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ABSTRACT

The economic and social crises the Western democracies are currently experiencing have aggravated ideological polarisation and increased citizens' distrust of both politicians and political institutions. As a result, it has become increasingly difficult to obtain consensus just at the moment when it is most needed in order to put into effect those reforms the situation demands. It is in this context that studies of democratic deliberation gain new relevance and significance, particularly within parliaments, which are the places, par excellence, for political debate and consensus building. However, democratic deliberation requires more than just institutions, rules and regulations: it requires a political culture that is imbued with these principles and values, that is to say, it need citizens and political actors with positive attitudes towards the various dimensions of democratic deliberation. The results obtained here point in the general direction of support for the different aspects of deliberation, both in the attitudes of the citizens' and the deputies, indicating some very specific differences between each of them.

KEYWORDS

deliberation
political attitudes
political debate

* Translated from the Portuguese by Stewart Lloyd-Jones (stewart@cphrc.co.uk).

INTRODUCTION

The deliberative process has been one of the most debated themes in research on democracy since the end of the 1980s. Returning to the discussion on how democracy functions can be explained in two ways: the fall of the self-styled

'popular democracies' of Eastern Europe, which resulted in the disappearance of a competitive counterpoint to the liberal democracies and, from another perspective, the depletion of minimalist state guidelines that dominated in the democracies that developed from the end of the 1970s.

The return to the state has manifested itself in the renewed importance conferred upon those mechanisms that govern democracies, particularly the representation, deliberation and political decision-making processes.

For Dalton, Scarrow and Cain (2004), the proposals that have emerged since the 1960s, which sought to improve the quality of democracy, have developed within three fields: the system of political representation, which seeks to improve this process; in the experiences and proposals for direct democracy; and, finally, in the reforms that tend to encourage different forms of political participation, whether by groups or individuals, in a model that the authors label 'advocacy democracy'. The conceptions of democratic deliberation quite clearly fall into this latter field.

The debate began with Habermas' (1991 [1962]; 1996b) and Cohen's (1989) essentially theoretical proposals for democratic deliberation. This deliberation was defined as a model of discussion between diverse participants with each speaking in terms of the common good all the while taking the interventions of the other participants into consideration, with all seeking to reach a consensus.

Cohen (1989: 22–3) defined the criteria behind this concept of deliberation as 'freedom', that is, the possibility for each of the participants in the debate to speak without coercive restrictions; 'the rationality of the debate', meaning that the debate's outcome will be the position that includes the best arguments in terms of the 'common good'; 'equality', in that each participant has equal status; and, finally, 'consensus', which is achieved by incorporating each participant's best contributions.

Many other authors express criticism from this point, questioning the concept and its scale, its validity, the possibility of deliberation being viable in a real political struggle, and its contribution to democracy. Some of the collective publications and academic articles that critique the literature on deliberation give an account of the proliferation of contributions (Macedo 1999; Warren 2002; Drysek 2000; Fishkin and Laslett 2003; Chambers 2003; Guttman and Thompson 2004; Mansbridge et al. 2006).

In the empirical field, studies conducted at the international level range from the psycho-social analysis of deliberation in small groups, particularly juries or experimental groups, to, on a more comprehensive and political scale, an analysis of debates in parliament and other political bodies (Steiner et al. 2004; Naurin 2007; Luskin, Fishkin and Jowell 2002; Ryfe 2002; 2005; Carpini, Cook and Jacobs 2004; Gastil 2008).

This article has theoretical and empirical goals. In order to achieve the former we will propose a concept of democratic deliberation and its dimensions, which takes the initial proposals advanced by Habermas and Cohen into consideration while also including later critical contributions. For the latter, empirical goal, we will analyse the attitudes of citizens in relation to this normative model of deliberation, considering separately each one of the previously established dimensions of the concept.

Why the interest in capturing the attitudes of citizens towards democratic deliberation? The importance of dialogue and the striving for consensus is a matter that has been studied extensively in the literature on the welfare state, particularly on that part relating to social concertation (Ashford 1986;

Esping-Anderson 1991). The importance of this is analysed both from the aspect of the legitimation of democratic institutions and in terms of the gains in governmental efficiency. However, as we shall see below, the social dialogue of concertation is based on bargaining, that is to say, on the search for common ground between the many private interests (Steiner et al. 2004). It presupposes that there is something to distribute, to increase global wealth. However, in the present period of economic crisis, deliberation need not necessarily rely on haggling over the distribution of increased resources, but rather in the search for consensual economic and social solutions resulting from the best presented arguments.

