

Introduction

Raphaël Kies and Patrizia Nanz

As a direct response to the political crisis in 2005, when the Constitutional Treaty was rejected in the French and Dutch referenda, the European Union (EU) has promoted several participative plans (Plan D, “Debate Europe,” etc.) with the aim of increasing citizens’ information and involvement in Europe. This has led to the appearance of a large variety of innovative consultative experiments at different geographical levels (national, cross-border and pan-European), including virtual and face-to-face communication, deliberative consultation and polling. What these experiments of public participation share is the idea of exploring in a highly qualitative way the priorities and preferences of European citizens, (re-)connecting them with the rather elite-driven political sphere in Brussels and, more ambitiously, including lay citizens in the EU decision-making process. For EU institutions, and in particular the Commission, these participatory experiments are clearly meant to be a remedy for the democratic or legitimacy deficit of the EU. For practitioners and academics, these experiences are a privileged terrain of investigation of citizens’ deliberation in a transnational context.

Political and legal theorists indicated the deficiency in the EU’s democratic credentials many years before the political crisis in 2005. From a normative point of view, European citizens are, under current conditions, only the addressees of binding and coercive Community law, and are not the ultimate authors of the basic laws and constitutional principles that constitute a polity (see e.g. de Burca 1996, Gerstenberg 1998, Weiler 1999). While this system of political authority is based on international treaties and, therefore, draws its ultimate source of legitimacy in the sovereignty of the member states, the authority of the single nation-state is nonetheless being undermined by the EU institutions’ accretion of substantial authority: the member states do not control the constitutional–legal context within which the European-level decision-making process takes place; furthermore, EU law is gradually developing into an autonomous, distinct and independent supranational legal order, the provisions of which take precedence over national law and are directly applicable to the citizens of the member states. The resulting democratic deficit can therefore be formulated as the discrepancy between the pervasive effects of the regulative power of the EU and the weak authorization of this power through the citizens of the member states who are specifically affected by those regulations (Nanz 2006).

From an empirical point of view, there is a widespread perception of a lack of popular support to Union institutions and a lack of a European (political) identity (see Risse 2010 for a critical approach). It is still questionable whether European citizens acknowledge that the EU provides a framework of norms which connects

them to the authoritative institutions of the Union in a chain of reciprocal rights and obligations. In any case, there is a significant gap, wider in some countries than in others, between the attitudes of the elite and the masses towards the EU (Bruter 2004, Hix 2008). For Europe's political and economic elites, the EU is certainly very real. For ordinary citizens, however, the EU is a more distant political community. The dominant picture of EU governance remains that of an opaque and technocratic process that involves civil servants and EU officials in a closed policy network, rather than a transparent process of deliberation and decision-making, open to broad participation of all those who have a stake in the outcome.

In order to address the problem of legitimacy, the European Commission has become an active advocate of participatory engineering (Abels 2009: 3). This book aims at providing initial answers to the question as to whether the participatory shift in the European Communication Policy is merely rhetorical or whether there is a clear political will to institutionalize citizens' involvement—and if these participatory procedures can be considered a move forward in the direction of a more legitimate and democratic Europe.

The Emergence of a European Citizenship Regime

Crucial for the legitimate role of citizens in the EU is Union citizenship, a conceptual innovation of the Maastricht Treaty. The creation of this legal status goes beyond the functional integration of member-state economies via the fundamental (economic) freedoms: the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor force. Until 1992, the citizens of EU member states were “market citizens”; they were considered foreigners when traveling or residing elsewhere in the Union. Union citizenship established the legal status of European citizenship for every person who is a national of a member state.¹ It is a big challenge to the conventional conception of citizenship.

In nation states, citizenship is national citizenship: only nationals qualify for belonging to the political community (the demos). There are two basic criteria according to which modern states normally define nationality, namely, the *ius sanguinis* (cultural/ethnic criterion) and *ius solis* (territorial criterion). These criteria are supposed to embody those social facts of close attachment to a particular state. They serve as patterns of justification for excluding non-nationals from citizenship. Union citizenship, although it is contingent upon national citizenship in one of the member states, is a status that is not grounded in a prior belonging to a particular

¹ Legal status confers four main rights: (1) the right to move freely among, and reside in, other member states; (2) the right to vote and run in municipal and European Parliament elections in the member states where they reside; (3) protection in a non-EU country by the diplomatic or consular representatives of other member states if one's own member state is not represented; and (4) the right to petition the European Parliament and to petition the European Ombudsman.

state. It is attached to the idea of a single polity (Preuss and Requejo 1998) but does not presuppose a prior underlying attachment of the citizen to the Union, i.e. it does not convey any kind of cultural or national European identity. Union citizenship abolishes the hierarchy between different loyalties (national, European) and allows individuals a multiplicity of associative relations without binding them to a specific nationality. In this way, nationality (belonging) and citizenship (legal status) are gradually becoming dissociated in the Union.

