

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Body Speaks Before It Even Talks: Deliberation, Populism and Bodily Representation

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Deliberation is a complex interpersonal process that involves different forms of communication. While earlier versions of deliberative theory had overly rationalistic and proceduralist views of linguistic exchange, it is now understood that deliberation involves a full range of speech cultures, which include humour, storytelling, metaphors, testimonies and others, as well as the full range of emotions including fear, anger, compassion and sympathy. This article extends these developments in deliberative scholarship by placing the role of the body as central to the practice of public deliberation. The agents of real-world deliberations are not pure consciousness but embodied beings whose corporeality carries the palimpsest of marks of their class, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation, amongst others. Bodily self-presentation informs how affect, identification and political representation are established even before words are spoken. The goal of this article is to reflect on the effect of bodily identification and representation on the process of deliberation. Drawing on populism literature, particularly the socio-cultural approach, I explore four types of bodily representation: popular, technocratic, authoritarian and populist, and the affects they might provoke in other participants in deliberations, both negative and positive. Through this article, I hope to demonstrate how the vocabulary of populism research can equip deliberative democrats to identify, confront and negotiate the politics of bodily representation.

**Keywords:** deliberation; body; populism; affects; identification; representation

## Introduction

Deliberation is a complex interpersonal process that involves different forms of communication. It is primarily linguistic because only in and through language can reasoning take place.<sup>1</sup> However, deliberation involves the full range of human emotions: fear, anger, compassion, sympathy and many more. These are expressed through a panoply of linguistic and non-linguistic means: humour, storytelling, rhetoric, gesturing and mimicking, raising or lowering of the voice. Since linguistic and non-linguistic communication alike are performed by the body, it is necessary to recognise the body as the substratum of communication. The agents of real-world deliberations are not pure consciousness but embodied beings whose corporeality carries with it a palimpsest of marks of their class, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation, amongst others. Bodily self-presentation informs how affect, identification and political representation are established even before words are spoken. However, deliberative theory has not reflected on the impact of the body on deliberation as much as it should.

This article argues that it is imperative to reflect on the effect of bodily identification in the process of deliberation. I explore four types of bodily performance whilst drawing on populism literature: technocratic, authoritarian, popular and populist. These four types of bodily performance contribute to our understanding of deliberative democracy by highlighting four bodily effects that both exist before deliberation and develop in interpersonal deliberative situations. The fact that people choose to perform one of these bodily styles when deliberating, and that some might feel compelled towards, or repulsed by, any of them, can be a powerful obstacle to deliberation. I will present some possible remedies to this problem. I will discuss ways in which deliberative designs can be cognisant of how bodily self-presentation both facilitates and constrains deliberation, and how to accommodate it in ways that foster democracy. My conclusion is that deliberation needs to move from a 'publicity of ideas' to a 'publicity of the bodies' (Clifford 2012: 211) and that representation of diverse bodies are as necessary as conversations about the effects evoked by those representations. Through this article, I hope to demonstrate how the vocabulary of populism research, particularly its socio-cultural approach, can equip deliberative democrats to identify, confront and negotiate the politics of bodily representation.

### Deliberation, Language and the Body

Deliberative democratic theory is inseparable from language. It is, in itself, the product of the linguistic turn which views language as more than a code with which to transmit packages of information from one consciousness to another. Rather, language is recognised as the very act through which social reality is fabricated.<sup>2</sup> Deliberative democratic theory is born out of a simple yet profound insight: politics is a unique human enterprise that seeks to resolve conflicts through means other than violence, tradition or the deference to a sacred text. Rather, politics is based on the wager that social order can be built upon the tasks of *talking* and *persuading*. Deliberative democracy, therefore, is a humble utopia: it does not ask of men and women great acts of superhuman wisdom or courage, but only that they are open to the act of speaking to one another until they come to a mutually justifiable agreement.

In the earlier days of deliberative theory, this humble utopia of reasonable discussion was weighed down by a rationalistic model of deliberation. Confidence in the communicative power of talking as a human praxis became fused with confidence in the rational power of language, understood as an a priori universal rational form. In this view, the ideal political subject is a disembodied entity oriented by an equally unencumbered reason.<sup>3</sup> In Jürgen Habermas's terms, participants in deliberation need to 'suspend the immediate orientation to personal success' for language to be able to do its work.<sup>4</sup> As a result, a proceduralist model of democracy was developed, one which was either oblivious or sceptical to the emotional and dispositional dimensions of communication.