The deliberative process is not restricted to political bodies, such as parliaments. In fact, deliberation takes place at many levels of society; however, public support for these processes has greater significance when related to bodies of democratic power. It is difficult for a political body, such as a parliament in which different groups and social interests are represented, to operate according to the normative model of democratic deliberation if this model does not have the general support of the people.

We begin with the theoretic clarification of the concepts, in particular the concept of democratic deliberation. Having introduced the critiques of the initial proposals put forward by Habermas and Cohen we then suggest and defend a definition of deliberative democracy that is very close to that formulated by Chambers (2003) while also considering the dimensions of the concept to be empirically operationalised. We then move on to present the goals and methodology used in this study, complete with an empirical analysis that consists of a study of citizens' attitudes in relation to deliberation, based on the data from a survey of a representative sample of citizens in continental Portugal. Following this we will present our conclusions.

DEMOCRATIC DELIBERATION: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF A CONCEPT

The acceptance of a plurality of opinions, interests and directions in democratic and liberal societies has, from the outset, raised the problem of how to take decisions that bind the whole population. It is noted that, in democracy, at stake is not only acceptance of differences, particularly difference of opinion, but also the recognition that all citizens have something to say, directly or indirectly, in relation to political decisions.

It is true that the rule of the majority, which was instituted as a fundamental precept of democracy, seems to resolve the problem. In fact, with there not being any criteria for absolute truth, and with each individual being equal in their status as citizens, within the public and political sphere decisions can only be made on the basis of the support of the largest number of citizens.

Acceptance of the rule of the majority enables an attenuation of the reaction of those who were defeated; that is, it contributes towards the legitimation of majority decisions without, however, ensuring their wisdom. For this reason, democratic institutions will vote following a discussion on the matters for which a decision must be made. This, without speaking of other mechanisms designed to attenuate the blind application of the rule of the majority, such as the elaboration of constitutional texts that are less prone to fluctuations of opinion, the demands of enhanced majorities, mechanisms or processes of appeal and others that we have no space to discuss here.

We need to be clear that the rule of the majority is used to resolve the problem of the plurality of positions when the time comes to reach a decision while

democratic deliberation is applied earlier, that is, during the discussion between those participating in the debate and who may (or may not) change the direction of the debate. In this sense, deliberation does not directly oppose the rule of the majority, but rather rational choice theory, which assumes individuals start out with an opinion based on their own interests, and that collective positions are only the result of an aggregation of preferences (Knight and Johnson 1994).

According to rational choice theory individuals always act in a way to maximise their gains, which results, politically, in the pure logic of representation. As interests are many and varied, the reach of the debate conducted prior to reaching a decision remains very limited, to the extent that there is no recognition of the existence of a 'common good' around which the participants can base their reasons. The understandings or agreements remain, to a large extent, limited to the confluence of positions: in other words, to an aggregation of interests.

Nevertheless, several authors have noted that the process of interest and preference aggregation cannot be reduced to electoral processes or parliamentary tactics, but that these agreements suffer from a lack of discussion and the formation of platforms for understanding (Barber 1984; Drysek 2000; Drysek and List 2003; Chambers 2003). 'Deliberative democracy is not usually thought of as an alternative to representative democracy. It is rather an expansion of representative democracy' (Chambers 2003: 308).

The crisis of democracy during the inter-war years that in many cases led to their collapse is evidence of the limits of procedural rules based on political representation and the legitimation of majorities. The more polarised political and party currents were confronted, without hope of reconciliation, without any attempt or desire to seek platforms for understanding.

The social dialogue of 'concertation between capital and labour' during the post-Second World War period sought a practical social agreement; that is, none of the parties sought to convince the others of the need for a particular model of society, or even concerning the concept of the 'common good'. It was understood that each had their interests, which were essentially irreconcilable (at least at the beginning; later, with the success of the welfare state, the very idea of society became unifying). However, this did not stop the search, through bargaining, for compromises, particularly for sharing the increases in productivity between capital and labour (Mishra 1990; Ashford 1986; Esping-Anderson 1991).

'Social concertation' is the institutionalisation of the dialogue between social partners, within the process of which the state can play a greater or lesser interventionist role. This process is based on dialogue and negotiation in the search for solutions that are acceptable to all concerned. During the bargaining process, each party can give ground on some points, and gain on others on the understanding that agreement is worth more than stalemate.