While the European legislature, made up of both the European Council and the European Parliament, has been reluctant to attach substantial rights to the concept of Union citizenship, the European Court of Justice has been much more receptive to an expansive understanding of the concept. Its jurisprudence has played a key role in gradually including European citizens in the matrix of rights and duties of the treaties and thus has promoted a transnational vision of EU citizenship (Nanz 2009): by expanding the nondiscrimination principle to that of the prohibition of any discrimination on grounds of nationality, the European Court of Justice has reconstructed Union citizenship in a way that potentially turns aliens into associates. People, who are separated by their different national identities, are at the same time fellows with respect to their shared European citizenship (Offe and Preuss 2006). In addition, there has been a continual legal expansion of the status of Union citizenship so that it comprises benefits (e.g. job seeker's allowance in the member state of residence of an EU citizen).

Union citizenship does not envision a supranational demos, but a more abstract sphere of cooperation among aliens, which depends on their capacity to engage in transnational citizenship practices. The question is whether the EU's experiments in citizen participation of recent years offer good opportunities for such transnational political practices. Can they be considered institutionalized settings of a European public sphere, in which citizens form opinions about common matters and eventually decide upon collective action? A second question is whether these new types of transnational forums could contribute to substantiate the European citizenship. Could they lead to the appearance of a citizenship that would be based not only on new rights and duties but also on a stronger awareness of and empathy with the other EU citizens?

Cases of Transnational Citizen Participation in the European Union

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been an exponential increase of Deliberative Citizens Involvement Projects (DCIPs)² promoted by the European Parliament and Commission in the framework of different strategic labels (for a review see Chapter 1). In front of this large diversity several criteria have been applied for selecting the case studies of this book. A first criterion was

² DCIP is a label coined by Mundo Yang in order to include the variety of participate models used in the EU context (for a justification see chapter one).

the importance of EU financial and political support. The rationale is that citizens' consultations that are largely supported by the EU are also more likely to become part of the EU decision-making process. The two projects falling into this category were the European Citizens Consultation and EuroPolis, which were financed twice, amounting to over one million Euros. A second criterion was the focus on citizens' participation, as this corresponds to the new EU democratic path aiming at increasing the legitimacy after the reinforcement of the role of the European Parliament and the greater inclusion of civil society associations in the decision-making process. All the case studies analyzed in this book focus on citizens' participation with the exception of Citizens Agora, a consultation organized by the European Parliament, whose focus is on civil society associations. It seemed important to include this project that was implemented during the same period because the direct implication of civil society is often presented as the sole valid solution to reinforce EU legitimacy (see e.g. Smismans 2006). The comparison between these two approaches (civil society versus lay citizens) is useful to assess if there are major differences concerning the discursive dynamic and impact of consultations and to what extent they are complementary. A third criterion was interactivity. Nearly all the case studies are consultation procedures based on discursive interactions, whether online, offline, or both. Your Voice in Europe, the consultation procedure of the Commission, is an exception, for it is not based on any discursive interaction. This case study is however interesting for it is the only consultation procedure open to citizens that has a tangible impact on EU decision making. For the purpose of this book it is relevant to analyze how it did so and whether such an impact could occur also for a DCIP. The last criterion was the transnational nature of participation, that is, the inclusion of participants from different EU countries. The transnational nature of the forum can mean two different things. The first meaning is the participation of citizens of different EU countries in a same forum with the help of translators or through the mastering of a *lingua franca* (generally English). The second meaning is the combination of parallel national forums on one topic whose outcomes are then merged in a common document. All the selected case studies belong to either of these two categories and involve the participation of citizens of at least three countries.

