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GENERATING DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY THROUGH DELIBERATIVE INNOVATIONS: THE ROLE OF EMBEDDEDNESS AND DISRUPTIVENESS

Didier Caluwaerts and Min Reuchamps

Democratic deliberation is claimed to improve the legitimacy of democratic decision making. However, deliberation's beneficial effects do not come about easily. If deliberative innovations want to contribute to the legitimacy of political decision making, they have to reflect the principles of legitimacy in their own functioning. In this paper, we set out to assess the input and output legitimacy of four deliberative events, and determine which are the favourable conditions for their legitimacy. Based on a comparison of the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly, the Belgian G1000, the Dutch Burgerforum, and the Irish We The Citizens, we argue that the institutional embeddedness of deliberative innovations strongly affect their claims to legitimacy, but also that their disruptive potential is unrelated to legitimacy.

Deliberation is considered capable of generating legitimate political decisions that receive broad public support, even when there is strong disagreement on the aims and values a polity should promote (Cohen 1998; Dryzek 2001; Parkinson 2006). However, deliberative democracy can only contribute to the legitimacy of the political system as a whole, if it reflects the principles of legitimacy in its own process. It is therefore crucial to assess how internally legitimate deliberative mini-publics are, and how we can design them as to maximise their positive externalities.

In this article, we focus on two of those design features. Our research question is: to what extent are institutional embeddedness and disruptiveness favourable conditions for the legitimacy of deliberative innovations? We hypothesise that the deliberative mini-publics' institutional embeddedness improves their output legitimacy, whereas a high level of disruptiveness improves their input legitimacy. In order to test these hypotheses, we compare four mini-publics: the *British Columbia Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform*, the Belgian *G1000 Citizens' Summit*, the Dutch *Burgerforum*, and the Irish *We the Citizens*.

Hereafter, we first develop criteria for the legitimacy of deliberative mini-publics, because this concept has never been comprehensively translated into operational terms (Geissel 2011; for a more in-depth analysis of these criteria: see Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2014b). Thereafter, we hypothesise why embeddedness and disruptiveness are considered favourable for the legitimacy of deliberative mini-publics. In the third section, we develop the methodology and discuss the cases under investigation. The fourth and fifth sections offer the comparison, and try to link the specific design choices of deliberative mini-publics to their contributions to democratic legitimacy.

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Conceptualising Deliberative Legitimacy

New types of democracy require new conceptualisations of democratic legitimacy, and in his seminal piece on deliberative legitimacy, Cohen (1998: 74) contends that 'outcomes are democratically legitimate if and only if they could be the object of free and reasoned argument among equals'. A conceptualisation of deliberative legitimacy must therefore distinguish between the inputs from citizens being heard in an inclusive, open, and transparent process, and the specific outputs produced through deliberation (Bekkers and Edwards 2007; Edwards 2007; Geissel 2011). We should therefore assess both input and output legitimacy.

Input Legitimacy

Input legitimacy refers to the openness of deliberative processes towards public demands. The inclusion of the authentic preferences of all affected is the guiding principle, whereas selectiveness has to be avoided. Input legitimacy therefore has to meet the following three central criteria.

Quality of representation Deliberative democracy requires all those who are bound by a decision to be included in the process leading up to that decision (O'Flynn and Sood 2014: 42), but 'meaningful participation in collective decision by anything more than a tiny minority is inconceivable in contemporary nation-states' (Dryzek 2001: 652). Therefore, citizen deliberation is usually scaled down to a type of mini-public with participants being representative of the population from which they are drawn. This gives every citizen an equal opportunity of being included in the process leading up to a decision. As such, high levels of representativeness are indicative of high levels of input legitimacy. Empirically, we distinguish between the following coding categories:

(1) *Representative inclusion*: The mini-public is characterised by a good socio-demographic representation.
(2) *Representative bias*: There is drop out or self-selection among traditionally vulnerable groups, and socio-demographics are skewed.
(3) *Representative inbreeding*: There is strong drop out and self-selection among all groups.

