Volume 13 • Issue 4 • 2007

Swiss Political Science Review

Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft
Revue Suisse de Science Politique
Rivista Svizzera di Scienza Politica

4

SPSR

Special Issue
Deliberative Democracy

© (2007) Swiss Political Science Review 13(4): 497–526

The Ends of Deliberation: Meta-consensus and Inter-subjective Rationality as Ideal Outcomes

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Normative deliberative theory has contributed much to an understanding of ideal procedural standards, but there is considerable uncertainty regarding the appropriate nature of desired deliberative outcomes. In this paper we identify two inter-related concepts of meta-consensus and inter-subjective rationality as outcomes that an authentic deliberative process ought to produce. Importantly, these deliberative ends are consistent with ideal deliberative procedure. They are also empirically tractable, where preference transformation can be described in terms of underlying values, and judgments. Methods for assessing deliberative ends are provided and demonstrated using a case study.

Keywords: Meta-consensus • Inter-subjective Rationality • Deliberative Democracy • Consensus • Subjectivity • Deliberative Outcomes

Introduction

To date, the outcomes that deliberation should achieve has been the subject of some confusion and contestation. The most widely recognised benchmark, proposed by Habermas in the form of rational consensus, has been met with rebuttals from critics as unrealistic and fraught, yielding undesirable side-effects. Perhaps more problematic from an empirical perspective is that, the Habermasian example aside, deliberative theory is vague about deliberative ends, making it difficult to assess the quality of outcomes (Burkhalter, Gastil and Kelshaw 2002).

These limitations yield wider implications for deliberative democracy. A counter-factual orientation has led to criticism regarding its feasibility in the real world. Deliberation in its ideal form is viewed as a desirable, but patently unobtainable. This is further compounded by conceptual un-

certainty about deliberative ends opening up multiple avenues for criticising something that may not actually be deliberation in a normative sense. The literature is littered with experimental and real world "deliberation" (criminal juries, social psychology experiments, opinion surveys) as well as theoretical explorations the results of which have been used to critique the deliberative project. In many cases the connection with normative deliberative democracy is tenuous at best (Steiner 2007 forthcoming).

In view of this, at the very least we need to clarify the sort of outcomes that deliberation ought to produce. In this paper, we seek to reduce the conceptual uncertainty by identifying two types of deliberative end (meta-consensus and inter-subjective rationality). They are deliberative to the extent that they are produced by the processes that define authentic deliberation – something that is much better developed to date than outcomes.

We also demonstrate empirical methods that can be used to evaluate deliberative outcomes and their relationship to the ideal ends of meta-consensus and inter-subjective rationality. We demonstrate the utility of these approaches using the case study of the Bloomfield Track (see Niemeyer 2002; Niemeyer 2004). To this we add a small caveat: Our aim here is not to provide a definitive approach, but to set an agenda. By identifying ideal deliberative ends we open up possibilities for increasingly sophisticated empirical approaches to assessing outcomes. To this end, the methods we showcase mark staging posts *en route* to more advanced approaches.

In the following section we begin by connecting the task of identifying desirable outcomes with the ideal deliberative processes that are widely recognised in normative deliberative theory. The subsequent two sections detail the two main kinds of desirable outcome: meta-consensus and inter-subjective rationality. We then turn to methods that can be used to examine these phenomena empirically, presenting some results.

Ideal Deliberative Outcomes

Deliberative democracy has been associated with the promise of many things, a number of which remain highly contested. Some claims relate to the nature of outcomes, pertaining for example to the epistemic superiority of deliberation in producing outcomes closer to some independent standard of good collective choice (Cohen 1986; Estlund 1997), or its ability to overcome the arbitrariness, instability, and vulnerability to manipulation in

collective decision that social choice theory has warned against (McLean et al. 1999; Dryzek and List 2003).

The most commonly cited outcome is also the most controversial: Habermas's ideal of complete and rational consensus. Elster (1986) interprets this ideal as follows: "a rational discussion would tend to produce unanimous preferences". The criticisms that this claim attracts reflect wider arguments against the gold standard of consensus. Rescher (1993: 3) attributes this adherence to consensus in both Rawlsian and Habermasian interpretations in deliberative democracy as a kind of "pre-democratic *dirigisme*". For critics of deliberative democracy, it is often the goal of consensus that explains why deliberative democracy is either unachievable (Femia 1996; Van Mill 1996) or undesirable (Sanders 1997; Young 2000), achieved by silencing particular voices. Obviously we need to clear up the nature of ideal deliberative outcomes.

The problem with standards such as rational consensus and epistemic populism is that they privilege exogenous political ideals without drawing directly from the procedural norms that lie at heart of the deliberative project. Focusing on these exogenous ideals, Bohman (1998: 403) argues that procedural and epistemic legitimacy are on a collision course, it being impossible to simultaneously guarantee good process and good outcomes. But it is questionable whether this dilemma is intrinsic to deliberative democracy, particularly where the desired outcomes Bohman refers are exogenous to normative deliberative theory.

The procedural-outcome collision can be avoided if procedure and outcome are connected at the foundational level. For example, deliberative procedure should mean that preference positions are amenable to change in light of the reasons that are encountered. The procedural ideal here involves reflecting on the issue at hand from a shared perspective and articulating good reasons in a public context to co-deliberators. Reasoning from the standpoint of all involved forces "a certain coherence upon one's own views" (Benhabib 1996: 72) – a coherence which is embodied in outcomes.

To elaborate briefly on ideal procedure: authentic deliberative engagement requires an open mind in a spirit of reciprocity (Benhabib 1996; Gutmann and Thompson 1996), where deliberators do not privilege their own perspective above those of others. For Arendt (1961: 220), "enlarged thinking" means transcending "private subjective conditions" and taking into account the perspectives of others during the process of judgement. Deliberating citizens can ideally investigate generalisable interests (Hab-

ermas 1971) informed by "communicative rationality" that emphasises mutual understanding.

Based on these accounts, we identify two types of outcomes that should result from authentic deliberation. First, deliberation should produce *meta-consensus*, or agreement about the nature of the issue at hand, not necessarily on the actual outcome. This occurs because deliberation requires that individuals transcend private concerns and that they engage with competing views, taking them into account as part of their evaluations. To the extent this occurs, deliberation should produce agreement on the domain of relevant reasons or considerations (involving both beliefs and values) that ought to be taken into account, and on the character of the choices to be made. But it does not require agreement on the veracity of particular beliefs, or ranking of values, still less unanimity on what should be done.

The second type of outcome refers to the form of rationality that should result from deliberation. Our argument is that although deliberation should not make concrete claims about making the "right" decision, it can legitimately claim superiority to the extent that individuals have taken into account all the relevant considerations determined by meta-consensus. *Inter-subjective rationality* results from deliberative procedure in which both agreement and disagreement are possible, but are constrained by a condition of consistency regarding the reasons that produce a particular decision. An intersubjectively rational situation emerges when individuals who agree on preferences also concur on the relevant reasons, and vice versa for disagreement.

