



***Deliberation under conditions of
language pluralism***
*Insight from the
Europolis Deliberative Polling Experiment*

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Abstract

In this paper, we confront some commonly held assumptions and objections with regard to the feasibility of deliberation in a transnational and plurilingual setting. To illustrate our argument, we rely on a solid set of both quantitative and qualitative data from Europolis, a transnational deliberative experiment that took place one week ahead of the 2009 European Parliamentary elections. The European deliberative poll is an ideal case for testing the viability of deliberative democracy across political cultures because it introduces variation in terms of constituency and group plurality under the controlled conditions of a scientific experiment. On the basis of our measurement of both participants' self-perceptions and changes of opinions through questionnaires and of group dynamics and interactions through qualitative coding of group discussions we can identify the following patterns: 1) The EU polity is generally recognised and taken as a reference point by participants for exercising communicative power and impact on decision-making, 2) the Europolis experiment proves that participants are in fact able to interact and debate across languages and cultures, developing a self-awareness of citizens of a shared polity and thereby turning a heterogeneous group of randomly selected group into a constituency of democracy.

Keywords

EU - Democracy - Political Science

Introduction

Ten years ago there was widespread optimism with regard to the possibilities of activating European citizens as members of a constituency of European democracy. The assumption was that the European Union (EU) was in need of more citizens' participation to overcome its democratic deficit and to turn the Europe of elites into a Europe of citizens. In scholarly debates this optimism was reflected in the 'deliberative turn' of EU studies relying on the integrative potential of deliberation and consensus seeking procedures as an alternative path to majoritarian democracy (Eriksen and Fossum 2000: 7). Following this logic, the emergence of a European public sphere was held possible through strong publics as the promoters of democratic reform with the double task of enhancing the reflexivity of governance and constituting the citizenry through a pan-European discourse about the constitutional essentials of the new political entity (Eriksen 2005a; Eriksen 2005b). From this normative perspective, deliberation within strong publics was seen as a harbinger for the democratisation of EU politics. To the extent that it was put under empirical scrutiny, deliberation was studied mainly as an additional means of communication in expert discourses, for instance in the comitology system of the EU (see Joerges and Neyer 1997a; 1997b). Only few empirical studies dealt thus far with the conditions and capacities for citizen deliberation within the EU (Abels 2009) even though EU institutions already implemented several deliberative experiences in order to involve the citizens in dialogue and stimulate a public debate across Europe.

The debate on the democratic deficit of the EU has increasingly involved calls for a more profound engagement of 'ordinary' citizens in European politics. The low level of political participation in EU politics has become all the more acute in recent years as the so-called 'permissive consensus' has been cast aside by growing discontent among citizens with the integration project (Hooghe and Marks 2009); most clearly visible recently in a string of popular rejections of the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. Moreover, the new diversity of the enlarged Europe is potentially a further obstacle to mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and the activation of European citizenship. European Parliamentary elections thus far rather amplified the problem addressing the citizens mainly as uninformed voters, displaying decreasing turnouts and increasing support for populist parties and Eurosceptic opposition.

But what do citizens actually think and how do they behave when informed properly about the EU and encouraged to exchange their views and opinions about EU politics? So-called Deliberative Polling provides us with a research

tool linked to an experimental design to answer precisely this question with regard to the potential impact of engaging citizens vis-à-vis EU institutions (Fishkin et al. 2000; Fishkin and Luskin 2005). The Europolis Deliberative Poll was held in Brussels one week before the 2009 European Parliamentary elections inviting a randomly sampled group of lay citizens from all member states to deliberate freely on political issues of relevance for the election.¹

In this paper, we intend to scrutinise more closely the conditions and dynamics of citizens' deliberation in the pluri-lingual and multicultural setting of European politics. In the first section, we lay out the main ideas behind deliberative polling and map two challenges to deliberative democratic practice and theory in heterogeneous political settings such as the EU. We then present the design of the Europolis deliberative poll and methodological issues of coding and measurement of deliberation between lay citizens. Finally, we analyse actual deliberation in the Europolis deliberative experiment focusing on these challenges.

Deliberation under conditions of group heterogeneity and language pluralism: two challenges

Deliberative polling has been launched as an alternative to public opinion research to measure the informed opinion of citizens going through a monitored process of public deliberations (Fishkin 1991; 1995). As a democratic experiment, deliberative polls were designed in a way to maximize two principles of democracy, which are usually defined as exclusive: participation and deliberation (Fishkin 2009: 95). Can citizens be engaged in a broader public dialogue that is at the same time driven by rational consideration and arguments? Can a public sphere be created that is inclusive and engaged in high quality deliberation? Through careful experimental design, deliberative polling projects have succeeded to implement the conditions for an inclusive and deliberative public sphere both at the national and at the local level. They have also been applied in different political cultures: in developed Western democracies, in the new democracies of Eastern Europe as well as in an authoritarian regime like China. Deliberative polls have further been tested out with regard to a large variety of issues such as local policy issues, environmental policies, budgetary issues, constitutional design and foreign policy.²

¹ Europolis is a project co-funded by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission, the King Baudouin Foundation, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, Compagnia di San Paolo, and the Open Society Institute. For an overview and summaries of results from questionnaires see <http://www.europolis-project.eu/>

² For more information on the substantive topics and designs of each deliberative poll, see

Deliberative polling experiments provide sufficient evidence for the potential of deliberation to empower citizens within contextualised national cultures, when participants share the same language and are familiar with political rules and institutions. Apart from improving the general knowledge and the participants' political engagement, deliberative polls also result in value changes and increased agreement on problem perceptions, expressions of concern and possible solutions (Fishkin et al. 2000; Luskin et al. 2002: 474ff.). Deliberative polls have proven successful in achieving consent on policy content, and in fostering citizens' allegiance to their polity. In this sense, the application of the method of deliberative polling has made a substantial contribution to illuminate key questions of both mass politics and democratic theory (ibid.: 487). Deliberation makes a difference in helping people to become aware of balanced information about policy issues; to exchange thoughtful views with other participants; and to reflect and modify their original views in light of exposure to information and discussion. Deliberative polls are thus able to stipulate processes of individual and collective opinion formation that are not available to other democratic procedures. Deliberative polling is however usually applied within a national, monolingual political culture. While there appears to be agreement on the applicability and normative value of deliberative polling in local and national settings, applying this experiment to a transnational setting poses additional challenges.