Epistemic completeness By talking to each other, participants identify good arguments, and ideally come to better decisions. This means that deliberative processes can only be epistemically complete to the extent that the participants have access to all public discourses or frames on the issue under discussion (O'Flynn and Sood 2014: 43). It is therefore common practice to give the participants the opportunity to get their facts straight and to grow their competence by offering them information (see for example Luskin et al. [2002]). This can be done in three ways, in descending order of epistemic completeness:

(1) *Access to experts*: The participants have access to independent and unbiased experts and policy makers.
(2) *Balanced information booklets*: Comprehensive information booklets are available to the participants.
(3) *Private information pooling*: Deliberation allows the participants to pool their private information, but no other information is available.

Open agenda setting When the agenda is open, citizens will be able to approach the issues more holistically. Selectiveness during the agenda setting and narrowly defined topics will undermine the input legitimacy, since policy problems are often multifaceted and interdependent (Edwards 2007; Smith 2009). Allowing the participants to explore new and adjacent problems thus increases the input legitimacy (O'Flynn and Sood 2014: 52). The openness of the agenda was coded as follows:

(1) *Open agenda*: All citizens or all stakeholders are able to set the agenda in an open-ended process.
(2) *Semi-open agenda*: The agenda is thematically fixed, but participants can introduce adjacent issues, and question the assigned issues.
(3) *Closed agenda*: The organisers set the agenda, and there is very little room for introducing new issues.

Output Legitimacy

Deliberation aims to transform public demands into legitimate political outcomes. As such, mini-publics' outcomes have to be in some way connected to the formal decision-making arena. This means that the following criterion has to be met on the output side.

Political uptake Deliberative outputs have to be linked to the formal political sphere, or mini-publics would be little more than a form of democratic experimentation without practical use (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). We do not expect all outputs from deliberative consultation processes to be directly implemented by policy makers, but they at least have to set the political agenda (Edwards 2007). The output legitimacy thus increases when the effective impact of the deliberative decisions on real world politics is high. We apply the following coding scheme:

(1) *Political uptake*: The mini-public's decisions are implemented, or the choice about whether or not to implement is given to the wider public.
(2) *Agenda setting*: The decisions set the political agenda and inform policy makers. There are references to the mini-public's decisions in policy documents and parliamentary debates.
(3) *No uptake*: Party and government officials do not let the deliberative outcomes inform policy.

Embeddedness and Disruptiveness

Whether or not deliberative mini-publics are high on legitimacy depends on many factors. In this contribution, however, we will focus on two specific conditions: institutional embeddedness and disruptiveness.

Institutional embeddedness refers to the extent to which the mini-publics are tied to the decision-making machinery (Barth 2006). When deliberative processes are initiated by government, or when policy makers explicitly support them, their decisions are more likely to be implemented. Deliberative innovations outside of the formal decision-making realm, will be less successful in generating any substantive impact for their outcomes (Geissel 2011: 176–177). After all, institutionally dissociated mini-publics will at best be seen as a precursor to the 'real' decision making. Or, as Edelenbos (2005: 111) argues: '[i]nteractive governance

needs better institutional embeddedness in order to prevent the interactive process from becoming meaningless and useless in formal decision making'.

Institutional embeddedness will thus impact deliberative mini-public's output legitimacy (Fagotto and Fung 2006: 20). When there is a real power-sharing arrangement between the elites and the mini-public, the weight given to the results of the mini-public will be greater. Deliberative innovations that are institutionally embedded will thus have a higher output legitimacy than their institutionally dissociated counterparts (Smith 2009).

> H1: Embedded deliberative innovations have a higher output legitimacy than dissociated ones.

Besides their embeddedness, mini-publics' disruptiveness might also affect their legitimacy. Democracies are sometimes incapable of generating appropriate functionality (Newton 2011). Such democratic failures create opportunities for 'innovative democratic challengers' (Saward 2008: 408) to disrupt the process of public goods allocation (Christensen et al. 2006). Disruptive democratic innovations challenge the political status quo, by targeting the perceived gap between elites and citizens. Disruptiveness is a measure for the ferocity with which deliberative innovation want to alter existing power relations, and empower previously disengaged and substantively disenfranchised citizens. As such, it opens up decision making to a wider range of citizens and discourses, and it is expected to affect mini-publics' input legitimacy.

Disruptive innovations can take two forms: high-end disruptions are revolutionary and radical, whereas low-end disruptions are evolutionary and incremental. The less a democratic innovation resonates the core interests of established democratic institutions, and the more it presents itself as a decision-making circuit outside the representative arena, the more radically disruptive it is (Carayannis et al. 2003).