Objective of the Book and Criteria of Evaluation

The general objective of this book is to evaluate the legitimizing potential of the DCIPs, which can be subdivided in two large categories. On the one hand, whether they have the capacity to connect them to the authoritative institutions of the Union (or not) and, on the other hand, whether they could contribute to the emergence of a more substantial EU citizenship, that is, whether they have the capacity to deepen transnational communication and social links between EU citizens (or not). In order to address these questions, the contributing authors were asked to evaluate the DCIPs on the basis of deliberative normative criteria. It is important to note that

they were not given a common set of deliberative criteria and a common method for operationalizing them because the case studies appeared to be too divergent, from the viewpoint of both their design and implementation. Despite this rather “ecumenical” understanding of deliberation, the contributors have adopted, most of the time, the same deliberative criteria under different labels and by using different methods of operationalization. They can be divided into four main categories.

The first category concerns the inclusive nature of the DCIPs that refers to three complementary requirements. Firstly, the classical self-selection form of inclusion, which requires that all of the people interested in the topic discussed in a DCIP should have the possibility to express their opinions. Secondly, the more progressive form of inclusion that requires that people who would not spontaneously take part in the consultation but whose opinions could benefit the outcome of the consultation should be encouraged to do so. This aspect of inclusion is particularly important in the context of the EU decision-making process that is perceived by a large majority of citizens as particularly distant and nebulous due to the complexity of the issues treated, the impenetrable nature of the decision-making mechanism and the absence of an appropriate communication policy. For this second type of inclusion the selection process is fundamental and particularly challenging: it should aim at including citizens whose opinions are representative of the different national views on the topic discussed. Lastly, inclusion requires that people who are not directly involved in the consultative process should be informed about its content and outcomes, so that the benefit and impact of the confined DCIP could be enlarged and reinforced. This aspect of inclusion is generally assimilated in the notion of “publicity.”

The second category of normative criteria relates to the quality of the information and discursive exchanges. It has been inspired by the ideal speech situation of Jürgen Habermas (1989, 1996). Did the participants receive balanced information? Did they have an equal opportunity to participate? Were the debates interactive and reflexive? Were the expressed opinions well-founded? Were the discussants ready to change their mind when convinced by other arguments? Were the debates respectful? etc. These criteria allow us to evaluate the epistemic value of the DCIPs as well as their capacity to deepen the social links between the EU citizens.

The third category of normative criteria concerns the civic impact (or internal impact) of the DCIPs both on the people who were engaged in the consultations and those who were part of a larger public sphere. The main internal impacts that are evaluated concern the opinions about the EU (Does the perception and understanding of Europe evolve? Do they feel more “European?” etc.), and about the topics debated in the DCIPs (Do they change their views after deliberating? Do participants feel more competent? etc.). The civic potential of these experiences is generally evaluated through surveys and interviews.

A last category concerns the impact on EU decision-making (or external impact). It is possible to distinguish two types of external impact. On the one hand, there is the impact on decision-making that looks at whether propositions and opinions expressed during the consultation are taken into consideration by the decision-

makers. The second category corresponds to the indirect impact that looks at whether the media and opinion leaders have considered the outcomes of the consultation. Even if the experimental nature of the DCIPs and the fact that they were not linked to decision-making processes invite us to limit the evaluative standards of this impact, there should be a minimal level of impact corresponding to the right of participants to receive feedback from the authorities targeted/concerned by the DCIPs.

Plan of the Book

The book is divided into three parts. Part I provides contextual information on the consolidated and innovative deliberative EU practices *latu sensu*. Mundo Yang's chapter gives an overview of the main DCIPs that have been financed by EU institutions since 2001 and an acute analysis of the evolution of the EU communication strategy spanning from the White Paper on Governance (EC 2001) to the White Paper on a European Communication Policy (EC 2006). He convincingly argues that there has been a shift from a top-down communication strategy aiming at increasing the legitimacy of EU institutions by better informing the citizens of their work, to a bottom-up approach that considers that the EU decision-making process should be legitimated by a direct and discursive involvement of EU citizens. Yet, he points to some major weaknesses in the way this new strategy was implemented. In particular, he argues that there were no efficient synergies within and between the different EU institutions and that the financial support for promoting such forums was marginal. In the same vein he observes that with the advent of the second Barroso Commission the political willingness for promoting DCIPs strongly decreased. For these reasons Yang's conclusion is that the top-down unidirectional communication policy will remain the dominant paradigm.

