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Chapter Six

Facilitating Deliberation: The Role of Impartial Intermediaries in Deliberative Mini-Publics

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Introduction

In Habermas' counterfactual ideal speech situation, speakers are equals and coordinate their beliefs and action plans through a rational discourse. They make and challenge validity claims, resolve disputes and eventually arrive at a consensus that is both rational and dispels conflict, thus warranting a two-fold claim to superior legitimacy. In political practice, Habermas locates democratic deliberation in the public sphere, where communication is free-flowing, boundless and subject-free. While the contexts of justification in the public sphere can clearly be more or less democratic, Habermas and other proponents of a two-track-model of political decision-making that contrasts the public sphere and the political system are, for several reasons, less interested in the institutionalisation of deliberation in mini-publics (see Schmalz-Bruns 2009: 451–2). Bächtiger *et al.* have distinguished Habermasian deliberation as 'deliberation Type 1' from a more comprehensive understanding of deliberation – 'deliberation Type 2' – which not only considers less ideal instances of interaction as at least potentially deliberative but is also more concerned with the institutionalisation of deliberation (Bächtiger, Niemeyer, Neblo *et al.* 2010). Where deliberation is organised and institutionalised, however, some of the people involved in the process assume a role that is different from that of those who are to deliberate under conditions of equality: they function as organisers, agenda-setters, chairpersons, moderators, mediators or facilitators.

These intermediaries are ideally impartial and enable structured communication where it would otherwise be impossible, due to the intensity of conflict or simply to a lack of co-ordination. Understanding institutions as sets of rules (Ostrom 1986), those who organise and institutionalise communicative interaction must be seen as rule-setters; and those who keep it going within institutions must be seen as rule-keepers. Impartial intermediaries thus constitute a kind of personification of discourse rules, whatever these rules are in the given case.

Deliberation in mini-publics is always organised and structured by rules: the convenors typically choose the topic for a deliberative event, invite and select participants and set up a time schedule for deliberation. Typically, intervention

does not end here: in most cases, deliberation is attended by a professional mediator, moderator or facilitator. Where this is not the case, participants may be advised to choose a chairperson from their midst or may even do so on their own initiative. While intermediaries in different types of mini-publics share the role of rule-keepers, the way they fulfil this role, and thus their impact on interaction and function in deliberation, vary widely – both in theory and in practice.

In this chapter, in the first section I will try to structure arguments for the use of impartial intermediaries in mini-publics and suggest a list of possible tasks and functions for them, before I review existing research on the role and impact of intermediaries in deliberative practice in the second section. In the third section, I will argue that the appropriate role of intermediaries – as chairpersons, moderators, mediators or facilitators – depends on the mode of interaction that is institutionalised and on the role of participants in communication. I conclude by pointing to open questions and possible routes for further research.

Intermediaries in mini-publics: Tasks and functions (theory)

Communication needs organisation – at least in groups of more than about five speakers, particularly where opinions conflict and where the aim is making some sort of decision. While fears of domination and censorship apparently deter many deliberative theorists from openly discussing organisational requirements such as agenda-setting and rule-enforcement, preventing disorder or even chaos in communication is a more practical concern: ‘Free speech without regulation becomes just noise; democracy without procedure would be in danger of degenerating into a tyranny of the loudest shouter’ (Blumler and Coleman 2001: 17–18).

Considering reasons for and against intermediation, it seems that there are strong normative reasons against it but also strong pragmatic reasons in favour. Taking Habermas’ idea of the ideal speech situation as a reference point, it is clear that intermediation violates the condition that all speakers interact as equals: the intermediary possesses powers that are not based on the ‘forceless force of the better argument’ but associated with the special role assigned to him or her. Thompson and Hoggett point to a ‘huge lacuna in the theory of deliberative theory’, consisting in the ‘absence of an account of leaders’ (Thompson and Hoggett 2001: 360). Those who study the practice of deliberative democracy in mini-publics, however, are aware of the requirements of organised communication and groups’ need for organisation and even leadership. Accordingly, they use intermediaries in the set-up of deliberative forums, although apparently often without reflecting on their role and impact. Deliberative democrats’ lack of interest in leadership may thus result in a neglect of intermediation (which is nonetheless practised for pragmatic reasons) and thus a failure to connect practical experiences with theory.