Some disruptions are more incremental, however, and do not fundamentally contest the status quo. They are followers in the sense that they do not offer a radical alternative to the democratic business as usual. Such incrementally disruptive events sustain existing power relations. The resistance to involving ordinary citizens, which often characterises representative institutions, will also haunt these events, causing their input legitimacy to be rather poor (Table 1).

> H2: Radically disruptive deliberative innovations have a higher input legitimacy than incrementally disruptive ones.

If we combine these hypotheses, we reach the following scheme:

TABLE 1
The hypothesised impact of embeddedness and disruptiveness on legitimacy

		Institutional embeddedness	
		Embedded	**Dissociated**
Disruptive potential	Radical	**Inside challenger** High input High output	**Outside challenger** High input Low output
	Incremental	**Inside follower** Low input High output	**Outside follower** Low input Low output

Research Design

To answer our research question, we will use a comparative method. This allows us to single out those configurations of factors that are conducive to high levels of legitimacy. We have selected four deliberative events in a most-similar design: the *British Columbia Citizens' Assembly*, the Belgian *G1000*, the Dutch *Burgerforum*, and the Irish *We the Citizens*. These are all sizeable and highly mediatised deliberative events gathering ordinary citizens to discuss salient political issues. Moreover, they were all organised in contexts with a strong sense of democratic dysfunction. The cases are, however, matched on their embeddedness and disruptiveness (Table 2).

The *British Columbia Citizens' Assembly* (BCCA) qualifies as an insider because it was strongly embedded. BC's 1996 elections highlighted the disfunctionality of the province's single member plurality system (Ratner 2004). The provincial government itself therefore decided to organise an assembly to reflect on the electoral system (Fournier et al. 2011). The fact that the BCCA was instituted primarily at the Premier's request, and that the mini-public had to report back to the provincial government, makes clear how centrally the Assembly was to be embedded in the Provincial decision-making structures. The BCCA also had a high disruptive potential. It challenged existing power structures and empowered citizens by letting them set the rules of the political game, a task a legislative body normally reserves to itself. Moreover, the BC government also gave citizens some real decision-making power by stipulating that the propositions of the Assembly would be put to a provincial referendum. This commitment on behalf of the provincial government was remarkable, because—constitutionally—provincial referendums could never be binding. As such, the BCCA was able to radically disrupt the political game.

The Belgian *G1000 Citizens' Summit* is the outside challenger. It explicitly challenged the closed, consociational nature of Belgian politics in which citizens are reduced to deferent bystanders (Caluwaerts 2012). The G1000 took place in 2011, after the Belgian party elites tried for 541 days to form a government, resulting in little more than a complete political stalemate (Deschouwer and Reuchamps 2013; Devos and Sinardet 2012). In this climate of government instability, the organisers explicitly stated that the event aimed at empowering citizens. It wanted to resonate the voice of the people instead of the voice of vested interests, which usually dominate Belgian politics. The disruptive potential of the mini-public has to be understood in its historical context: Belgian politics has always been averse to giving citizens voice outside the polling booth ever since Belgium teetered on the brink of civil war after the 1950 referendum on the return of the King. In a country, notorious for its highly elitist political culture (Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2012, 2014a), the G1000 was thus considered by elites and

TABLE 2
Case selection

		Institutional embeddedness	
		Embedded	**Dissociated**
Disruptive potential	Radical	**Inside challenger** Case: British Columbia Citizens' Assembly	**Outside challenger** Case: Belgian G1000
	Incremental	**Inside follower** Case: Dutch Burgerforum	**Outside follower** Case: Irish WTC

public opinion as a hostile democratic challenger (Van Den Broeck 2011). The project was, however, an outside challenger because it was completely dissociated from formal decision making (Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2014b). It relied on volunteers and the political elites were not involved until the very end when the citizens' proposals were presented. Moreover, the organisers did not rely on government funding. Instead, the project was entirely crowd funded with small gifts from private citizens or companies.

The inside follower, the Dutch *Burgerforum Kiesstelsel*, emerged from the Dutch government's *Agenda for Democratic Renewal* and was asked to reflect on the electoral system for the Second Chamber. The Burgerforum is based on the design of the BCCA: it was installed by government decree and funded by government, and it reported directly to the Minister for Public Renewal, which makes it institutionally embedded (Pechtold 2004–2005). However, contrary to the BCCA, the Burgerforum had little potential to disrupt the political system. It was not framed as an alternative to Dutch politics as usual, and no final referendum was foreseen (Smith 2009). The political will to let the Burgerforum make a dent in the political power constellation was therefore low, even though politicians themselves installed the forum. As such, the Burgerforum did not take off under the best of circumstances and only constituted an incremental disruption.

