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# Equality of Narrative Inclusion in Decision-Making Processes: A Deliberative Approach<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Introduction

If pluralism of comprehensive doctrines is assumed, political decision-making processes taking place within deliberative practices constitute an emanation of the Rawlsian idea of reasonableness.<sup>3</sup> When entering into deliberation, participants of the public sphere are only required to fulfil minimal conditions,<sup>4</sup> which are defined primarily in terms of soft competences, i.e., being able to listen to the voice of the other person and show unconditional respect for them through communicative actions. Although the classical normative model of deliberative democracy assumes that, ideally, the discursive procedure is to be an agora of factual argumentation over preferences and interests, the initial awareness of potential contributors does not constitute a *conditio sine qua non* of participation. Deliberation is in fact a procedure of the public sphere which enables the structuring and clarification of conflicting interests.<sup>5</sup> On its basis, both enlightenment and the transformation of preferences and interests can take place, as well as the actual search for them. In other words, deliberation is a space in which selected enlightened preferences are aggregated into ensembles comprising different forms of interests.<sup>6</sup> The reasonableness of this process is grounded in the collective nature of communicative action. However, as the theory has developed, it can be assumed that the formation of interests has become a subsequent feature – incidental to a broader subjective aspect, namely the formation of attitudes. What comes to the fore is the understanding of deliberation as a process that creates stable conditions for the discursive formation of individual identities through the recognition of positioning within group differentiation. The stability of this relational conceptualization is rooted, on the one hand, in the

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<sup>3</sup> J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Expanded Edition, New York 2005, pp. 48–54.

<sup>4</sup> K.M. Cern, *On the Intrinsic Correlation Between Public Legitimation of Democratic Law and Discursive Competences of Citizens*, "Filozofia Publiczna i Edukacja Demokratyczna" 2014/2, pp. 63–64.

<sup>5</sup> J.J. Mansbridge, J. Bohman, S. Chambers, D. Estlund, A. Føllesdal, A. Fung, C. Lafont, B. Manin, J.L. Martí, *The Place of Self-Interest and the Role of Power in Deliberative Democracy*, "Journal of Political Philosophy" 2010/1, p. 68.

<sup>6</sup> For the definition of interest, see: J.J. Mansbridge, J. Bohman, S. Chambers, D. Estlund, A. Føllesdal, A. Fung, C. Lafont, B. Manin, J.L. Martí, *The Place...*, p. 68, footnote 15.

principle of unconditional, equal and mutual respect<sup>7</sup> and, on the other hand, in the egalitarian ideal of wide inclusion.

Nevertheless, the practical purpose of deliberation remains to provide argumentative justification for the decision made in its course. Therefore, given the natural diversity of the discursive competences of the participants, the question is how to guarantee both that deliberation is a source of public legitimacy for political decisions and that, within the framework of wide inclusion, it enables proper articulation of attitudes? To this end, I propose a different approach to deliberation, which I refer to as *the narrative model of deliberation*. It assumes a normative framework for the deliberation process that enables the inclusion of collective subjectivity and individual identity as valid objects of discussion, rather than mere carriers of information – preferences and interests. The aim of this paper is to outline the preconditions of this model and to indicate its usefulness under the conditions of pluralism.

In this paper, I assume that in order to ensure the public legitimacy of collective binding political decisions, equality of inclusion should procedurally and substantively take into account diverse discursive competences of participants in deliberative processes. In the first step, I will analyse the notion of a narrative as a tool for equalizing participation in the context of the theory of deliberative democracy. In the second one, I will show how incorporation of narratives affects the principle of equal inclusion. In the last step, I will point out potential problems that this type of inclusion may cause in practice.