In the surprisingly scarce literature on intermediation in deliberative forums, we find different functions and tasks assigned to impartial intermediaries (for example, Wright 2006: 553; Edwards 2002: 6). I suggest grouping these tasks as follows, ranging from minimal regulation to significant intervention in the discourse.

Task 1: Constitutionalise deliberation (institutionalisation and organisation)

Communication in mini-publics is, as noted before, always organised communication. As a minimum, someone needs to set up a website or book a venue and invite participants. Typically, this kind of initial organisation also includes the selection of a topic for communication. Consensus conferences or planning cells address very specific topics, such as genetic engineering or school reform. In participatory budgeting, too, the subject that is dealt with is clear – the allocation of a given budget. Citizen juries, focus groups or online forums can be more open where the subjects to be addressed are concerned but they still focus on controversial issues of contemporary relevance (such as issues in upcoming elections or problems in the community). In general, it seems that the more closely mini-publics are connected with macro-political institutions and decision-making processes, the more institutionalisation and organisation will be required.

The institutionalisation and organisation of deliberation also comprises the setting of conversational maxims or constitutive rules of reciprocal interaction.¹ Such maxims include the abjuration of physical and verbal violence and a commitment to minimal co-operation, in the sense that speakers refrain from speaking all at once and generally try to listen to one another. Participants in mini-publics are usually asked to accept a set of rules of procedure provided by the organisers. While details may be subject to change within the deliberative process, these rules are the initial constitution of a deliberative forum.

Task 2: Enforcing procedural rules

After the initial steps that organise and institutionalise communication, intermediation is typically taken over by a different group of people: chairpersons, mediators, moderators or facilitators. The motivation for this change in intermediaries is the legitimate fear that organisers could steer deliberation in a direction that suits their own preferences or research hypotheses. The choice of professional intermediaries who are not only impartial between the participants but also independent from the organisers is thus a requirement of good research practice.

The first and least controversial task for these intermediaries is to ensure that the rules of procedure, which are constitutive of the forum, are kept. In practice, this task ranges from preventing violence and enforcing compliance with discourse rules (for example, by banning insulting contributions) to keeping a list of speakers and admitting speakers to the floor. The enforcement of rules of procedure becomes more important the larger the group is. In small groups, speakers may manage to co-ordinate themselves if they have internalised the rules of procedure. However, the larger a group and the more controversial the issue at hand is, the

1. H.P. Grice pointed out a co-operation principle that regulates communication and is constitutive of it (Grice 1979).

more challenging and the more important keeping the rules of procedure becomes. If a group is left to itself, this task is often taken up by dominant participants. By assuming this responsibility these people do provide a service to the group; but they are not impartial and may tend to press their own views upon the other participants in illegitimate ways.

Task 3: Rationalising communication and keeping emotions at bay

The third task for intermediaries is far more controversial than the first two. Intermediaries can try to ‘rationalise’ communication by insisting on generalisable arguments and trying to keep emotions at bay. Interventions can range from the explicit rejection of contributions (‘this is not an argument’; ‘your emotions are not of interest here’; ‘we don’t want to hear about your personal experiences’) over exhortations (‘let’s not get too emotional here’; ‘let’s return to the general question’) to pacification or the rephrasing of personal stories into general arguments (‘I see why you get upset here’; ‘you probably mean to say that [...]’).

Whether or not contributions other than reasonable and generalisable arguments should be permitted in deliberation is a hotly debated topic in current deliberative theory. Several authors have highlighted the legitimate significance of emotions in politics (for example, Hall 2005; Krause 2008) and argued that non-argumentative contributions such as greetings and, in particular, personal stories or ‘testimonies’ have important inclusive functions in deliberation and should therefore not only be permitted but encouraged (for example, Lara 1999; Young 2002). The present positive appraisal of emotions and personal narratives in democratic decision-making goes so far that the diagnosis that an emotional or narrative turn has followed the cognitive turn in democratic theory is surely correct.