Perhaps at the political level, some of the models and rules of operation will favour the development of a political culture of accommodation and the search for consensus. In this position are those political systems with the following four characteristics: (1) proportional representation for parliamentary elections; (2) the existence of two chambers in which controversial decisions can be re-examined; (3) politically federal or highly decentralised; (4) institutional escalation of decisions resulting in re-examination of those taken at a lower level. The system in the Netherlands is the one most commonly noted as containing examples of the institutions and cultures that function, and very well, according to this consensus-seeking model.[1]

1. Criticism of this institutional model centre on resolving the problems of governability, problems that can only be overcome with a culture that is highly 'accommodating'.

The deliberative model shares some of the principles of the 'social concertation' model: an appreciation of dialogue and discussion; the search for solutions that are a result of the contribution of all participants; and the search for consensual solutions.

It is necessary, however, to stress that the 'accommodation' found in the deliberative democracy model is, at least partly, different from that in the classical and historical 'social concertation' of the welfare state model (Steiner et al. 2004).

In the concertation model, the understanding results from the bargaining: that is, each one defends a position that best represents their interests. When ground is ceded on one point it is not necessarily because of any recognition that the arguments of others may be better or worse, but rather because there is always a concern to reach a common solution. The giving of ground on some issues is justified by the expectation of gaining ground on others. The search for a broader range of positions is also achieved through the aggregation of interests.

In the deliberative model the arguments are organised and explained in logical terms, eventually with some clear empirical support that notes its contribution to the common good. The final position may include the arguments of several of the participants, but to the extent that they were considered by all to be the most valid rather than as the result of a calculated bargain.

In this process there are information gains, because each participant agrees to share information and also to recognise the gains that result from the discussion of ideas. Refutation is based solely on the ideas expressed by the other, and not on the destruction of their credibility, and is organised in a logical manner and with respect for the empirical data.

It is clearly evident that, with its belief in reason and in the possibility that through reason and with the participation of all one can arrive at a just idea, the deliberative model is the heir of the republican ideal and, further back, of the Enlightenment.[2]

There is no consensus among all of the authors participating in this debate about the integration of the 'common good' into the deliberative model. There are different reasons for this to be the case: some because they defend intransigently pluralist positions (Warren 2002), others because they believe that deliberation tends to blur differences of interests and to legitimise hegemonic forms of the common good (Sanders 1997).

We believe, in first place, these objections can be overcome were we to consider that democratic deliberation represents an abstract model of discussion, in the Weberian sense of the term, which, in the political and social reality, would have to coexist with other equally valid principles, particularly the representation of interests.

In second place, it must be said that the 'common good' may mean different things to each of the participants on any deliberative forum. What the deliberative model demands is that the arguments employed by each participant are not organised simply in terms of the advantages for any particular faction, but rather in terms of the gains for society as a whole.

The republican current, and the generality of the conceptions of participatory democracy, have always valued the debate as an important aspect of democracy in action. Therefore we can say that, at first glance, democratic deliberation fits into this political current. Looking closer, it very well might not be like this (Habermas 1996a).

2. According to Habermas (1996a), his proposal for deliberative democracy, while further from the liberal than from the republican model, also differs from this by the critical distancing relative to the 'ethical overload' of the republican model.

For many of the participative currents, from the historical movements calling for the vote for the working class during the 19th and 20th centuries to the many different radical left-wing groups that emerged after the Second World War, the appeal of participation had more to do with the question of representation and the increase of the political-electoral power of the lower classes. The interests and positions of those intervening were clear and well-defined from the outset and there was no expectation that the discussion would lead to any substantial change to these positions. Political discussion was valued because it was believed that it would increase the awareness of the individuals from the exploited classes about the problems affecting them.

It is in this context that we must understand the opposition to the theory of deliberation expressed by those authors who claim politics is confrontation and political struggle and not a discussion between academics. Those who are marginalised, dominated or in any way socially disadvantaged must be able to have their voices heard, must present their 'live stories', to strengthen the positions of their group and not to allow themselves to be caught up in the logic of deliberation, which demands symbolic resources that they often lack (Sanders 1997; Knight and Johnson 1997; Young 2000).

The demands of consensus politics, expressed for example by Cohen (1989: 23), plays to the advantage of installed interests since those who both want and need change have the greatest difficulty obtaining a consensus. In order to corroborate this thesis, the authors mentioned above note the historical predecessors of consensus, which includes many conservatives and very few democrats.[3]

The definitions of deliberation evolved according to the critiques that were made to the initial proposals advanced by Habermas (1996b) and Cohen (1989). It is easy to see that, according to the critiques, the more polemical parts of the initial definition relate to the criteria 'common good' and 'consensus'.

