

## How deliberation makes better citizens: The Danish Deliberative Poll on the euro

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**Abstract.** This article presents results from a Danish national Deliberative Poll on the single European currency. A representative sample of 364 Danish citizens assembled to deliberate on Denmark's participation in the single currency. As a quasi-experiment, the Deliberative Poll is an example of deliberative democracy. Four research questions regarding these deliberative processes are analyzed: openness and access, the quality of deliberation, efficiency and effectiveness, and publicity and accountability. The participants' responses reflect a deliberative process characterized by considerable changes in political opinions as the Poll proceeds, increase in level of knowledge and an improved ability to form reasoned opinions. A mutual understanding on the subject matter prevailed among the participants. At the same time, self-interest and domination also appeared during the deliberative process. The article emphasizes the need for further elaboration of the theory of deliberative democracy so that it better reflects these features of 'real-life' politics.

### Introduction: The Deliberative Poll in Denmark

In 2000, the Danes had to decide whether to join the single European currency (the euro). In the 28 September referendum, 53 per cent of them voted against joining the single currency. The results of opinion polls up to the referendum showed a close race. One month prior to the referendum, a Deliberative Poll® on Denmark's participation in the single currency was held in the city of Odense. A representative sample of 364 Danish citizens participated. The aim of the Poll was to create a setting for studying what happens when people meet and discuss a complex issue. Of particular interest was the very fact that the participants would be divided on the issue beforehand. During the Deliberative Poll, their opinions were polled four times. The participants represented a panel study of representative citizens in what can be seen as a quasi-experiment on deliberation. By analyzing the deliberation, opinions and cognitive skills of the participants, this article seeks to contribute insights into the dynamics of deliberative processes.

The Deliberative Poll as a quasi-experiment is related to 'deliberative democracy'. In this context, the article focuses on four research questions with

respect to deliberative processes: openness and access to the deliberative process, the quality of deliberation, efficiency and effectiveness, and publicity and accountability. The Deliberative Poll is just one of several methods that have been developed over the past decades for involving citizens and making their voices known to the political elite.<sup>1</sup> As opposed to more formalized channels of representative democracy, these methods of citizen involvement are ad hoc, non-institutionalized, deal with a limited agenda of issues, independent of the electoral process and organized primarily by someone other than the citizens themselves.

A Deliberative Poll is based on a simple idea: bring together a representative group of people, let them deliberate with each other and with politicians and experts, and poll their opinions before, during and after the process (t0-t1-t2). The national Danish Deliberative Poll was based on James S. Fishkin's model (1988, 1991, 1997). Prior to the Danish Poll, six Deliberative Polls on a national level have been conducted: one in the United States, three in Great Britain, one in Bulgaria and one in Australia. The Danish Deliberative Poll process was launched with interviews with a representative sample of citizens, selected by simple random sampling (t0). At the same time, the respondents were invited to participate in a weekend gathering with all expenses paid. At this event, they were given the opportunity to discuss issues related to the European Union (EU) and the single currency with other participants, politicians and experts. Prior to the weekend meeting, participants received a background paper presenting arguments for and against Denmark's enrolment in the single currency. During the deliberative weekend, the participants met in small groups and in plenary sessions with the leaders of the Danish political parties and leading experts on the EU and the single currency.<sup>2</sup> The small groups were randomly composed, consisted of 18–20 citizens, and each group was assigned a trained moderator. At the plenary sessions, the participants had the opportunity to pose questions to politicians and experts about the single currency process. The participants' opinions were polled through self-administered questionnaires at the beginning (t1) and at the end of the weekend (t2), and by telephone three months after the Deliberative Poll (t3). The questions asked in t1, t2 and t3 were to a large extent similar to the questions asked in t0.

The Danish Deliberative Poll was methodologically innovative (see Hansen 2004; Hansen & Andersen 2004). First, by polling the participants' opinions four times, it was possible to differentiate between the effect of the materials given to them prior to the weekend (the difference between t0 and t1), the effect of the deliberative weekend (the difference between t1 and t2), and the long-term effects of participation in the Deliberative Poll (by comparing t3 to t0-t2; see also Table 1). A representative control sample of citizens surveyed at the same time as the 364 participants were gathered at the Delib-

*Table 1.* Recruitment of participants for the Deliberative Poll on the euro in 2000

Phase	Activity	Date	Number of participants
t0	Recruitment interview (telephone interview)	1–8 August	1,702
	Acceptance of participation in the Deliberative Poll	8 August	732
	– Yes, definite participation		206
	– Possibly participation		526
	Information folder on the event sent to participants	8–11 August	732
	Second invitation by telephone to the Deliberative Poll	16 August	699
	– Yes, definite participation		375
	– Possibly participation		81
	– No participation		243
	– Respondents who could not be reached		33
	Programme and information sent to participants	14–18 August	489
	Contacted by phone to confirm participation	17–22 August	489
	Number of enrolled participants	22 August	396
	Tickets sent to participants	21–25 August	
	Number of enrolled participants	25 August	386
t1/t2	Number of effective participants in the Deliberative Poll	26–27 August	364
t3	Number participants re-interviewed (telephone interview)	27 November–16 December	355