Nonetheless, it is important to remember the benefits of rational argumentation; there are contexts in which it is the most appropriate and goals to which it is the most conducive form of communication. In particular, where mini-publics are to produce recommendations to become inputs to legislative processes at the political macro-level, comprehensible and generalisable arguments are essential for any real and justifiable impact on collectively binding decisions.

Task 4: Ensuring internal inclusion and pluralistic argumentation

A common problem with mini-publics is that, even if they are inclusive in the sense of being representative of the population at large, some participants are more assertive and eloquent than others, leading to a kind of domination that undermines the equality of speakers. Iris Marion Young was the first to remark on the importance of ‘internal’ as well as external inclusion (Young 2002). While it is easy to see how internal inclusion may be lacking, for example, when some speakers do not contribute at all or when they are not listened and responded to, it is difficult to say when precisely it has been properly achieved. Simply counting minutes of floor time or references to contributions by single speakers may be simplistic as a way to measure inclusion. Maybe internal inclusion is best

conceived of as a regulatory ideal that intermediaries pursue, keeping in mind that it is notoriously difficult to achieve. Pursuing this ideal, it will help to be aware of the fact that dominant participants tend to be male, white and better educated, meaning that power relations within mini-publics tend to reproduce those in the society at large (Sanders 1997).

Intermediaries can try to counter undesirable power dynamics by encouraging ('A, what is your opinion on this?'; 'I think A can say something about this') and protecting ('I think A had not finished his point'; 'you're missing A's point here') shy participants and by thwarting too-dominant ones ('B, I think everyone's got your point'; 'B, please don't interrupt A'; 'I would like to hear what the others think'). However, inclusiveness can concern not only participants but also arguments. As Dryzek and Niemeyer (2008) argue, discursive representation is given where all relevant arguments and counter-arguments are heard and where different world-views and discourses are brought to bear on deliberation (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008). Where the intermediary herself brings in missing arguments and views, however, she loses her impartiality. The intermediary can thus ensure argumentative inclusiveness legitimately only by encouraging and protecting the participants who make the respective arguments. Moreover, while deliberative theorists stress the importance of internal inclusion and organisers of deliberative events are usually positive about encouraging interventions by intermediaries, participants themselves may view such interventions as patronising.

Task 5: Summarising, aggregating and decision-making

The final task for intermediaries is the most problematic one. Particularly where communication is goal-oriented, for example, where a joint report or vote is to be produced, the intermediary is under some pressure not only to enforce rules of procedure but also to keep to a schedule and to structure the discourse accordingly. Structuring the discourse can mean to sum up results, to define the issue at hand, to close a topic and open a new one or to establish agreement. A more interventionist form of structuring and summarising consists of actively suggesting solutions or compromises or defining options to be put to a vote. Some models for deliberative mini-publics, such as the planning cell (*see* Hendriks 2005) do not force participants to take a decision but reserve the task of aggregation for organisers and intermediaries. The same path was taken in one of the most famous experiments in alternative citizen participation, the Oregon Health Plan (*see* Oberlander, Marmor and Jacobs 2001). In Oregon, the results of large-scale citizen hearings were aggregated by an expert group that merely registered the frequency with which certain topics were raised (for example, 'mental health', 'access to care', 'efficiency'). These 'results' of the citizen hearings then served as an input to an expert ranking of medical services according to priority, leaving the actual significance of deliberations for the decision entirely obscure.

Where aggregation and decision-making are not left to deliberators themselves but taken over by intermediaries, deliberation runs into the danger of becoming no more than an input to a technocratic decision-making process. Fears that

deliberation mainly serves to win consent for predetermined decisions and ease the implementation of unpopular policies are clearly warranted here. Nonetheless, there are cases where the heat of a conflict renders agreement or acceptance of a majority vote unrealistic goals and where an arbitral award that takes the interests and arguments of all parties into account is better than no solution at all.

Intermediaries in mini-publics: Roles and impact (practice)

While the importance of intermediaries in mini-publics is frequently discussed, research on the effects of facilitation is surprisingly scarce. Deliberative events are typically intensively documented and studied. However, reports often mention facilitation only in the description of the set-up, not as a factor whose effects are systematically controlled for and analysed. As Wright notes: ‘[...] it is often claimed that “skilled” or “trained” moderators are used, but no details are given as to what this means in practice’ (Wright 2006: 551). Given that intermediation is more or less universally used in mini-publics and widely appreciated for its benefits, how can it be that we know so little about what these benefits are?