## 2. Preconditions of the narrative model of deliberation

According to Iris Marion Young, difference and diversity are essential resources for democratic communication processes. Proper deliberation enables participants to reflect in depth on multiple social perspectives, to cooperate and, ultimately, to reach an agreement. Deliberation as a source of public legitimacy should fulfil at least two conditions that Young presents together:

First, democratic discussion and decision making must include all social perspectives. Second, participants in the discussion must develop a more comprehensive and objective account of the social relations, consequences of action, and relative advantage and disadvantage, than each begins with from their partial social perspective.<sup>8</sup>

If one adopts these criteria, it can be assumed that, in a broader perspective, deliberation is a communication process rooted in democratic institutions and oriented towards the articulation, structuring and mutual understanding of the diversity of participating actors. The issues addressed, for which solutions with justifications are formulated in the language of preferences and interests, are only viewed holistically when participants can freely express their beliefs. These, in turn, rooted in comprehensive doctrines, form relational patterns that situate actors in specific cooperative constellations. This means that on the agora of the deliberative process, cooperation is established on the basis of

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, with a revised Preface, Chicago–London 1983, pp. 5 and 237–244. Adversary democracy adopts an egalitarian ideal of equal protection of interests, since its starting point is conflicting interest, whereas unitary (deliberative) democracy, based broadly on the assumption of common interest, adopts the ideal of equal respect.

<sup>8</sup> I.M. Young, *Difference as a Resource for Democratic Communication*, in: J. Bohman, W. Rehg (eds.), *Deliberative Democracy. Essays on Reason and Politics*, Cambridge (Mass.)–London 1997, p. 385.

individually assessed identification with – or rejection of – the presented positions and their justifications. Nevertheless, the formulation of evaluative attitudes towards the issues under discussion results from objective insight. Yet, objectivity is not contrasted with subjectivity here. It is grounded in reflection not only on one's own, but in all available perspectives. It does not imply impartiality, but rather a multiplicity of biases, where each one has an equal right to be voiced and each deserves equal respect.

## 2.1. Narration and the recognition of subjectivity

The classical requirement that deliberation should serve to develop a public justification for common interest<sup>9</sup> while abstaining from situated knowledge and particular preferences, in the case of the diversity grounding pluralism, seems to be an instrument of oppression and, furthermore, may give rise to undesirable theoretical consequences. Firstly, it disrupts processes of wide inclusion by substantively excluding potentially valid claims. Secondly, it imposes the unrealistic expectation that a diverse community of deliberating subjects will be able to produce artificially narrow frames of reflection that are incompatible with their lifeworlds. Thirdly, this disturbs the credibility of the outcomes of the process itself – the cognitive value of justifications constructed in this way will compromise the epistemological component of deliberation. Deliberation is no longer aimed to lead to consensus at all costs, thus allowing for the possibility that its aim may be reduced to the structuring and argumentative clarification of the reasons for adopting a particular perspective. Therefore, the expectation that processes of deliberation will not only allow but also celebrate diversity is the most reasonable.

Deliberation, by its very nature, imposes the requirement that diversity be manifested discursively within it. Every demonstration of individual identity and collective subjectivity must make itself visible at the level of communicative actions. Since diversity manifests itself not only in the evaluative attitudes towards social reality, but also in the ways in which they are articulated, allowing participants to construct their own narratives will ensure that deliberation embraces all these differences with the common denominator of equal, mutual and unconditional respect.

A narrative is a particular way of communicating a story by unveiling a plot, which is also the internal logic of the story. One plot can be expressed in many ways, thus constituting many stories.<sup>10</sup> When this definition is being translated into the normative model of deliberation, it should be assumed that narration makes it possible to show certain aspects of the discussed issue, with regard to both defining the problem itself and proposing solutions – the equivalent of a plot within a first-person story. There is no competition between narratives – none of them can claim superiority over the others. Their purpose is to mark the identity of the debating subjects and to lend credibility to the views they express. However, this by no means amounts to an attempt to develop a single, shared narrative that will constitute the collective identity of the participants.

<sup>9</sup> J. Cohen, *Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy*, in: J. Bohman, W. Rehg (eds.), *Deliberative Democracy...*, pp. 74–75.

<sup>10</sup> P. Skuczyński, *Narracyjność języka prawniczego w procesie tworzenia prawa* [Eng. *Narrativity of legal language in the law-making process*], "Archiwum Filozofii Prawa i Filozofii Społecznej" 2020/1, p. 66. In deliberative democracy, it is used to assume that narrative is synonymous with the concept of storytelling, cf. D.M. Ryfe, *Narrative and Deliberation in Small Group Forums*, "Journal of Applied Communication Research" 2006/34, pp. 74–75. I will, however, treat the concept more broadly, extending the above minimum definition with additional classes of notions to build a methodological model of narrative deliberation.