However, any model of deliberation that does not consider the role of passions (Hall 2007; Mouffe 2018), identifications (Panizza 2005: 26) and affect<sup>5</sup> (Eklund 2019) is bound to generate partial if not skewed understandings of human interaction. It will be blind to social and cultural exclusions that impede deliberations taking place in the real world. Institutions and practices in the public sphere, from public hearings to participatory budgeting to PTA meetings at the neighbourhood school, are prone to have biases towards privileged groups,<sup>6</sup> though when designed properly they can be vehicles to give equal voice to all citizens. However, these forums are never perfect. Even deliberative minipublics, where there is supposed to be a fair and equal representation of citizens from different backgrounds, have been questioned for their failures in realising discursive equality. Power infuses deliberative institutions with unacknowledged asymmetries in voice. For example, women can be internally excluded from deliberation when they find themselves constantly interrupted by their male counterpart, or doubt their own judgment and tend not to stand their ground in discussions (Beauvais, 2019; Afsahi 2020). Citizens with disabilities also face hurdles to be accepted as co-equal deliberators (Karpowitz et al 2012). From the beginning, critics have argued that deliberative democracy veered closed to epistemic colonialism. Habermas's argument that 'an already rationalized life world' is necessary for civil society to blossom (...) 'otherwise populist movements

arise that blindly defend the frozen tradition of a life world endangered by capitalist modernization' (1999: 370) can be read as arrogantly colonial.<sup>7</sup> If, as Partha Chatterjee persuasively argues, Western liberal democracy constructed itself as the 'Other' of the those communities living within supposedly 'non-rationalized' life worlds (and thus judged to be conservative and intolerant), are members of those communities not justified in their mistrust of deliberative democracy as a whole? (2011: 35).<sup>8</sup> In my argument, the democratisation and decolonisation of deliberative democracy must begin at the bodily level, by recognising that the processes of exclusion/inclusion operate at the bodily level.

Despite these criticisms, it is important to recognise that deliberative democracy has become increasingly cognisant of the precise manifestations and impact of status inequalities in deliberation. Deliberative theory has responded by theorising speech cultures that give voice to the subaltern and excluded. This started with deliberative theory embracing humour, testimonies, storytelling and rhetoric as part of deliberative speech (Dryzek 2002; Chambers 2009). The legacy of broadening the understanding of acceptable speech forms in deliberation was extended to empirical developments in the field, namely the systemic turn in deliberative democracy where different forms of speech were considered to have value for deliberative democracy if they contribute to the inclusiveness, authenticity and consequentiality of the deliberative system (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2013). The theory sought to expand the definition of political deliberation so that it could be defined as a 'public conversation' that occurs in 'multiple sites of communication', some of which operate as discursive publics, but that also include protests and other forms of direct action (Mendonça and Ercan 2015: 267).

More recently, deliberative theorists have recognised the role of non-verbal communication in deliberative democracy. This development began with the critique of feminists, queer, disabled and post-colonial scholars who questioned the abstractness of the political subject. The idealisation of a disembodied political subject, the argument goes, is only possible because of the forcible erasure of all the bodies which were deemed to be insufficiently rational: women, people of colour, disabled and the poor. Feminist political theory has spoken against the 'disappearance' of the body from the focal point of representation, meaning, in fact, the ultra-visibility of *some* bodies and the effective invisibilisation of others (Fraser 1997). The disembodied political agent of democracy was described as a theoretical projection of the *embodied* white, wealthy, man whose freedom to engage in politics and to allow 'the mind to go visit' (in Kant's formulation) was based on the subjection of other *bodies*, whose toil kept them confined to the realm of irrationality. Men could imagine that they were speaking from a position of weightlessness because the burdens of everyday life fell largely onto other bodies.<sup>9</sup> Yet, it is not only the bodies of women that have been effectively excluded from this space, but also the bodies of ethnic, religious or sexual minorities, of the young, of those with

disabilities or of those who want to challenge the status quo.