In an attempt to overcome these difficulties, Chambers defined deliberation as 'debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants'. Questions concerning consensus and the common good are less prominent, but they remain present when he adds that 'Although consensus need not be the ultimate aim of deliberation, and participants are expected to pursue their interests, an overarching interest in the legitimacy of outcomes (understood as justification to all affected) ideally characterises deliberation' (Chambers 2003: 30). While stated in a weak manner, the second part of the definition seems essential otherwise it would completely undermine the core of the initial proposal.

Therefore we propose the following definition of democratic deliberation as:

> a process of debate and discussion in which each of the participants are equal in terms of status and right of expression, where they take into consideration the information and arguments of the other participants in the debate as seek to arrive at a consensus that includes the best of each participant's contributions in respect of the common good.

If we are speaking of deliberative processes in organs of power within a representative democracy, one of the problems we will face is the possible conflict between representation and deliberation. That is to say, how can a member of a democratic representative body – a parliamentary deputy, for

3. For example, the operating model of the British parliament before the 19th century.

example – be both free to change their mind during a debate by accepting some of the arguments made by their opponents (as demanded by the logic of deliberation) while at the same time acting as a representative of others, in terms of the set of interests and values that they represent?

We should recall that democratic deliberation is defined in normative terms, and not as a concept that characterises any given reality. In the example of representative democracies there can be some conflict between the representation of interests or values and the open character of deliberation. It is because of this that the more recent formulations of deliberation, particularly those that we have chosen as our reference (Chambers 2003), allow participants to defend specific interests since they are also concerned with considering common interests.

For the purpose of our study we will leave to one side the definition of democratic deliberation presented above. However, we recognise that some points remain unclear, particularly where Chambers speaks about the goal of reaching 'reasonable positions'. The search for consensus is also presented ambiguously. Nevertheless, the core of the definition is clearly stated, and it is this that we will examine in quantitative terms.

Empirical studies on deliberation generally report on the deliberative processes, both those that take place in real political life and those that are take place in an experimental context. In this exercise, what we propose to do is somewhat different: we want to capture the attitudes of citizens towards democratic deliberation, outside of any actual deliberative context.

Assessments of democratic deliberation resulting from this conceptual framework develop in three dimensions: (1) attitudes towards political participation; (2) attitudes towards the discussion of political matters; and (3) attitudes towards the rules of the deliberative debate (see Figure 1).

The first dimension emerges prior to the deliberative process and relates to those who are participating in the process. Within this are two sub-dimensions: the opening to citizens and voluntary organisations to political participation and the recognised virtues, or not, of this enlarged participation (see Figure 1).

It is important to consider this dimension, by the closing characteristics of the deliberative group that characterises the historical experiences of deliberation. The modern resurgence of the concept emphasises the value of enlarged participation, even in the context of representative democracy.

The second aspect to be considered refers to the 'attitudes towards political debate'. We recall that political debate, understood as the exchange of views between many participants, all of whom in all good faith respect, and seek, the best solution, which is at the heart of the definition of deliberation. We will examine three sub-dimensions of this: the first, which measures the respondent's practice of democratic debate; the second, which assesses the respondent's powers of persuasion; and the third and final, the value, or lack thereof, placed on public debates.

The last of the aspects of democratic deliberation proposed above, 'attitudes towards the rules of deliberative debate', will be broken down into two sub-dimensions: respect for other participants in the debate, and a second that seeks to evaluate the respondent's support for the 'principle of accommodation'.

Having introduced the concept of deliberative democracy and its dimensions, we are ready to move towards outlining the research goals and the methodological and technical methods employed.