This is due to the very subjective essence of pluralism. Narratives in deliberation function as spaces for unconstrained expression through communicative action. They also make it possible to define the relations between the participants of deliberation and to express their attitude towards reality.<sup>11</sup> The diversity of social groups enables the application of relational logic on the basis of communication processes, which the mutually exclusive collective identity does not allow.<sup>12</sup> Individual identity is partly conditioned by membership in specific social groups, but identification with a social group does not condition fixed group identities. Thus, identification with a particular group determines not so much individual identity, but rather social orientation.

Moreover, narrative is also understood as an emanation of descriptive and normative beliefs reflecting the participant's attitude to both the knowledge they already possess at the starting point and the newly learned facts.<sup>13</sup> The collective experience of discussion causes individual narratives expressing perspectives and viewpoints to influence the optics of the issues addressed in the discussion. Hence, to some extent, narratives have the capacity to condition the epistemic value of the deliberation process.<sup>14</sup> Cognitive diversity is at the core of collective intelligence, in the sense that the wider the inclusion, the more cognitively valuable the outcomes of the deliberative process.<sup>15</sup> The use of narrative, however, raises an important practical consequence for the epistemology of deliberation in terms of, on the one hand, the substantive moderation of the process and, on the other hand, the need for participants to pay special attention. This is because different types of validity claims can be distinguished in narrative statements. In the case of political deliberation, narratives primarily reveal claims of rightness and truthfulness.<sup>16</sup> The public reasoning that occurs during deliberation allows not only for the separation of *regulativa* from *expressiva*, but also for the incorporation of the former sphere into the constructed justification. However, this issue requires a more extensive analysis, which falls beyond the scope of this paper.

Nevertheless, since narrative allows the participant to freely articulate their stance by manifesting their own position unhindered by the rigours of argumentative discourse, it is worth noting that it has consequences for the moderation of deliberation: in accordance with the normative ideal, narrative regulates the initial inequalities in the distribution of the discursive competences of the participants. These competences, being primarily subject to socio-economic, cultural and psychological distortions,<sup>17</sup> can significantly affect the confidence and activity of the participants and, as a result, have an impact on the legitimacy of the decision-making process. Deliberative abilities are understood here as a set of basic competences for participation in a discursive procedure, assuming in particular: the ability for public reasoning, active listening, empathy and formulating a statement detached from one's individual positioning. However, the inclusion of narratives moderates these inequalities by highlighting pluralism and,

<sup>11</sup> D.M. Ryfe, *Narrative and Deliberation...*, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> I.M. Young, *Difference...*, p. 393.

<sup>13</sup> M. Dubowska, A. Dyrdra, *Legal Narrative and Legal Disagreement*, "Archiwum Filozofii Prawa i Filozofii Społecznej" 2018/2, p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> D. Steel, N. Bolduc, K. Jenei, M. Burgess, *Rethinking Representation and Diversity in Deliberative Minipublics*, "Journal of Deliberative Democracy" 2020/16, p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> D. Estlund, H. Landemore, *The Epistemic Value of Democratic Deliberation*, in: A. Bächtiger, J.S. Dryzek, J. Mansbridge, M. Warren (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, Oxford 2018, pp. 121–122.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1*, Boston 1984, pp. 15–23.

<sup>17</sup> M. Gerber, A. Bächtiger, S. Shikano, S. Reber, S. Rohr, *Deliberative Abilities and Influence in a Transnational Deliberative Poll*, "British Journal of Political Science" 2016/4, pp. 5–7.

moreover, enhancing the dynamics of the deliberative process. Equally important is the ability of narrative to facilitate empathy and bonding between participants. Directly through this, narrative becomes the key to recognition in deliberative processes.

## 2.2. Narrative inclusion in deliberative practice

Narrative construction influences not only the type of inclusion, but also the level of participants' involvement and the process itself – both during and when joining the process. Thus, narrative redefines the practice of deliberation in many areas simultaneously. This is because the levels of manifestation of the effects of narrative inclusion in deliberation determine the wide range of influence of this type of communication on intersubjective relations on the one hand,<sup>18</sup> and on the manner and course of constructing justifications on the other. I distinguish three spheres in which the effectiveness of narrative anchoring in deliberative processes is most strongly manifested.