Scholarship on deliberative democracy responded to these critiques in various ways. Amanda Machin notes that 'what is often implied by the deliberative model is that democracy occurs in a disembodied public realm, where individuals think and speak as ethereal ghosts' (2015: 43). Against this ethereal portrait of deliberation, she describes the ways in which 'gender, race, nation, class and other sorts of collective identifications' are incorporated through interactions, and how bodies are 'shaped by their social, political and cultural environments' (2015: 48). The body, she argues, has the potential to contribute to democracy, because bodies can be made aware of these pre-conscious identifications. This awareness stems from the experience of 'being wrenched from our familiar situations' (2015: 50) and thus 'new habits' can be incorporated: bodies do not only operate as limits to democratic politics but can, in fact, produce *opportunities* for it (2015: 43). Toby Rollo raises a related and important point: deliberative democratic theories that singularly focus on voice as 'the primary form of citizen participation' has rendered them 'ill-equipped to identify and account for the agency or exclusion of those who do not participate directly in deliberation'. Non-deliberative bodily actions can and do impact political outcomes. He warns that 'neglect for the political nature and autonomy of deeds combined with the veneration of political speech can lead to the misrecognition of action' (2016: 590). Complementing Rollo's work, Laura Montanaro makes a case for discursive exit: the deliberate *absences* of bodies from political spaces can be an equally powerful statement as their presence (2019: 876). Finally, Afsoun Afsahi (2020) gives empirical evidence on how power dynamics affect interactions within deliberations: even though women are more willing to deliberate than men, and more prone to engage in positive deliberative behaviour when deliberating under controlled circumstances, they are negatively affected by the tendency of men to engage in negative deliberative behaviour. Moreover, men assert power through non-linguistic means such as ignoring what others are saying or not responding to challenging arguments.

These developments, amongst others, demonstrate that, in any communicative setting, only a fraction of interactions take place at a linguistic level. To deliberate requires stepping into shared spaces with other people, and when a person enters into co-presence, they are already communicating: gender, height, weight, skin colour, clothes and hairstyle are immediately readable to others. While language is the primary medium for communication, it is not the only one. The body is another profound yet less discussed component of public communication. Many of the processes of inclusion/exclusion that deliberative theorists are trying to help avoid are based on complex semiotic processes of identification, solidarity and antipathy that take place at the bodily level even before words are exchanged. Agents of deliberations are situated beings that carry markers of status, privilege or exclusion in their bodies. Hence, I argue that deliberation must be understood as a *public*

*performance* where different types of bodily presentation inform identification and representation.

### Identification, Representation and Bodily Performance

To develop the argument of deliberation as a public performance, I draw on recent developments in populism studies. I recognise that populism is often theorised as the antithesis of deliberative democracy. Deliberative theory is deeply suspicious of the kind of mobilisational and antagonistic politics that is identified with populism (see Habermas 1999: 370, cited above). Empirical researchers often operationalise populist rhetoric as the opposite of deliberative norms (e.g. Marien, Goovaerts, and Elstub 2020), while some see deliberative democracy as the remedy of populism because it 'improve(s) citizens' overall decision-making capacity' (Suteu 2019: 507) and primes citizens to 'examine their own prejudices' (Curato and Parry 2018: 5). These perspectives are indeed valuable and it is not my intention to challenge them in this article. Instead, my argument only goes as far as saying that the scholarship on deliberative democracy can benefit from learning from the developments in populism studies, especially from the field's increasing focus on the body as part of the populist political style. My argument is that deliberative democratic theory is weary of populism and envisions deliberation broadly defined as a corrective to it. However, recent research on populism makes clear that, although arguments do matter for populism, especially historical narratives about exclusion, injustice, and collective damage (Casullo 2019a; 2019b), its appeal is not based entirely or even primarily on arguments. It is based on identifications created through affects which are rooted in bodily performances. The way in which populists behave affects their followers and detractors with as much force as what they say. If that insight is correct, deliberation might simply be an ineffective corrective to populism, or rather work to strengthen it if it does not deal with these affects in the correct manner. To rephrase, deliberative democrats may articulate arguments against the claims put forward by populists, but the field has yet to explain what kinds of bodily identifications can challenge the embeddedness of populism in democratic politics. I argue that the scholarship on populism, particularly its socio-cultural approach, can enrich the vocabulary of deliberative democracy to make sense of the role of the body in deliberation, in both micropolitical forums such as minipublics or in the wider public sphere.

The socio-cultural approach to populism starts with the premise that the body is an effective instrument in political communication. Speaking, gesticulating and producing facial expressions are all part of a political performance. It is not a surprise that populism research pays attention to bodily performance given that personalistic leaders are one of its fundamental areas of study (Ostiguy 2009; Moffitt 2016; Mudde and Rovira 2017, Diehl 2017). The socio-cultural approach to populism studies, in particular, views populism as a publicly performed political grammar.<sup>10</sup> Populism is a political style,<sup>11</sup> that is, an embodied performance that appeals to 'the people' versus

'the elite' through the strategic public performance of anti-elitism and often using 'bad manners' (Moffitt 2016: 44). The populist's political grammar is constructed not only through what the populist says but through how the populist's body presents itself in the public sphere: the demeanour, clothing, hairstyle, gestures, posture and the like (Moffitt 2016, Sorensen 2017, Ostiguy 2017, Diehl 2017).