In the case of Europolis, the designing of deliberative polling meets two additional challenges when confronted with the conventional way of applying the method within a contextualised national context. First, the applicability of the experiment is put into question by the fact that the group of randomly selected participants are situated within a non-finished polity. Political authority of the European Union is neither legally consolidated nor socially accepted. The polity as the reference point for the sample is not the familiar environment of national or regional government but a complex multi-level governance arrangement. This introduces further uncertainty with regard to the question of which type of administration, legislative procedures and formal government deliberation should exert influence on. Is communicative power expressed through transnational deliberative bodies renationalised in the sense of targeting mainly domestic institutions and decision-making processes or do such 'mini-publics' rather pay tribute to the complexity of multi-level governance in the sense of empowering European institutions and supranational authority?

The second challenge of relevance here is that the constituency from which the representative sample is chosen for deliberative polling lacks concrete political

<http://cdd.stanford.edu/>.

recognition. Participants of Europolis were not members of a pre-established *demos* or a fully recognised and taken for granted political community. They were also not professionals with expert knowledge and multi-lingual skills. Participants rather represented lay citizens from 27 member states, spoke 23 different languages and differed widely in their opinion and attitudes about the issues at stake and about the EU in general. The EU represents precisely this case, in which the constituency of democratic politics is neither fully legally recognised nor is it self-recognising as a politically bounded and culturally distinct community. EU constituents are unbounded, multi-dimensional and contested (Abromeit and Schmidt 1998; Fossum and Trenz 2006a; 2006b). Statistical indicators for drawing a representative sample of European citizens can therefore not rely on the background assumption of a relatively homogeneous and monolingual population but must take into account the existence of pluri-ethnic and pluri-lingual fragmented groups as well as shifting minorities and majorities.

The conditions for the generation of legitimacy in deliberative democracy have been discussed in terms of epistemic rationality and political equality (Eriksen 2005a; Fishkin and Luskin 2005; Habermas 1996; Peters 2005). With regard to the epistemic value of deliberation, it has been argued that understanding relies on basic cultural commonality (Kraus 2008; Kraus 2003; Taylor 1985; 1989). Following this line of thinking, a democratic public sphere can only be built where a number of pre-political requisites are found. There is a communal and identitarian base that must pre-exist democracy. This is further linked to the idea that a common culture and identity are pivotal for deliberation because these create the *trust* and *understanding* that are necessary for citizens to reach sound agreement on political issues (Miller 1995). In an increasingly complex and culturally pluralistic Union of 27 Member States and 23 official languages meaningful and equal deliberation can therefore be seen as an impossible project. The upshot of this is, then, in the final instance that democratisation in terms of engaging citizens and fostering a vibrant public sphere on the transnational level is an impossible task. If cultures demarcate different discursive universes, discourses between cultures must be seen as principally problematic (Leigh 2004). In the EU context, it therefore needs to be closer examined whether there is a correlation between deliberative quality, group homogeneity and language. Group heterogeneity and language pluralism would thus further exacerbate the potential threshold to deliberation between EU-citizens. This is in line with the literature according to which the democratic deficit of the EU is structurally rooted in the absence of a European *demos*. The people of Europe (or rather the many peoples in Europe) do not simply lack a common identity as citizens of the same polity. They also lack the socio-cultural prerequisites to become united, e.g. through a

common language, a shared cultural background or through participation in an encompassing public and media sphere (see e.g. Grimm 1995; Kraus 2008; Miller 1995; Offe and Preuss 2007; Offe 1998). Accordingly, deliberation has been mainly measured within and not across political cultures.³ In this line of reasoning, deliberation would work best, if political culture is contextualised, pluralism of opinions is contained, participants speak the same language, share a common ethical understanding and pay each other respect as co-citizens (Habermas 1998; Wessler 2008).

With regard to the political equality condition similar objections have been made in the literature with regard to the applicability of the principle to a transnational and pluri-lingual setting, Political equality in deliberation, it is claimed, is best served by the common origin and shared social and cultural traits of the participants. The *demos* of equal citizens relies on some pre-political bonds: a common language, culture, and history (see e.g. Grimm 1995; Schnapper 1994). Moreover, in terms of placing the citizen in relation to political authority, this relates to the argument that 'citizenship' belongs firmly to the lexical set of concepts like 'nation', 'state' and 'peoplehood' (Williams 1976). Consequently, the idea of reason and equality in communication is seen to be unrealistic in situations of deep diversity where deliberation cannot draw on a notion of a 'demos of equals' that unifies the citizens. This is allegedly the case in the European Union, which is characterised by unequal living conditions of its populations and which grants only a limited range of political rights to its citizens. The drawing of a statistical representative sample of participants from a heterogeneous population that lacks the basic bonds of trust and recognition would then interfere with the confinement of political equality.

Against these valid objections with regard to the possibilities of applying the principles of deliberative democracy to a transnational and pluri-lingual setting, others have discussed solutions for reconciling political equality with deep diversity and the different meanings political equality assumes in multicultural societies (Fossum 2003; Fraser and Honneth 2004). This is in line with findings from social movement research, which show that contrary to the expectations, pluri-linguism at the European level does not impair the inclusivity and epistemic quality of deliberative settings such as the European Social Forum as compared to the exchange among movement activists at the national level (Doerr 2008; 2009). Finally, in a project on the reconfiguration of EU democracy, different polity options are discussed with regard to what

³ There are some useful insights on dynamic of discussions between heterogeneous groups in the literature on intergroup cooperation-contact (see Allport, 1954, Brewer and Miller, 1984, 1996).

political equality can mean and how it can be consistently applied with regard to the multiple *demoi* of Europe (Eriksen and Fossum 2007).