*Delivery.* This is a sphere of expression whose characteristics depend on intersubjective relations. In other words, it is the adopted rhetoric of the constructed narrative – a way of delivering arguments in circumstances where pure rationality may be less convincing than voicing arguments in a manner adjusted to the cognitive competences of the participants. Rhetoric is thus a tool for moderating the meaning of a given statement. Issues such as: 1) the emotional tone of the speech; 2) the speaker's attitude; and stylization of the statement – including the use and choice of metaphors, the emphasis on specific, arbitrarily considered important issues, and even the very manner in which the speaker's position is presented; 3) directing participants to the desired orientation of reception of the argument presented; and 4) non-verbal communication – ways of manifesting one's position through, e.g., manner, posture, dress, as well as graphic presentation of slogans and symbols that appeal to the imagination and experience of the participants.<sup>19</sup> Thus rhetoric positions and orders the importance of the issues raised in deliberation.<sup>20</sup> It allows narrative public reasoning to be tailored to participants' expectations, while reinforcing their subjective inclusion and constituting a recognition of their subjectivity.

*Reception.* This sphere is most strongly coupled with the very essence of narrativity. Storytelling, a specific way of constructing stories, has the function of explaining, describing and justifying the chosen perspective.<sup>21</sup> Through the shared experience of storytelling, mutual understanding of the participants is promoted and a space for easy transmission of values is created. From a democratic communication perspective, storytelling is an emanation of diversity and pluralism. The ways in which stories are conveyed – their intrinsic diversity and the particular emphasis on issues important to the speaker – bear witness to the immanent heterogeneity of the public sphere. The multiple publics<sup>22</sup> within a deliberation show a diversity of viewpoints, preferences and interests. The direct contact of the participants in the deliberation contributes

<sup>18</sup> K. Jezierska, "I" meets the "Other": Agonistic and Deliberative Versions of Subjectivity and Otherness, in: K. Jezierska, L. Koczanowicz (eds.), *Democracy in Dialogue, Dialogue in Democracy. The Politics of Dialogue in Theory and Practice*, Farnham 2015, p. 100.

<sup>19</sup> I.M. Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford 2002, pp. 64–65.

<sup>20</sup> A. Gutmann, D. Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1998, pp. 135–136.

<sup>21</sup> I.M. Young, *Inclusion...*, pp. 70–72.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. N. Fraser, *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy*, in: B. Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Minneapolis 1993, pp. 13–23.

to accurate perception of others' preferences. Therefore, empathy generates a strengthened sense of responsibility for the co-participants, the process itself, and the effects of the deliberation.<sup>23</sup> Empathy additionally fosters openness – participants, having a sense of psychological safety and comfort, are not afraid to talk openly about their desires, aspirations and preferences, thus crossing the boundaries of the private and the public.<sup>24</sup> The sphere of reception makes it possible to reveal the sources of accepted values, as well as the social and cultural meanings of the issues raised in deliberation,<sup>25</sup> allowing differences not only to resound but also to be explained in an accessible way.<sup>26</sup> It is in this area that the educational potential of deliberative processes can be seen most fully.

*Interaction.* This is a sphere of recognition of the particular perspective of other deliberation participants, which consists of customary and conventional activities that do not directly belong to the process itself. These include all expressions of public acknowledgement, such as greetings, flattery, jokes, small talk, gestures – all foundations of interpersonal bonds which ensure a friendly atmosphere during deliberation. These peri-deliberative interactions, to use precise terminology, are in Young's view the counterpart of Levinas's *Saying* (subject-to-subject recognition), contrasted with *Said* (expression of intersubjective content).<sup>27</sup> They directly serve the recognition of the subjectivity of the other – in terms of their interests, preferences, social and cultural background, or level of education. The sphere of interaction can therefore be considered as an added value to deliberation. It creates a sense of closeness between the participants and establishes a basis for mutual understanding. Although it is not always rooted in sincere and enthusiastic mutual interest among the participants, it is a manifestation of respect and an expectation of equal treatment.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. Equality in the scope of narrative inclusion