The final case, the Irish *We the Citizens* (WTC), was launched by a working group of the Political Studies Association of Ireland and the Irish Universities Association. It was a clear outsider in that it was conceived in academic circles, and was funded by Atlantic Philanthropies (We the Citizens 2011). Government had little to no impact on the organisation of the event. Moreover, its primary aim was not to radically overturn the power dynamics of Irish politics, and to empower the Irish citizens. Rather, WTC primarily wanted to test whether a more participatory form of democracy could work in Ireland and whether it could produce opinion and attitude change among citizens (Farrell et al. 2013). Even though WTC did lay the foundations of the Irish Constitutional Convention (which is a clear inside challenger), it was conceived as a stand-alone project aimed at mapping attitude change. This makes it an ideal example of an outside follower.

Assessing the Deliberative Innovations' Legitimacy

Now that we have presented the four cases under investigation, we will assess the legitimacy of each case.

The BCCA on Electoral Reform

From January to November 2004, an Assembly of 160 citizens met to consult with experts and politicians, deliberate, and recommend that British Columbia's electoral system change from first past the post to single transferable vote. This experiment was considered 'the first time a citizens' body [had] ever been empowered to set a constitutional agenda' (Warren and Pearse 2008: 6). Randomisation was explicitly considered to be a necessary condition for the legitimacy of the BCCA (Gibson 2002). It was designed to approximate a descriptive representation of the population, with one woman and one man randomly drawn from each of the 79 ridings in the province (Warren and Pearse 2008: 10). However, the selection process was not as straightforward as expected. Of the 23,000 invitations sent out, only about 1000 citizens attended the selection meetings (about 4% response rate). From these attendees, 158 participants to the BCCA were selected, in addition to two Aboriginal

TABLE 3
Legitimacy of the BCCA

Dimension	Subdimension	Coding
Input	Quality of representation	Representative bias
	Epistemic completeness	Access to experts
	Open agenda setting	Closed agenda
Output	Political uptake	Political uptake

members, resulting in a body of 160 of which only one participant was reported to drop out (BCCA 2004). Given the strong self-selection but low dropout and gender parity, we conclude that there was a biased representation and that the quality of representation was average.

Because of their reliance on the Provincial government, the organizers had to stick to a pre-defined agenda. The agenda was thus thematically fixed, and only the electoral system could be the subject of debate, and the main constraint was that the proposed system could not conflict with the Canadian constitution or with the Westminster parliamentary system. Even though the participants could consider all alternative electoral formulas, the scope of the deliberations was thus very narrow. This thematic limitation negatively impacts the input legitimacy, and we qualify the agenda as being closed.

Because the BCCA lasted almost a year, the participants could dig deeply into the issue and eventually propose a thorough recommendation. This process was aided by the professional support of a full-time staff, as well as part-time facilitators and experts, whose role was to make sure that all perspectives were heard. No effort was spared to provide the participants with the necessary information, which means that the event is characterised by a high level of epistemic completeness.

In 2005, the BCCA's proposal was put to a referendum, which failed to meet the double threshold for approval: 60% of the province-wide vote and a majority in 60% of the districts. While the latter was reached easily (passing in 77 out of the 79 districts), the former fell 2.3% short gaining 57.7% of the vote (Cutler et al. 2008). A second referendum was organised in 2009 but the proposal gained even less support. Despite the negative impact, the government does have to be credited for following-up on its promise and leaving the final decision to the wider public. We therefore do reckon there was political uptake (Table 3).

The Belgian G1000

In 2010, in the midst of a deep democratic crisis, 27 Belgian citizens launched the G1000 Citizens' Summit, a grassroots organisation, which relied on hundreds of volunteers and a crowd-funded budget. This crowd-funding was considered crucial in order to keep the agenda open. After all, accepting funds from government in the heated context of nationalist deadlock would prioritise issues related to the state reform, whereas the G1000 wanted to open up the agenda to what citizens, rather than elites considered important. The agenda-setting process was thus very open: several thousands of Belgian citizens suggested issues through an online idea-box (Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2012), and the three most salient items were discussed at the G1000 in November 2011.