The second chapter, by Dawid Friedrich, reviews and analyzes the existing innovative practices of EU governance from a deliberative perspective. This study allows not only to contextualize the DCIPs into the existing EU governance practices, but also to assess to what extent and under which conditions they could reinforce the deliberative character of the EU decision-making process. He begins his analysis by explaining how the concepts of governance and deliberation progressively became complementary: the governance approach found in the deliberative principle the normative upgrading it needed while the deliberative approach found in the governance approach "a much needed pragmatic flavor." In a second step he makes an analysis of the innovative modes of EU governance (Comitology; Open Method of Coordination; and Civil Dialogue) and argues that they do not comply with the deliberative criteria for their epistemic and/or that the participatory components are insufficient. The author concludes by arguing that the DCIPs could contribute to reinforcing the deliberative character of the EU under certain conditions (selection of participants, visibility, impact, etc.) that will be briefly discussed in the last part of this introduction.

Part II focuses on the empirical analysis of the selected DCIPs. The two initial chapters focus on the two major transnational citizens' forums. The first, the European Citizens Consultation (ECC09), by Raphaël Kies, Monique Leyenaar and Kees Niemöller, is a consultative method inspired by the 21st Century Town Meetings.³ It is grounded on a complex procedure inviting a large number of citizens from the 27 member states to debate and elaborate propositions online and face-to-face on the "social and economic future of Europe." The study concludes that the civic impact of the consultation was good despite the fact that the consultation design presented important shortcomings and that the external impact was symbolic at best.

The second case study, by Pierangelo Isernia, James Fishkin, Jürg Steiner and Danilo Di Mauro, is the deliberative opinion poll EuroPolis that convened to Brussels a sample of 348 citizens from the 27 member states to discuss and express their opinions on immigration and climate change. Differently from ECC09, the citizens who participated at EuroPolis were not asked to elaborate and to agree on original propositions but to express their opinions of a pre-defined questionnaire before, during and after a balanced and informative discussion in a pan-European context. The authors consider that the design, implementation and civic impact of this experience were particularly successful. In particular they observe, as in most of the deliberative opinion polls, that participants changed their views on the topics they had debated and that their perception of EU legitimacy and belonging became more positive.

The third case study analyzed by Julien Talpin and Laurence Monnoyer-Smith is Ideal-EU, which is also inspired, as was ECC09, by the 21st Century Town Meetings. However, while the structure and the objective of the consultation are similar, Ideal-EU differs in many aspects to ECC09: the topic is different (climate change), the target population is narrower (young people aged 14–30 years from three European regions), the selection is based on a voluntary basis and not on a random selection, and participants were not invited to draft recommendations but instead to vote on a multi-choice questionnaire that had been elaborated in advance by the organizers. An original contribution of this chapter is the attempt to define the factors that may influence the quality of deliberation within the same consultative procedure. Interestingly the authors observe that the framing of the discussion (local versus global) had a greater impact on the quality of deliberation than did the distinction between face-to-face and online debates. As far as the outcome is concerned, the authors vividly expressed the fear that the absence of impact leads to strong frustration among the participants and discredits the EU deliberative project. The fourth case by Romain Badouard, is Your Voice in Europe. It is, as mentioned above, the only consultation procedure that involves lay citizens to be institutionalized and to have a visible impact on decision making. He analyzes its functioning and how its usage evolved in time. His empirical focus is the consultation realized at the

³ The 21st Century Town Meeting is a large-scale one-day event that uses information and communications technologies to enable participation by a large number of participants (for more information see in this book the chapters of John Gastil and Graham Smith).

European Citizens' Initiative that came into force with the Treaty of Lisbon. While the impact is important and visible, Badouard regrets the absence of an interactive discursive dimension. More generally he observes that citizens' participation through this consultative method is rather weak compared to that of interest groups and institutional actors. He convincingly argues that the (spontaneous) inclusion of lay citizens is strongly correlated with the complexity of the debated topic.

The last empirical case study, by Léa Roger, is the Citizens' Agora, which corresponds to the second of three consultations launched by the European Parliament. The topic of the consultation is climate change and the targeted public are exclusively civil society actors. An interesting finding of this study is that this consultation presented similar shortcomings to the ones observed for most of the DCIPs: there was no impact on the European Parliament and there were important dysfunctions in the way the consultation was organized (absence of time, too large group discussion, and nonprofessional moderation).