The classical model of deliberation involves weighing and reflecting on the preferences and interests of the participants in order to reach a consensus on the public justification of a decision emanating from their common interest.<sup>29</sup> Since this form of democratic communication is rooted in notions of argumentative discourse, it is based on the standard of the force of the better argument.<sup>30</sup> Since no other factors influence deliberative standards, the assumption of unconditional equality of participants in the procedure must be taken as a basic principle. Arguing for the common interest excludes a situation of conflict, for which the egalitarian standard should be equal protection of interests. In its place, the standard of equal respect is implemented. In this normative setting, the initial inequalities of the participants, their individual experiences and self-interest are ignored.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>23</sup> J. Mansbridge, *Beyond...*, p. 273.

<sup>24</sup> J. Mansbridge, *Beyond...*, p. 286.

<sup>25</sup> I.M. Young, *Inclusion...*, p. 75.

<sup>26</sup> F. Poletta, J. Lee, *Is Telling Stories Good for Democracy? Rhetoric in Public Deliberation after 9/11*, "American Sociological Review" 2006/71, pp. 718–720.

<sup>27</sup> I.M. Young, *Inclusion...*, p. 58; cf. E. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, Pittsburgh 2006, pp. 5–7.

<sup>28</sup> I.M. Young, *Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy*, in: S. Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference*, Princeton 1996, pp. 129–130.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. B. Manin, *On Legitimacy of Political Deliberation*, "Political Theory" 1987/3, pp. 262–264.

<sup>30</sup> J. Habermas, *The Theory...*, p. 25.

<sup>31</sup> P.W. Juchacz, *Deliberatywna filozofia publiczna. Analiza instytucji wysluchania publicznego w Sejmie Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z perspektywy systemowego podejścia do demokracji deliberatywnej* [Eng. *Deliberative Public Philosophy. An Analysis of the Institution of Public Hearing in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland from the Point of View of a Systemic Approach to Deliberative Democracy*], Poznań 2015, pp. 112–113.

The inclusion of narrative in deliberation disrupts the order of this structure. The assumption of absolute communicative equality becomes insufficiently stable or, even worse, exclusionary in the case of narratives articulating the polyphony of the nuances and complexities of social reality. For it is extremely important to recognize that the equality of individuals in deliberative processes is inevitably rooted in the perception of equality between the groups with which these individuals identify, or to which they belong or aspire. By offering particular points of view, by drawing on individual experiences and, above all, by making it possible to construct one's own story, narration reveals the actual plurality of the participants. It is therefore based on the assumption that, regardless of whether issues of common or conflicting interests are addressed in the course of deliberation, the initial diversity of participants and the perspectives they offer is crucial for effective deliberation.

Jane Mansbridge argues that the category of political equality imposed on subjects collectively participating in democratic practices is unnecessary when these groups are united by another common denominator.<sup>32</sup> For the classical model, that bond was undoubtedly the common interest towards which deliberative communities gravitated. However, in the case of narrative inclusion, this bonding factor takes on an interpersonal dimension and manifests itself as a sense of belonging to a group that remains in relation to individual identity. Under such conditions, maintaining the postulate of unconditional equality, blind to the diversity of subjects participating in deliberation, would be counterproductive and inconsistent with the social reality. The point is that deliberative democracy must be able to provide appropriate tools for navigating possible conflicts arising from the diverse situatedness of its participants.<sup>33</sup> Most bluntly put, it can be argued that proper mechanisms of democratic practice should ensure respect for the complementary principles of universal moral equality and equity,<sup>34</sup> which, however, need not imply the primacy of the principle of unconditional equality.

In the narrative approach, the theory of deliberative democracy is oriented towards structural equality, i.e., equality that occurs between members of different social classes or different ethnic, gender or religious minorities. It is understood differently from equality between individuals. In other words, it cannot be verified on the basis of the sum of equality relations between individuals belonging to different groups, as these differ not only in terms of numbers, but also – and more fundamentally – in terms of popularity, the catchiness of proclaimed values, the transparency of views or the multiplicity and quality of groups' interests. When constructing narratives, social groups manifest relations whose egalitarianism is determined by the principle of structural equality. The consequence of not respecting this principle is obviously inequality between social groups, which consists in generating asymmetrical competences, manifested in limited

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<sup>32</sup> J. Mansbridge, *Living with Conflict: Representation in the Theory of Adversary Democracy*, "Ethics" 1981/3, pp. 466–470.