Note: Television spots on the event were shown daily on national Danish television in the week prior to the event. The recruitment interviews (t0) were conducted by PLS Rambøll Management by telephone. The response rate was 60 per cent, with seven call-backs. The sampling was conducted through simple random sampling on telephone numbers. The t1 and t2 surveys were conducted through self-administered questionnaires. The t3 survey was conducted by trained students at the Department of Political Science, University of Southern Denmark, and supervised by the authors of this article. At a later stage, the surveys will be available at the Danish Data Archives.

erative Poll (24 August–3 September,  $N = 1,005$ ) allows us to assess the effect of deliberation during the weekend and the effect of other factors such as the public debate more generally (the difference between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ ,  $t_0$  and  $t_1$  compared to the development in the control group between  $t_0$  and  $t_2$ ). Second, the set-up of the Danish Deliberative Poll makes it possible to assess the deliberative process through a thorough evaluation of the participants' deliberation in the small groups. A method for evaluating the deliberative process was developed in order to assess not just changes in opinions and development of participants' knowledge due to the Deliberative Poll, but also the deliberative process itself. Our approach thus differs from that of Fishkin (1997), who often limited his analysis to the increase of knowledge and changes in opinions among the participants. In order to assess the Deliberative Poll, the following section will deal with four key problems raised by the theory of deliberative democracy (see also the four research questions outlined in Papadopoulos & Warin's introduction to this special issue).

### **An assessment of deliberative democracy**

Democratic systems are usually based upon a number of different channels such as political parties and organizations through which citizens can express their views. Today, one of the main challenges to the institutionalized version of representative democracy is the presumed increasing democratic deficit between the elite and the lay public. As an extra-parliamentary institution, a Deliberative Poll allows for a range of different experiences to be brought into the political process. It facilitates reflection and exchange of viewpoints to be important aspects of the political process (Hansen & Pedersen 2001). In the normative debate, deliberative democrats such as Bohman (1996), Gutmann & Thompson (1996) have often argued for the need to create alternative arenas for public deliberation. The Deliberative Poll is intended to enhance a particular dimension of democracy – the deliberative dimension. On the other hand, it is also a setting for studying processes of deliberation and opinion formation; in this sense the Deliberative Poll is a quasi-experiment.

Danish society is particularly divided on issues concerning the EU – a division that stems from the 1972 referendum on Denmark's accession to the EU (Buch & Hansen 2002). Division on the European issue is found within the public, within the elite, and between the public and the elite. How does a democracy cope with such a lasting division of opinions? By limiting the scope of conflict, resolving the conflict by seeking consensus, pursuing some sort of compromise, enforcing majority rule, proposing different alternatives or simply adopting non-solutions? Within the normative deliberative democratic frame, the aim is to find ways to live with such a division of opinion in a

constructive way rather than to simply eliminate or overlook the plurality of opinions (Gutmann & Thompson 1996: 54–55). Many deliberative democrats argue that deliberation should be seen as part of the democratic process in a broad context. According to their argument, deliberation not only takes place among the elected elite, as some representative democratic positions suggest (e.g., Schumpeter 1975); rather, deliberation is seen as an ongoing process among elites and among the public, and between the two groups.

The following sections assess the Deliberative Poll in Denmark through the lenses of the four research questions outlined in Papadopoulos & Warin's introduction to this special issue. The first pair of research questions focuses on the impact of deliberation on the participants. The second pair of questions focuses on the effect of deliberation on the public at large.

### *Openness and access*

The criteria of openness and access are related to who is able to participate in the Deliberative Poll. To secure inclusiveness, recruitment to the Deliberative Poll was through simple random sampling. In this way, the recruitment process is similar to a national lottery in which every citizen has an equal chance to be selected. The aim is, first of all, to treat all citizens equally. The recruitment process aims to ensure representativeness between the participants and the citizens at large. It relates to Robert A. Dahl's (1989) principle of 'inclusiveness' as all citizens should be given an equal chance to participate (Hansen 2004). Nevertheless, this form of representativeness is not equivalent to a situation where citizens have a right to participate, as would be the case in a referendum or general election. Thus, it can be argued that any recruitment process that fails to grant all citizens the full right to participate compromises the normative criteria that all citizens should be able to participate in the democratic process. The recruitment process of the Deliberative Poll on the euro is summarized in Table 1.

The aim of a Deliberative Poll is not to allow the participants to act on behalf of the *demos*. Accordingly, the outcome of the Deliberative Poll on the euro was not a binding decision. The Deliberative Poll can be considered part of the ongoing public debate prior to the referendum on the euro, in which all Danish citizens had the opportunity to express their preferences via the ballot box. The aim of the Deliberative Poll was to bring different social experiences into the political process by mirroring the *demos* in terms of sociodemographic characteristics and opinions (Aars & Offerdal 2000: 77). In this sense, the participants mirror the *demos* at large prior to the deliberative process. When the participants engage in deliberation, their opinions start to mirror the specific process of deliberation and information set up in the

quasi-experimental context; consequently, the deliberative process among the participants will differ from the deliberative process among the population at large. Initially, at the Danish Deliberative Poll (t0), the participants did to a large extent mirror the Danish population (see Table 2).