To ensure a high quality of representation, the organisers selected 90% of the 1000 targeted participants through Random Digit Dialing. The random selection process did, however, experience some self-selection bias and the response rate was only 3%. Moreover, the event

TABLE 4
Legitimacy of the G1000 Citizens' Summit

Dimension	Subdimension	Coding
Input	Quality of representation	Representative bias
	Epistemic completeness	Private information pooling
	Open agenda setting	Open agenda
Output	Political uptake	No uptake

experienced a 30% dropout, and the final number amounted to only 704 participants. Because the organisers were aware that some social groups (the homeless, ethnic minority groups . . .) were hard to reach through randomisation, they reserved 10% of the seats at the events for participants selected through minority organisations (G1000 2012). Nevertheless, there was a representative bias in the mini-public, even though an international team of participatory experts considered the diversity at the tables to be one of the most impressive features of the event and even though the ex-post checks showed that the final participant sample was socio-demographically representative of the entire population (G1000 2012: 102–103).

Contrary to standard practice in other mini-publics, the participants were not given any information booklets in advance, but they were able to listen to independent experts' presentations before the deliberations. However, as the international observers noticed, the experts had a more left-wing profile. The lack of information booklets and the biased experts means that the only way of sharing information and making decisions was through private information pooling during deliberation. In terms of epistemic completeness, we therefore code the G1000 as a process of mere 'private information pooling'.

Being a grassroots initiative inevitably meant that the organisers could not secure any commitment on behalf of the political elites. Rather, the final proposals met relative political scepticism. Apart from the presidents of the different Belgian Parliaments saying that 'it is important to listen to citizens', few politicians actually initiated any action on the short term to politically take up the ideas of the G1000. There was thus no uptake, leading to low output legitimacy (Table 4).

The Dutch Burgerforum

After the 2003 elections, the newly appointed Minister for Institutional Renewal decided to fund a citizens' assembly that would reflect on the Dutch electoral system for the Second Chamber (Van der Kolk and Thomassen 2006). He stipulated that the Burgerforum, as it came to be known, had to consist of 140 citizens, and that each adult citizen of the Netherlands should have an equal chance of being selected (Pechtold 2006). In practice, a random sample of 50,000 citizens was drawn from the official citizens' registry, 3000 among which attended an information session, and 1700 among which submitted their candidacy to participate (a 3.4% response rate). Of those candidates, 140 were finally selected, taking into account socio-demographic and territorial quota (Van der Kolk 2008a). In terms of the quality of representation, the Burgerforum was characterised by a biased participant pool that was self-selected (Broekmeulen 2006).

The initial phases of the forum consisted of information gathering and expert consultations, so full information was available to the mini-public and there was a high level of epistemic completeness (Van der Kolk 2008b). After those consultations, the participants drafted

TABLE 5
Legitimacy of the Dutch Burgerforum

Dimension	Subdimension	Coding
Input	Quality of representation	Respresentative bias
	Epistemic completeness	Access to experts
	Open agenda setting	Closed agenda
Output	Political uptake	Agenda setting

several proposals for electoral change. In the final weekends, votes were held in order to come up with the concluding report that would be presented to the government.

The openness of the agenda was low. The Dutch government determined the substantive scope of the Burgerforum and decided it had to present a final report on what system the citizens preferred for electing the Second Chamber. The initiative was thus strongly tailored to one issue, and it was obvious to the participants that only the electoral system, and not the wider functioning of democracy, was to be the issue (Fournier et al. 2011).

Unlike the British Columbia case, the policy suggestions in the final report were not submitted to a referendum, and no action was taken to implement the suggestions of the Burgerforum (Ten Heuvelhof and Van Twist 2007). From the start of the project, the academic team was critically aware that the results of their efforts depended largely on the goodwill of the politicians to change the rules of the electoral game (Broekmeulen 2006), but political will faded soon after the initiative was announced. Prime Minister Balkenende explicitly stated—before the Burgerforum even took place—that he would not change the electoral system, and that he wanted to keep the existing electoral rules (Wansink 2005; Wynia 2005). In the end, the substantive results were discussed in the Parliamentary Committee for Interior Affairs, and it did set the political agenda, but there was no full political uptake because there was strong opposition within government against a new electoral bill (Table 5).