<sup>33</sup> J. Mansbridge, *Consensus in Context: A Guide for Social Movements*, "Consensus in Decision Making, Northern Ireland and Indigenous Movements" 2003/24, p. 245.

<sup>34</sup> E. Beauvais, *Deliberation and Equality*, in: A. Bächtiger, J.S. Dryzek, J. Mansbridge, M. Warren (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook...*, pp. 145–146. Universal moral equality characterizes the distribution of symmetrical competences by recognizing individual freedoms that resist coercion. Assuming an abstraction from social conditions and a recognition of the fundamental homogeneity of human beings in terms of their moral needs, it manifests itself in the perception of these competences as having a universal starting point, evident, *inter alia*, in the realization of the need for freedom. Equity requires that a fair redistribution of resources take account of social determinants as well as recognizing systemic differences, i.e., structural inequalities that exist between members of the social groups concerned.

access to, inter alia, participatory institutions.<sup>35</sup> Thus, structural inequalities are a threat to democratization of public life to the extent that they result in excluding members of particular social groups, both by limiting their possibilities of free expression and by inhibiting the process of self-improvement of individuals on the basis of their particular competences.

### 3.1. The procedural and substantive aspects of equality

By its very structure, deliberative democracy requires a special and complex form of equality, since its material effect, i.e., the content of the reached agreement, always remains in principle unknown. Therefore, no hope can be placed in fulfilling the postulate of equality only at the stage of the actual decision-making process. Instead, deliberative equality should rather be seen as an opportunity: equal opportunity of entry and equal opportunity of access to political influence. These considerations translate in turn into a description of the procedural and substantive aspects of equality in deliberation.

*Procedural equality.* Its scope is determined by the rules of the internal functioning of deliberative institutions. The mechanism for ensuring such equality consists of three steps:

- 1) The requirement of conditions for the widest possible inclusion – which means that inclusion should take place both at the stage of designing the process, i.e., setting the agenda, and at the stage of its conduct and effects;
- 2) Fundamental indifference to immanent inequalities in the distribution of power and resources – sets the framework for deliberative institutional structure and means that it should be based on such rules of internal functioning as not to unjustifiably favour either any of the participants or the initial positions they present;
- 3) The internal constraint of neutrality – a starting point in the design of deliberative institutions, protecting them from manipulation and limiting the risks generated by the possible difficulty with distinguishing their publicly legitimized effects from those that are a result of a flawed design.

Thus, the mechanism of procedural equality further specifies the conditions that a deliberative institutional structure should fulfil. On the one hand, it should ensure wide inclusion of participants – namely, fulfilling its role of an inclusive agora of important political decision-making processes, and on the other hand, it should provide public legitimacy for the decisions worked out within its framework.<sup>36</sup>

*Substantive equality.* This means creating equal opportunities for political influence. It arises at the intersection of equality as a regulative ideal in deliberation and actual political equality, characterized by asymmetrical distribution of power and resources. It refers to the effects of inclusion that are visible, for example, in methods of cooperation or in the decisions taken. Narrativity imposes the requirement that the substantive equality of deliberation should take into account the diversity of the participants' discursive competences.

In order to ensure that the justifications it constructs do indeed provide public legitimacy for political decisions, deliberation requires that influence of factors that

<sup>35</sup> I.M. Young, *Inclusion...*, pp. 92–102.

<sup>36</sup> J. Knight, J. Johnson, *What Sort of Equality Does Deliberative Democracy Require?*, in: J. Bohman, W. Rehg (eds.), *Deliberative Democracy...*, pp. 282–92.



are sources of natural initial inequalities be neutralized. These factors include, on the one hand, inequalities in the distribution of resources, such as educational background, material resources, or access to political institutions,<sup>37</sup> and, on the other hand, asymmetry in the distribution of abilities and skills, such as reasoning skills or the ability to articulate views.<sup>38</sup> The ways in which the above inequalities are balanced *de facto* determine the extent to which the conditions of substantive equality are created in the deliberative arena.