A socio-cultural approach enriched the literature on populism in three ways. Firstly, it was able to connect the discourse analysis of populism of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (Laclau 2005; Mouffe 2018), and its abstract analysis with empirically-oriented studies that focused on charismatic leaders and their followers. Secondly, it takes seriously something that many theories just allude to: the mediated nature of contemporary politics. The mass media has made the bodies of the leaders even more recognisable and important than before (Sinclair 2005; Sorensen 2017; Chatterje-Doody 2019). Thirdly, it brings the body squarely into focus, and explores the ways in which the body is the anchor and cause for identification. These contributions to populism studies are also valuable for deliberative democracy. Deliberative theorists are aware that the body needs to be included in their analyses. In my view, the most productive way to do so is to ask how the body can be used for co-participants to identify with the speaker. The socio-cultural approach to populism makes clear that ideas and arguments become persuasive not only because of their linguistic appeal, but also because of the identifications we make with the person making these arguments. The primary *locus* and tool for creating these identifications is the leader's body.

There are four main types of a leader's body based on political (public) performances: technocratic, popular, authoritarian and populist.<sup>12</sup> Each one of the them seeks to create a different affect to the onlooker: trust, empathy, fear and charismatic identification. Even though they are not linguistic, these affects can shape deliberations in profound ways. Deliberative systems should be sensitive to these bodily performances for they shape the course of deliberation in the public sphere.

### The Technocratic Model of Identification

The ideal of a dispassionate, argumentative deliberation oftentimes is associated with a bodily performance that erases the marks of subjectivity and a style that is as impersonal as possible. Moffitt and Ostiguy call this style 'technocratic.'<sup>13</sup> It is a 'high' style or self-presentation where one appears as credentialed, professorial or managerial.<sup>14</sup> This entails 'proper' bodily presentations, favouring neutral colours, 'professional' clothes and no-fuss hairstyles, and the rejection of anything that can be construed as ostentatious or gaudy. Bodily markers of status are toned down, so as to generate an effect of self-erasure and transparency. An image that connotes cosmopolitanism is preferred over 'ethnic' styles. For instance, Michelle Bachelet and Alejandro Toledo are two former South American presidents who consistently opted for a technocratic self-presentation. Michelle Bachelet is

a woman and Alejandro Toledo is a man of indigenous descent. Both chose to downplay possible markers of their 'non hegemonic' identities and instead emphasize their credentials and experience.

There are two possible effects of a technocratic model of identification. An attire of dark suit and tie might come across as impersonal to a certain type of onlooker as it is the default 'look' of white-collar professionals. But the same suit might be read as distant or even threatening to somebody that has not been socialised in a managerial lifestyle, leading some to argue that a technocratic model of identification creates distance between the leader and the citizen by further emphasising the gap in knowledge, status and power between the two (Diehl, 2017; Annunziata et al, 2018).

What can deliberative democrats learn from this observation in populism studies? First, it calls deliberative democrats to critically deconstruct the technocratic model of identification as a way of establishing authority in deliberation. Speakers who behave in a 'professorial' manner may be reassuring for some as it reminds them of free discussions in seminar rooms, but for others, these actors are smug, cold and condescending. In fact, technocratic-types are often the target of populist's attacks, accusing them of being out of touch elitists. The study of deliberative democracy, therefore, needs to be more cognisant of how technocratic communicative power is generated by bodily performances, how citizens identify or reject these performances and the implications of technocrats and experts downplaying markers of difference – as in the case of Bachelet and Toledo – gain credibility in public deliberation.

### The Authoritarian Mode of Identification

The authoritarian mode of self-presentation does not seek to project managerial efficiency but power and authority. This form of self-presentation emphasises the person's office through the use of signifiers such as presidential attributes (e.g. sashes or batons in the South American case), military attributes (wearing fatigues even though one is a civilian) and sometimes clerical symbols. In South America, military men have been the most constant users of this bodily trope. Photographs of the members of the military dictatorships or *juntas* that ruled the Southern Cone during the seventies showed an endless display of white middle age men, all dressed in similar uniforms, all sporting the same combed-back style of hair. Women were never present, except for their wives on official events, mostly Catholic masses or celebrations. These wives and sometimes daughters were uniformly dressed in modest clothes. *Junta* members were almost never photographed in civilian clothes or in their private homes. The effect of the military uniforms was to make the personality of each individual disappear, projecting the institutional weight or even the threat of the armed forces onto onlookers. The affect that this public presentation seeks to create is not one of sympathy, or identification or closeness. It seeks to generate not only distance, but outright fear in the onlooker.