For the concluding part of the book two experienced scholars in deliberative democracy, Graham Smith and John Gastil, were asked to evaluate the potentialities of these innovative EU participative experiences. Graham Smith compares the deliberative character of their design as well as that of *Futurum*, a web-forum that has been established to enable citizens to debate in any European language on the European constitutional process (Wright 2007). He elaborates a useful analytical matrix that distinguishes the cases on seven criteria and evaluates their deliberative character (or aptitude of realizing significant goods) on the basis of four criteria (inclusiveness, considered judgment, publicity and popular control). Like Mundo Yang, Smith is rather pessimistic concerning the future of DCIPs. In his view, the deliberative path of citizens is being replaced by a plebiscitary path embodied in the European Citizens' Initiative. This is an evolution that he strongly regrets for it will not promote a fair interaction between European citizens, but become another tool that will be exploited by organized interests.

The chapter by John Gastil analyzes these experiences in the light of the participative innovations and practices applied in other (also non-EU) national contexts. He elaborates an analytical framework that distinguishes the level of influence (to participants; to wider public; to public officials) and the phase of policymaking process these intervene in (agenda setting; problem analysis; choice framing; decision making). He then uses this same framework to present a broad array of existing public deliberation practices in order to illustrate some alternative and complementary possibilities to the existing EU deliberative democratic projects. This last chapter provides a clearly structured overview of the existing modes of citizens' deliberation that is extremely valuable for opening complementary and innovative solutions for promoting citizens' deliberation in the European context.

Complementarity with the European Citizens Initiative?

With the economic crisis taking off in the wake of the 2007 global financial crisis, European politics is being more profoundly challenged than for many decades. As EU leaders rush from summit to summit, political (and media) attention has focused on economic choices and much less on political and democratic failings. The urgency of the economic crisis, in other words, has diverted the attention of most leaders from the need to directly (re)connect citizens with EU affairs. The only noticeable progress in terms of participative democracy since the 2005 recognition of the failure is the introduction of the European Citizen Initiative (ECI) that allows one million citizens from at least seven member states to submit a proposal to the Commission that falls into its competences, respects the EU fundamental values and is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious.

It is obviously too early to draw any definitive conclusion on the functioning and the democratic impact of the ECI since this has been very recently introduced (April 1, 2012) and so far none of the initiatives has reached the sufficient number of supports to be considered by the Commission. It is, however, clear that the ECI has still to resolve several problems for its implementation (for a review see De Witte et al. 2010) and does not aim at the same democratic objectives as the DCIPs. First, the ECI has a limited potential to include lay citizens who are not interested in EU affairs. Rather, it concerns in the first place organized groups that have sufficient financial and human resources to gather one million signatures in just 12 months (see chapter by Smith). On the opposite side, the DCIPs target precisely the lay people who are generally unaware of and detached from EU issues. Second, the ECI is not specifically designed to promote a truly pan-European discursive space as expressed by most of its promoters. Some proposals may be discussed in different national public spaces but this type of debate will be restrained to national elites interested in EU affairs and is unlikely to reach the deliberative quality and civic benefits observed in most of the DCIPs. In other words, it is not designed to promote a deliberative citizens' cross-border debate on EU issues. Third, the ECI is not a more legitimate participative instrument than the DCIPs for influencing the EU decision-making process, for the fact of gathering one million signatures (out of 500 million EU citizens) under the impulsion of well-organized groups does not constitute a stronger democratic basis than the propositions deliberatively pursued through the DCIPs. One could even argue that the latter are more legitimate in so far as they attempt to implement solutions leading to qualitative and inclusive interactions. Lastly, the ECI that is generally presented as a unique opportunity to directly involve citizens in EU affairs can also lead to frustrations if the majority of the proposals are considered non admissible, if they are not followed by a legal act or if they appear to be unable to gather one million signatures in just 12 months. This danger has been underlined by voluntary groups such as the ECI campaign,⁴ which

⁴ The ECI Campaign is a grassroots coalition of democracy advocates and over 120 European NGOs dedicated to the creation and successful implementation of a European

argues that the rules of admission for the registration of the initiatives are too vague and allow the Commission to block an initiative at an early stage. This same group, as well as several MEPs, proposed to extend the delay for gathering signatures from 12 to 18 months.