It turns out that mutual, equal and absolute respect can be guaranteed not by absolute equality but, seemingly paradoxically, by legitimate inequalities in the treatment of participants, i.e., by what deliberative democrats refer to as equalization of opportunities. What is important, however, is that the equalization of opportunities is a subject-oriented procedure – focused on the participants in the deliberation process – and not an object-oriented one, i.e., focused on the positions they formulate. The value of the latter remains directly dependent on the strength of the arguments and justifications formulated by participants (directly or indirectly). The inclusion of narratives helps to neutralize the asymmetry of discursive competences of the participants, and thus constitutes one of the basic mechanisms of legitimate equalization of opportunities for the excluded and the less privileged.

### 3.2. Equalization of opportunities

Including narratives in deliberation is linked to the demand for equalizing opportunities for the less privileged, which means an end to equality presented in absolute terms. Enabling participants to speak beyond the rigours of argumentative discourse, to present their own perspective and tell personal stories, is the essence of equalizing opportunities in terms of discursive competences. A zero-sum approach gives the participants of a deliberation process the same participation opportunities. Providing them with equal opportunities for inclusion involves, among other things, actively encouraging, supporting and privileging those who are less predisposed towards deliberation, have less developed linguistic competences or have any other initial difficulties in participating in deliberation. In addition to these purely practical guidelines for moderating the deliberation process, the moment of transition from unconditional equality to equalization of opportunities also has important theoretical consequences. On the one hand, it accentuates issues of equality not during the deliberation process, but in the very access to it, and, on the other hand, it emphasizes the issue of equality in the diversity of participants.

A condition for a well-organized deliberation process, i.e. one whose results will be reliable and authoritative, is to ensure equal opportunities to participate and equal possibilities to influence the outcome. Political equality in democratic systems should be realized simultaneously as equality in terms of inclusion in decision-making processes and giving citizens an equal chance to shape their content. Although the core of the understanding of the concept of equality remains the same, i.e. the concept is still strongly related to 1) the demand for mutual respect; 2) the inclusion of those whose interests are directly affected by deliberation; and 3) communicative equality, meaning the freedom of every participant in the process to have their say, the demands for equal voice and equal

<sup>37</sup> J. Mansbridge, *Acceptable Inequalities*, “British Journal of Political Science” 1977/3, pp. 335–336.

<sup>38</sup> J. Knight, J. Johnson, *What Sort...*, p. 281.

influence proposed in classical deliberation have been revised to emphasize equality not so much in the scope of the agreement actually reached, but in the very access to the process and the possibility of constructing narrative justifications for the decisions made.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4. Problems and risks

Deriving deliberation from individually constructed narratives is how this theory of democracy responds to the need for subjective inclusion and its adaptation to conditions of social and cultural pluralism. Nevertheless, in my view, this model gives rise to at least four basic problems that need to be addressed.

Firstly, a key issue from the perspective of my considerations is the question of the limits of equalization mechanisms. This concept of equality, rooted in narrative inclusion, is viewed as a vector for transforming the views of participants, who accept that there are initial inequalities between them and attempt to balance them in the course of communicative action. However, which inequalities are legitimate and therefore acceptable seems to be largely an arbitrary judgement depending on the deliberative culture and the specific socio-political conditions of the participants in the dialogue. For it is not possible to create an algorithm to assess the discursive competences of the participants and on this basis to grant them the right to construct narratives to express their own positions. Therefore, it should be assumed that the assessment of the adequacy and proportionality of narratives and arguments remains in principle the result of collective reasoning.

Secondly, deliberation that incorporates individual experiences and forces us to reflect not only on arguments but also on particular narratives comes at a high emotional cost and requires a significant time investment.<sup>40</sup> The more individual the perspectives and extended stories, the more extensive and less condensed the deliberation becomes. The emotional charge carried by storytelling necessarily exceeds that of a publicly reasoned argument. The practical problem of time and emotion concerns, therefore, how to moderate the deliberation process so that the emotions of speakers and listeners help to solve problems rather than distance the decision-making process and so that the lengthiness of the process does not discourage participation.