Understanding the authoritarian mode of identification lends insight into how deliberative democrats can examine deliberation under repressive regimes. One could argue that fear is not only coming from directives of authoritarian leaders or threats of coercive force targeted at dissenters, but also through the visual performance of authority that constrains the problematisation of political relations and construction of the public sphere. This fear might cause participants to exit deliberations in the public sphere, feel that they have been entrapped or conceal their real feelings and ideas. Others may revert to their discursive enclaves and counter-publics where performances of authority are less pronounced and avoid discursive contestation in public where authoritarian symbols prevail.

As with the technocratic mode, deliberative democrats should also be very aware of the effect that bodies performing this particular style might have when included in deliberations. The current debates about the relation between police forces and the communities in the US and elsewhere have made clear that the uniformed body of a police officer might generate completely opposite effects in different people: security to some, threats and violence to others. Conversely, the decision on the part of members of armed or security forces to simply wear civilian clothes when participating in deliberations or monitoring protests can have a profound impact on their results. When engaging in deliberations, participants should dedicate portions of their time to discuss which symbols of authority are displayed, their effect on them and whether they hamper deliberations in public settings.

### The Popular Mode of Identification

The popular mode of identification rejects the technocratic style. Instead of suits and ties, these personalities wear folksy clothes, hairstyles or accessories. Almost all politicians mix the popular style when campaigning, and there are those that seem to truly prefer it and express discomfort in performances of 'high' politics. Former Uruguayan president José 'Pepe' Mujica has made his popular style his personal brand. A former Marxist guerrilla fighter who was imprisoned by the Uruguayan military government for twelve years, Mujica is well-known for his dishevelled personal style, for living in an old farm with his three-legged dog and driving a VW beetle car from the seventies.

Popular is not populist, however. There is a reason why Mujica is generally not included in the category of populist South American presidents, even with his bona fide leftist credentials. Mujica's refusal to embrace the symbols of power anchors him in the popular, not populist, category. His self-presentation is based on a kind of monastic austerity. In the popular mode of identification, there is no antagonisation or inversion of the social order. The 'low' here is not equated with the vulgar or the obnoxious. There are no challenges of social hierarchies, but a repudiation of them. In Ostiguy's words, there is no 'flaunting' of the low in an antagonistic fashion in the popular style (Ostiguy 2020: 29).

The popular style seeks to create identification through its folksiness. However, it can also be a non-democratic weapon. People of indigenous descent or other 'ethnic' groups have troubles having their voices recognised as authoritative: they are often expected to behave in stereotypical popular ways to perform their identity claims. Deliberative democrats need to be cognisant of how 'folksy' participants in deliberation – whether in the public sphere or in minipublics – could unfairly be expected, if not pressured, to show bonhomie and candour that fits expectations of how they perform their identity. And, if they express anger or relate a sense of injustice, they are often accused of being resentful or 'uppity.' The public performance of such resentfulness becomes the grounds for populist identification.

### The Populist Mode of Identification

Populist body is the other of both the technocratic and popular models: 'As a political figure who seeks to be at the same time one of the people and their leader the populist appears as an ordinary person with extraordinary attributes' (Panizza, 2005: 21).<sup>15</sup> Populist bodily presentation typically combine markers of the low and the high, the popular and the technocratic, the flamboyant and the proper, the ordinary and the extraordinary. A suit and tie with an extravagant haircut or an inexplicable fake tan, a business suit and red high heels, an Etonian accent and long, shaggy, obviously peroxidized hair, a formal jacket that mixes Western cut with an indigenous embroidery are examples of populist syncretism. The populist bodily performance is based on the perpetual hybridization between the high and the low. As such, the populist body is able to elucidate a powerful current of identification from those other embodied subjects that *looks like it* and yet have not being able to perform such challenge or wield that kind of power.