If language pluralism needs to be defined as one of the basic EU values that should be conserved, protected and even promoted,⁴ the question of whether and how groups can interact and seek understanding across languages gains momentum. Translations can potentially help out in exceptional circumstances, for instance, in the case of professional groups or among experts. But can the epistemic condition of democracy be met in a pluri-lingual random sample of citizens setting? The critical issue here is *how transformative* the deliberative poll could be in a transnational setting. To what extent did the gathering of people together in Brussels over a weekend foster a sense of common understanding of the issues at stake? Further, when and under what conditions can this translate into recognition of EU authority and shared identity? EuroPolis offered a setting wherein one can consider this dimension of deliberation's transformative role against the communitarian view that certain pre-political requisites must be in place for deliberative democracy to function effectively.

Method and data: EuroPolis - the European Wide Deliberative Poll

Taking place one week ahead of the 2009 European Parliamentary election, EuroPolis was set up to conduct a *transnational* deliberative experiment that engaged citizens from all EU Member States in debates on issues of shared concern. As such, EuroPolis was an experiment that can contribute to clarifying both the normative and the empirical concerns pertaining to the application of deliberative democratic theory's core assumptions to the EU. While resting on the crucial normative standards of deliberative democratic theory, EuroPolis' main innovation was to probe the conditions for deliberation among citizens in a transnational and multilingual setting through an empirical and comparative experiment.

In other words, whereas the underlying constituency and the polity have thus far been treated as relatively stable variables in the designs of deliberative polling experiments, EuroPolis introduced an additional axis of variation along these lines. For that purpose, the views and preferences of the 348 randomly selected EU citizens taking part in the EuroPolis Deliberative Poll

⁴ For that purpose, the first Barroso Commission even appointed a Commissioner of Multilingualism. The language strategy of the EU with the aims to promote language pluralism internally and externally has been established in 2008.

have been assessed against a representative sample of the EU population which was used as a control group.

The Europolis project followed standard Deliberative Poll design, which is organised as follows: First, a cross-sectional random survey is organised and administered to a representative sample of the universe under study. Second, a random sub-sample of those citizens first targeted to answer to the cross-sectional survey is invited to attend a deliberation event. Often, to minimise barriers to participation, citizens are paid a stipend for their time. Third, those who say they will come to the event are sent balanced background materials to inform them about the issues to be discussed and to incite them to put more attention and think harder on these topics. Fourth, the participants come together for some days, and are randomly assigned to moderated small groups to discuss the issues. As part of their small group discussions, they develop questions to ask a balanced panel of experts and politicians on each issue. Fifth, at the end of the event they fill out a questionnaire. Sixth, the citizens' changes of opinion from before and after their deliberation are analysed. These results are shared with the larger public and with opinion-leaders and policy-makers. Seventh, highlights of the deliberation process are televised to communicate to the larger polity the results. This guarantees accountability and also seeks to raise public interest in politics and levels of political participation.

The cross-national citizen dialogue of Europolis specifically addressed climate change and immigration, two high-profile issues of recent political debates in Europe. The participants were assigned into 25 small groups consisting of two or three languages. Discussions were led by moderators who had the task to manage the workings of the group through minimal interventions. In addition, there was a host of translators involved with each group due to their pluri-lingual character, thus allowing verbal exchange in the participants' mother tongue.

The Europolis Deliberative Poll produced two sets of data. First, the questionnaires allow us to measure both, pre- and post-deliberation opinions and knowledge level and the perceptions of the participants at the end of experiment. Secondly, audio recordings of the small group discussions have been coded by using a modified version of the Discourse Quality Index (DQI). DQI is a measurement instrument⁵ that relies on qualitative coding of debates

⁵ The unit of analysis of the DQI is a speech act delivered by a participant. The entire discussion is broken down into smaller speech units and each speech act is coded separately. Every speech act is coded for all the variables included in the coding scheme. Coding with DQI is not an automatic exercise and it requires qualitative interpretation of the coder which need to be familiar with the coding scheme and theoretical concepts that the measurement instrument is constructed upon..

based on a carefully constructed coding scheme.⁶ The initial DQI that was constructed to analyse elite deliberation in parliamentary assemblies (Steiner et al. 2004) was modified to account for the specifics of citizens' deliberations and to measure effects of transnationalism and pluri-lingualism. We coded and analysed small group discussions on immigration control in groups of the following language composition: Italian and English speakers (group SG7); English speakers and Bulgarians (group SG8); English, French (group SG11); Italians, Spaniards and Swedes (SG12). The indicators and measures we use for the empirical part of our paper are listed and described below.

In order to test possible effects of deliberative polling on the recognition of the polity and identification of the constituency of democratic politics we raise the following research questions which correspond with two challenges for how to conceive deliberative democracy in the context of the EU.

1) *The Polity dimension*

- a. Can deliberation in the EU work within a group of ordinary, randomly selected citizens instead of stakeholders and experts and can it support collective problem-solving?
- b. How can deliberative democracy in the EU be conceived under conditions of shared sovereignty and contested levels of political authority?

2) *The Constituency dimension*

- a. Can deliberation work within a heterogeneous group of participants, who were socialised in different national cultures and do not share the same language?
- b. How can deliberative democracy be conceived under conditions of enhanced group heterogeneity and applied to a group of participants, which do not recognise each other as co-citizens, i.e. as members of the same political community

These questions are addressed by a mix of quantitative and qualitative data sets and operationalized within the polity and constituency dimensions by relating them to the following hypotheses:

Polity hypothesis 1 (questionnaire): As an indicator of recognition of the EU polity, we expect that the level of political authority chosen by participants as relevant for problem solving within the two issue fields would shift towards the EU level after participating in Europolis. This would correlate with constituency hypothesis 1 measured in a higher identification as European at

⁶ See annex for the coding scheme.

the end of experiment while identification of participants with their own country remains constant or goes down.