Both meta-consensus and inter-subjective rationality highlight the importance of empirical study. Their development is consistent with the idea that the deliberative project should be open to revisiting its normative commitments in light of empirical findings (Rosenberg 2005). Both concepts have been developed following intensive scrutiny of real-world deliberation using methodologies that are grounded in or consistent with normative deliberative principals. Both the empirical and normative approaches of this research has been based on a particular model of the deliberating individual, which we will now allude to.

The Deliberating Individual

Our implicit model of the deliberating self contains preferences whose drivers involve both normative and cognitive content – that is, values and beliefs. Beliefs about the nature of the world shape understandings of

what is possible and how it can be achieved. Choices (preferences regarding course of action) are a function of both beliefs and desires (Dennett 1971).

Although we are interested in values and beliefs as separate entities, for the purposes of understanding the choices made by deliberators it is more useful to consider values together as part of a subjective whole. In "real world" deliberation there is no neat distinction between beliefs and desires, which are also logically interdependent (Dennett 1971: 92–93). This can be illustrated by the adage that "people believe what they want to", which captures the idea that the dominant values one holds will influence how one interacts with information (Elster 1983: 19). The converse can also hold: the information an individual possesses will affect his or her confidence in beliefs, playing a role in the activation of values (Palfrey and Poole 1987). Therefore, to fully understand the nature of deliberative outcomes we need to combine values and belief in a notion of individual subjectivity in which understandings are developed and transmitted.

There are a number of ways in which deliberation can transform the positions of individuals as well as produce the two kinds of outcomes that we argue ideal deliberation should yield (meta-consensus and inter-subjective rationality). The first results from changes in reasons (subjectivity: values and beliefs) yielding changes in expressed positions (preferences). Secondly, and more importantly, deliberation shapes the contours of the relevant reasons used in this process. A particular deliberative engagement should result in recognition of those reasons that can lay a legitimate claim on the sorts of choices that need to be made – encapsulated here in the form of meta-consensus. As part of this extended cognition, deliberation should also produce more consistent connections between particular subjective positions and corresponding preferences. The result of this should be a more collectively "rational" outcome in the sense that there is inter-subjective understanding of competing perspectives and consistency between differences in subjective positions and preference positions (inter-subjective rationality). In the following we consider these types of outcome before moving on to explore empirical methods that can be used to assess them before application to the Bloomfield Track example.

Meta-consensus: Outcomes in the form of agreement

The first outcome that we ascribe to ideal deliberation, meta-consensus, concerns the type of agreement that both can and ought to be produced (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006). It represents a move away from the principle of complete consensus as the benchmark for political legitimacy. Although it does not preclude such an outcome, it embraces the principle of plurality within the context of a broader agreement that there are other legitimate points of view that should be admitted to the deliberative table.

As previously discussed, this move to the meta-level is connected to key processes at work in deliberation. It also permits nuanced evaluation of the content of any agreement in a way that is consistent with the theory of deliberative democracy. To demonstrate how this works, we need to first work through the components of meta-consensus and their relationship to the deliberative process. Many existing conceptions of consensus proceed in terms of the preference side of the model, such that consensus means agreement on what is to be done. However, consensus can also refer to the subjective component of the model as well, which we begin discussing by breaking back down into its component parts of values and beliefs.

Based on the three component elements of values, beliefs and preferences, there are three kinds of consensus (see Table 1). *Normative consensus* is agreement on values. *Epistemic consensus* is agreement on how actions affect values in cause and effect terms. *Preference consensu*s is agreement on what should be done.

The three types of consensus can be demonstrated using the example of the Bloomfield Track, which we will repeatedly refer to as both an illustrative and empirical example. The issue at stake here concerns the future of a crudely constructed road in the tropical far northeast of Australia in an area that has since been listed as of World Heritage significance. The future of the Bloomfield Track was the focus of a four-day Citizens' Jury conducted as part of research funded by Land and Water Australia in 2000 involving 12 "participants" (Niemeyer 2002).

Four different issue positions regarding the Bloomfield Track were identified through reference to their basic viewpoint: Pragmatist, Preservationist, Optimist and Propitiatist. These appear in the first column of Table 2. The second column identifies the value position held most strongly by the group regarding the main issue dimensions of environmental damage and vehicular access for the isolated communities at the northern end of the road. The third and fourth columns indicate the beliefs about connections

Table 1: Types of consensus

	Element of preference construction		
	Value	Belief	Expressed preference
Type of consensus	*Normative consensus* (Agreement on the values that should predominate)	*Epistemic consensus* (Agreement on belief about the impact of a policy)	*Preference consensus* (Agreement on expressed preference for a policy)
Meta counterpart	Recognition of legitimacy of disputed values	Acceptance of credibility of disputed beliefs	Agreement on the nature of disputed choices

Source: Dryzek and Niemeyer (2006).

between means and value positions. The final column indicates the preference ranking generated by each combination of values and beliefs.

Pragmatists prioritise the access needs of the local community as the main value. They do not necessarily believe the road meets this need; nevertheless their preferred option is to keep it open (partly based on an inherent conservatism). Preservationists prioritise environmental values, believe the road impedes these values, and so favour closure. Optimists put community values first, while putatively recognising environmental concerns. Their optimism is underwritten by a belief that the road can promote both values (a kind of "technocentric" view). Propitiatists believe the road benefits the community, but also that its upgrading could actually address their significant concerns about its negative environmental impacts regarding runoff and siltation.

Table 2 reveals no encompassing (complete rational) consensus, but some agreement across aspects of group positions. There are some normative overlaps (Propitiatism with Preservation on the priority of environmental values, Optimism with Pragmatism on importance of the community aspect). On the epistemic plane, disagreement across the groups means that agreement on values can coincide with disagreement on preferences. Conversely, Optimists and Propitiatists disagree on reasons, but have similar preferences.

Meta-consensus in Operation

We know from Table 1 that normative, epistemic, and preference consensus all have a "meta" version which good deliberation ought to produce.

Table 2: Preference formation, the Bloomfield Track

Position	Subjectivity (discourse)			Preference
	Value Normative level	Belief Epistemic level		Preference level
	Normative priority	*Benefit community*	*Damage environment?*	*Expressed reference*
Pragmatist	Community	No	No	*Keep road* (Leave)
Preservationist	Environment	No	Yes	*Close road*
Optimist	Community	Yes	No	*Keep road* (Upgrade)
Propitiatist	Environment	Yes	Yes	*Keep road* (Upgrade)

Source: Dryzek and Niemeyer (2006).