Table 2. Characteristics of the participants at time of recruitment (percentage)

Characteristic		Participants in the Deliberative Poll	Participants in the Recruitment Survey
Gender*,**	Male	58	49
	Female	42	51
Age*	18–30 years	17	23
	31–40 years	23	20
	41–60 years	41	34
	61+ years	19	23
Education*	Lower secondary	12	18
	Upper secondary	52	52
	University degree	36	30
Sector of work	Self-employed	5	4
	Private employee	57	58
	Public employee	38	38
Place of residence	Rural area	5	5
	<2,000 inhabitants	10	10
	2,001–10,000 inhabitants	18	21
	10,001+ inhabitants	67	64
Member of a political party or group	Yes	10	9
	No	90	91
Expected vote at the referendum*	Yes	45	39
	No	37	37
	Undecided	18	24

Note: A total of 364 citizens participated in the Deliberative Poll. The recruitment survey was representative of the Danish electorate. The data from the recruitment survey (N = 1,702) is weighted according to census data – age, gender and place of residence. \* The difference between the groups is significant at  $p < 0.05$  using a Chi<sup>2</sup> test for independence (two-tailed test). \*\* The mean between the groups is significantly different at  $p < 0.05$  using a test comparing the mean (two-tailed test). Comparison of means between age groups showed no significant differences.

Of relevance to the issue of openness and access to the deliberative process is not just the representativeness of the participants, but also whether the involvement of citizens who are not usually active in politics will increase their participation in other political arenas (Mansbridge 1999). As Table 3 shows, however, the participants' willingness to engage in more institutionalized forms of democracy, exemplified by their wish to run for office, is only moderately affected by the deliberative process, with a small peak at the beginning of the Deliberative Poll (t1).

Participating in an innovative experiment such as the Deliberative Poll does not foster participation in traditional representative channels. On the other hand, we find a strong interest in participating in events like the Deliberative Poll. Non-institutionalized, ad hoc and less intense forms of democratic engagement seem to be preferred over the willingness to run for office. By the end of the event, only 2 per cent of the participants did not wish to participate in future Deliberative Polls, and only 1 per cent stated that they would not recommend participation to family or friends. The results suggest that extra-parliamentary arenas such as the Deliberative Polls are not just another mechanism for communicating informed opinions to the political elite, but also a mechanism for involving citizens who would otherwise not be willing to engage in well-established institutions of representative democracy.

### *The quality of deliberation*

The public's focus on the Deliberative Poll was set at how the participants would vote on the question of Denmark joining the single currency. Some 45 per cent of the participants indicated that they would vote 'Yes', 37 per cent 'No' and 18 per cent did not take a stand before participating in the Deliberative Poll (t0) (see Table 2). At the end of the Deliberative Poll, 50 per cent indicated they would vote 'Yes', 39 per cent 'No' and only 11 per cent remained undecided.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence, more people took a stand after having participated in the Deliberative Poll. However, it is not only the outcome of the Deliberative Poll that is of interest here. Equally important is the process by which the outcome was reached – that is, the quality of deliberation.

In order to evaluate the quality of deliberation, four factors affecting the process of opinion formation will be discussed. The four factors are: formation of reasoned opinions; minimizing the use of arguments referring to narrow self-interests; increasing mutual understanding among participants; and educating citizens. Deliberation involves an exchange of opinions. Different social experiences are brought together and shared among the participants in the Deliberative Poll. By exchanging opinions and presenting arguments, participants become aware of the consequences of a decision. Through this process,

Table 3. Willingness to run for office (percentages)

	Yes	Would consider it	No	Undecided	Mean	N
t0 – Recruitment interview	11	33	56	0	27	364
t1 – Start of Deliberative Poll	12	40	44	4	34**	362
t2 – End of the Deliberative Poll	12	36	50	2	31**	357
t3 – Three months after the Deliberative Poll	12	33	55	0	29*	355

Note: The participants' showed greater willingness to run for office than the Danish population at large. The mean is calculated on a scale where 'Yes' = 100, 'Would consider it' and 'Undecided' = 50 and 'No' = 0. \* The difference from the previous round of questions is significant at  $p < 0.1$ . \*\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed test).

they have the opportunity to form coherent, stable and consistent preferences. However, in the process of exchanging viewpoints, the participants' opinions may also change. During the Deliberative Poll, between 7 and 28 per cent of the participants altered their views from 'agree' to 'disagree' or vice versa, with the percentages varying on a number of issues related to the single currency (see Table 4).

Changes in opinion were found prior to the deliberative weekend (t0-t1) as well as after the weekend (t2-t3). In this respect, the Deliberative Poll did not create stable opinions in the sense of being unchangeable after the deliberative process. This suggests that political opinions are never stable; rather, there is an ongoing process that continuously develops as people engage with each other. On two of the three questions presented in Table 4, the level of opinion changes is significantly smallest during the Deliberative Poll (t1-t2) and relatively larger in the intervals up to (t0-t1) and after the poll (t2-t3). All phases of the Deliberative Polling process show a strong significant effect on the participants' opinions (see also Luskin et al. 2002; Sturgis et al. 2005). Nevertheless, the time prior to the event (during which the participants received the balanced information material, followed the debate in the media and engaged in discussions with friends more intensively than usual anticipating their participation in the Deliberative Poll), as well as the time after the event, when the result of the referendum was known, had a larger effect on participants' opinions than the two days of intense deliberation (Andersen & Hansen 2002; Hansen 2004). This highlights the importance of a method relying on several waves of questioning throughout the process in order to understand the logic of opinion changes in a Deliberative Poll.

A change of opinion can never in itself be a qualitative criterion of deliberation. The processes through which these changes come about have to be carefully examined as the changes of opinion can also be a sign of manipulation or group conformity. Some 69 per cent of the participants agreed that the arguments of others were useful in forming their own opinion (see Table 5).