Considering all these factors that differentiate these two instruments, both participative instruments appear to be complementary channels for informing and influencing EU institutions on the opinions stemming from European society: the ECI is a more valid instrument to gather the wishes of organized groups while the DCIPs are more adapted to reach those of European lay citizens. These new participative procedures are themselves complementary to the other well-known channels of opinions, such as the media, European political parties, trade unions, lobby groups, and opinion surveys such as the Eurobarometers.

How Can Citizens' EU Deliberation be Improved?

The different empirical analyses on DCIPs agree on the fact that these new instruments have a positive civic potential on EU citizenship: the citizens involved generally expressed satisfaction with their functioning and reported gaining knowledge about EU and the topics discussed. In other words, the DCIPs have the potential to ameliorate the legitimacy of the EU and to promote a more substantial EU citizenship. However, empirical analysis also points to several important shortcomings concerning the design and implementation of the DCIPs as well as their impact on the EU political process. To conclude we would like to mention the main challenges and discuss some of the solutions that were proposed by the authors of this book.

The first challenge concerns the promotion of citizens' inclusion, which should be as broad as possible and should allow citizens who would not spontaneously participate to be part of the DCIPs. The analysis in this book points to two factors that appeared to be particularly promising for promoting a broad and plural inclusion. The first one is the design of the consultation. What seemed most appropriate is a combination of an online phase of consultation with a face-to-face phase (as for ECC and Ideal-EU). An open online phase allows a large number of citizens and/or members of civil society to express their opinions, while well-organized face-to-face consultations, based on carefully defined selection criteria, enrich the consultation with the opinions of citizens who would not spontaneously debate on EU issues. As indicated by Talpin and Monnoyer-Smith (see Chapter 5), "the articulation with different framings of the discussion might from this perspective allow a greater inclusiveness, allowing fulfillment of the entire potential of deliberative democracy." It goes without saying that such a potential could be fulfilled only if a bridge between two phases were built. In the two cases mentioned this bridge was

citizens' initiative right. Available at: http://www.citizens-initiative.eu/?page_id=2 [Accessed: 7 June 2011].

absent or symbolic, at best. The second way to increase inclusion is the topic of the debate. Badouard shows that issues that are technical and of specific interest are more likely to attract organized groups while issues that are of general interest and not too technical are more likely to attract the opinions of ordinary citizens. There is, in other words, a tension between the complexity of the debated topics and the spontaneous participation of the citizens in self-selecting processes. Such tension should be taken into consideration when a consultation is designed in order to favor the inclusion of lay citizens even on complex topics.

A second challenge concerns the transnational nature of debates that is particularly relevant concerning multilingual and multicultural characteristics of the different EU member states. The DCIPs have dealt with it whether by promoting i) direct discursive exchanges between citizens of different countries or ii) discursive exchanges between citizens of the same country. While a pan-European, multilingual approach may appear more attractive from the viewpoint of human experiences and the civic benefits that could be derived from it, it is also very costly (travel, translation, staying in hotels, etc.). This implies that it can rarely be implemented and benefits only a limited number of people. Moreover the multilingual nature of the debates presents several important limits. If no translation is provided, there is a danger that the debates will be dominated by the English native speakers (see *Futurum*) while debates that are translated slow down the debates, limit the spontaneity and narrow the debates to certain combination of languages (see *EuroPolis*). For these reasons, a national based debate, where the propositions of other countries are discussed, and a synthesis of the national outcomes is elaborated, is probably the most adapted option for promoting transnational citizens' debates.⁵

A third challenge is the external impact of participatory processes on political decisions and/or on the larger public sphere (media, opinion-leaders etc.). Even if the standards for evaluating the impact of EU citizens' consultations are mild because of their experimental nature, a total absence of impact is not tolerable. It is not only problematic because of the frustration it creates among its participants (see in this volume Chapters 3, 5, 7), but also with regard to the quality of the debates. Roger quotes studies by Ryfe and by Hibbings and Theiss-Morse that found that people in face-to-face contexts⁶ are more inclined to take part in deliberation and more willing to engage their critical faculties if the deliberative process really has an impact on the final political decision and if they feel accountable. In addition, the (perceived) impact on decision-making is also strongly related to participants' acceptance of the decision. While it seems clear to everyone that European citizens' consultations should, as any type of consultation, have an external impact, it is

⁵ It should be noted that such a solution does not preclude the possibility to have at a later stage a pan-European debate, which would occur in English or, if more inclusion is needed, could occur in two or three working languages. In this case it is very important to elaborate a clear linkage between these two phases of the consultation.