Normative meta-consensus can be defined as shared recognition of the legitimacy of a set of values, while not requiring agreement on the ranking these values. In the Bloomfield Track example, both community and environmental values are recognized as legitimate by all groups. That is, no group is actively opposed to the presence of community and environmental concerns in deliberation – although, as will be shown, the nature of environmental concern did differ at the beginning of deliberation. Ideally, all deliberators should recognize the legitimacy of the values held by other deliberators.

Epistemic meta-consensus refers to agreement on the credibility of beliefs and their relevance to the question under deliberation. Pluralists have long pointed to the need for multiple perspectives to be brought to bear on policy issues. Epistemic meta-consensus means that the engagement of perspectives is productive, as opposed to a clash of competing attempts to eradicate perceived falsehoods. The absence of epistemic meta-consensus can be found in, for example, debate over the teaching of evolution and creationism in the United States. On environmental issues, epistemic meta-consensus would allow that ordinary citizens' claims about health damage caused by pollution be accepted as equally valid as epidemiological evidence, even when the latter contradicts individual accounts (Tesh 2000).

Preference meta-consensus refers to the character of choices across options, and most straightforwardly connotes agreement on the range of acceptable alternatives. The whole point of judicial review of legislation

Table 3: Preference options for the Bloomfield Track

Option	Description
Bitumenise	Bitumenisation, which would make the track into an ordinary road
Upgrade	Upgrading by covering the road in gravel
Stabilize	Stabilizing steep slopes
Status quo	Leaving the road as it is, accessible only to four wheel drive vehicles
Close	Closure of the road and rehabilitation

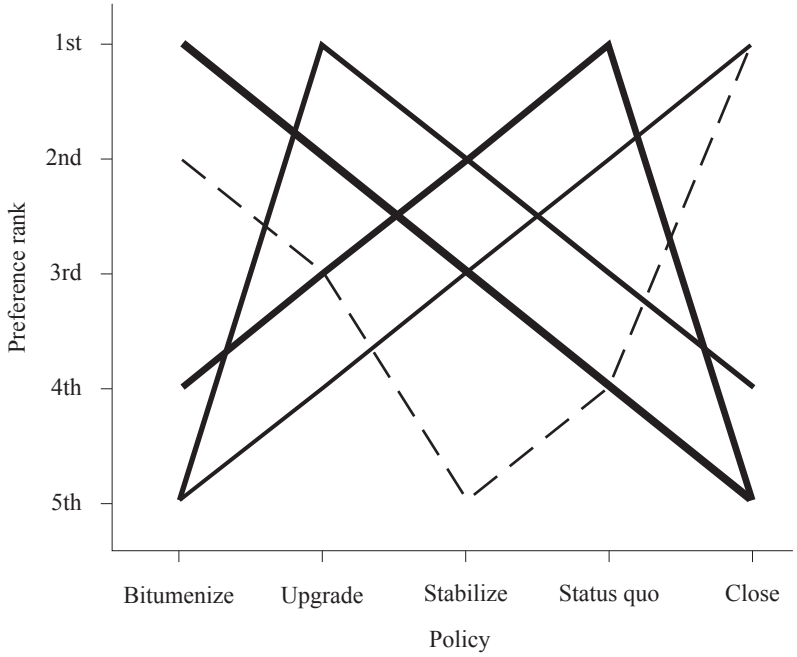
rests on the idea that some policy alternatives are unacceptable – such as those that violate basic rights specified in a constitution. Many deliberative democrats would want preference meta-consensus to be produced by deliberation itself, rather than pre-specified in a constitution.

Preference meta-consensus can also refer to the way choices among alternatives are structured. For List (2002), structure comes in terms of a single issue dimension along which preferences are aligned. Referring again to the Bloomfield Track, there are five options ranked by deliberators, shown in Table 3.

An example of a single peaked ordering (to use the language of social choice theory) relates to agreement that "degree of access" is the most important dimension of the issue. In Figure 1 there are three single peaked preference rankings. The broken line is not single peaked, and so this particular preference profile (whose first choice is closure, second choice bitumenisation) is outside the preference meta-consensus.

As we will demonstrate below, single peakedness is not the only kind of structure that preference meta-consensus can produce. It occurs to the extent that there is meta-consensus on the relevance of all the options to the issue – because to "structure" them is to imply a willingness to weigh all the alternatives in respect to the others. Alternatively, preference meta-consensus can also imply a change in the range of acceptable options, well as the domain of most important options (a structure within a structure). For example, as will be seen the Bloomfield case, there was agreement at the end of the process that the effective choice boiled down to one between closure and all other options. This reduction of relevant options is another kind of preference meta-consensus.

Figure 1: Single peaked preference orderings of Bloomfield Track policies



Source: Dryzek and Niemeyer (2006).

Inter-subjective Rationality: Coherence in Deliberative Outcomes

Meta-consensus provides one type of coherence that ought to result from deliberation in the form of agreement on the relevant domain of reasons and the relevant domain of preferences. It gets us some way toward an idea of the sorts of outcomes deliberation ought to produce, but it is a domain within which all sorts of outcomes of varying claims to deliberative authenticity remain possible. It does not tell us much about the quality of the outcome of any particular deliberative engagement. Also missing is a formal link between values and beliefs on the one hand and preferences on the other that ought to underpin a deliberative form of rationality in both individual and collective choice. In short, deliberation should produce outcomes that reflect the will of its participants.

It is possible to connect meta-consensus and choice in a manner consistent with the ideals that define deliberation. This relationship can be formulated as follows: if authentic deliberation has been achieved, whether

or not all individuals end up agreeing at the level of preferences, they ought to at least be capable of identifying and adducing all relevant perspectives dictated by meta-consensus into their reasoning. A good outcome should then reflect the extent to which the individual positions resulting from deliberation reflect the integration of all the concerns present in meta-consensus. The term *inter-subjective rationality* is used to describe this ideal (Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007).

At the heart of inter-subjective rationality is the idea that any pair of deliberators with similar subjective positions – in that they agree on values and beliefs – ought also to agree on preferences. Conversely, if they disagree on values and beliefs, they are reasonably expected to disagree on actions. Deliberation should, then, improve the standardization of what should be done in light of any particular individual subjective standpoint.

In its purest form, the condition of inter-subjective rationality precludes incompletely theorized agreements, involving working agreements or a *modus vivendi* (Sunstein 1995). Agreement on outcomes without agreement on reasons is of course a feature of real world deliberation. Indeed, it describes the convergence in the preference positions of Pragmatists and Propitiatists in Table 2. However, in proposing inter-subjective rationality we seek to establish an ideal outcome based on well-established procedural norms of deliberation. Doing so should contradistinguish processes that approach ideal deliberation in which inter-subjective rationality is achieved from those that do not, where other outcomes, such a *modus vivendi* occur. Elsewhere we have suggested that these latter outcomes, although workable, are neither likely to be deliberative in an ideal sense, nor vulnerable, being subject to perturbations in light of changes to the issue in terms of both substance and framing (see Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007).