Even though up to 28 per cent of the participants changed their opinion, they did not change it in one and the same direction or reach a consensus on the issue. Two dimensions of consensus are outlined in Table 5: consensus on substance and consensus on procedure. A vast majority of the participants (82 per cent) stated that consensus on procedure was obtained in the group sessions, while consensus on the issue was not obtained. This suggests that the changes in opinion were not due to manipulation or group conformity. Deliberation can be defined as a free process in which participants engage in reasoning that forms and potentially alters their preferences (Andersen & Hansen 2002: 80; Hansen & Andersen 2004). In this respect, the quality of deliberation refers to substance as well as procedure. Some 45 per cent of the

Table 4. Gross change on attitude items (percentage of participants who changed their views)

	Changed category						Changed side			
	t0-t1	t1-t2	t2-t3	t0-t2	At some point	t0-t1	t1-t2	t2-t3	t0-t2	At some point
'If Denmark joins the single currency, it cannot withdraw at a later point in time.'	67	62	63	74	88	23	19	22	28	45
'The cooperation within the single currency is undemocratic.'	61	46**	54**	61	80	19	10**	15**	16	32
'Danish participation in the single currency is beneficial to the Danish economy.'	64	47**	60**	68	84	7	3**	6*	7	12

Note: All questions had a 5-point scale and a 'don't know' option. 'Changed category' is defined as a change between the six points of the scale. 'Changed side' is defined as a change from agrees to disagrees or vice versa. Only respondents who answered the question in both relevant rounds of questioning are included. *n* varies from 327 to 364. 'At some point' refers to participants changing at least once between the four polls. All changes in the table are strongly significant compared to no change. \*\* The number of participants changing opinion is significant compared to the previous phase at  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed-test). \* Significant at  $p < 0.1$ .

Table 5. Consensus, discussion and argumentation in the group sessions (percentages), (12)

Consensus	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	N
'From the beginning there was consensus in the group.'	25	21	54	346
'Towards the end there was consensus in the group.'	27	21	52	344
'There was consensus in the group on the way to deliberate.'	82	10	8	351
'It was difficult to agree on the questions to be asked in the plenary sessions.'	28	12	60	353
<b>Discussions</b>				
'A few of the participants dominated the discussions.'	45	17	38	353
'There arose alliances between some of the participants.'	31	24	45	353
'The discussions were superficial.'	10	10	80	354
'There was too little time to discuss.'	68	11	21	352
'All aspects of the euro-debate were covered in the group discussions.'	64	17	19	355
<b>Argumentation</b>				
'The participants in the group argued by referring to what would be best for themselves.'	25	26	49	354
'The participants in the group argued their case by referring to justice and general principles.'	57	25	18	355
'The discussions were characterized by responsiveness towards each others' arguments.'	88	9	3	353
'An understanding of those arguments opposing my own was created.'	84	11	5	352
'The participants in the group argued by warning against negative consequences of a "Yes" or "No" to the single currency.'	54	18	28	352
'The participants in the group argued by referring to what would be best and most fair for all citizens.'	70	18	12	354
'All positions in the group were considered with equal respect.'	85	9	6	354
'The arguments of the other participants were useful in forming my own position.'	69	17	14	356

Note: Twenty groups, each with 18–20 members, deliberated during the weekend in Odense in four group sessions of 2–3 hours' duration and four plenary sessions of one hour. The category 'agree' combines responses of those who stated either 'strongly' and 'somewhat agreeing', 'disagree' combines responses of those who 'strongly' or 'somewhat disagree', 'neutral' combines both 'neither agree or disagree' and 'don't know'.

participants indicated that a few of them dominated the discussions, thus questioning the quality of *free* procedure of the deliberation, while at the same time pointing to the fact that such features of politics are also part of a deliberative setting such as the Deliberative Poll. However, the overwhelming agreement on how to deliberate indicates a high degree of quality of procedure. A majority of the participants stated that all aspects of the euro debate were covered. Although combined with a low degree of consensus on substance, this broad coverage of aspects of the euro debate indicates a high degree of quality of substance in the deliberative process.

The second of the four factors adding to the quality of a deliberative process is related to the assumption that participants will be more reluctant to refer to arguments based on narrow self-interest. The use of self-interest was not eliminated from the Deliberative Poll on the euro. However, arguments referring to self-interest were not dominant in the process; rather, the participants appealed to more general principles in their argumentation assessing the consequences for all Danish citizens and not just the consequences for their own situation. One might object that in order to promote one's own interest, the individual participant would refer to arguments based on the common good in a strategic way. On the other hand, the setting of the Deliberative Poll enhances the possibility to reveal and prevent the strategic use of argumentation. This aspect can in itself be seen as an improvement in the quality of deliberation. However, one should not overlook the restrictions put on the Deliberative Poll, such as scarce time resources, dominant participants and so on. In this way, the ideal deliberative process resembles the real world deliberation. As in any other political setting, the Deliberative Poll is also confronted by certain obstacles to achieving an 'ideal deliberation'.

By evaluating the argumentation made by the participants in the small groups during the weekend, a picture of mutual understanding emerges – this is the third factor affecting the quality of deliberation. To a large extent, the participants were sympathetic towards the arguments of other participants and an understanding of the arguments of others took place even though these arguments differed from the participants' own viewpoints.<sup>4</sup> Participants did not agree on issues relating to the single currency either before (t1) or after (t2) the deliberative weekend. However, the vast majority of the participants claimed that there was agreement on how to deliberate in the small groups. Participants had only to agree on what questions they wished to ask the politicians and experts at the plenary sessions. One-third of the participants found it difficult to agree on the questions. The only requirement participants in a deliberative process have to fulfill – agreeing to disagree – seems to have been fulfilled at the Deliberative Poll on the euro.