I believe that one reason for this gap in research on deliberation is that it is – for eventually normative reasons of good research practice – in most cases hardly possible to organise a control group that deliberates without some sort of intermediation. As noted before, communication needs organisation, at least where group size exceeds a limit of five to ten participants. Where deliberation is ‘cold’, that is, where participants have no or little vested interest and emotions involved in the conflict at hand (*see* Fung 2003), communication without intermediation may simply be unorganised and uncondusive to decision-making, with the resulting frustration possibly leading to a high number of drop-outs. In ‘hot’ deliberation, however, especially in divided societies or even between former combatants in a civil war, unmediated interaction may lead to physical violence – violence that in this case would in a highly problematic way have been caused by researchers themselves. In hot conflicts, setting up a control group without intermediation would thus amount to deliberative ‘malpractice’ and clearly constitute a violation of research ethics.

For cold deliberation, by contrast, the potential insight to be gained from comparing facilitated deliberation with non-facilitated deliberation appears worth risking a little frustration on the participants’ side. However, given that researchers rarely have funds to realise more than a single mini-public and that they have strong interests in the success of their own event, it is understandable that they do not opt for unmediated communication.

A more systematic and therefore more serious reason for the neglect of the role of intermediaries may lie in deliberative theorists’ aforementioned lack of interest in leadership: proponents of deliberative democracy, who organise mini-publics, accept intermediation for pragmatic rather than normative reasons and may seek to downplay its effects because these call into question the theory’s premise that communication is best when it takes place among equals. A final reason, both normative and pragmatic, to refrain from organising mini-publics

without intermediation is that participants conceive of themselves as engaging in democratic deliberation, not as guinea-pigs in an experiment. What if a control group without intermediaries asks the organisers for facilitation or elects a facilitator from its midst? Would the academic interest in the effects of intermediation justify its denial to a group of democratically engaged citizens?

Given these obstacles, existing studies on the effects of intermediation come from a context where risks and costs are lower: they are studies of virtual, rather than face-to-face communication in online discussion forums. Let us take a look at their main findings. Given that the number of studies is small, this look can be brief.

Trénel (2009) finds that ‘advanced facilitation’ that actively encourages reticent participants improves the internal inclusion of women and non-whites. Wright compares two types of moderation in online forums. *Content moderation* involves censoring the content of contributions and, if necessary, deleting entries with offensive messages. *Interactive moderation* is even more interventionist than content moderation: the moderator not only controls content and seeks to maintain civility but also brings in new users and even participates in debates himself. Wright finds that the interactive moderator ‘can have a positive role in promoting both the levels of discussion and bringing in users from the outside’; but he also notes that, where moderation and censorship are not perceived as independent and unbiased, the legitimacy of the forum may be undermined (Wright 2006: 563). Edwards describes the moderator in online forums as an ‘emerging democratic intermediary’, arguing that ‘moderators will establish themselves as elements of the information and communication infrastructure between the citizenry and public administration’ (Edwards 2002: 18). His analysis of several forums, however, mainly serves to illustrate this claim rather than providing evidence to prove it. Moreover, all three studies (Trénel, Wright and Edwards) compare forums with more intermediation (advanced / hands-on / interactive moderation) with ones with less intermediation. None of them refers to a ‘control forum’ without any intermediation, which would be required for a comprehensive assessment of the effects of intermediation.