⁶ Interestingly similar findings were also observed for the cases in cases of web-debates (Kies 2010).

particularly worrying to note that the designers as well as the EU institutions did not imagine some concrete ways suggesting how this impact could be guaranteed. This book points to several promising factors that may increase the strength of the impact. The first, probably most obvious, is to integrate, as a new official participative instrument (such as *Your Voice in Europe*), the DCIPs in the EU decision-making process. Here the analytical table in Gastil (see Chapter 9) can be a precious tool to define at which level of the decision-making process such consultation should be introduced. A second factor is that a consultation should be valuable for the authority requesting it. In other words, a consultation should not just be a performative act aiming at ameliorating the image of the EU as an institution, but should respond to a real need for expertise that only citizens can provide. If this is not the case, these consultations risk being perceived as a pure exercise in marketing or “window-dressing.” Lastly, the topic of the DCIPs should be restrained and concrete in order to obtain opinions and propositions that are useful to decision-makers. If lay citizens or even civil society organizations are invited to debate about broad topics such as the social and economic future of Europe (ECC09), immigration policy in Europe (EuroPolis) or climate change (Ideal-EU or EU Agora), the opinions expressed can only be very general and useless for decision-makers. The outcome of such a procedure should obviously not hide the disagreements among citizens of different countries, for the idea of the consultation is not to reach a general consensus but to enhance deliberation among citizens and to enrich the information available to decision-makers. As Gastil points out in his chapter: “the EU processes in these books did not so much tell public officials how to decide as *why* to reach certain decisions. After all, forwarding blunt policy recommendations without justifications would be the height of irony for a deliberative process that bounds itself to the rules of reason and argument.”

Fourth, the DCIPs face a problem of credibility that derives from their attempt to satisfy the EU’s request to ameliorate its public image among the largest number of EU citizens. This implies that they were selected rather for their promotional potential than for their capacity to integrate the EU decision-making process. As a consequence, some choices needed to be made in the design and implementation of the DCIPs that do not match with the deliberative principles. To begin with, the organizations (essentially NGOs, think tanks and universities) that implemented these consultative procedures were generally in favor of EU integration and/or directly concerned by the consultation’s topic. In the case of Ideal-EU, for example, some online debates on climate change were moderated by a green activist who is suspected to have deliberately biased the debates. Another connected problem is the choice of the topic that could advantage some political actors compared to others. In the case of EuroPolis, for example, it appeared that the debates on climate change significantly influenced the voting intentions in favor of the Green party. A final possible challenge of credibility is that these events were in several cases evaluated by scholars who were directly involved in their implementation and/or who promote in other contexts a large implementation of deliberative procedures. While the DCIPs analyzed in this book have been evaluated in a professional way, one cannot deny

that this combination of tasks could nurture a legitimate sentiment of suspicion. In the future it would be desirable for the implementation and evaluation of the DCIPs to be realized by different people.

Concluding Remarks: The Future of DCIPs?

Sufficient experimentation material has been accumulated and time has come for EU decision-makers to take a decision on how the European-wide citizens' consultation should be institutionalized. However, this is not likely to happen in the next five years. DCIPs will be further used experimentally under the action plan "Active Citizens for Europe" and the contribution for its implementation will be restrained compared to previous action programs. The grant awarded may not exceed 60 percent of the total amount of the project's eligible costs and the maximum grant awarded is 250,000 Euros. This implies that important transnational projects that have attempted to reach the entire EU population such as the European Citizens Consultation and EuroPolis may not be implemented anymore. What is worse is that the next participatory projects are likely to be increasingly perceived as EU promotional instruments with no real impact on the political decision-making process. If this is so, this will inevitably lead to further frustrations among those citizens who offer their time to participate and to increasing criticism concerning the way participative EU strategies are implemented and European money is spent.

The EC has designated 2013 as the European Year of Citizens. It is a unique opportunity to discuss and decide how to transform the incredibly rich democratic material and knowledge the EU has generated and accumulated on EU-wide citizen participation into mainstream participative tools that will be useful both for decision-makers and citizens. We hope that this book will offer a valid contribution to this complex, but necessary debate.

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