Moreover, inter-subjective rationality is no more far-fetched than *modus vivendi* – but it is more desirable from a normative deliberative perspective. As we will demonstrate below, it is not a counterfactual ambit, but an empirical observation. Its emergence as a result of the Bloomfield Track CJ dissolved the pre-existing Pragmatist-Propitiatist *modus vivendi* and, as argued more forcefully elsewhere, produced an outcome better reflective of democratic will (Niemeyer 2004).

But what of this democratic will? What does the condition of inter-subjective rationality have to say about collective decisions? Complete rational consensus, despite its drawbacks, has the advantage of a definitive collective choice outcome. We make no such claim. Our two deliberative ends leave open the kinds of collective decisions that deliberators

will come to, although it does constrain them in important ways. Any particular outcome may involve the construction of agreements on courses of action that are not the first preference of any subset of deliberators. These deliberators may assent to the outcome for different reasons (including fear of what may happen in the absence of agreement). Whatever the reason, to the extent that the outcomes at the individual level reflect the two ideals we have laid out, the assent of the collective outcome is more likely because (1) it is part of a collectively formulated domain of possible outcomes and (2) it is fully understood and accepted as at least legitimate by all deliberators. These outcomes reflect a similar, but more constrained version of deliberative legitimacy proffered by Gutmann and Thompson (1996), based on procedural opportunity for all sides to make claims about preferred outcomes. We would also assert that the deliberative ends that we describe should also produce collective outcomes that are more stable, in the sense of achieving widespread assent, without risking the alienating effects ascribed to complete rational consensus.

Exploring Deliberative Outcomes Empirically

We now sketch methods that can be used to evaluate a given deliberative exchange in terms of meta-consensus and inter-subjective rationality using data obtained from the Bloomfield Track case study. We measure subjective positions (in terms of values and beliefs) using Q methodology.[1] This approach has the advantage of permitting the discovery of relevant subjective positions in a manner that is consistent with a discursive approach. Blaug (1997: 107) points out that Q methodology is one of the few empirical methods available for the systematic study of intersubjectivity that "has been informed by discursive and domination-free notions of opinion formation". The method also avoids problems of overspecification, lending itself to the discovery of relevant subjective types, rather than establishing them a priori.

Meta-consensus is evaluated using factors produced by Q method in the case of subjectivity and structure found in preferences for preference meta-consensus. Preferences are surveyed using a simple ranking of options by

[1] The standard exposition of Q methodology is Brown (1980). Introductions to Q can also be found at http://www.qmethod.org.

subjects. Inter-subjective consistency is used as an indicator of inter-subjective rationality, which combines subjective and preference positions.

Understanding Subjective Positions

Briefly, Q methodology as applied to the Bloomfield Track case study entailed presenting each deliberator with a set of 42 statements about the Bloomfield Track issue drawn from interviews and content analysis of media and parliamentary reports. Participants in the citizens' jury on the issue were asked to order these statements in a quasi-normal distribution from "most agree" to " most disagree" on a nine-point scale, resulting in a "Q sort" that is a picture of the individual's subjective orientation to the issue in question. The resulting sorts were subjected to inverse factor analysis.[2]

Participants performed Q sorts and filled in the preference ranking of policy options (based on the list provided in Table 3) both before and after deliberation. The Q sorts were collated and analysed using inverse factor analysis (Centroid extraction, Varimax rotation). Further "judgemental" rotation was performed to maximise the relationship between the resulting subjective factors and the preferred outcomes of participants. The resulting factors represent archetypal positions pertaining to the Bloomfield Track issue that also correspond to different preference positions, which has been stylistically represented earlier in Table 2. These were interpreted based on the idealized Q sort, which represents the response to each statement of a hypothetical individual in 100% agreement with that factor. The results were "triangulated" by comparing with dialogue during the deliberative process and follow-up interviews with individual participants.

The four basic subjective positions or factors that were elucidated from the Q sorts (Preservation, Pragmatism, Optimism and Propitiatism) reflect their namesakes that have already been described in Table 2 – indeed, the groups in the table were identified using Q methodology. To elaborate slightly on the descriptions provided there, Preservation reflects a strongly pro-conservation orientation and sentiment against development in the region based on a long-term perspective of inter-connected impacts. Pragmatism was distinguished by scepticism about evidence supporting particular claims of environmental damage and community access associated with the Bloomfield Track. Optimism resonates with a culturally influenced tech-

[2] The application of Q methodology to the Bloomfield Track case study is set out in detail in Niemeyer (2002, esp. ch.6)

nocentric belief that developments, such as road construction, represent progress that yields benefits for both humans and the environment. Propitiatism reflects a political socialisation into the Bloomfield Track issue under the influence of claims made by competing sides, resulting in a grappling with claims concerning community access and reef damage. Both of these were presented in public by opposing sides as part of a strategy of invoking a strong emotional response in a manner consistent with symbolic politics (Edelman 1985). Consequently, Propitiatism is associated with high levels of anxiety in relation to the issue, seeking mechanisms through which to resolve dissonance between extreme views.

The differences between these factors are illustrated numerically in Table 4, which shows the factor "score" – the typical response for a hypothetical person in complete agreement with that factor – for five of the 42 statements used in the study. We show these five because they best reflect the major differences between Preservation, Pragmatism, Optimism and Propitiatism. A score of "4" represents the strongest possible agreement with a statement, "-4" the strongest possible disagreement. Table 4 also shows the average rank given to each statement by all participants pre and post-deliberation for these statements.

The table shows a clear difference between Preservation and the remaining factors on whether the road will cause greater levels of (environmentally damaging) development (statement 2). Both it and Pragmatists are against this development (10). Both Pragmatists and Propitiatists are sanguine about the issue of leaving the road, given that it already exists (38), but the latter is strongly concerned with its impact on the reef. Moreover, Propitiatists share a belief with Optimists that the road provides and important access route.

Table 4 also provides a clue as to the fate of each of these positions as a result of deliberation, using the average rank score for each statement shown in the last two columns for pre- and post-deliberation respectively. Concern about the impact from the road by way of increased development has risen (statements 2 and 10). By contrast, concern about the potential impact on the reef has declined (7). So too has the belief in the importance of the road as an access route (18) as has the conservative disposition to keep the road open (38).