Chair, moderator, mediator, facilitator: Roles and functions for intermediaries in organised communication

Given the reluctance of deliberative theorists to address intermediation theoretically and the scarcity of empirical research on the effects of intermediation, a systematic appraisal of the possible roles and functions of intermediaries in organised communication appears to be a clear desideratum. Assuming that ‘one size fits all’ is hardly ever true, I want to argue that different types of forums and different types of conflicts require different types of intermediation. Cold deliberation in a rather ‘expertocratic’ forum can, where the requirements for intermediation are concerned, hardly be compared with hot deliberation in a divided society like, for example, Colombia (described in Steiner 2012). Deliberation on emotional issues like the rebuilding of the World Trade Center (described by Polletta 2006)

is difficult to compare with deliberation on distributive or informational issues. I suggest four possible roles for intermediaries, each suited to a particular mode of interaction.²

The chair

Where interaction is highly formalised, for example, in parliamentary debates, the forum is typically ‘chaired’ by one member or a committee of members. Who is the ‘chair’, and what are his tasks and functions? Literally, a chair is a piece of furniture, not a living participant in interaction. The description of a person in charge of keeping rules of procedure, of leading discursive interaction, as a chair, comes from the position this person assumes at the table or in the plenum: he or she is seated in the front and in the middle, not on the side of either of the factions. The tasks of the chair were described above as task 2: enforcing rules of procedure. The chair keeps a list of speakers and admits speakers to the floor. He or she takes action against violations of discourse rules, depending on how these are specified. Typically, insulting remarks and physical violence are ruled out and interruptions are allowed only if the speaker on the floor permits them. In addition, speaking time will often have to be limited to ensure equal floor time for all groups and factions. However, the chair will refrain from evaluating contributions as adequate or inadequate and from encouraging members to express their opinion. Some ‘chairs’ may also summarise results. The chair in a parliamentary debate, though, aggregates opinions by calling a vote that also closes the exchange on a given subject.

In what kinds of conflicts and for what modes of interaction is the role of the chair the appropriate one for an intermediary to assume? I have noted above that intermediaries are commonly described as ‘chairing’ interaction where this is highly formalised, in a parliamentary debate, for example. The debate, as a mode of interaction, is characterised by antagonism between groups or factions. It is public, but in the way that speakers address an audience rather than one another. The audience that listens to the debate cannot contribute to it and, in this sense, the debate is not discursive (*cf.* Landwehr 2010). Accordingly, speakers seek to convince the audience, not one another, and admitting to a change in opinions or preferences may amount to admitting defeat or even losing face. Ideal-typically, opponents in a debate do not seek to reach an agreement or co-ordinate their action plans. Rather, they act out a conflict ‘on stage’ for an audience whose preferences are formed and transformed in listening. Nearly ideal-typical debates may be seen in the events organised by debating clubs, where positions are assigned by lot and the debate itself is a game, played according to specified rules, in which speakers seek to *score* by making arguments. To what extent parliamentary and

2. I have suggested a typology of modes of political interaction – debate, discussion, bargaining and deliberation – elsewhere (Landwehr 2009; Landwehr 2010). I do not explicitly draw on this typology here but it is no coincidence that each of the possible roles for intermediaries corresponds to one of those four modes of political interaction.

other debates in a given political system resemble this ideal-type will depend on the set-up of its polity and its political culture.

Why is the chair the appropriate role for an intermediary in the kind of antagonistic interaction we find in a debate? Where factions merely act out a conflict as a tennis match, where positions are fixed and where co-ordination is neither aimed at nor realistic, it is particularly important that the intermediary does not take sides. The chair's role is not only to be impartial but to be as neutral as a sports referee. In the context of a debate, any attempt to influence interaction that goes beyond taking action on rule violations will be frowned upon by the debating parties and would undermine the intermediary's authority.

The moderator

A second possible role for intermediaries is that of a moderator. The Latin origin of the word moderator is *moderare*, meaning 'to check/slow down/control'. The tasks for this type of intermediary were described above as task 3, the task of rationalising communication and keeping emotions at bay. The moderator, as I wish to define the role here, thus does significantly more than the chair: he or she evaluates contributions as relevant or irrelevant to the topic and may even admonish participants for digressions or emotional outbursts.