Polity hypothesis 2 (DQI) As an indicator of recognition of the EU polity, we expect that participants justify their arguments less in terms of particular group interests or references to their country of origin but by referring to the benefits of EU/Europe, or to common good principles. We further expect that 'European justifications' as an effect of group discussion increase while particularistic (nationalist) justifications decrease over time.⁷

Constituency hypothesis 1 (questionnaire): As an indicator of recognition of political community, we expect that participants identify more strongly as Europeans after participating in Europolis. At the same time, we would expect socialising and learning effects from participation in group discussions measured through the self-perception of the participants (post-event evaluation). This would correlate with the readiness to support the allocation of political authority to the EU as measured in the polity hypothesis 1.

Constituency hypothesis 2 (DQI): As an indicator of recognition of political community, we expect that participants participate equally in group discussions and that no linguistic group dominates over others. Furthermore, we look at the role of the facilitator, in order to determine to what degree equal participation has been encouraged and if that was the case, who needed encouragement. We further measure degrees of interactivity between participants across languages and whether these interactions include positive, neutral or negative reference to other participants' arguments.

Analysis: Deliberative citizens in action

Introducing variance in both the polity and constituency dimension, Europolis measures not only change of opinion and knowledge of the participants with regard to the policy issues at stake but also impact on deliberation on the recognition of political authority and composition of political community. In the following, we will address each of these two dimensions separately.

⁷ The 'content of justification' variable originally captures whether arguments are made in terms of narrow group interests, in terms of the common good, or in terms of both (Steiner et al. 2004: 58). In our modified coding scheme we added the category *Europe justified* speech acts" to capture the specifics of Europolis citizens' deliberation in the context of EP elections.

The polity dimension

Following the traditional design of deliberative polling experiments, the Europolis questionnaire measured changes of opinion and preference of citizens who deliberate on important policy issues. In addition, participants were specifically asked to reflect on the appropriate level of decision-making. At which level should political authority be allocated: entirely at the EU level, shared by both levels in a 'multi-level' arrangement or entirely at the national level?

Table 1. Preferred level of decision-making

And on a scale from 0 to 10, where '0' means 'entirely at the EU level', '10' means 'entirely by the individual Member States', and '5' is 'exactly in the middle', at what level do you think decisions should be made in each of the following areas?	Mean T1	Mean T3	Difference T3-T1	N
Immigration	5,05	5,07	0,02	323
Climate Change	3,39	3,13	-0,26	322
Fighting unemployment	6,06	5,99	-0,07	321
Fighting crime	5,49	5,73	0,24	322

** significant level 0,001

Table 1 reports the questionnaire results of aggregate change in participants' views on decision-making levels before (T1) and after deliberation (T2) with regard to the two debated issues (immigration and climate change) and two 'control' issues (unemployment and crime).⁸ Europolis participants become more favourable of shifting decision-making powers to the supranational level on climate change and unemployment issues but less favourable on immigration and crime. Looking more closely at the issues discussed, climate change is the proverbial transnational and boundary-crossing issue, while immigration is often linked to identity discourses in nation-states. The differences between the climate change and immigration issues on this score could indicate that citizens, despite balanced information and being confronted with a diversity of opinions remained rather 'conservative' on this aspect of the polity dimension. In an issue that is already 'globally confined' they became more inclined towards solutions 'beyond the nation-state', while on a typical national identity issue they remained 'national' in their outlook. The control issues support this interpretation with regard to the fight of

⁸ Before-after changes for the participants were obtained by comparing the mean value at time of recruitment (T1) and time 3 (T3), the end of deliberative event. We assessed the difference using a paired comparison test of significance for all questions we include in our analyses.

unemployment (transnational social rights dimension) and policing (internal security as a national prerogative).

The qualitative analysis of small groups' discussions gives a more nuanced picture of salient cleavages among European citizens about the question of allocating political authority for immigration control. On the one hand, citizens reflect national legacies and express preferences in accordance to the membership status of their country (e.g. being a strong member state and not part of the Schengen group):

I'd say, that for some countries, it will be very difficult to implement this zero immigration policy because of the colonial past. In the UK there are just a great [...] People who fought for the UK during previous wars will be allowed to residence in the UK. So it will be very difficult for the UK to agree to a zero immigration regulation coming from the EU.' (UK male, SG 22).

On the other hand, there can be also very pragmatic reasons for citizens to prefer nation states prerogatives in immigration control or to opt for a delegation of competences. Some participants recognize that EU competences would be most desirable to achieve policy goals but deplore deficits in implementation or inefficiency of existing institutional arrangement and therefore opt for national authority as an 'interim solution':

The message they send to us (experts who participate at the plenary sessions) is that for Europe made of twenty-seven member states is difficult to find an agreement with regard to the legislation on immigration. It seems that the countries do not want to use this common law [...] and this just shows the complexity of the issue. And now I have to say that I understand better why mechanism proceeds so slowly, and because it is so difficult to agree [...] to reach a decision at European level [...] where the various states are independent, therefore the European Union is not really supranational [...].(Swedish national, female, SG 12)

Finally, from the geo-political perspective of Southern Europe, a primary interest on EU support for building control capacities prevails:

But what I understood today at the plenary meeting was that everybody blames individual member states. Italy is sending back immigrants. Spain does not want to do anything. Greece the same. Still, Italy, Spain and Greece are receiving these people, trying to select them in the best

possible way. I would ask the 'lords' of the European Union what they are doing for these countries. (Italian male, SG 12)

Qualitative coding of group discussions further helps us to understand how citizens justify the appropriateness of collective choices and levels of decision-making. The underlying assumption is that citizens by expressing political preferences with regard to specific policy solutions also raise validity claims with regard to the common good that applies with regard to the debated issue. In particular, we are interested here in the scope of validity of the particular arguments delivered by citizens. Within what particular institutional arrangements are arguments held to be valid and who should be the main beneficiary of a given policy solution and to whom shall collective decisions apply? In a given setting, should the collective choice respond to the needs of the local community, a sub-state region, a nation-state community, the community of citizens in the European Union, or the global community of all human beings?