Thirdly, attention should be paid to the possibility that changing perceptions of preferences and interests can lead to a decision-making stalemate. When the deliberation process is poorly organized, the multiple perspectives offered in the narratives can lead to a decision-making deadlock and thus block the primary purpose. Strengthening the empathy of participants may, in extreme situations, lead to a significant impediment to obtaining sound justification arguments.

Fourth, the problem that narrative deliberation is potentially vulnerable to manipulation should also be acknowledged.<sup>41</sup> The unjustified favouring of certain positions of individual participants by giving them a larger platform for free speech may ultimately lead to unreliable results of the deliberation process. The uneven distribution of emphasis during the design and moderation of the deliberation process runs the risk of giving the misleading impression that the minority views express the majority position of the participants.

<sup>39</sup> A. Bächtiger, J.S. Dryzek, J. Mansbridge, M. Warren, *Deliberative Democracy: An Introduction*, in: A. Bächtiger, J.S. Dryzek, J. Mansbridge, M. Warren (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook...*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>40</sup> J. Mansbridge, *Time, Emotion, and Inequality: Three Problems of Participatory Groups*, "The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science" 1973/9, pp. 355–361.

<sup>41</sup> I.M. Young, *Inclusion...*, p. 77.

## 5. Conclusions

In the theory of deliberative democracy, it is the justifications that are the source of public legitimacy for decisions. As Piotr W. Juchacz points out: “[t]he requirement of providing public justifications is considered to be the basis for deliberation in a deliberative democracy, whereas appealing to a particular political interest would be a violation of this”.<sup>42</sup> While narrative inclusion is fraught with some risks, its benefits still outweigh the potential problems that inappropriate moderation of deliberation can spawn. It allows for reflection on situated knowledge and therefore ensures that the results of deliberation – that is, justifications – more fully reflect the complexity of social reality.

Yet, incorporating narratives into the deliberation process changes the vector of the justification – from public to mutual. The construction of stories rooted in individual experiences and opinions reinforces the subject orientation and generates important changes, especially in the substantive equality of participants. Equalizing the participation opportunities of the excluded or communicatively disadvantaged implies that all participants must develop the competence to translate the language of narrative into the language of argument. The more convincing they are, the more likely they are to become a source of legitimacy for decisions.

Consequently, narrativity implies a privileged role for the concept of mutual justifications. As a rule, this is based on the fact that the participants in the deliberation present and accept not so much reasons as considerations that they can mutually accept. Thus, not only their validity claims are emphasized (which remains an inherent legacy of Habermasian argumentative discourse), but also their persuasiveness. Mutual justifications have the task of constructing considerations that find validation among people who are in reasonable disagreement with each other,<sup>43</sup> thus realizing the idea of overlapping consensus.

### Equality of Narrative Inclusion in Decision-Making Processes: A Deliberative Approach

**Abstract:** This paper explores the relationship between narrative inclusion and the notion of equality from the perspective of the theory of deliberative democracy. It is based on the assumption that taking into account the diversity of discursive competences influences the constructed justifications constituting the source of legitimacy of political decisions. Moving beyond a purely argumentative discourse towards emphasizing pluralism provides a significant enough modification of the theory to claim that it constitutes a separate model of deliberation. At the starting point, the role and purpose of narrative is presented, as well as the conditions under which it can be incorporated into deliberative processes. Then, consideration is given to the transformation of the category of equality that is brought about by introducing narrative to the framework of subject inclusion. The shift in meaning from unconditional equality to equalization of opportunities is also addressed, in both procedural and substantive terms. Finally, the paper outlines the possible practical problems and risks that the inclusion of narrative in deliberation may give rise to.

**Keywords:** narration, theory of deliberative democracy, substantive inclusion, equalization of opportunities, public legitimacy, mutual justifications

<sup>42</sup> P.W. Juchacz, *Deliberative Law-Making: A Case Study of the Process of Enacting of a “Constitution of the Third Sector” in the Polish Sejm*, “International Journal for the Semiotics of Law” 2020/3, p. 92.

<sup>43</sup> J.J. Mansbridge, J. Bohman, S. Chambers, D. Estlund, A. Føllesdal, A. Fung, C. Lafont, B. Manin, J.L. Martí, *The Place...*, p. 67.

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