When is the role of the moderator the appropriate one for an intermediary to assume? A moderator is required where the goal of interaction is one of tracking truth and assessing justification, or at least of establishing rational, justified premises for decision-making, and where passion and rhetoric may impede the pursuit of this goal. I have termed this mode of interaction 'discussion' (Landwehr 2010). A discussion is a highly discursive mode of interaction, where claims and arguments are conscientiously assessed. All hearers can also become speakers, in contrast to the debate, where listeners are confined to a passive role. In their logic, discussions are public: what is said is being said for everyone to hear and to judge. The reasons named are supposed to be general and transferable to hearers. In other words, speakers, when giving reasons, claim that these are not only reasons for themselves but that they should constitute reasons for anyone else, too. However, participants in a discussion do not so much aim at a consensus as at tracking truth or assessing justification. Consensus on a given assumption or conclusion may well be an indicator of its truth or justification. In a discussion, however, consensus is not an end in itself. Accordingly, it would be inappropriate for an intermediary in a discussion to suggest a compromise – truth is nothing to be bargained about.³

The pursuit of truth through discussion also requires discursive inclusion (or representation) in Dryzek and Niemeyer's sense (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008): if important information is missed out or if relevant perspectives are not considered, results – if achieved at all – are likely to be biased. Political institutionalisation of the discussion as a mode of interaction can be found in advisory forums and expert

3. For a somewhat contrary argument, see Goodin and Brennan 2001.

committees. In the selection of expert members for their (supposedly) superior knowledge and understanding, convenors typically seek to ensure external inclusion by drawing on scholars for different disciplines or schools of thought. Internal inclusion appears to be less of a problem here, assuming that experts have won their status in part through the confident articulation of their positions within their respective peer groups. However, given that they do not have material interests in results, participants in a discussion may feel inclined to drop out of the process when their arguments do not meet with resonance. While it may seem patronising in the intermediary to encourage more reticent expert members in a discussion, he or she could still ask for opinions or prevent a premature closure of the discussion in order to ensure discursive inclusion.

The central role for the intermediary in a discussion, however, derives from the fact that experts can, in practice, be highly emotional about their position and may resort to rhetorical means they would disapprove of if taken to task. Assuming that all members of the forum aim at a rational, measured exchange – which is the kind of interaction most conducive to truth and justification – moderating interventions from the intermediary are likely to be approved of in factual discussions.

The mediator

A far more interventionist role for the intermediary to assume than that of either the chair or the moderator is that of a mediator. The word is of Latin origin, too, originally meaning ‘to intervene’ or ‘to divide in the middle’. The meaning ‘one intervenes between disputing parties’ is first attested in the fourteenth century.⁴ Today, intermediaries described as mediators play a role in the out-of-court settlement of legal conflicts, for example over custody of children. In political contexts, mediation is used in conflicts between stakeholder groups with vested interests, where hierarchical direction is not likely to be effective and a decision by majority vote not feasible.

I define the mediator role for intermediaries in political interaction by the primary task connected with it, which is the one I outlined above as task 5: the mediator not only guards rules of procedure and moderates interaction where necessary, he or she also seeks to enable solutions by aggregating opinions, by exposing shared interests and areas of agreement and by summarising results. In situations where no other form of aggregation (through voting, majority rule or compromise) is possible, the mediator may even make an arbitral award on the basis of an evaluation of the participants’ interests, positions and arguments. In any case, it is particularly important for the mediator to be accepted as impartial by all parties involved.

In what kinds of situations is the mediator role the appropriate one for an intermediary to play? As noted before, mediators seek to settle disputes between stakeholders with vested interests. Mediation would be pointless, however, if

4. Source: Online Etymological Dictionary, www.etymonline.com, accessed 17 February 2014.

besides the parties' diverging interests there was not also a shared interest. The analogy with child-custody proceedings holds well here: however fierce the couple's battle may be, they still have one interest in common – that of their child or children. Mediation is thus a viable option only in positive-sum games. The situation where an intermediary acting as mediator might enable superior outcomes is a classical bargaining situation. Bargaining, as a mode of interaction, is not public in the way a debate or a discussion is. The reasons, or motives, that drive participants need not be general and transferable. They do not even need to be justifiable, because interests are taken as given.