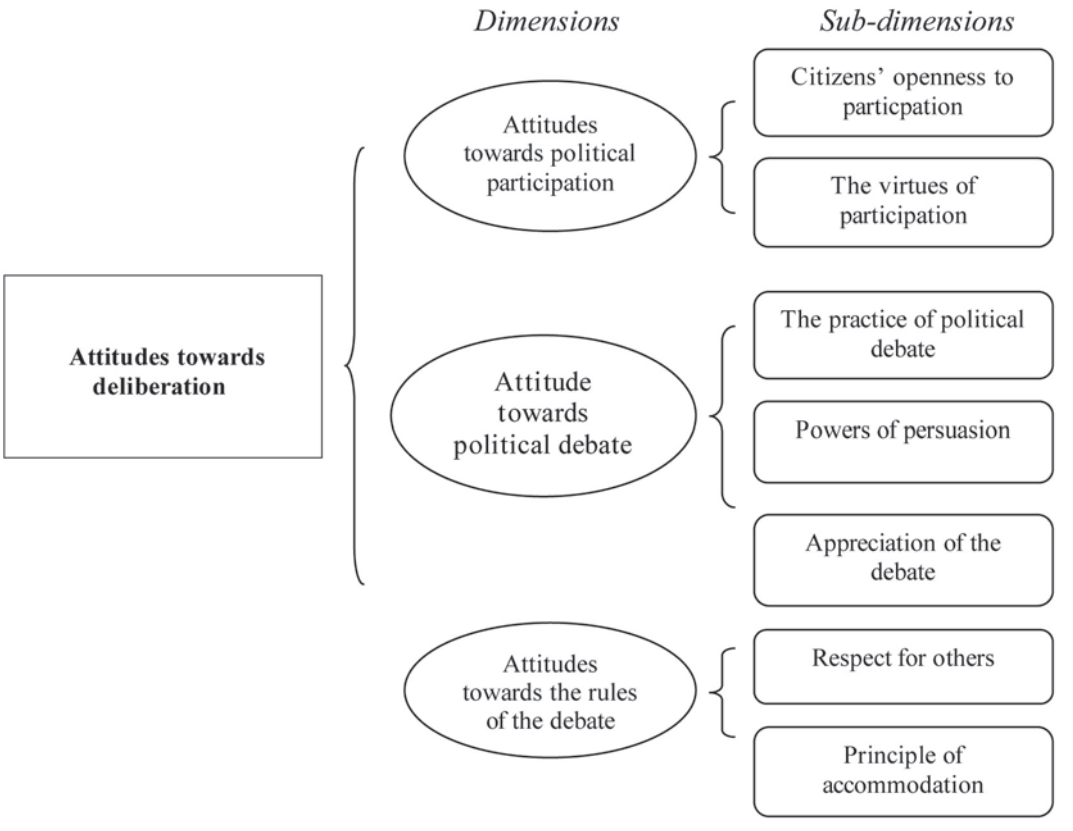


Figure 1: Analytical diagram of the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the deliberative democracy concept.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS DELIBERATION: AIMS, METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The main goal of the scientific research underlying this text is to know in what aspects and to what extent citizens support or oppose the democratic deliberation processes. This question can be split into more specific points: do citizens recognise the virtues of the deliberative process, and if so, which? Do they recognise any drawbacks, and if so, what are they? To what extent do they agree or disagree with each of these aspects of deliberation? Finally, it would be interesting to know whether deliberative processes are viewed positively or negatively overall.

To analyse citizens' attitudes we conducted a survey of a representative sample of the population of continental Portugal in 2006.[4] The questionnaire included several indicators that operationalised the sub-dimensions of the concept of deliberation. In 2008 one part of the indicators of the concept of deliberation was applied in a new survey questionnaire distributed to a representative sample of the Portuguese population (Freire, Viegas and Seiceira 2009).[5]

The closeness in time between the two surveys prevents us from drawing any grand conclusions in evolutionary terms; however, we do have data from

4. The sample consisted of individuals aged between 18 and 70 and residing in continental Portugal. The sample size was 1,000, and was representative of the Portuguese population, sorted by region and habitat. The data was undertaken as part of the 'Participation and democratic deliberation' research project (PDD 2005–08), co-ordinated by José Manuel Leite Viegas.

5. The sample size was 1,350 individuals aged between 18 and 70 and living in continental Portugal. The sample was sorted by region and habitat and the data gathered during 2008. The

two different surveys, which although not sharing the full set of indicators used, allows us to guarantee the data's reliability and assess whether there is a pattern in the attitudes in relation to democratic deliberation.

We contend this analysis of attitudes towards deliberation is a gain for empirical research, one that is limited to citizens but which whenever possible compares the results of the 2006 survey with those of the 2008 survey. It is interesting to establish whether we are witnessing a pattern of consistent attitudes that can define part of the citizens' cultural policy. This line of research in studies on deliberation does not seek to replace the analysis of deliberative processes as they occur in reality within the political institutions, but rather is looks to assess potential citizen support for these processes, taking the purely attitudinal aspects into account.

As we noted above, there are three dimensions, or assessment fields, to the attitudes on deliberation: (1) attitudes towards political participation; (2) attitudes towards the discussion of political matters; and (3) attitudes towards the rules of the deliberative debate.

1. Attitudes towards political participation

In order to measure citizens' attitudes towards political participation we use three indicators: the first evaluated the degree of acceptance, or rejection, of independent candidates in elections for deputies to parliament (Assembly of the Republic); the second measures levels of agreement, or disagreement, with the participation of citizens or the representatives of voluntary organisations in the political decision-making process; the third indicator assesses this same agreement (or disagreement) with letting associations be heard, but this time at the local level; finally, the last indicator evaluated the agreement, or disagreement, with the disadvantages of consulting with citizens when seeking to introduce reforms.