When citizens engage in mutual exchange or deliberation, openness towards the arguments of others is considered an important factor. In this statement of openness, political tolerance based on mutual acceptance of differing arguments is embodied. Two statements were presented to the participants in order to assess whether the process of the Deliberative Poll on the euro would increase the level of political tolerance (Table 6). Fewer participants agreed that lack of knowledge is the reason why other citizens had political viewpoints that differed from their own by the end of the Deliberative Poll (t2). This change indicates that the participants had become more tolerant in the course of the process. This development is supported by the fact that the control groups were less tolerant according to the first statement on tolerance than the participants by the end of the Deliberative Poll. According to the second statement, the participants became less tolerant of others' viewpoints during the deliberative process. It was more common for participants in the recruitment stage (t0) to strongly agree that other citizens had good arguments for supporting political viewpoints that differed from their own than at the end of the Deliberative Poll (t2). The trends in participants' opinions can be attributed to the effect of the process of the Deliberative Poll as the control groups showed no development in their political views.

One explanation of this ambiguous development in tolerance is that by the end of the deliberative weekend, the participants may have become more confident about their own line of argumentation. Participants gained increased knowledge and experience in deliberating on a complex issue such as the euro, thus reflecting a stronger belief in their own argumentation rather than a lack of tolerance for others' arguments. When polled about their level of political tolerance three months after the deliberative weekend, participants changed back towards their initial position. Combining the items on tolerance with the items of Table 5, in which the vast majority of the participants claim that responsiveness towards and understanding of opposing arguments prevailed, it seems reasonable to conclude that a mutual understanding was obtained as a result of the Deliberative Poll.

Increasing mutual understanding among the participants at the Deliberative Poll is part of an educative effect, and this educational aspect is the fourth and final factor that can enhance the quality of deliberation. By engaging in the deliberative process, the participants become more knowledgeable not only about the deliberative process, but also in relation to the single currency. In itself, this increase in knowledge adds to the quality of deliberation. Measuring the level of knowledge among the participants assesses the educational effect. An increase in the level of knowledge on the single currency among the participants is identified in Table 7.

Table 6. Political tolerance (percentages)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Undecided	Mean
'Lack of knowledge is the reason why other citizens have political viewpoints that differ from your own.'							
t0 – Recruitment interview	28	18	4	9	34	7	49
t1 – At the beginning of the Deliberative Poll	10	18	18	11	35	8	40**
t2 – At the end of the Deliberative Poll	9	16	16	14	38	7	36**
t3 – Three months after the Deliberative Poll	17	16	5	14	42	6	38
t0 – Control group at recruitment	30	16	5	7	34	8	51
t2 – Control group during the DP	30	16	5	8	35	6	50
'Other citizens have good arguments for supporting political viewpoints that differ from yours.'							
t0 – Recruitment interview	67	17	4	3	5	4	85
t1 – At the beginning of the Deliberative Poll	45	26	14	4	5	6	75**
t2 – At the end of the Deliberative Poll	47	30	9	5	4	5	78
t3 – Three months after the Deliberative Poll	64	23	2	4	3	4	86**
t0 – Control group at recruitment	66	17	3	2	5	7	85
t2 – Control group during the DP	68	17	4	3	4	4	85

Note:  $n = 353$ – $364$ .  $n$  for the control groups are 1,664 and 982. The mean is calculated on a scale where strongly agree = 100, somewhat agree = 75, neither agree, nor disagree and undecided = 50, somewhat disagree = 25 and strongly disagree = 0. \* The difference from the previous round of questions is significant at  $p < 0.1$ . \*\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed test).

Table 7. Level of knowledge: percentage of respondents giving correct answers to various statements and questions about the single currency (correct answers in parentheses)

	t0 Recruitment	t1 Beginning of DP	t2 End of DP	t3 Three months after DP	Control group at recruitment (t0)	Control group during DP (t2)
'As a member of the monetary union, Denmark could be fined if the national fiscal deficit is too large.' ('Yes')	41	71**	80**	82	34	36
'Denmark can decide its own interest rates if we join the monetary union.' ('No')	73	78	82**	83	72	74
'Denmark can decide its own rates of taxation if we join the single currency.' ('Yes')	64	66	83**	75**	59	65
'If we vote "Yes" at the referendum on 28 September, the single currency will enter into circulation starting in 2001, 2004, 2005 or 2007.' ('2004')	51	83**	89**	88	48	53
'If Denmark joins the single currency, the Danish National Bank will be closed down, continue to operate as now, or become part of the European Central Bank.' ('become part of ECB')	59	55	66**	68	56	54
'Will the euro coins have a national side?' ('Yes')	53	91**	94**	92	49	76**
'Is Denmark already involved in a monetary union where the member states help each other in situations of an unstable foreign exchange market?' ('Yes')	83	78*	87**	88	73	75

Note: *n* varies from 354–364. The control group at recruitment varies between 1,669–1,672. The control group during the Deliberative Poll has an *n* = 984. The control groups are weighted according to the Danish electorate. Correct answers in parenthesis. \* The difference from the previous round of questions is significant at  $p < 0.1$ . \*\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed test). The two control groups are two independent samples of the Danish population.