Table 2. Justification⁹

all groups(7,8,11,12)	I Discussion	II Formulation of questions	III Discussion-after plenary
N speech acts (excluded moderator)	202	74	73
N of speech acts justified among which:	109	40	25
Group interests, own country	25.9%	25.5%	12.5%
Europe	31.5%	19.3%	45.8%
Global or common good references	42.5%	55.2%	41.7%

Our data supplement the questionnaire finding that citizens are not only generally favourable towards supranational decision-making but do in fact also engage with the issue of the EU polity and express strong opinions on European integration in relation to alternative local, national or global polity settings. Citizens thus accept or take for granted that the handling of complex policy issues requires some practical arrangement of shared sovereignty in a multi-level polity arrangement. On the whole, Table 2 indicates that European and common good orientations with regard to the issue of immigration control prevail over national interests. Citizens demonstrate a clear tendency to look

⁹ We report the percentages of cases which had level of justification higher than zero. Thus, only justified speech acts were included in the analyses.

beyond the national context to validate their claims and to raise competing polity preferences. They had, in a sense, internalised the fact of free movement and residence rights *inside* the EU. The common good of Europeans was for instance linked to issues such as the economic future of Europe and avoidance of illegal immigrants dwelling on EU territory. The thus constructed European common good was, then, used as a justificatory argument for supranational policies on and control of physical entry to the EU:

The only thing I want to say is that we can't really allow to sit on the fence. If we truly want to build a true Europe, we should talk about external borders only, and the EU member states should relinquish some of their sovereignty. I think that there's no other way to go about it. (French male, SG 11)

So, I think we should also strengthen the borders of Europe, because if we make all these people legal, we will have a massive arrival of migrants, and we do not have the capacity to welcome all these people. And it will only be to the detriment of the migrants themselves. (Luxembourg/Portuguese male, SG 11)

In further analysing the debates, we adopted a sequencing approach in order to separate different phases of small group discussion on immigration issue (see table 2). The first phase of discussion evolved mainly around the identification of the problems at stake. The second phase was more strongly influenced by the moderators, who coordinated the more formalised task to formulate questions for the plenary session. These questions were based on a selection of previously justified contributions to the debate, which made a further engagement of the participants in justificatory discourse during this phase redundant. The third phase was again more open and participants had the possibility to express their views on the plenary session with experts and come up with some concluding thoughts on the issue. Leaving aside the more formalised setting of the second phase, we would expect that citizens' deliberations in the context of EP elections enhance a European common good orientation among the participants. Table 2 largely confirms this hypothesis. As an effect of knowledge increase, learning and socialisation during the experiment participants become more 'European' in their justifications and develop a sense of belonging to the EU polity. At the end of the experiment one third of the justifications delivered contained a European common good reference, while references to national interest clearly diminished. This finding is coherent with deliberative theory assumptions of the transformative power of deliberation that can alter individual preferences towards the identification of a common good (Mansbridge 2010). In addressing and recognising the EU

as a polity, where borders and the insider/outsider logic matters, these debates also suggest an evolving sense of community between the participants. Were they more than just private participants in a confined deliberative experiment? In the next section, we address this so-called constituency dimension of deliberation between lay citizens in the transnational setting of the EU.

The constituency dimension

The pluri-lingual and transnational design of the Europolis experiment raised the question of whether citizens are able to interact and debate across languages and cultures, thereby turning a heterogeneous group of randomly chosen participants into a constituency of European democracy. Any viable polity depends on a modicum of identification from its citizens. As highlighted *ad infinitum*, the EU lacks the typical identity signifiers that are held to be constitutive of nation-states (Calhoun 2001; Castiglione 2009; Delanty 2005; Giesen 2003). Since a strong political identity that would replace the existing identities of the nation state seems unattainable and for many also undesirable, the question is whether the European setting is based on a zero-sum relationship between existing national identities or conducive to a positive sum relationship of nested identities (Góra et al. 2011). For the one, it is only on the basis of nationness that the citizens can build trust and solidarity that is necessary to participate in opinion-forming processes. The lack of a basis of political community would therefore restrict the scope of integration to intergovernmental cooperation. Participants in transnational mini-publics would be expected to defend primarily national views and interests. In such a view, the group discussions would lead to a nationalist clash among the participants who would become more introverted in defending the integrity of the national community and mapping their attitudes onto a cultural cleavage towards their fellow participants from other member states. Alternatively, European integration is seen as giving expression to a cosmopolitan vocation that can be transposed to the universal and inclusive community of democracy (Beck and Grande 2007; Delanty 2009; Eriksen 2007). The EU-setting would thus be post-national, in the sense of renouncing on a strong identity, and the persisting plural identities would be significantly constrained by the necessity to respect diversity and cosmopolitan values (Góra et al. 2011). Under these conditions, participation in group discussions would stimulate citizens to engage with others' views and interests. This would lead, in turn, not only to attitude change but also trigger off micro processes of identity change and socialisation of participants as citizens of Europe.

Europolis provided an ample 'laboratory' for gauging the degree to which group heterogeneity and language differences can be overcome in deliberative

mini-publics. Each of the 25 discussion groups was composed by 12-15 participants from two or more language groups and sometimes three or four countries. Did participants in such a multinational and pluri-lingual setting have equal opportunity to participate in the debate and to contribute to deliberative exchange and opinion formation? (Steiner et al. 2004: 56). In the following analysis, we use a mix of quantitative questionnaire and qualitative DQI variables to test possible effects of ethno-cultural heterogeneity and language pluralism on deliberative quality and test out the possibilities for socialisation, group reflexivity and identity formation.

Effects of ethno-cultural heterogeneity

First, with regard to ethno-cultural plurality, our data show that exclusive national identities did not affect the quality of group discussions and the potential to arrive at common understanding among the participants. The danger of a clash of national identities can be ruled out. In addition, deliberation in a transnational setting shows a clear potential to spur identity change among the participants. More concretely, the share of participants that perceived themselves as national citizens *only* decreased significantly after participation in the deliberative poll. Participants turned from identifying in exclusive nationalist terms to becoming 'inclusive nationalists', i.e. also identified as members of a community of Europeans (Risse 2010: 13).