In such a bargaining situation, mediation may enable superior outcomes by encouraging participants to lay out their interests and positions more clearly and to explain them to the other side. This is why inclusion plays a role in bargaining situations as well. First of all, external inclusion needs to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are represented, as any results achieved in mediation are unlikely to win public approval otherwise. Moreover, internal inclusion requires that all participants get the chance to bring their interests (rather than only their positions) to bear on decisions. This is precisely what Fisher, Ury and Patton (1992) have pointed out as a prerequisite for win-win solutions to be achieved in negotiations (Fisher, Ury and Patton 1992 [1984]). Compared to more traditional bargaining situations (without or with only minimal intermediation), transparency of reasons may enable new deals and compromises that would have remained out of reach in a situation of mutual suspicion. Dryzek notes that, once a mediator has achieved such reasoned engagement between initially hostile parties, he or she can 'increasingly fade into the background' and allow the parties to work out solutions by themselves (Dryzek 1987: 668). However, and quite in contrast to the discussion case, consent, or rather compromise, on a joint solution, is a goal in itself in situations of bargaining between vested interests. Tracking truth or establishing which party's claims are better justified, by contrast, is not a goal to be pursued here and respective approaches from participants would be dismissed rather than encouraged by a mediator.

The facilitator

Neither of the situations, or modes of interaction, referred to so far comes close to the ideal of deliberative interaction. Deliberation is both discursive and aimed at co-ordination; and it is both about truth and about reaching meaningful compromises (cf. Landwehr 2010). Deliberation is a demanding mode of interaction to realise and intermediation that contributes to its success is demanding as well. I would like to argue that the appropriate role for an intermediary in deliberation is that of a facilitator. The word comes from French *faciliter* – 'to render easy'. What is the facilitator to render easy? In short, the facilitator is to help the group reach its own goals. As these goals are twofold – truth or normative justification on the one hand, co-ordination through compromise or consensus on the other hand – so are the facilitator's tasks. I have defined the facilitator's tasks and thus his role as task 4 above: the tasks of ensuring internal inclusion and pluralism.

Each of these tasks for the facilitator is conducive to one of the deliberating group's goals. Internal inclusion, which is notoriously difficult to ensure in deliberative mini-publics, is central for the goal of co-ordination. Only those participants who have actively contributed to the group's product, for example, a joint statement or report, are likely to fully support it. The facilitator's role here is to ensure that the absence of open dissent is not mistaken for consensus and thus successful co-ordination. More passive participants, particularly if they hold minority opinions, may opt for the exit rather than the voice option and drop out of a deliberative forum altogether. Encouraging passive members and thwarting too-dominant ones is not to be understood as an intervention in the discourse itself but as a kind of advanced enforcement of discourse *rules*. While in the context of a debate, in which opponents view themselves as equally equipped with the necessary professional skills to make themselves heard, it is sufficient to guarantee orderly proceedings by, for example, keeping a list of speakers, watching speaking time and penalising offences, deliberation among lay citizens requires somewhat more. Discourse rules may need to be more fully specified, particularly where they are supposed to ensure mutual respect. In a citizen conference on stem-cell research in Berlin, for example, participants set up the rule 'troubles first': whenever one of the forums members felt misunderstood, disrespected or offended, this irritation was dealt with before the group continued topical deliberation (*see* Landwehr 2009: 200).

Ensuring pluralism of different arguments and points of view is important with regard to the goal of tracking truth and assessing justification. Clearly, the scope of arguments and perspectives is limited by the composition of the forum. What if the forum's opinions and views turn out to be alarmingly biased? Although convenors of deliberative events will strive to assemble groups representative of the population at large, a group that is representative with regard to socio-demographic criteria may well turn out to have (or be dominated by) biased opinions on specific issues – and the smaller group is, the higher the likelihood of biased opinions occurring. Can or should the intermediary prevent the kind of polarisation and group think that is likely to evolve in such cases (Sunstein 2003)? If facilitators bring in issue-related arguments themselves, they leave the safe and important ground of impartiality. Whether preventing group-think or maintaining impartiality is more essential in any given case will be a practical and pragmatic decision. When choosing to leave the ground of impartiality, the facilitator should, in any case, present arguments not as his or her own opinion but in a more indirect way. Rather than saying 'you're wrong, because p, q!' he or she might suggest: 'what would you reply if someone argued that because p, q?' The facilitator could thus try to ensure 'discursive representation' (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008) without taking sides.