Here we present the empirical results of the first indicator (see Table 1). The data shows that there is a large degree of support for citizen participation through the presentation of independent candidates in elections to parliament with 68 per cent of respondents in 2006 and 66 per cent in 2008 stating they would be in favour of changing the law to make this possible.[6]

The results in respect of the evaluation of consulting citizens before political bodies make decisions are shown in Table 2. Generally speaking, much importance is placed on the participation of citizens and associations in the political decision-making process (75 per cent of positive responses).

	2006 (N=1000)	2008 (N=1350)
Agree	68	66
Disagree	14	12
No reply	18	22

Source: PDD (2006); PTDC (2008).

* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 1: Degree of support or opposition to the possibility of allowing independent groups of citizens stand as candidates for parliament (%).*

survey was part of the 'Portuguese deputies in comparative perspective: Elections, leadership and representation processes' research project (PTDC 2007–10), which was led by André Freire and José Manuel Leite Viegas.

6. This difference is not statistically significant: $Z = 1{,}020877$ $\alpha = 0.05$

7. Z = 4,3343623 α = 0.05

	Agree	Disagree	No reply
2006 Survey (N=1000)	75	9	16

Source: PDD (2006)

* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 2: Degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement: 'Information provided by citizens and associations is essential to the political decision-making process' (%).*

The support for popular consultation during the political decision-making process must, however, be put in context by looking at the results of the final indicator, which are presented in Table 2.1. This shows that 52 per cent of the respondents in 2006 and 43 per cent in 2008 agreed that decision-making could be blocked were citizens and associations to be consulted before implementing any reforms; however, this difference is not statistically significant.[7]

Two notes on this point: the number of individuals who agreed fell by almost 9 per cent between 2006 and 2008, which could indicate an increase in support for citizen consultation and participation in political decision-making. Could it be that the citizens, within a set of necessary reforms, would seek to attenuate the implications of the changes by being less opposed to the government negotiating with different private interests? This is something that needs to be examined in closer detail.

A second note, which stresses that what seems to be behind this objection is the systemic, and perhaps excessive, nature of these consultations, rather than the principle underlying them, which the indicators above shows has a high level of support.

2. Attitudes towards political discussion

A second aspect to be examined relates to attitudes towards political discussion. There are three sub-dimensions to this: the practice of political discussion, measured by an indicator of the frequency of political discussion in daily life (in the family, at work and amongst friends); the second is the power of persuasion in political discussion, which is also measured with an indicator of frequency; the third, appreciation of the debates and political information, measure by three indicators (two relating to an evaluation of parliamentary debates and television in providing clarification to citizens and one that measures the extent to which people follow political events on television).

	Agree	Disagree	No reply
2006 Survey (N=1000)	52	30	18
2008 Survey (N=1350)	43	33	24

Source: PDD (2006); PTDC (2008).

* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 2.1: Degree of support for or opposition to the statement: 'To consult individuals and associations in all situations would lead to politicians not introducing any reforms' (%).*

Frequency with which an individual discusses political matters with …	Friends	Family	Colleagues
Never	28	27	36
Rarely	32	33	31
Sometimes	34	35	28
Often	6	5	4
No reply	1	1	1

Source: PDD (2006).

* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 3: Frequency with which an individual discusses political matters with friends, family and colleagues (%).*

Table 3 shows that, in general terms, individuals do not spend much time discussing political matters, with only 4–6 per cent saying they often discuss matters of this nature. From an analysis of the kind of people who do discuss politics, it is clear that it is in more private or intimate situations these discussions are more likely to take place. In fact, people are less likely to discuss politics when they are with colleagues, with only 32 per cent of respondents admitting to have had conversations of this nature, and then generally only within this social environment. Family and friends show results that are very similar, and generically greater, to the results for discussions with work colleagues, occurring in these circles of interaction for about 40 per cent of respondents.

The practice of persuasion implies a greater degree of involvement in the discussion. In relation to those who discuss politics, we note that only 35 per cent of respondents do so with some or much frequency (Table 4). Therefore, we can confirm that discussion of political matters mainly involves the exchange of ideas and, to a lesser extent, an attempt to convince others to change their way of thinking.

Finally, in the 'attitudes towards political discussion' we have yet to analyse the three indicators relating to the sub-dimension 'evaluation of debates'. The

Frequency with which the individual persuades …	2006 Survey (%)
Never	32
Rarely	32
Sometimes	31
Often	4
Don't know/No reply	1

Source: PDD (2006); N = 1000.

* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 4: Frequency with which an individual persuades their friends, family or colleagues (%).*

8. This difference is not statistically significant: Z = -10,6405499 α = 0.05

9. Z = -3,84615 α = 0.05

	Agree	Disagree	No response
2006 (N=1000)	63	23	14
2008 (N=1350)	58	30	12

Source: PDD (2006); PTDC (2008).

* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 5: Degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement 'Debates in parliament contribute towards clarifying matters for the citizen' (%).*

two former indicators assess the contribution of parliamentary debates and television towards clarifying matters for the citizens. The results show that respondents place a positive value on these debates, although we note that the proportion of those who agree that the contribution these debates make towards explaining matters to citizens is around 63 per cent in the case of parliamentary debates and 83 per cent in the case of discussions on television.

The last indicator in this dimension relates to the frequency with which political events are accompanied on the television (Table 6). Around half of the respondents, 50 per cent in 2006 and 53 per cent in 2008, follow political events either on a daily basis or several times per week. If we also include those who follow politics at least once a week, the proportion rises to 66 per cent in 2006 and 85 per cent in 2008.[8] These are the citizens, accounting for more than two-thirds of the population, we may regard as being at least minimally aware of political events. The difference noted between the 2006 and 2008 surveys allows us to state that the proportion of such citizens has risen during the period in question.

The practice of following politics on the internet is still residual, although it increased slightly between 2006 and 2008 (Table 7). In 2006 only 5 per cent of respondents used the internet to obtain information about political events, a figure that had risen to 9 per cent by 2008; nevertheless, this difference is not statistically significant.[9] However, aware of the explosion in the use of social networks during the second decade of this century, we believe the current proportion of people using the internet for political news will be very much greater.

What conclusions can we reach from a reading of this set of indicators of 'attitudes towards political discussion'?

	2006 (N=1000)	2008 (N=1350)
Never	14	7
Less than once a week	20	8
Once or twice a week	16	12
Several times a week	19	17
Every day	31	56
No reply	1	0

Source: PDD (2006); PTDC (2008).

* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 6: Frequency with which you follow political events on television (%).*

	2006 (N=1000)	2008 (N=1350)
Never	82	77
Seldom	7	9
Once or twice a week	4	4
Several tmes a week	3	5
Every day	2	4
No reply	2	1

Source: PDD (2006); PTDC (2008).

* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 7: Frequency with which you follow political events on the internet (%).*

In first place, we must distinguish the passive approval for and political debate from the low proportion of those who get actively involved in the debate. Value is given to the idea of consulting citizens, although there is also recognition of the inconvenience an excess of this can cause; however, the effort to be informed, to participate and to attempt to convince others only involves around one-third of the population.

The distancing of some citizens from the political debate does not necessarily mean that they are opposed to this aspect of political deliberation, it could simply signal their political disaffection. Anyway, this disaffection can never be an active support for democratic deliberation.

3. Attitudes towards the rules of the deliberative debate

In relation to the last of the dimensions considered, 'attitudes towards the rules of the deliberative debate', two of the three theoretically considered sub-dimensions were examined: respect for other participants in the debate, and the respondents' adherence to the 'accommodation principle'.

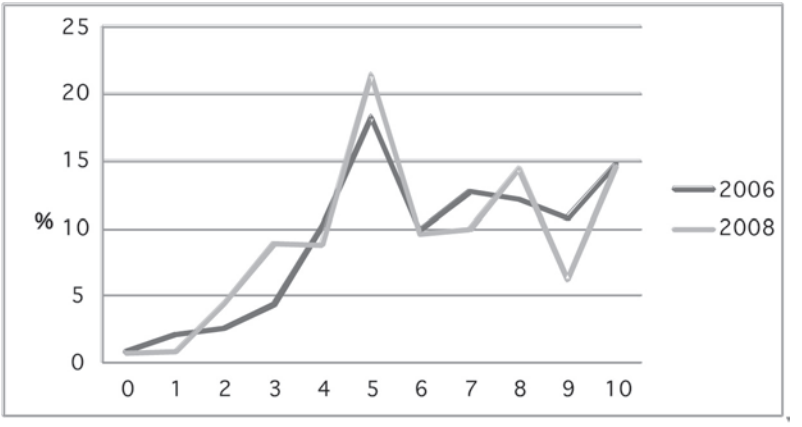
Respect for others is measured using a variable of 11 positions in which '0' is defined by 'in the democratic debate each person can interrupt the other in order for there to be a lively discussion' to '10', which is defined as 'in the democratic debate each must be heard without interruption, absorbing what has been said and only speaking later'. This latter position on the scale corresponds to the deliberative position, with the former being the opposite, as it is related in the critiques of the deliberative model.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of responses for each of the 11 positions on the scale, with average values and standard deviations indicating that there are no statistically significant differences.