These changes are reflected in the overall predominance of each of the factors in the subjectivity of participants. This can be measured in three ways: average factor loading, number of participants with a significant

Table 4: Factor score and average rank for selected statements

No.	Statement	Score				Average Rank	
		Pres	Prag	Opt	Prop	Pre	Post
2	I don't know if improving the Bloomfield Track would lead to a rapid acceleration of development in the area to the detriment of the environment.	-3	0	2	0	-0.10	-1.10
7	Erosion from the Bloomfield Track is permanently damaging the coral reefs that fringe the beaches below.	1	-2	-2	3	1.40	-0.80
10	No development should be permitted in World Heritage areas such as the Daintree.	3	4	-3	1	0.92	1.92
18	The Bloomfield Track is important because it allows quick access to remote areas of the North.	0	0	2	2	0.50	-0.67
38	The Bloomfield Track may not have been the best idea, but I guess there is probably little point in closing it now that it has been built.	-1	4	-2	2	0.58	-1.58

loading, and number of participants whose loading on a factor is highest.[3] Table 5 provides this information for each factor. It is clear from the table that both Optimism and Propitiatism have been greatly reduced in influence during the deliberative process. By contrast, the number of participants principally loaded on Preservation has increased, as has Pragmatism, though remaining a much smaller factor overall.

The decline of Propitiatism during deliberation is worth highlighting. The average factor loading has declined from 0.26 to -0.10; the number of significant loadings from six individuals to zero; and the number of principally loaded individuals from two to zero. In short, Propitiatism went from being the second most predominant position using all three measures at the outset of deliberation to the smallest, ending up having an effectively nil impact on the subjectivity of participants. As we will see, the decline

[3] A factor loading is the measure of correlation between each individual's Q sort and the position described by a particular factor. Significance of correlation was based on a standard error $SE_r = 1/\sqrt{n}$ (Brown 1980), where n (= 42) is the number of statements. At the 95% level a significant loading is $1.95 \times 1/\sqrt{42} = 0.30$, such that a significant affiliation comprised all individuals with a correlation of greater than 0.30.

Table 5: Level of overall agreement with four subjective positions pre- and post-deliberation

	Pre-deliberation				Post-deliberation			
	Pres	Prag	Opt	Prop	Pres	Prag	Opt	Prop
Average factor loading (×100)	59	25	20	26	59	34	15	-1
Number of participants in significant agreement*	11	4	4	6	11	8	2	0
Principal factor	7	2	1	2	9	3	0	0

Note: *Row sums to more than 12 because any one participant can have a significant correlation with more than one subjective position.

of this position in particular has a significant impact on the nature of meta-consensus.

Comparing Meta-Consensus Before and After Deliberation

(1) *Epistemic and Normative Meta-consensus*.—The disappearance of the Propitiatist during deliberation changed the nature of epistemic meta-consensus regarding the Bloomfield Track. Prior to the citizens' jury, there was epistemic meta-consensus about the credibility and relevance of two claims. The first claim was that the existence of the track hurt the environment because it caused soil erosion, which in turn led to significant damage to onshore coral reefs (see statement 7 in Table 4). The second was that the track benefited the community by providing residents with easier access to centres of commerce, employment, and social interaction (18).

Our evidence for this post-deliberation epistemic meta-consensus comes mainly from analysis of dialogue during the deliberative process by assessing participant dispositions toward the main issues in their speech acts in a manner analogous to, but less advanced than, the measurement of the "respect" criteria used as part of the Discourse Quality Index (Steenbergen et al. 2003). Exit interviews with individual participants were also used to gauge how beliefs and values changed during the deliberative process from the participant's own perspective (see Niemeyer 2002).

Direct evidence of the changing nature of meta-consensus during the citizens' jury can be obtained using a juxtaposition of Table 4 and Table 5. They show that some participants disagreed with the two specific claims of reef damage (statement 7) and community access (18) prior to delibera-

tion. After deliberation rejection of them was much more widely shared. Although there was no *simple* consensus on these two claims prior to deliberation, there was *meta-consensus* on their credibility and relevance. This meta-consensus can be divined by comparing the "forced" Q sorts (in which statements are ranked according to a quota for each response category) that are the basis for the tables provided above to the "unforced" response (which is unconstrained by quotas, analogous to use of a Likert scale). In these unforced reactions, all participants responded positively to statements 7 and 18 prior to deliberation, but negatively afterward.

After the deliberative process and the disappearance of Propitiatism there was epistemic meta-consensus concerning two somewhat different sets of claims. Damage to the onshore reef was no longer viewed as an important environmental concern. It was instead replaced by concern about the knock-on effect in exposing large areas of rainforest to residential and commercial development that would accompany the road (statement 10).

The importance of community access *per se* did not decline in importance as a valid normative issue. However, as for environmental concern, there was a transformation in the content of meta-consensus under the broader community access heading. Epistemic meta-consensus changed such that an existing alternative route to the Bloomfield Track (running inland to the World Heritage area) was added to the domain of possible means to this end. Moreover, the road was not seen as primarily useful for access, but tourism. Further upgrading the road surface was seen as detracting from the "wilderness experience" and thus would have questionable economic benefit.

Although the content of epistemic meta-consensus changed, basic normative commitments to community access as a matter of justness and fairness and environmental quality were not substantially altered. This is not surprising. When it comes to normative meta-consensus, one of the more robust findings of the psychology literature on values is that at the abstract level there is a high degree of agreement on the legitimacy of basic values (Rokeach 1979). Individuals differ mainly on the relative priority of values, and how they apply in particular cases. In our terminology, normative meta-consensus is pervasive. Our results are consistent with the psychology literature on this point: the Q factor analysis shows that no normative positions held by our participants were hostile to environmental or community values before or after deliberation. However, prior to deliberation community and environmental values were widely perceived to exist in zero-sum relationship, such that a trade-off would need to be made. Af-

ter deliberation, appreciation of the potential complementarity of community and environmental values had grown. So environmental values were no longer conceptualised in terms that entailed their incompatibility with community values.

(2) *Preference Meta-consensus*.—One type of preference meta-consensus, agreement on a single dimension along which preferences are structured – illustrated above as part of discussion in relation to Figure 1 – can be measured using List's index of preference structuration. This index represents the proportion of individuals in a situation whose preferences are single-peaked on any conceivable dimension (McLean et al. 1999). In the case of the Bloomfield track, this index can be calculated using pre and post-deliberative responses to the five policy options we described earlier.

Table 6 shows the results for the index of structuration for four different preference structures. On the left hand side of the table are the raw preference ranking results pre- and post-deliberation for each participant. On the right hand side of the table are the results of the structuration analysis. Four preference structures are labelled from X to Z. The first of these (X) is the same "level of access" structure as that represented in Figure 1. Participants who share the same preference structure are indicated by a tick in the column corresponding to that structure for pre- and post-deliberation respectively. The bottom row tabulates the total number of participants who share that structure and the corresponding index of structuration.