The increase in knowledge is due both to the information materials the participants received prior to the deliberative weekend and to the deliberative weekend itself. Several participants also indicated an increased awareness of the public debate prior to the deliberative weekend due to the fact that they were invited to the Deliberative Poll. In this way, they became more aware of the topic (Andersen & Hansen 2002; Hansen 2004). The level of knowledge remained high after the Deliberative Poll (t3). In this sense, the Deliberative Poll indeed had an educative effect on the participants. An analysis of the control groups suggests a smaller increase in the level of knowledge. Such a small increase can probably be ascribed to the simultaneously ongoing referendum campaign.

The overall conclusion is that the quality of the deliberative process during the Deliberative Poll on the euro was relatively high. The deliberation was structured in a way that allowed for the development of reasoned preferences, an increase in mutual understanding among the participants and an increase in their knowledge about the single currency. However, the use of arguments based on narrow self-interest, the presence of some dominating participants and limited time resources were also part of the deliberative process. Rather than suppressing the existence of self-interest and dominant participants, the deliberative process should be designed such that these features become public and visible. Only by bringing these elements of politics into the open can they be adequately considered.

### *Efficiency and effectiveness*

As a Deliberative Poll is merely consultative, its efficiency and effectiveness differ from other political processes aimed at making actual decisions. A Deliberative Poll should be assessed through the lens of participants' capabilities. The capabilities of the participants consist of knowledge, empathy and their sense of efficiency in relation to their own political qualifications and influence on political institutions. The effectiveness and outcome of a deliberative process depends on the possibility of creating an increased understanding for collective decisions. As shown in Table 5, 84 per cent of the participants at the Deliberative Poll on the euro agreed that they had achieved an understanding of those arguments opposed to their own. In addition, the increase in the level of knowledge can also be seen as an indicator of the possibility of creating an increased understanding for collective decisions. The assumption is that an understanding of the opposing arguments combined with a high level of knowledge will increase the understanding of a collective decision – even though consensus on the decision is not achieved. The effectiveness of a

Deliberative Poll can thus also be linked to participants' subjective feelings of political efficiency (see Table 8).

In general, the participants were self-confident about their own political potential, but were less optimistic about their influence on government and much less about the EU. The participants became more self-confident in relation to debating the euro through the deliberative process. They felt more qualified with regard to the specific topic of the Deliberative Poll (the euro), but became somewhat less confident that their own viewpoints were worth considering. Nevertheless, self-confidence was very high among the participants throughout the deliberative process. With regard to influence, a minor significant increase in relation to government and parliament was reported, but no change regarding their feeling of whether they could influence decisions made by the EU. The Deliberative Poll can be considered an arena of political participation, but the participants did not consider it part of the institutions associated with representative democracy. Hence, they did not have a sense that their participation would make a difference in relation to decision making in these institutions.<sup>5</sup> This was so even though the participants could be said to have had an influence on EU decisions through the Danish referendum. Even when the result of the Danish referendum (a 'No' to the euro) was known in t3, the participants indicated that they had little influence on EU decisions.

### *Publicity and accountability*

A common criticism of institutional arrangements such as the Deliberative Poll is that though the opportunity to participate in a Deliberative Poll is the same for all citizens, only relatively few citizens actually participate in the events (Smith 2000: 32). Two questions can be raised in this respect. One is how to ensure publicity about the deliberative process; the other is the question of holding the participants of a Deliberative Poll accountable. Public awareness and discussions of an event like the Deliberative Poll among the wider population are important elements in establishing democratic legitimacy due to the limited number of citizens participating. For this reason, a Deliberative Poll must be part of ongoing public deliberations and opinion formation (Smith 2000: 33).

Publicity and transparency were important elements in the Deliberative Poll on the euro. Transparency was accomplished in several ways. The information material on the euro was distributed to all political parties and movements for comment in order to provide balanced information to the participants. The information material was then made public on a website and sent to all Danish public libraries. Furthermore, during the Deliberative Poll, all panels were balanced, representing 'yes' and 'no' arguments in equal

Table 8. Efficiency in politics (percentages)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Undecided	Mean
'Citizens like yourself are qualified to participate in a debate on the euro.'							
t0 – Recruitment interview	56	13	4	11	12	4	73
t1 – At the beginning of the Deliberative Poll	56	25	7	5	2	5	82**
t2 – At the end of the Deliberative Poll	66	23	4	3	2	2	87**
t3 – Three months after the Deliberative Poll	73	16	1	3	5	2	87
t0 – Control group at recruitment	50	16	3	10	15	6	69
t2 – Control group during the DP	54	14	4	9	14	5	71
'Citizens like you have political viewpoints that are worth taking into consideration.'							
t0 – Recruitment interview	79	13	1	3	3	1	90
t1 – At the beginning of the Deliberative Poll	61	24	9	2	1	3	86**
t2 – At the end of the Deliberative Poll	63	27	5	2	1	2	87*
t3 – Three months after the Deliberative Poll	77	17	1	1	1	3	92**
t0 – Control group at recruitment	75	12	1	3	5	4	87
t2 – Control group during the DP	76	13	2	2	4	3	88