Table 3. Identity

	Mean T1	Mean T3	Difference T3-T1	N
On a scale from 0 to 10, where '0' is 'not at all', '10' is 'completely', and '5' is 'exactly in the middle', how much would you say you think of yourself as being European?	7,10	7,39 *	0,29	328
And on the same 0 to 10 scale, how much would you say you think of yourself as just being from your [COUNTRY]? Only country= 10	7,74	6,67 ***	-1,07	326
And if you had to choose just one of the following alternatives, what would you say you see yourself as...? 1-nationality only/ 4-European	2,18	2,23	0,06	323

** significant level 0,001

Table 3 indicates that, although there are no dramatic identity changes,¹⁰ reasoned debate and opinion exchange in small group discussions enables citizens to relate to the broader gamut of identities that emerge in a pluricultural, multilingual, and multilevel polity like the EU. Even though the topics brought to discussion were geared towards more pragmatic issues of problem-solving, most participants were sensitive to questions of group belonging and sometimes also more vocal and explicit on identity issues. Qualitative data from transcripts give numerous examples of the development of reflexive capacities of participants turning group deliberations into critical voice of the citizens. Critical reflexivity is partly encouraged by the specific task the group had to perform in formulating expert question and addressing policy makers. The confrontation with experts and other groups in the plenaries created shared expectations that were exchanged among the participants especially in the last round of the debate.

The development of critical and reflexive attitudes as part of group deliberation can be considered as an important identity marker. We can distinguish between different layers of reflexive deliberations which can encompass a critical reflection on the role of participants as citizens, a critical reflection on the purpose of the scientific experiment and their role therein, and finally, a meta-discourse on Europe and its complex identity questions. For obvious reasons, critical reflexivity as part of the group discussions is unequally developed; in some instances, it is given only sporadic expression and restricted to single statements, in other instances, it unfolds in longer sequences through dialogue among the participants.

First, group solidarity is enhanced by the processes of becoming reflexive as citizens of Europe and expressing critique towards the experts and politicians. In the following statement, an Italian participant confronts the unitary visions of the citizens (the participants of the panel) with the still divided positions of the political representatives (the experts of the plenary). *We* (the citizens) can make proposals and provide solutions for problems, which *we* feel are *ours*. *We* can, in principle, convert from nationals to Europeans. But *they* (the politicians) are not able to give substance to a European identity. *They* do not know how to use the opportunities (like a citizen forum) for *us* but only for *them*. *They* do not take up our ideas but only follow *their* opportunistic interests:

¹⁰ Differences in identification between T1 and T3 are not particularly strong and only two out of three indicators are statistically significant.

[we should] [...] make a question to our political representatives of Europe: Whether (and when) Europe will give substance to a European identity. [...] We could give the proposals and solutions to our problems (but) we must feel them as our problems, we should feel as Europeans [...] the fact that we still (mainly) have a national identity is limiting strongly our ability and participation. In fact, the participation in European elections was shameful. The sense of belonging (to Europe) is lacking. (Italian male, SG 7)

More specifically, the experts and politicians are criticised for their unwillingness to provide concrete answers or their incapacity to make themselves understandable to the citizens. This lack of responsiveness is then generalised as a European experience that marks the citizen-elite divide of the European Union and justifies the democratic response of indignant citizens against the elites in Brussels:

What I experienced as a person, I felt that these young women (experts and politicians who participate at the plenary sessions) [...] I do not know what kind of degree they have, I assume that they should at least have a good degree in international politics given the fact that they arrived here [...] and even if they wanted to give us the answers, those were not the answers in my opinion. [...] It is absolutely unacceptable that they didn't find the way to answer to such a precise question. It is unacceptable. And I am sorry for this but I if I could decide who should occupy those places at the European Union I would suggest to place us there. Why so many people are moved from their homes (to work for the EU) if they can't give us concrete answers? (Italian female, SG 12)

This indignation about the incomprehensible experts and elites is also shared by other participants. In the following statement, the upcoming elections are seen as an opportunity to mark a difference. Again, a 'we'-feeling is created by distinguishing participants of the experiment as the forerunners of a European citizenry who should guarantee that only the 'really qualified' are elected.

[...] now we have the European elections, and we should all do the 'advertising' in order to select the qualified people. So they will not come there only to be 'chair warmer'. (Italian male, SG 12)

Secondly, group solidarity is enhanced by the processes of becoming 'reflexive' of being part of a European experiment. Reflections on the purpose of the experiment are a recurrent topic of group discussions. Participants see themselves confronted with the expectation that they should develop a

common understanding and we-feeling as Europeans. In general, this possibility is not rejected but taken up as an opportunity for further reflection:

[...] the purpose of this research is to understand how the discussions may change our views [...] and I think that the possibility to communicate with each other could help us to understand each other better and could lead us to feel more European [...] because we get to know other people and we discuss with them [...] so the time we spent here is good for us. (UK female, SG 07)

Another Italian participant reflects about the privileged experience to participate in the scientific experience, which for him is also a 'human experience'. He is however fully aware of the isolated character of the experience and deplors the lost opportunity for the EU to not making a more systematic use of the ideas and proposals that are produced by the citizens:

I wonder why this opportunity is not used by the EU. It could have been an opportunity for the EU and for the people to bring up new ideas. In fact, it could have given the space for (our) new ideas that could have become active and not only passive proposals (like now). Instead, it's only good for us as an experience, but in the end it only remains a 'discourse' that we carry with us, but this benefit does not sufficiently justify that the EU is losing this opportunity. (Italian male, SG 07)

Participants thus combine their critical reflection about the experiment with the expression of critique of the European Union and the state of European democracy. As a case of second-order reflexivity, this transformation of becoming a European citizen can again become an element of reflexive group deliberation. It is then recognised that the experiment was not helpful in an instrumental sense to arrive at better policies and solutions but rather in a symbolic sense to make participants aware of the dimensions of European citizenship:

[...] this meeting, at least in my opinion, did not help us to solve or to clarify the problems of immigration. But, it increased the awareness of European citizenship. Not because they made me feel more European, but because they made me be more careful towards the people we are selecting to represent us in Europe. (Italian female, SG 12)