Structuration on the most common pre-deliberative preference dimension (X) has not changed strongly as a result of deliberation. Of the twelve participants, three had non-single-peaked preference orderings on this dominant dimension prior to deliberation, while two had non-single-peaked preference orderings on this dimension after deliberation. This result by itself suggests that deliberation did not substantially increase the degree of this kind of preference meta-consensus across the participants.

However, following deliberation there are actually three preference dimensions that each have ten individuals single-peaked on it. Participant A is the only one with single peakedness on all three structures at both deliberative stages. This despite a change in preference ordering, albeit a slight one, is of particular interest. The only change in preference here involved a switch from Closure as the most preferred option to the second most preferred.

This observation relates to another dynamic at work than that suggested by preference structuration, which generates a different kind of preference meta-consensus in the form of option reduction. What this indicates is a

Table 6. Policy preference Preferences and Structuration

Part.	Preference Ranks										Preference Structures					
											X		Y		Z	
	BIT	UPG	STA	MAI	CLO	BIT	UPG	STA	MAI	CLO	{BIT, UPG, STA, MAI, CLO}		{UPG, STA, MAI, CLO, BIT}		{UPG, MAI, CLO, STA, BIT}	
	Pre-deliberation					Post-deliberation					Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
A	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	1	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B	4	3	1	2	5	5	4	3	1	2	✓	✓		✓		✓
C	5	3	1	2	4	5	4	2	3	1	✓		✓			✓
D	1	4	3	2	5	5	4	3	2	1		✓		✓		✓
E	2	1	3	4	5	5	3	1	2	4	✓	✓		✓		
F	4	3	2	1	5	5	3	1	2	4	✓	✓		✓		
G	2	5	1	4	3	4	5	2	3	1					✓	✓
H	5	4	2	1	3	5	4	3	2	1	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
I	4	3	2	1	5	5	4	3	2	1	✓	✓		✓		✓
J	4	3	1	2	5	5	4	3	2	1	✓	✓		✓		✓
K	1	2	3	4	5	5	4	3	1	2	✓	✓		✓		✓
L	2	5	3	4	1	5	4	3	2	1		✓		✓		✓
No of single peaks											9	10	3	10	2	10
Index of Structuration											0.75	0.83	0.25	0.83	0.17	0.83

qualitative change in the content of preference meta-consensus, which after deliberation consisted of the idea that the crucial choice was between closure and all other alternatives. The importance of the closure/non-closure choice is also demonstrated by the concurrence between those participants that self-reported a significant preference change and those who experienced a reversal on this binary choice. Thus the full range of options on the degree of access dimension was no longer key (although, as will be seen, still relevant enough to distinguish different positions).

In other words, following deliberation the effective number of options at the heart of the Bloomfield Track issue has been reduced to two, although we also find strong structuration across all options. Why did this occur? Our analysis so far has given us little insight into why the meta-consensus

we have observed at the subjective level has translated into meta-consensus at the preference level. To make this connection, we need to now turn to our other measure of deliberative outcome in the form of inter-subjective consistency.

(3) *Inter-subjective Consistency*.—Inter-subjective rationality requires that the level of agreement among any pair of individuals in terms of preferences should be proportional to the level of agreement in terms of reasons (subjective agreement). We can measure this relationship using the observations we have made in terms of subjective positions (Q sort) and preference positions (preference survey). This measure, labelled inter-subjective consistency (IC) begins by representing on a scatter plot the correlations between pairs of individuals. On the x-axis is plotted the correlation between the subjective positions (based on their Q sorts) of a given pair. On the y-axis is plotted the correlation between the preference positions. Because preference agreement should be proportional to subjective agreement, an intersubjectively rational situation will feature a positively sloped regression line, around which data points are tightly clustered. The regression coefficient is the indicator of IC.

If, as we assert above, authentic deliberation ought to improve inter-subjective rationality, then it should also result in an increase in IC (see also Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007). This is indeed the case for the Bloomfield Track Jury, as can be seen from Figure 2. The figure shows the pre- and post-deliberative plot for all combinations of pairs of participants in the left and right hand plots respectively. Each plot also shows the regression line, with the 95% confidence contour for the regression. The regression *r* for each plot is also shown.

It can be seen from Figure 2 that inter-subjective consistency has increased dramatically during the deliberative process, moving from a non-significant negative relationship prior to deliberation, to a strong one following deliberation. After deliberation, 56% (R^2) of variation in preferences can be explained by variation in subjectivity, up from 1%.[4]

A high IC is possible to the extent that there is a strong meta-consensus on the relevant issue consideration and preference dimensions. At the preference level, that there is meta-consensus on the issue of the close/not

[4] Changes to simple consensus can be also be observed by the distribution of points, where distributions converging toward the top of each axis indicate greater consensus. Subjective consensus has increased only marginally during deliberation from an average correlation of 0.45 to 0.52. Consensus among preferences by contrast has increased dramatically from 0.13 to 0.72.

