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A New Leaf for Public Deliberation

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Abstract

The Journal of Public Deliberation is turning over a new leaf. This short introduction maps new directions for the journal and invites readers to continue engaging the vibrant field of deliberative democracy.

Keywords

deliberation, deliberative democracy, democratic innovations, public engagement, practice

A New Leaf for Public Deliberation

It has been fourteen years since the *Journal of Public Deliberation* published its first issue. What started as an initiative by the Deliberative Democracy Consortium has grown to become a collective enterprise with the International Association for Public Participation, the newDemocracy Foundation and the vast network of editors, board members, authors, reviewers, and readers all committed to enrich our understanding of deliberative democracy. To date, the journal has published over 297 research articles, commentaries, book reviews, and reflections from the field, demonstrating the growing body of knowledge on public deliberation.

Over the years, the journal has witnessed how the field of deliberative democracy has responded to major political transformations. Fourteen years ago, it would have been unthinkable that politicians, activists, and mainstream media would turn to deliberative democracy as a solution to today's sharply polarized, multimedia saturated, highly unequal, and climate-challenged world. Fourteen years ago, it would have been a long shot to expect countries around the world to institutionalize deliberative mini-publics in key moments of collective decision-making. And yet, just in the past five years, the Irish Constitutional Convention, the permanent assembly of deliberative democracy in the German-speaking part of Belgium, and deliberative polls, as precondition for any constitutional amendment in Mongolia, have demonstrated deliberative democracy in action on a large scale. We could not help but look back at the question Peter Levine, Archon Fung, and John Gastil raised in the first article this journal ever published: What happens when deliberation becomes “a more high-stakes public process” (Levine, Gastil & Fung, 2005, p. 6)?

Boldness in Vision, Humility in Claims

This question could not be more pertinent today. As the crisis of liberal democracy unfolds, scholars and practitioners of deliberative democracy are faced with the challenge of offering bold solutions while maintaining epistemic humility. If democracies are to survive incessant attacks from demagogues, dark money, and disinformation networks, advocates of deliberative democracy need to offer transformative democratic innovations. But boldness in vision must be tempered by humility in claims. The field has developed a body of evidence about deliberation's epistemic, ethical, and democratic functions, but there remains the unfinished business of the field lacking “a clear image of its ultimate goal” (Black, Shaffer & Thomas, 2019, p. 2). More work needs to be done in theorizing, operationalizing, assessing, and improving deliberative practice in a way that is responsive to the rapidly changing character of the public sphere today.

These new and persistent challenges signal that it is time for the research field and indeed this journal to turn a new leaf.

Beginning 2020, the journal will undergo significant changes. First, the journal will be published under a new name: *The Journal of Deliberative Democracy*. This slight name change captures how the field evolved over the years, where deliberative democracy no longer occupies a marginal space in the fields of communication and rhetoric, social sciences, education, and public policy, and instead has become a “mainstream” field of research and practice. This, however, this does not mean that the journal will only showcase successful stories and sympathetic theories. Quite the contrary, we envision the *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* to feature the latest thinking, emerging debates, alternative perspectives, and critical views of deliberation. It will maintain its pluralistic character and multidisciplinary

approach and will continue to publish on topics that capture the breadth of deliberative practice including public deliberation in informal political spaces, structured deliberations in institutions of representative democracy, and undemocratic deliberation in authoritarian regimes. The journal is guided by the normative vision that by publishing rigorous research and reflective critical pieces about deliberation, we contribute to building a global society that is sensitive to good reasons.

Second, the *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* will prioritize reaching out to authors, readers, and publication partners outside North America. Deliberative democracy is a global project and so its process of knowledge production should be global too. As a first step, we have revamped the editorial board to capture the diversity of scholars specializing in deliberative democracy. Our editorial team is now a three-way collaboration between Nicole Curato from the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance at the University of Canberra in Australia, Kim Strandberg from Åbo Akademi University in Finland, and André Bächtiger from the University of Stuttgart in Germany. Next year, Graham Smith from the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of Westminster will join the editorial team. We started building a gender-balanced editorial board based in various parts of the world, from Belfast to Accra, Beirut to Hong Kong, Boston to Johannesburg, and Dublin to Virginia. We are also proud to announce that four early career academics are taking the role of book review editors: Patricia Mockler (Queen's University), Filipe Motta (Federal University of Minas Gerais), Kei Nishiyama (Australian National University), and John Rountree (University of Houston-Downtown).

To facilitate the diversification of manuscript submissions, we are working on a strategic plan to reach out to authors and reviewers outside the anglosphere. We are deeply aware that diversity does not mean decolonizing knowledge production. In the coming months, we would like to start a conversation with the global community of deliberation scholars and practitioners on how the journal can be an agent of epistemic justice and not one that is complicit to the subordination of knowledges.

Finally, the journal will find a new home with the University of Westminster Press (UWP), with our first issue scheduled to come out midyear in 2020. We are delighted with this partnership for UWP will allow the journal to grow without the prohibitive costs of a commercial press. As always, the journal is available open access.

About this Issue

This “final issue” of the *Journal of Public Deliberation* in its current form presents an exciting lineup of research articles and reflections from the field. These articles represent the growing strength of deliberative democracy research in making theoretical developments and empirical puzzles speak to each other to push the boundaries of knowledge. This issue covers a range of topics. Markus Holdo challenges us to rethink the role of power in deliberative democracy. Michael J. DeMoor introduces the “embedded” conception of public reasoning, while Carey Doberstein moves the growing scholarship on deliberative systems forward by proposing the terms “venue coupling” and “actor circulation,” using a case study of health care networks in Canada. These articles are useful in further deepening deliberative democracy’s vocabulary in making sense of complex political realities.

This issue also provokes reflection for deliberative practice. Helen Christensen characterizes the types of deliberative practitioners operating now in Australia and reflects on its meaning for public engagement more broadly. Lori L. Britt and Rob Alexander bring to surface the

storied character of civic practice in local communities, reminding dialogue and deliberation practitioners to be considerate of past experiences among communities when designing civic engagement. Meanwhile, Colene Lind unpacks the kinds of epistemology at play in group discussions and reminds deliberative practitioners to emphasize values as much as facts.

The final research article by is Marcia D. Mundt on deliberation and peacebuilding in El Salvador. It speaks well to the reflections from the field offered by Jürg Steiner and Maria Clara Jaramillo about building peace in deeply divided societies. This issue concludes with a wonderful gift from Arendt Lijphart—a short commentary on the role of deliberation in promoting the spirit of accommodation.

As the *Journal of Public Deliberation* enters a new chapter, we are grateful to our funders and former editors, particularly Laura W. Black, Timothy J. Shaffer, and Nancy Thomas for providing guidance and inspiration. We thank Lyn Carson, Wendy Willis, Cassie Hemphill, Tim Steffensmeier, John Gastil, and Matt Leighninger for their generosity in giving advice to us as new editors of the journal.

The *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* continues to accept manuscript submissions. Visit <https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/> for the latest instructions and more information.

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