Last but not least, we can identify instances of a meta-discourse on Europe. One Swedish participant, for instance, calls upon her group fellows to reflect directly upon the notion of 'our European life' and 'European life style', a

rather unclear notion for her that is in need of common interpretation:

I do not know what 'the European way of life' exactly means, so I would like to ask you how to interpret this expression. (Do) we have a European way of life, if there is such diversity even if I don't really know what could be defined as a Swedish culture or anything else. For this reason I am curious to know what do you think of the expression 'the European way of life'. (Swedish female, SG 12)

While acknowledging the potential for transnational identity formation, another participant also underlined its possible pitfalls and limits. A contrast to this is found in the interplay between different modes of identity that might change over time:

For me, Europe and the world are a village [...] A Frenchman for example, coming from the south of France to the north of France, is like in a foreign country. And with the years, he will become used to the people of Northern France and the people of Northern France will become used to him. [...]. And I think that those who welcome the migrants should create situations where people can better integrate themselves. I think if you do that, you're not going to lose your identity; you're not going to lose your origins [...] (Luxembourg/Portuguese male, SG 11)

These findings on critical reflexivity of intercultural group discussions strongly back an understanding of reflexive public deliberation as an effective means to overcome cultural incommensurability (Bohman 2003). Socialisation factors of taking part in an assembly like a deliberative poll matter to explain the transformative force of deliberation in intercultural settings. The challenges of cultural pluralism are thus minimised by the effects of group reflexivity. Participants from diverse ethno-political groups are committed to shared practices for providing evidence and discussing solutions to common problems. What is more, participants from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds are critically engaged in contesting political authority and defining their role as European citizens (not least in light of the upcoming European Parliament elections).

These findings on group reflexivity and socialisation as a counter-effect to cultural pluralism are also strongly backed by the questionnaire post-deliberation poll. The views and perceptions of participants on the behaviour of other participants, provides answers to the degree of cohesion and 'groupness' in the transnational mini-public of Europolis. Our data show that

contrary to the communitarian assumption, language pluralism and group heterogeneity were not seen by participants as impediments to dialogue in small group discussions (Table 4).

Table 4. Group heterogeneity and deliberative setting

Most participants seemed to mainly care about their own country and not about the European Union	%
Disagree (0-4 on 0-10 scale)	39,1
Exactly in the middle (5)	29,6
Agree (6-10 on 0-10 scale)	27,6
Don't know/no answer	3,7
On a 0 to 10 scale, where '0' means 'completely disagree', '10' means 'completely agree', and '5' is 'exactly in the middle', how strongly would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements is?	%
The members of my small group participated equally in the discussion	
Disagree (0-4 on 0-10 scale)	23,9
Exactly in the middle (5)	12,4
Agree (6-10 on 0-10 scale)	62,1
Don't know/no answer	1,7
I learned a lot about people different from me – about who they are and how they live	
Disagree (0-4 on 0-10 scale)	5,7
Exactly in the middle (5)	10,9
Agree (6-10 on 0-10 scale)	81,3
Don't know/no answer	2,0
My fellow participants respected what I had to say, even when they didn't agree	
Disagree (0-4 on 0-10 scale)	3,4
Exactly in the middle (5)	7,8
Agree (6-10 on 0-10 scale)	84,2
Don't know/no answer	4,6
Despite simultaneous translations I had problems to follow the debate as if it were in my own language	
Disagree (0-4 on 0-10 scale)	80,5
Exactly in the middle (5)	4,0
Agree (6-10 on 0-10 scale)	12,1
Don't know/no answer	3,4

Overall, the participants evaluated their experience of participating in the deliberative event as highly positive. Only 27,6% of participants felt that their group fellows mainly cared about their own country and not about European Union. 62 % agreed that participation was equal in small group discussions. The experience of meeting and talking with other people from all across the continent and with different cultural background also had an impact: 81% of the participants thought that they had learnt a lot about people different from themselves, 'about who they are and how they live'. 84% felt that their fellow participants respected what they had to say, even if they did not necessarily agree. On average, the participants thought the event extremely balanced and considered the quality of the group discussions they took part in to be high. Most importantly, participants from other member states were not seen as hostile players who defended diverging interests but as equals who expressed strong view and provided accessible justifications. On this score, then, we can conclude that, overall, the results of Europolis show that contrary to the communitarian assumptions, ethno-cultural plurality has no significant impact on deliberative quality and the possibility for citizens from different member states to debate and find agreement on issues of common concern.

Effects of language pluralism

For the purpose of this analysis, language is used as the second analytically distinct though not independent variable in constituting political community and democratic constituencies. As we saw from table 4, participants had, according to their self-evaluation, no problems in 'understanding' their fellow European citizens. Moreover, language was seen by only 12% as a barrier to follow the debate. When analysing data from the actual group deliberations the results are more mixed. Table 5 summarizes the findings of language group participation and interactions in different sequences of deliberation in the four groups analysed.

Table 5. Equality, language groups and the role of moderators¹¹

		I Discussion	II Formulation of questions	III Discussion-after plenary
SG 12 (N participants 15) Language of moderator - Italian	Total speech acts (excluded moderator)	76	9	16
	Moderator intervene to engage individual participants	2,6 %	0,0 %	0,0 %
	Moderator intervene to engage linguistic group (sw)	3,9 %	0,0 %	0,0 %
	Neutral or positive reference to other arguments	35,5 %	11,1 %	43,8 %
	Swedish n. of speech acts	23,3 %	23,5 %	37,5 %
	Italian n. of speech acts	65,1 %	70,6 %	62,5 %
	Spanish n. of speech acts	11,6 %	5,9%	0,0 %
	Total	100 %	100 %	100%
SG 11 (N participants 13) Language of moderator – English	Total speech acts (excluded moderator)	46	9	16
	Moderator intervene to engage individual participants	20,7%	22,2	9,1
	Moderator intervene to engage linguistic group	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
	Neutral or positive reference to other arguments	50.0%	42,2%	66,7
	FR LUX % of speech acts	30,8%	15,6%	25,8%
	UK IRL % of speech acts	69,2%	84,4%	74,2%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

¹¹ The percentages of each linguistic group speech acts are calculated by weight of each language within the composition of small group.