In populist self-presentation, the body becomes the signifier of a powerful act of political transgression and inversion of the social order. Through its performance it is able to 'carry with it', as it were, the bodies of his or her followers into spaces of power where some bodies were allowed, and other bodies were excluded. It is by this act of personal, concrete, embodied 'irruption' that the leader fulfils his or her promise of shaking the status quo and dislodging the elite.<sup>16</sup> The populist body thus becomes a kind of signifying surface, a symbolic tapestry of flesh and blood that fulfils three simultaneous tasks: to establish herself as 'of the people', to project charismatic exceptionality and to appropriate the symbols of power they aspire to wield. For the first objective, the leader's body must mirror some of the people's cultural characteristics: ways of dressing, ways of eating,<sup>17</sup> demeanour and patterns of speech. For the second, certain markers of exceptionality will be underscored: vigour and physical prowess are typical (Moffitt 2016: 65-66) but restraint and morality might also be chosen. For the third, the leader's bodily presentation will underscore her possession of markers of institutional power: presidential emblems, military uniforms, displays

of wealth, diplomas of higher education and the like. The key concept is that the populist body does not perform *humility* and, more importantly, it is not read as such by neither her foes nor her followers. The former president of Bolivia Evo Morales is a good example: even though he is constantly performing his closeness with his Bolivian indigenous 'brothers and sisters' and adherence to their aesthetic-ethic ethos, he never performs humility. On the contrary, his detractors usually accuse him of being *resentido* (uppity). There is a strong 'mirroring' (Diehl 2017: 366) component in his clothes, patterns of speech, love of *fútbol* and even the food that he eats, but there is also another side to his bodily presentation that blends the cultural legacy of Bolivian indigenous people with the symbols of modernity, technological progress and political power. The transgressive, self-transcending effect many of his followers find compelling is created by the fact that an 'Indio' who looks like, speaks like and dresses in ways that call back the daily life of the majority of the Bolivian people, yet appropriates for himself the marks of modernity and power.

Populism, therefore, is *performed* as a hybrid of the other three types. The first type of bodily performances aims at reinforcing the distance between the politician and the represented; the second one aims at mirroring as closely as possible a certain ideal of the virtuous or humble people that does not challenge social hierarchies too much; the third one wants to communicate who holds the symbols of power forcefully and without regard for democratic legitimation. These performances can be called technocratic, popular and authoritarian respectively. The difficulties in conceptualising populism and of classifying particular cases comes from the fact that populist representation is not performed in a 'pure' way but always in impure and syncretic ones, as a mixture of the three.

Understanding the complexity of the populist's bodily representation allows deliberative democrats to untangle what it is about populist performances that can potentially undermine and put forward the goals of deliberation. There are numerous examples of populist leaders that have put forward inclusiveness of voice in the public sphere whilst also holding symbols of power forcefully. In fact, it might be said that the tension between the expansion of voice to excluded groups and the personalistic control of such voice is one of the defining features of populist governance. Juan Domingo Perón advanced labour rights, empowered unions and granted women the right to vote, while simultaneously striving to control the public sphere and the press.<sup>18</sup> Evo Morales greatly expanded the voice of citizens of indigenous descent, bolstered their parliamentary representation and reformed the national bureaucracy with the incorporation of women, indigenous Bolivians and the youth. (Wolff 2018). However, the centrality of his leadership and the impossibility of transferring his charismatic authority to a successor brought his movement to an untenable position.<sup>19</sup> The leader's body incarnates the promise of 'carrying the people' forward and his authority over them;

it can act as a symbol of an expansion and of a restriction of their deliberative power at the same time.

### Lessons for Deliberative Democracy

Why is a discussion of populism relevant to deliberative democracy? I would like to highlight three lessons. Firstly, the socio-cultural approach to populism is a reminder that the co-presence of bodies is as deeply a significant communicative act as deliberation itself. Spaces for deliberation – whether in structured forums like parliaments, minipublics or the informal public sphere – are instances where not only a diversity of ideas flourish, but a diversity of bodies makes an appearance. As Clifford puts it, the publicity of the bodies is as crucial as publicity of speeches. Female bodies, indigenous bodies, queer bodies, disabled bodies and many others should be present in deliberations because their 'physical presence' provokes new conversations similar to rational speech acts (Clifford 2012: 211). In the same way that the entry of populist personalities like Sarah Palin, Boris Johnson, Evo Morales, Donald Trump or Jair Bolsonaro provoked new conversations and forms of identifications in a political sphere that have been traditionally dominated by technocratic leaders, the presence of non-hegemonic bodies challenges public deliberations to react to perspectives and develop affective relationships even before a single word is uttered. Will participants in deliberation be open to welcome new and perhaps unfamiliar bodies? Will they be antagonistic? Uncomfortable? How will this affect participants' deliberative stance and the outcomes of the process? Clifford's call for a 'publicity of the bodies' resonates deeply here (2012: 211). Equal representation of bodies, pluralism of bodies, recognition of bodily differences – all these signal that a new theoretical and political vocabulary needs to be constructed.