'Citizens like you have no say on decisions made by the government and parliament.'									
t0 – Recruitment interview	23	15	3	16	40	3	42		
t1 – At the beginning of the Deliberative Poll	15	25	10	23	26	1	45*		
t2 – At the end of the Deliberative Poll	13	21	8	26	30	2	41**		
t3 – Three months after the Deliberative Poll	13	18	1	32	34	2	36**		
t0 – Control group at recruitment	26	16	3	16	36	3	45		
t2 – Control group during the DP	23	15	4	17	40	1	41**		
'Citizens like you have no say on decisions made by the EU.'									
t0 – Recruitment interview	41	15	5	14	22	3	60		
t1 – At the beginning of the Deliberative Poll	32	26	8	19	13	2	61		
t2 – At the end of the Deliberative Poll	32	24	8	18	15	3	60		
t3 – Three months after the Deliberative Poll	34	23	2	23	16	2	59		
t0 – Control group at recruitment	45	15	3	14	19	4	64		
t2 – Control group during the DP	44	15	4	15	20	2	62		

Note:  $n = 354-364$ . Mean is calculated on a scale where 'strongly agree' = 100, 'somewhat agree' = 75, 'neither agree nor disagree' and 'don't know' = 50, 'somewhat disagree' = 25 and 'strongly disagree' = 0. \* The difference from the previous round of questions is significant at  $p < 0.1$ . \*\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed test). The two control groups are two independent samples of the population. The control group at recruitment has an  $n$  of 1,666-1,675. The variation in  $n$  is due to missing data. The control group during the DP has an  $n$  of 982. Both control groups are weighted according to the Danish electorate.

proportion. Radio, national television and major national newspapers covered the Deliberative Poll. National television broadcast more than four hours of the weekend. Of a total population of 5 million, 443,000 Danes watched at least 15 minutes of the Deliberative Poll. The national radio broadcast more than four hours during the weeks before and during the deliberative weekend. A total of 91 articles were printed in 41 different newspapers and magazines. This minimized the risk of arguments being suppressed; threats of manipulation were subject to an open evaluation and elements of the deliberative process were communicated to the rest of the population.

To ensure legitimacy of deliberation, the question of accountability is important. First, the participants' relations to the politicians and to their fellow citizens are of concern. The majority of the participants at the Deliberative Poll did not believe that the results of a Deliberative Poll should be binding for political decisions – even when its results oppose the majority among the politicians (see Table 9). The results of the Deliberative Poll, moreover, should be only one among many different sources of information available to the politicians. In this way, the participants were in accordance with the view that decisions made at a Deliberative Poll cannot be binding for non-participants. Hence, the participants need not be held responsible to the public at large. Still, the participants in the Deliberative Poll had a sense of accountability that goes far beyond the actual arena of the Deliberative Poll; three-quarters of the participants agreed that they could speak for citizens who did not get the opportunity to participate. This viewpoint relates to a moral concept of accountability or self-imposed accountability.

Accountability within a deliberative process is also related to whether the participants can be considered accountable in relation to the argumentation they put forward. This form of deliberative accountability is based on what participants consider to be mutually acceptable by others, meaning that one must be responsive to others and their arguments. Every participant is accountable to objections raised by others and answerable to demands to recognize their concerns (Bohman 1999: 185). In this way, the participants are forced to think of what would count as good reasons for all others involved (Benhabib 1996: 71–72) – that is, to appeal to reasons that can be shared by fellow citizens in the specific context of deliberation. Table 5 shows that the participants reveal a high degree of deliberative accountability during the deliberation. Nevertheless, the Deliberative Poll lacks the kind of formal accountability essential to any representative democracy. Representative democracy holds elected officials accountable for their decisions through formal electoral procedures. The lack of formal accountability (Pitkin 1967) is the reason why a Deliberative Poll ought not to be binding for non-participating citizens. Accordingly, a representative sample of citizens taking part in the Deliberative Poll cannot be a substitute for

Table 9. The Deliberative Poll in the future (percentages), t2

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Undecided	Mean
'The results from the Deliberative Poll ought to be binding for political decisions, also when it is against a majority among the politicians.'	9	12	15	12	47	5	31
'The results from the Deliberative Poll should be only one source of information among many available to the politicians.'	57	24	7	3	6	3	80
'Deliberative Polls should not to be used.'	1	2	5	8	82	2	8
'As a participant in the Deliberative Poll, you also speak for citizens who did not get the opportunity to participate.'	43	34	7	4	8	4	75
'As a participant in the Deliberative Poll you only speak for yourself.'	16	13	10	19	41	1	35

Note:  $n = 348-352$ . The mean is calculated on a scale where 'strongly agree' = 100, 'somewhat agree' = 75, 'neither agree nor disagree' and 'undecided' = 50, 'somewhat disagree' = 25 and 'strongly disagree' = 0.

an electorate. On the other hand, selection by lot has historically been used as a selection mechanism due to its neutrality. Being difficult to corrupt by strong actors, random selection emphasizes political equality, which is why juries are often selected by lot. In cases where the primary goal is not to ensure formal accountability, but rather to have a fair selection process and minimize the risk of individuals seeking selection for their personal benefit, selection by lot may be a better choice (Hansen 2004).

## Conclusion

The Deliberative Poll on the euro proved that it was possible to engage a representative sample of the Danish population in deliberating on a highly complex issue. Through the representative sample, a range of different experiences was brought into the deliberative process. In this respect, there is no reason to assert (contrary to Bell 1999: 86) that citizens are not capable or willing to engage in deliberation on complicated matters such as the euro. The success of the Deliberative Poll, combined with the strong support for the event as voiced by the participants, suggests that democracy may benefit from extra-parliamentary deliberation being applied more widely. Deliberative Polls help increase participating citizens' experience in knowledge and mutual understanding.

