zero migration. On the other hand, D also implicitly refers to A, by arguing that development aid is of crucial importance in improving a country’s situation. Thus, by taking a differentiated perspective, D succeeds in diffusing an emerging conflict. In other words, the highly interactive setup in deliberative polls seems to stall an ongoing controversy.

In some cases, it is also the facilitator who interrupts and stops a potentially evolving controversy. In group A, the facilitator kept asking detailed questions on different aspects of immigration, sometimes in a challenging manner. Although this might be a technique to bring latent disagreements to the fore, it did not work well in this particular case. Rather, by performing a questioner role, the facilitator somewhat freed participants from asking (critical) questions on their own. Moreover, the frequent interruptions by the facilitator also hindered coherent discussion and was conducive to what Ryfe (2006: 88) has called “scattershot” discussion.

In sum, these findings provide a strong indication that our four small group discussions in Europolis are mainly instances of “gentlemanly conversation”. Contestation is not absent, but it is neither the most important communication mode nor is it deployed in a bold manner. Only group B (involving a participant devil’s advocate) has partially debate-style features, whereas group A (despite the presence of facilitator questioner) is so low on contestation that one might wonder about its “critically reflective” character. As Manin (2005) has speculated, despite the fact that there is diversity and underlying disagreement in the groups, this is not automatically conducive to vigorous contestation. By the same token, our four Europolis groups also had no discernible drift towards consensual discussion: agreement was present, but consensual modes of communication were not particularly marked. As such, the discussions in the four groups were polite and “gentlemanly”, but not really consensual.

To be sure, we cannot make bold generalizations out of an analysis of four purposively selected discussion groups in one deliberative poll on one specific issue. Future research will require more comparative data to give context to our findings and to support our interpretations. For instance, we need to compare our results with fully-fledged debate formats (such as debating clubs) in order to determine how idealized notions of contestation actually look like, i.e., what the exact shares of contestatory and consensual modes communication as well as other forms of communication are in such formats.

Conclusion

Bernard Manin’s (2005) intuition was right. Opinion diversity in citizen deliberation does not automatically spark vigorous contestation and a “clash of conflicting arguments”. Despite strong opinion diversity and their transnational character, the four Europolis small group discussions that we analyzed are a far cry from an adversarial inquiry as we find it in devil’s advocacy or in cross-examination, for example. Rather, the small group discussions are largely instances of “gentlemanly conversation”, with a bit of contestation surely, but definitely with no drift in direction of vigorous contestation.

Clearly, one might object that participants in Europolis have been provided with “competing considerations” in the information material and also had the possibility to critically question experts from different sides. That might add to the contestation part and compensate for the lack of vigorous debating in the small group discussions. But the core of a deliberative event is the actual deliberation phase. The very idea of deliberation, so Parkinson (2012), is that

preferences are constructed in the deliberative process. So, if contestation is as low as in our group A, one starts questioning the truly contestatory character of citizen deliberation.

But would more contestation in the small group discussions be really superior compared to the “gentlemanly” conversation mode that we found in our four groups? In other words, if the amount of disagreement and direct confrontations had been higher, would that have changed the outcomes, both in epistemic and substantial terms? In the context of this article, we must leave this question open. However, as our example in group 9 underlines, after conflicting viewpoints had clashed in a direct controversial exchange, the discussion became much more focused, in-depth and creative. This finding may also be in line with psychological research arguing that pre-discussion preferences are hard to crack. The problem is that there is a human tendency to quickly dismiss preference-inconsistent information (see, e.g., Greitemeyer and Schulz-Hardt 2003). As such, only direct confrontations – rather than merely ‘hearing’ counterarguments or reading lists of pro and con arguments - might lead people to take proper notice of the disagreement; and, by forcing them to give answers, people might also begin to seriously reflect about the merits and downsides of counterarguments.

Nonetheless, Fishkin and his associates might remain skeptical of pushing deliberative polls in direction of a debate format. First, they might rebut that people actually change minds in deliberative polls, and frequently do so in more public-spirited directions. This is also true for Europolis. First results show that participants in Europolis became more European and more tolerant towards immigrants (Cabrera and Cavatorto 2009). Moreover, individual satisfaction with the small group discussions in Europolis was high. As Isernia et al. (forthcoming) note: “On average, the participants thought the event extremely balanced and considered the quality of the group discussions they took part to be high.” Indeed, the mere presentation of diverse viewpoints as well as the release and pooling of private information may fulfill epistemic purposes. Argument in itself can be a learning experience, expand perspectives, and provoke insights. One might add that contestatory modes of communication may have their own pitfalls. There is a long debate in educational philosophy about the downsides of adversarialism. Educational philosophers (e.g., Ikenuobe 2001) have emphasized that pure adversarialism might be counterproductive by making people retrench and dismissive of a challenge. Clearly, the example in group 9 speaks a different language, namely that contestation can yield productive consequences. But much more research is needed to corroborate this positive outcome. Finally, a debate format may also increase the inequality of disadvantaged groups. Psychologists have shown that there is gender bias when roles such as

the devil's advocate are assigned. Women's reputations can be harmed when they challenge men (Sinclair and Kunda 2000). Similar results were found when Kunda et al. (2002) examined reactions of whites to statements by blacks.

On the other hand, there is relatively broad agreement in the literature that vigorous contestation is essential for thoroughly exploring the downsides of proposals and unraveling inconsistencies and flaws in participants' arguments (see Schweiger et al. 1986; Schulz-Hardt 2002; Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger 2009; Bächtiger 2011). Thus, discarding debate-style formats as inappropriate for citizen deliberation would fully miss the point. As Schudson (1997: 299) has elegantly put it, good democratic discussion must be "profoundly *uncomfortable*". But if the goal is to enhance contestatory forms of engagement in citizen deliberation then this needs to be properly organized. In corporate business, for instance, special confrontation sessions are built into a decision-making process. As Herbert and Estes (1977) note, the institutionalization of conflict and dissent "may help de-personalize the conflict generated by criticism." (p. 665). Another ingenious way of filtering controversial arguments into discussion is the "Deliberatorium", an online deliberative forum developed by Mark Klein (2011). Klein and his team developed an algorithm that automatically evaluates argumentative quality. If argumentative quality turns out to be insufficient, the algorithm alerts the participants and provides them with additional and controversial insights on the topic. Finally, we might also enhance the amount of contestation via the facilitator's role (an understudied topic, see Landwehr, this volume). Of course, the facilitator/questioner in group 2 may have missed her task, but we may think of active facilitation designs where the facilitator is turned into a devil's advocate, especially when there is no participant devil's advocate in the discussion group.

In sum, this article has laid some empirical spadework to analyze different communication modes in citizen deliberation. Future research will also have to deal with the consequences of different communication modes. For instance, it is an open question whether deliberation in DPs based on the systematic discussion of "competing considerations" has the same awareness and transformation effects than vigorous contestation. Having clarified such issues empirically, we may also be in a better position to re-think the merits and downsides of existing institutional designs for effective and productive citizen deliberation.

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