Deliberation under conditions of language pluralism

SG 8 (N participants 10) Language of moderator – English	Total speech acts (excluded moderator)	64	35	20
	Moderator intervene to engage individual participants	11,0%	8,6%	30,0%
	Moderator intervene to engage linguistic group	0,0 %	0,0 %	0,0 %
	Neutral or positive reference to other arguments	39,1%	34,3%	50,0 %
	UK	67,2%	44,2%	50,0 %
	Bulgarian n. of speech acts	32,8 %	55,8%	50,0 %
	Total	100%	100%	100%
SG 7 (N participants 11) Language of moderator – Italian	Total speech acts (excluded moderator)	46	21	21
	Toderator intervene to engage individual participants	15,2 %	4,5 %	5,0 %
	Moderator intervene to engage linguistic group (engl)	0,0 %	0,0 %	10,0 %
	Neutral or positive reference to other arguments	50,0 %	90,9 %	85,0 %
	UK and IRL	56,9 %	50 %	68,1 %
	Italian n. of speech acts	43,1 %	50,0 %	31,9 %
	Total	100%	100%	100%

In our qualitative analysis of group discussions we approached the criterion of equal participation by weighting each linguistic group's share in deliberation. Table 5 indicates that all linguistic groups participated in group discussions. Furthermore, moderators rarely intervened to engage specific linguistic groups in discussion but barely encouraged individual participants to get on board in the debates. There are, however, clear patterns of language dominance in two groups (11 and 12) that correlate with the language spoken by the moderator while in the other two groups (8 and 7) moderating effects on language dominance did not become salient. Our data set is too small to further enquire this question of language dominance. Possible intervening variables that explain the variation on the share of group participation are the design of the group setting, delays in waiting for translations and individual styles of moderation.

Another possible explanation for the minimisation of language as an impact on deliberative quality is that pluri-lingual settings are in fact especially conducive towards certain 'habits of listening' (Doerr 2008; 2009). Transnational groups might turn out to be more attentive listeners and overcome habits of hearing in familiar national settings. In a discussion among co-nationals we know intuitively whom to listen to and whom to ignore. In transnational setting, this familiarity is not given. In Europolis this was amplified by technical equipment (simultaneous translations, headphones and microphones) which helped focus the attention of the participants. As we see from the quote above, participants were routinely asked to speak slowly and keep their speech intelligible in order to facilitate translation and thus mutual understanding. The higher listening requirements of the pluri-lingual setting might thus have worked positively for the deliberative quality.

Overall, then, our results with regard to the equality of participation and status of language groups confirm the overall trend of the Europolis experiment that plurality is not a principled barrier to deliberation. Participants did not isolate themselves but engaged in debate with citizens from other language groups. Language dominance, to the extent it occurred in particular sequences of the experiment can be explained as an effect of several intervening variables, which cannot be fully controlled by our research design.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted that the polity and constituency challenges do not stand in the way for conceiving deliberation in a transnational and pluri-lingual setting. Contrary to the 'no demos thesis', the Europolis experiment proves that citizens are in principle able to interact and debate across languages and cultures, thereby turning a heterogeneous group of randomly chosen participants into a nascent constituency of democracy. We therefore conclude that communicative barriers as deriving from dispersed authority and group heterogeneity in the post-national constellation are for the most part practical and not substantial. They can be overcome by careful design of the deliberative setting which facilitates encounters among the participants and generates habits of respect, listening and learning.

More specifically, our overall findings from both sets of data firstly indicate that the EU polity is in fact recognised and taken as a reference point by citizens for exercising communicative power and impact on decision-making. Secondly, Europolis has provided a microcosmic European 'public', where citizens from highly diverse backgrounds and despite language pluralism have debated and contested each other on issues of principle and policy

related to European integration. Problems of understanding related to the use of plural languages in heterogeneous group settings can thus be partly overcome, though there remain restrictions in how the principle of political equality can be approached and how the overall representativeness of the experiment can be defended (Olsen and Trenz 2011).

The engaging of ordinary citizens through deliberative experiments should however not be misunderstood as a tool to fabricate citizens' support and to return from contentious politics to a more consensual style of EU policy making. Deliberation among lay citizens can as well express to public discontent with EU policies and institutions and exacerbate the citizens-elite divide that is underlying EU policy-making. By giving citizens the opportunity to discuss and voice opinion, deliberative polling raises awareness of the complexities of political decision-making and democratic legitimacy. In this light, deliberative polling highlights that legitimacy does not necessarily have to rest on substantive consensus on institutional issues or policy, but rather is ultimately dependent on the public 'saturation' of political will-formation through open and unfiltered debate. EU politics are increasingly politicised and EuroPolis brings with it evidence that the opportunity to engage in debates is a more effective means to mobilise political participation than endless media campaigns and public relations exercises courtesy of EU institutions that address the passive, and, for the most part, non-attentive citizens.

Deliberative polls are technical designs forgiving lay citizens the possibility to become more informed and to debate issues of political importance but not magical tools for resolving the democratic and legitimacy deficits associated with particular political settings. In this sense, the project of deliberative polling has come some way in opening up new avenues for political participation and active citizenship, but it has yet to provide a platform for 'unprocessed' deliberation between citizens, devoid of technical, cultural, or linguistic limitations. This indicates that there are still unexplored effects of the specific *setting* of deliberative experiments like EuroPolis. The relatively high hopes pinned to deliberative polling as an instrument for democratic reform of the EU need to be put into perspective in light of the unsettled questions of political representation and public mediation in a transnational setting such as the EU (Olsen and Trenz 2011). Given the experimental character of EuroPolis, it is therefore premature to draw any conclusion from the 'microcosm of European citizens' to the contours of a European public sphere. Deliberative polling opens a forum for the expression of public voice and discontent, which operates under scientifically controlled conditions, but does not automatically generate democratic legitimacy for the EU. The latter remains ultimately

bounded by the restricted capacities for the channelling of public discontent and the limited institutional responsiveness in a diversified polity such as the EU.

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