From a research perspective, organizing and analyzing Deliberative Polls can help increase knowledge about how extra-parliamentary arenas function. The potential of deliberation relating to the formation of opinion was to a large extent supported in the quasi-experimental design of the Deliberative Poll. Deliberation and information increased the participants' ability to form opinions, and many participants changed their views after engaging in the deliberative processes. The participants were capable of forming a reasoned opinion on a complex issue such as the single currency. Their knowledge about the issue, as well as their capabilities to engage in political debates, increased. In this sense, deliberation created 'better' citizens based on a normative judgment of active, informed and participating citizens. The citizens were self-confident with regard to debating the issues, but had doubts about their ability to influence political decisions. Decisions made by the EU were considered particularly out of reach as regards influence. And no clear evidence that the experience of participating in the Deliberative Poll increases participation in more institutionalized arenas of politics was found, even though the participants were very supportive of the Deliberative Poll as a participatory forum.

In the process of deliberation, the participants argued primarily by referring to general principles and the common good, but according to the partici-

pants, self-interest was also part of the process. A Deliberative Poll does not create an ideal deliberative speech situation. However, on a number of issues, the experiment provided an arena in which arguments based on general principles could flourish. The prevalent principles at the Deliberative Poll, for example, were an increased understanding of the different factors behind Denmark's participation in the single currency and increased responsiveness towards the arguments of others.

Elements from 'real-life politics' were also present at the Deliberative Poll. While deliberating, the participants also dealt with coalitions, self-interest and domination. These core and defining elements of politics are not eliminated from the political process – and, thus, not from the Deliberative Poll either. However, in the context of the Deliberative Poll, the participants were aware of them. This suggests that the setting of the Deliberative Poll succeeded in making these elements visible and public in the deliberative process. What is needed is an elaboration of how these features of politics interact with deliberation and how they are interrelated. The lack of such an elaboration is one of the main critiques raised against more normative approaches to the theory of deliberative democracy. The results of the Deliberative Poll pinpoint the need for a stronger theoretical elaboration in order to obtain an increased understanding of deliberative processes. It would be fruitful for deliberative democratic approaches to incorporate and accept the so-called 'obstacles' to deliberation as part of a democratic process – empirically as well as theoretically. Only through such an approach is it possible to benefit from innovative experiments in which political deliberation can take place without highly idealistic requirements as to the process or the outcome. Our objection is that too little focus has been placed on interest and power in deliberative processes. The systematic elaboration of the Deliberative Poll in order to assess the deliberative process is only a small step towards gaining a better understanding of how power among participants operates during deliberation. Nevertheless, our findings encourage a further development of the deliberative design in order to better understand these features of deliberation. Power and interest may be accepted as part of a deliberative process. What is essential is to provide a deliberative setting in which these aspects become visible.

In the referendum on the single currency, a majority of Danes decided against Denmark's participation. In contrast, the result of the Deliberative Poll was a majority for Denmark joining the single currency. The referendum and the Deliberative Poll are two distinct methods of democracy. The referendum is a Danish constitutionally secured right for making decisions on (e.g., ceding) sovereignty. The Deliberative Poll, on the contrary, is an alternative arena for public deliberation – a way of communicating citizens' views to the public and to the established political institutions in a manner unlike traditional opinion

polls. The Deliberative Poll does not replace the referendum, nor does it substitute for other institutions linked to representative democracy, such as elections. So far, the Deliberative Poll on the euro remains an isolated experience at the national level in a Danish context. Whether the Deliberative Poll will become an arena for supplementing and improving the public debate in relation to referenda and to political processes in a representative democracy more broadly, remains an open question. The experience of the Deliberative Poll on the euro shows that the process can be a relevant part of the public debate and, particularly in a referendum campaign, can help citizens make more competent decisions.

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### **Notes**

1. Citizens Juries®, Consensus Conferences® and Planning Cells are other examples of such methods (e.g., Smith & Wales 2000, Andersen & Jæger 1999, Dielén & Renn 1995). The trademark symbol indicates that these names have been registered as trademarks.
2. Part of the plenary sessions and part of the group discussions of two groups were transmitted by national television. Among the experts were researchers from the universities and the former director of the Danish National Bank. Experts and political panels were balanced in terms of their opinions on the euro (pro and con). Among the politicians were the Social Democratic prime minister (heading a coalition government consisting of the Social Democrats and the Social Liberal Party) and the leading members of the opposition as well as leading Danish Members of the European Parliament. Prior to the campaign, both the governing coalition parties and the majority of oppositional parties represented in parliament were proponents of a single currency.
3. These figures do not show the actual change during the Deliberative Poll; 20 per cent of the participants changed their views between the three positions at some time during t0-t2.
4. The positive view of the deliberative process may be due to the participants evaluating the weekend as a positive social experience, rather than evaluating the deliberation as

such. It is also possible that participants' responses may to some extent reflect political correctness, natural civility and social desirability (Hansen 2000). However, surveys of the moderators and the video recording of four of the groups throughout the weekend did not reveal such features.

5. This also relates to the question of why the Deliberative Poll had only a moderate politically mobilizing effect (see Table 3).

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