Secondly, a focus on the body encourages thinking about how to create deliberative spaces that are not predicated on the technocratic deliberator as the idealised embodiment of rationality. There is not one embodiment of an ideal deliberator. Conversely, it is important not to expect that participants that come from 'popular' sectors behave 'popularly', and it is crucial to understand that displays of authority within deliberation might be felt as direct threats by some participants. While deliberative democracy research has made progress in understanding how different styles of speech can advance the goals of deliberation, more can be done to understand how different bodily performances can contribute as well as compromise these goals.

Thirdly, bringing the scholarship on populism in conversation with deliberative democracy prompts reflections on the extent to which pluralistic performances of embodiment are acceptable in public deliberation. While one can perhaps imagine how a folksy popular self-identification may fit the inclusive ideal of deliberation, it is harder to ascertain how subtle performances of authoritarian bodies – those that point to significations of power and authority – can be called out. Should deliberative forums ban, for example, participants who

come from the police force or the military to wear their uniforms? Or should they be encouraged to express their self-identifications so these can be subject to scrutiny in deliberations too? Also worth asking is the extent to which relations of affect, antagonism, identification and representation permeate participatory spaces. The populism literature reminds us that identification to populist bodies and ideas are developed through affect, not argument, and that affect is generated 'between the bodies' as Ahmed put it (Ahmed 2014: 4). People taking part in deliberations carry with them these political identifications. Does deliberation require people to shelf these affective identifications to ascertain the common good, or should deliberation embrace them to uphold the virtue of plurality?

Deliberation does not only require a deliberative stance in the mind (Owen and Smith 2015), but a whole bodily disposition to happen. Populism research tells us that certain bodily performances seem to be preordained to elicit effects of identification from some and antagonism from others. South American leaders who use their bodies to create defiant, antagonist hybridisations of the low and the high and the popular and the powerful (like Eva Perón, Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales) generate strong currents of identification, affect, emotion and even love in their followers. This goes alongside generating an equally powerful current of loathing on the part of those that identify themselves with the cosmopolitan 'high'. It is hard to even envision how these positions might be resolved through deliberative means when these affects are rooted so deeply. There is a scene in the documentary *Cocalero* in which then-candidate Evo Morales (about to be elected in 2005 as the first indigenous president of Bolivia, a country which has an indigenous or *mestizo* majority) is walking along the hallways of the Santa Cruz de la Sierra Airport, when a white man yells at him "Indio de mierda" (You shitty Indian!). One might imagine that such a person might have trouble acknowledging Morales as an equal in deliberation, or that (conversely) the ideas that Morales brought to the discussions might be treated differently if a white person presented them. This works for Morales' followers too: the fact that he is a successful politician while also being 'an Indian' is a key element in his appeal.

It is crucial for deliberation to recognise this as bodily self-presentations and how they are received is not benign. How can we encourage conversations that engage the affect taking place at the pre-linguistic levels in ways that are open, yet not reductionist? To answer that, more empirical work is needed on the intersection of bodily self-presentation, identification and deliberation. Experimental and ethnographic studies can be made on how bodily self-presentation informs the positive or negative reception of arguments, and how technocratic, authoritarian, popular and populist speakers move their audiences. Clifford's notion of the 'publicity of bodies' is crucial as an orientation towards a reconfiguration of deliberative spaces in a way that evokes not only 'new conversations' but also new images and new symbolic reconfigurations and hybridizations at the bodily level. We