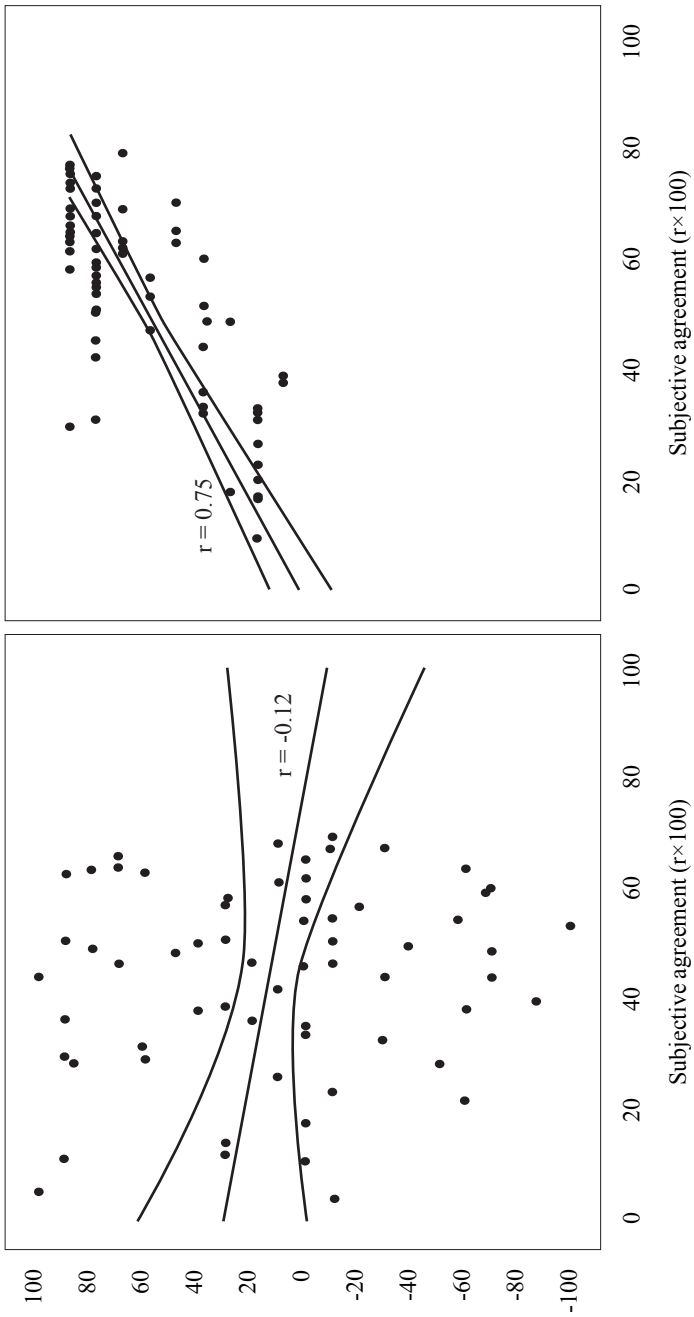


Figure 2: Pre and post-deliberative inter-subjective consistency for the Bloomfield Track Case Study

close road choice post-deliberation can be confirmed by recoding the preference positions according to this binary choice. Doing so results in a post-deliberation IC regression *r* of 0.33, which is statistically significant. It is however less than the IC in Figure 2, where post-deliberative ranks across all the options are included.

Therefore, as we have already deduced, the binary choice is only part of the preference meta-consensus story. In this case, structuration along the level of access dimension accounts for the rest of the high IC. We can demonstrate this by excluding the two individuals in Table 6 who do not conform to the level of access preference structure (*X*, which has a high level of structuration throughout the deliberative process) to see if doing so increases IC, which indeed it does, resulting in a regression *r* of 0.85 compared to 0.75 when all the individuals are included.

Although this evidence cannot be seen as conclusive – larger numbers of individuals would be necessary – it does appear possible to demonstrate the relationship between meta-consensus and inter-subjective rationality by investigating the extent to which the subset of participants who concur with a particular meta-consensus yield a higher IC than the deliberating group as a whole.

If we can demonstrate a relationship between meta-consensus at the preference level and IC, can we also do the same for meta-consensus at the subjective level? Our discussion so far suggests that this should be the case. We have posited that inter-subjective rationality provides the lynch pin between subjective and preference meta-consensus where meta-consensus at the subjective level has a constraining effect on the relevant domain of preferences options and ways in which these should be structured, thus producing a preference meta-consensus.

Our story so far has suggested that Propitiatism played a key role in distorting what appears to be a strong pre-existing consensus at the subjective level, which is mostly expressed in the form of Preservationism. Propitiatism was fixated on a particular set of environmental and community concerns that did not survive the deliberative process, hence Propitiatism disappearing as a subjective factor. This appears to have improved overall meta-consensus and thus facilitated a higher IC score.

However, it is also possible that the increase in IC is due to reasons less elegant than an emergent meta-consensus. Some of the improvement in inter-subjective rationality may be explainable by increased sophistication in political thinking, that is, a simple shift from non-attitudes of the kind often attributed to mass public (Converse 1964; Converse 1970) to coher-

ent attitudes as a result of thinking about the issue at hand (Sturgis, Roberts and Allum 2005). In this light, the low pre-deliberation IC in Figure 3 may simply reflect non-attitudes on the Bloomfield Track issue, with the deliberation merely producing more coherent post-deliberative positions. However, increasing sophistication along these lines can only be part of the story. High levels of political sophistication (and correspondingly well-formed attitudes) combined with low meta-consensus would still result in a low level of inter-subjective rationality.

We can actually test the relative effects of sophistication and meta-consensus by investigating changes to IC among sub-groups of participants. The small numbers we are using here limit the power of the analysis, but it is still indicative. The result of this analysis is shown in Figure 3. Two rows of plots are provided for Pre- and Post-deliberation IC among three sub-groups. Pairs who are both principally defined as Preservationist are shown in the left hand plots. The middle shows those who are principally defined by a factor other than Preservation. The right-hand plot shows the remaining set of pairs involving a Preservationist and a non-Preservationist.

The figure shows a reasonable level of IC resulting from the Preservationist and non-Preservationist pairs before deliberation. What this suggests is that there is some structure prior to deliberation – rather than a complete absence of attitudes. However, the mixed pairs show a substantial (but not quite significant) negative relationship. After deliberation the IC does not change for Preservationists (though consensus increases dramatically). There are only three non-Preservationists left following deliberation, so it is not possible to get meaningful IC results from this group. The Mixed pairs, by contrast, have improved dramatically in terms of IC.

These results suggest that lack of sophistication prior to deliberation was less important than lack of meta-consensus, which was corrected by the deliberative process. The key here is the relatively high IC among the pre-deliberative Preservation and Non-Preservation pairs compared to the Mixed pairs. This suggests two different types of relationships between subjective position and preferences, or two different kinds of inter-subjective consistency before deliberation, depending on which subjective position is most influential. Thus it appears that there was a good level of political sophistication before deliberation in terms of consistency between particular subjective positions and preferences, which is not as strong when we look at the group as a whole. This is not surprising given the potentially powerful effect of symbolic politics. We have shown in very broad terms