If we add the percentages found in positions 6–10 on the scale, which are closer to the extreme of 'not interrupting others during the debate', we see that the majority of respondents, around 60 per cent, place themselves closer to the democratic deliberation model. In 2008 the results were slightly different, with 55 per cent of respondents placing themselves more in favour of no interruptions (Table 8); however, this difference is not statistically significant.[10]

In order to measure the degree of acceptance 'of the principle of accommodation', in the understanding of this concept in deliberative theory, of recognising the ideas of others when assessed as having a better theoretical

10. $Z = 1{,}941697805$ $\alpha = 0.05$.



Notes: (1) 2006 survey: average value = 6.52, standard deviation = 2.445. (2) 2008 survey: average value = 6.24, standard deviation = 2.463.

Figure 2: Respect for the rules on intervention in democratic debate (%).

or empirical basis, the respondents were asked how often they change their minds after watching a televised debate.

Above we analysed the extent of the value the respondents placed on parliamentary and televised debates. Now we will analyse the consequences of having listened to these debates. Table 9 shows that only 23 per cent of respondents admitted to having changed their views, in some cases after having watched a political debate on television. Almost half said that they had never changed their mind after one of these debates. We could, therefore, say that we are confronted with a group of individuals who have little propensity for 'accommodation' in either their discourse or in that of others.

This is, perhaps, the aspect of democratic deliberation that is least accepted by the citizens. Moreover, it reflects the predominance of political discourse in the media and parliament – despite deputies displaying attitudes that move

Position with respect to interrupting others during a democratic debate	**(2006, N=1000)**	**(2008, N=1350)**
Interruptions are allowed to encourage lively debate (positions 0–4)	20	24
Neutral/equidistant position between the two extremes (position 5)	18	21
Interruptions are not allowed, with participants taking each other's arguments into consideration (positions 6–10)	60	55
Don't know/No reply	2	0

Source: PDD (2006); PTDC (2008).

* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 8: Respect for others during democratic debates (%).*

	2006, N=1000
I never change my mind	44
Sometimes I change my mind	21
I often change my mind	2
I never watch televised political debates	26
No reply	7

Source: PDD (2006).

* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

Table 9: Frequency with which an individual changes their opinion following televised debates.

in the opposite direction – which focuses its attacks on the individual or on collateral aspects to the detriment of objective arguments.

However, the reasons for the lack of a propensity for individuals to change their minds are varied, which, on the one hand could be understood as the subject's inability to listen to others and to take their arguments into consideration and incorporate them, while on the other, it could be due to the quality of the debate (the speakers' oratorical skills, the topics being discussed, rules of the debate, etc.).

CONCLUSIONS

Having analysed the empirical data, what can we say in reply to the question: do Portuguese citizens support or oppose democratic deliberation's values and processes? The answer, as could be guessed, is not straightforward. While we note the levels of approval for the idea that the structures of power should listen to citizens and social organisations, that parliamentary elections should be open to those who are not on party lists, the value attributed to televised debates and even respect for the rules of the deliberative debate, we would be able to reply 'yes': the majority of Portuguese are in agreement with these values and rules of deliberative democracy.

However, we can also note the other aspects of deliberation, principles of deliberation to which adherence is not quite so clear. In fact, despite believing political debates contribute towards clarifying matters for the ordinary citizen, very few Portuguese follow politics on television or the internet. This is also despite there being an increase in the proportion of citizens who follow politics through the audio-visual media. There are also few who discuss politics in different social environments, and there are fewer still who seek to persuade others.

The responses to the aspects relating to the rules of the political debate are also contradictory. On the one hand, as we noted above, the majority agree with the principle of 'listening to the other and taking what they have to say into account before responding'; however, on the other hand, the proportion of those who admit to having changed their minds after a debate is very low.

What we can state is that support for democratic deliberation is also mainly passive and defensive. It requires openness and moderation, but it shows itself to be little disposed to apply these principles. The formal respect for the interlocutor is not realised through any actual consideration for what they say.

Given the two surveys took place within a short time of each other there is little we can say with regards to the development of attitudes. However, if there has been some change, it has tended towards an increase in the citizens' political involvement, which has manifested itself in the growth in use of television and the internet to follow politics.

Finally, it is worth noting that some of the dimensions of deliberation were not examined, particularly support for the prevalence of the 'common good' over private interests in political debate. Future research must overcome these absences and construct new indicators that will expand our understanding of citizens' support of deliberative debate.

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