The Irish WTC

In 2009, a working group was set up by the Political Studies Association of Ireland to test whether a more participatory form of democracy could work in Ireland. With the financial support of Atlantic Philanthropies, WTC, was organised. From the outset, it was decided that the agenda would be very open and set by the people of Ireland. To this end, seven meetings were organised around the country, with an open invitation to anyone willing to help set the agenda of the national Citizens' Assembly in 2011 (We the Citizens 2011: 16).

For the event itself, 195 participants were drawn from a national poll of 1242 people, with the hope that 150 of them could be recruited for participation. Eventually only 100 citizens attended the actual event. They represented a cross-section of Irish society in terms of age, gender, region, and socio-economic background, but there was a representative bias (We the Citizens 2011: 31).

Two main themes—political reform-related issues and taxation versus spending—were discussed (one per day). Each session started with an expert presentation, followed by a process of deliberation. All the while the experts were available to answer further questions, which means that the event scored highly in terms of epistemic completeness (Farrell et al. 2012: 18).

TABLE 6
Legitimacy of WTC

Dimension	Subdimension	Coding
Input	Quality of representation	Representative bias
	Epistemic completeness	Access to experts
	Open agenda setting	Open agenda
Output	Political uptake	No uptake

WTC had no legal remit, and its aim was to show that deliberative democracy could work in Ireland at a time of deep economic and democratic crisis (We the Citizens 2011). The main outcomes were therefore scientific in nature in that they showed that the Irish people were capable of changing opinion through deliberation. However, there was no direct political uptake of the substantive proposals of the event. None of the proposals trickled up to the formal decision-making arena. Even though the initiative laid the foundations for the Irish Constitutional Convention, made of made of 66 citizens and 33 parliamentarians, there was no political uptake of WTC (Table 6).

Embeddedness, Disruptiveness, and Legitimacy

Do embeddedness and disruptiveness affect a deliberative mini-public's legitimacy? Table 7 offers a systematic comparison of the cases, and immediately indicates that the four cases hardly differ on two of the legitimacy dimensions. First of all, every case's composition is biased in terms of the quality of its representativeness. There are self-selection biases and high dropout rates, even though each event aimed at a fully randomised sample as a guarantee of representativeness. Whether it is out of political disinterest, or because participation in a deliberative mini-public requires a large investment of time and effort, citizens seem reluctant to participate.

Secondly, in three out of four cases, the epistemic completeness was high thanks to the presence of experts and balanced information. The only peculiar case in terms of epistemic completeness is the G1000, in which no information booklets were made available and in

TABLE 7
Cross-case comparison of legitimacy

		Radical		Incremental	
		Embedded ***Inside challenger (BCCA)***	**Dissociated** ***Outside challenger (G1000)***	**Embedded** ***Inside follower (Burgerforum)***	**Dissociated** ***Outside follower (WTC)***
Input	*Quality of repres.*	Representative bias	Representative bias	Representative bias	Representative bias
	Epistemic completeness	Access to experts	Private information pooling	Access to experts	Access to experts
	Openness agenda	Closed agenda	Open agenda	Closed agenda	Open agenda
Output	*Political uptake*	Political uptake	No uptake	Agenda setting	No uptake

which the experts were somewhat ideologically biased. The tight timing and financial constraints of the event can be considered the main culprits (Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2012).

The only two dimensions of deliberative legitimacy where variation is obvious are the openness of the agenda and the political uptake. Looking at the variation reveals that our hypothesis on the effect of disruptiveness does not hold. We hypothesised that the input legitimacy would be high in the challenger cases, namely the BCCA and the G1000, but the BCCA scores badly in terms of openness of the agenda. Moreover, WTC, as a follower, scores highly on this dimension. The positive effect of disruptiveness on input legitimacy is therefore not corroborated by our study.

However, embeddedness does seem to be a sufficient condition for output legitimacy in the hypothesised direction. Because of its close connection to the political system, the BCCA received significant political weight in that its results were put to a referendum—twice. The analysis of the Burgerforum points in the same direction in that its results set the political and parliamentary agenda. However, despite its embeddedness, the Burgerforum did not succeed in guaranteeing a full political uptake. Democratic reform was considered important at the time when the assembly was set up because it defused the party political problems within the governing coalition, but as soon as the initiative started the enthusiasm within government faded. The Burgerforum started out highly embedded, but lost some of its embeddedness over time, which explains why there was no final political uptake. The output legitimacy of the Burgerforum thus suffered from a diminishing sense of urgency within government.