need to create a public sphere that looks like everybody, and nobody, and is open to us all.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> 'This concept of communicative rationality carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of *argumentative speech*, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective views and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity of their life-world' (Habermas 1981: 10, emphasis added).
- <sup>2</sup> 'When envisaging discursive/affective practices, we can also take inspiration from Wittgenstein, who taught us that it is by their inception in "language games" (what we call discursive practices) that social agents form specific beliefs and desires and acquire subjectivity' (Mouffe 2018: 75).
- <sup>3</sup> 'The primacy of rationality is something which runs through liberal thought from Locke to Mill to more recent incarnations such as Rawls' (Eklund 2019: 68). For a thorough discussion of the historical roots of the dichotomy between reason and emotions, see also Ahmed (2014).
- <sup>4</sup> In Habermas's terms: 'Naturally, the binding energies of language can be mobilized to coordinate action plans only if the participants suspend the objectivating attitude of the observer, along with the immediate orientation to personal success, in favour of the performative attitude of a speaker who wants to reach an understanding with a second persona about something in the world' (Habermas 1998: 18). Also Habermas: 'Corresponding to the openness of rational expressions to being explained, there is, on the side of persons who behave rationally, a willingness to expose themselves to criticism and, if necessary, to participate *properly* in argumentation' (Habermas 1981: 19, emphasis added).
- <sup>5</sup> 'As such, for Lacan, the very distinction between affect on the one hand and language on the other is pointless. Here we can see that the division between mind and body is beginning to fall apart' (Eklund, 2019: 70).
- <sup>6</sup> A fact often highlighted by Putnam (2000).
- <sup>7</sup> Partha Chatterjee has another reading of the relation between rationalisation of the life world and civil society: 'The ideas of freedom and equality that gave shape to the universal rights of the citizen were crucial not only for the fight against absolutist political regimes but also for undermining pre-capitalist practices that restricted individual mobility and choice to traditional confines defined by birth and status' (2011: 30).
- <sup>8</sup> 'Even in industrially advanced liberal democracies, (most) led their lives within an inherited network of social attachments that could be described as community. But there was a strong feeling that not all communities were worthy of approval in modern

political life. In particular, attachments that seemed to emphasize the inherited, the primordial, the parochial, or the traditional were regarded by most theorists as smacking of conservative and intolerant practices and hence as inimical to the values of modern citizenship' (Chatterjee, 2011: 35).

- <sup>9</sup> 'It works as a reminder of how "emotion" has been viewed as "beneath" the faculties of thought and reason. To be emotional is to have one's judgement affected: it is to be reactive rather than active, dependent rather than autonomous. Feminist philosophers have shown us how the subordination of emotions also works to subordinate the feminine and the body (Spelman 1989; Jaggar 1996). Emotions are associated with women, who are represented as 'closer' to nature, ruled by appetite, and less able to transcend the body through thought, will and judgement' (Ahmed 2020).
- <sup>10</sup> Rather than a party-politics strategy (Weyland 2017) or an ideology (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2015).
- <sup>11</sup> Moffitt defines political style as 'the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life' (2016: 7).
- <sup>12</sup> I have described the four types of performance at length elsewhere. See Casullo forthcoming.
- <sup>13</sup> Moffitt: 'The difference between populism and technocracy here does not refer to modes of governance or ideological dispositions, but to distinct embodied, performative political styles. We are interested in the way that political actors present themselves along this technocratic-populist scale, not in the models of government they might present or advocate. Leonard (2011, 2) sketches the performative differences between populism and technocracy as such: "Technocracy and populism are mirror images: one is managerial, the other charismatic; one seeks incremental change, the other is attracted by grandiose rhetoric; one is about problem solving, the other about the politics of identity" (2016: 47).
- <sup>14</sup> Moffitt compares Al Gore's style with that of Sarah Palin: 'Gore's virtues are those of the establishment: seriousness, earnestness, gravitas, intelligence and sensitivity to the positions of others. Palin's are those of the 'outsider': directness, playful-ness, a certain disregard for hierarchy and tradition, ready resort to anecdote as 'evidence', and a studied ignorance of that which does not interest her or which does not go to 'the heart of the matter'" (Moffitt 2016: 44).
- <sup>15</sup> 'How can you be of "the people" as well as transcend "the people" at the same time? How can a leader be "exactly like you are", as Chávez (in Zúquete 2008, 100) once claimed, yet also be special or talented enough to rise above 'the people' as their leader and representative? In order to do this effectively, populist leaders must negotiate the precarious balance between appearing as ordinary on one hand, and extraordinary on the other. This combination between extraordinariness

and ordinariness is not easy to achieve' (Moffitt 2015: 55).

- <sup>16</sup> This fact was well articulated by John Chasteen when analysing the personal appeal of Latin American caudillos: 'beginning from the premise that leadership must be analysed less in terms of a leader's personal qualities than as a relationship between leader and followers, I will argue that ... the charisma of the Saravia brothers was in the eye of the beholder. It was intensely personal but also dependent on a collective assessment and therefore accessible to reconstruction' (Chasteen 1995: 5).
- <sup>17</sup> 'However, the most powerful technique to demonstrate proximity and similarity is eating' (Diehl 2017: 369).
- <sup>18</sup> Daniel James has described Juan Domingo Perón's management of the conflict between the need to fulfil his promises of expanding rights for his base and maintaining control over the pace of such expansion as 'riding the tiger' (1988: 40).
- <sup>19</sup> Morales was ousted from power in 2019.

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### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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