Figure 3: IC plots by type of subjective-meta-consensus

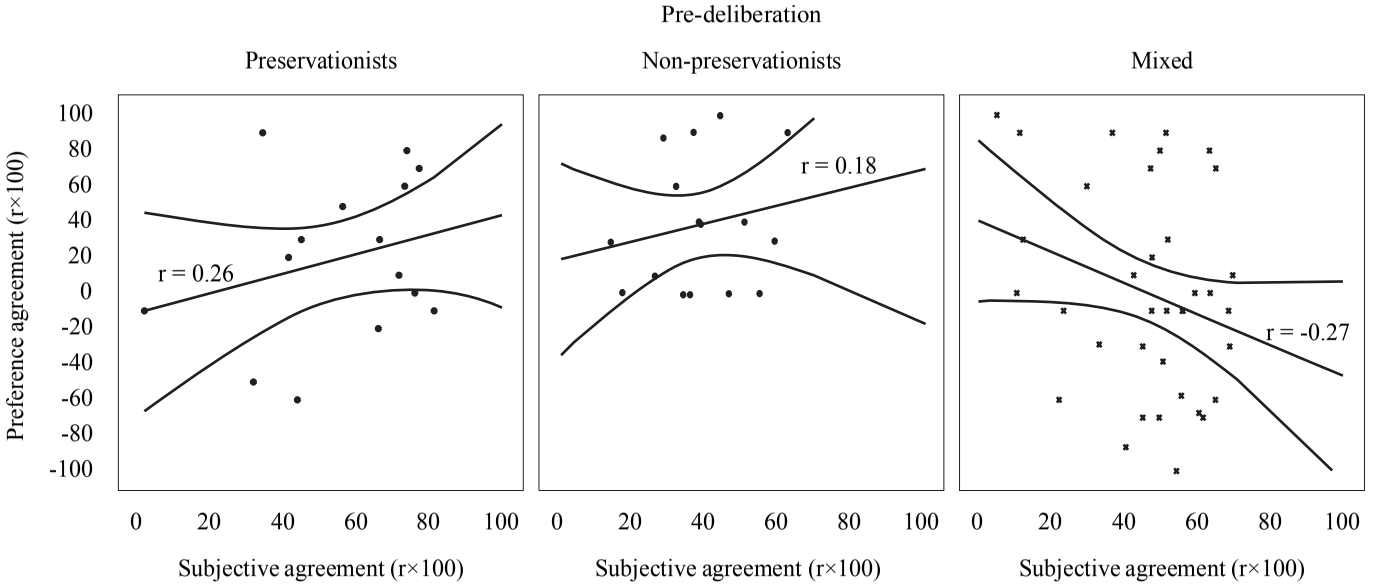
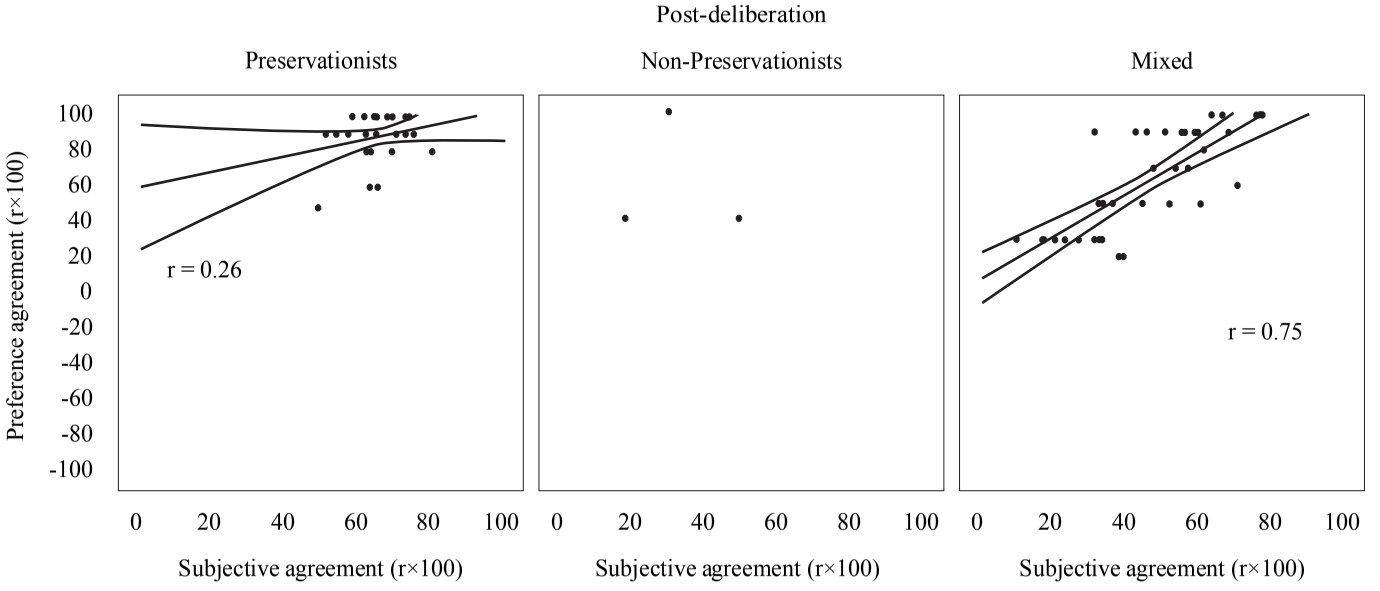


Figure 3 (continued)



how the deliberative process removed this distorting effect and produced a single meta-consensus, resulting in a high IC among all participants.

The methods that we have used to demonstrate this have been largely illustrative. No doubt there is considerable scope for the development of formal methods for identifying the meta-consensus-IC relationship.[5] But it is not the intention of this paper to provide a definitive empirical methodology. Our main aim is to argue for the desirability of meta-consensus and inter-subjective rationality as deliberative ends, as well as to showcase methods that can be used to examine them empirically.

Conclusion

Deliberative outcomes are amenable to empirical investigation that illuminates the effectiveness of deliberative process. We have stressed two sorts of outcomes, meta-consensus and inter-subjective consistency, that good deliberation should produce. Empirical analysis that deploys these measures can inform the normative project of deliberative democracy in important ways.

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[5] Moreover, the IC measure itself is weakest where there is a high level of consensus at both the subjective and preference levels (as is the case for Preservationists post deliberation in Figure 3). As it stands, it is possible to have a high level of complete (and rational) consensus resulting in a low IC.

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Ziele der Deliberation:
Metakonsens und intersubjektive Rationalität als ideale Ergebnisse

Während sich deliberative Theoretiker intensiv mit prozeduralen Standards deliberativer Qualität befasst haben, besteht weiterhin Unklarheit darüber, wie deliberative Ergebnisse konzeptualisiert werden sollten. Im Artikel werden zwei miteinander verknüpfte Konzepte – Metakonsens und intersubjektive Rationalität – vorgestellt, die normativ wünschenswerte Ergebnisse deliberativer Prozesse darstellen. Zudem sind Metakonsens und intersubjektive Rationalität empirisch realistische Ergebnisse (im Gegensatz zu einem Habermasschen rationalen Konsens). Sie ermöglichen eine empirische Analyse von Präferenzwandel, wobei veränderte Präferenzen in Form von grundlegenden Werten und konkreten Bewertungen beschrieben werden. Die Autoren zeigen an australischen Fällen die empirische Bedeutung von Metakonsens und intersubjektiver Rationalität auf.

Les aboutissements de la délibération:
méta-consensus et rationalité inter-subjective comme résultats idéaux

La théorie normative de la délibération a beaucoup contribué à une compréhension idéale des procédures délibératives. Il subsiste cependant de sérieuses incertitudes au niveau de la nature des résultats délibératifs. Dans cette contribution, les auteurs identifient deux concepts interdépendants – méta-consensus et rationalité inter-subjective – comme des résultats qu'un processus de délibération authentique devrait produire. Avant tout, ces résultats délibératifs sont en harmonie avec une procédure délibérative idéale. Ils sont également malléables empiriquement, la transformation des préférences pouvant être analysée en termes de valeurs principales et de jugements. Les méthodes pour évaluer les résultats des délibérations sont fournies et démontrées à l'aide d'une étude de cas en Australie.

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