To obtain a clear picture of how the intermediary in deliberation can act as a facilitator, it may help to differentiate this role from those of chair, moderator and facilitator and to point out what the facilitator should *not* do. Like the chair, the facilitator guards rules of procedure. However, the facilitator should not enforce rules too strictly and should be sensitive to situations where it helps to deviate from

them, for example, by permitting immediate replies instead of sticking to a list of speakers or by allowing interruptions from participants who feel misunderstood or offended. Like the moderator, the facilitator may sometimes have to keep emotions at bay and calm down participants when they are upset. However, the facilitator should not seek to rationalise deliberation by disqualifying or evaluating contributions. In particular, accounts of individual experiences have important functions in citizen deliberation and storytelling should not be discouraged by insistence on generalisable reasons. Like the mediator, the facilitator may point out areas of agreement and summarise arguments. However, he or she should refrain from aggregating results or making suggestions. Where facilitators do so, they give rise to the suspicion that the outcome of a deliberative event does not depend on the course of argumentation in the forum itself but is pre-determined by its organisers. While epistemic progress (tracking truth and assessing justification) and co-ordination are goals of deliberation, neither of them is, in this context, an end in itself. Any result of a deliberative citizen forum bears legitimacy and is of relevance only in so far as it was achieved by citizens themselves, free from undue influence by organisers and intermediaries.

All this said, we must keep in mind that there exist very different models for deliberative forums (*see* Fung 2003). In particular, forums differ with regard to their size (ranging from 10–20 in consensus conferences to hundreds in Deliberative Polls[®]) and with regard to their goals (some aiming at consensus, others pursuing mainly goals of information and exchange). Clearly, the role and tasks of the intermediary will differ depending on the precise set-up of the deliberative forum. In very large forums, the intermediary may only be able to ensure internal inclusion in a rather mechanistic way, by keeping a list of speakers and perhaps favouring ones who have not contributed yet. The role of the intermediary will, under such circumstances, rather resemble that of a chair. Moreover, large forums, particularly where deliberation is hot, may require moderating interventions to prevent turmoil that could risk the success of the entire event. Where a consensual vote constitutes an important goal for a deliberative forum, in contrast, the intermediary may take on the role of a mediator and seek to aggregate reasons and results in order to achieve the kind of ‘deep compromise’ that is often a more realistic outcome of deliberation than consensus (Richardson 2002: chapter 11).

Conclusions

Both deliberative theory and deliberative practice in mini-publics have shown surprisingly little interest in the role of impartial intermediaries. As for the theorists, this lack of interest may be due to strong beliefs in the equality of speakers and a general suspicion of leadership. The intermediary, after all, possesses rights the other speakers do not. Those who study deliberation empirically in mini-publics seem to accept intermediation mainly for pragmatic reasons; controlled studies of its effects are not to be found. The fact that interaction in mini-publics without intermediation can be so problematic that the success of the entire forum is risked and that organising mini-publics without intermediation may even amount to an

academic ‘malpractice’ is reason enough to address the issue more systematically. As long as little is known about the effects of (different elements of) intermediation, it may help to assume that intermediaries try to fulfil the tasks assigned to them and, more often than not, will succeed in doing so.

I have pointed out five central tasks for intermediaries. Sometimes, these can be pursued simultaneously; sometimes goal conflicts will arise in their pursuit. When deciding which tasks to assign to an intermediary, organisers of deliberative events should be clear about the character and goals of the forum: different roles for intermediaries are suitable for and conducive to different modes of interaction. I have suggested four possible roles for intermediaries that may be understood as ideal-types: the roles of chair, moderator, mediator and facilitator. The responsibility of organisers of mini-publics does not only lie in making sure that intermediaries are ‘skilled’ and ‘trained’, they also need to make clear – to both participants and intermediaries – what tasks intermediation is supposed to fulfil and what role the intermediary is to play in the forum. If interaction is to be deliberative, that is, aimed at co-ordinating participants’ preferences through a discursive assessment and weighting of reasons, the intermediary should act as a facilitator. The facilitator will promote internal inclusion and a pluralism of differing points of view but refrain from an overly strict application of discourse rules as well as from attempts to ‘rationalise’ interaction and from summarising results.

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