The two outsiders, however, experienced a much harder time getting through to the elites. Their lack of embeddedness undermined their substantive impact on politics. The G1000's autonomous operation explains its lack of political uptake, and the proposals of WTC have not received more than an informal nod from the political elites either.

A final conclusion is that embeddedness also seems to impact input legitimacy, which was not predicted by our hypotheses. After all, the open process of agenda-setting correlates negatively with embeddedness. The closer the mini-public is to the central political actors, the more closed the agenda is. This makes sense from a deliberative practice perspective because mini-publics funded by government will generally deal with issues decided by that government. The agenda-setting process and political uptake thus seem intimately related in terms of deliberative legitimacy.

Conclusion

This article aimed to determine whether embeddedness and disruptiveness affect legitimacy. The effects are, however, not as clear-cut as we hypothesised. Disruptiveness does not seem to affect legitimacy in the four cases we selected, but embeddedness does seem to be a sufficient condition for a high level of political uptake, and a closed agenda, even though the findings in terms of uptake would be stronger if the Dutch Burgerforum hadn't lost some of its embeddedness along the way.

But what are the implications of these findings for democracy and public action? And which lessons should potential innovators take from our findings? Firstly, each of the ideal types of innovators has its particular strengths and weaknesses. The *inside challenger* stands the best chances of creating positive democratic externalities. The BCCA is close enough to the power structures to gain political weight. However, it might be vulnerable to changing political climates, and its impact is highly contingent on a continued political will from the elites.

The *outside challenger* is more often than not a barking dog with no teeth. It has little political impact, in the short run at least, and often stand shouting in the desert. It promotes a different way of doing politics, but no one within the power structures is actually listening. However, these outside challengers can play an important role in the long run if they employ the right strategy (Christensen et al. 2006). Enduring innovations of this kind can change the democratic norms of appropriateness bottom-up and level out the playing field for other, future innovators.

The *inside follower* is a democratic wolf in sheep's clothes. It is often perceived as an alternative to politics as usual because it uses new ways of involving citizens and it gives the public the perception that it is listened to. In reality, however, the inside follower risks becoming a straw men set up by governments to deflect attention from the real democratic problems. Inside followers merely tinker at the edges and create the perception of legitimacy whereas nothing is actually changing to bridge the gap between power and the people.

And the *outside follower* is relatively powerless. Just like the outside challenger, it suffers from a lack of political uptake, and it rarely creates a democratic ripple effect. The outside follower is thus not powerful enough to break through the institutionalised deficit from which some representative systems suffer.

From a more theoretical point of view, our results also allow us to conclude that there are trade-offs between input and output legitimacy. Innovations that explicitly opt to be dissociated from the political system might score highly in terms of openness of the agenda, but their chances of actually generating political uptake are small. On the other hand, when deliberative mini-publics are institutionally embedded, their chances of political uptake increase, but taking money from government inevitably leads to a closed agenda. An important job for deliberative theorists is therefore to normatively assess these trade-offs and to decide which dimensions take preference.

Finally, we should look at the shortcomings of this study, and one of the limitations is that we focused exclusively on the immediate impact of these mini-publics on policy. However, if we take a longer term perspective and focus on the wider societal impact, the picture might change. For instance, the Belgian G1000 had very little direct political uptake, but many actors—among which some Belgian unions and employers organisations, and even some political parties—have taken over the methods of the G1000, and Belgium and the Netherlands are currently experiencing a proliferation of G1000 spin-offs. The same can be said about WTC: its direct substantive impact was limited, but it did lay the foundations for the more impactful Irish Constitutional Convention. An important lesson here is that embeddedness is not a necessary condition—albeit still a favourable condition—for success in the long run.

This study was merely an exploration of the empirical translation of deliberative legitimacy in four cases, and of two of its precondition. Our suggestion for future research is therefore to go deeper and wider: go deeper by developing more fine-grained conceptualisations of legitimacy and by looking at more of its determinants; go wider by looking at more cases. After all, there is a wide-open field with thousands of mini-publics, all with their own design features, for scholars to explore.

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