



Deliberative Democracy and Climate Change: Problematic Theory Meets Wicked Reality

Asif Siddiqui – Political Science Graduate Students'
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Topics to be covered

- 1. Understanding Deliberative Democracy (DD)

 - Points of Agreement

 - Points of Departure

 - Tensions within DD

- 2. Green Theory and DD

- 3. Application Problems of Theory

 - Problematic Assumptions

 - Input vs. Output

 - Wicked Reality

DD – Points of Agreement

Political Process should be more than:

- Competition among different groups in society
- Aggregate tallying of votes
- Bargaining as a way of decision-making
- Private Choices of consumers in the market

Political engagement requires citizen orientation to the “collective good” (whatever that might mean)

DD – Points of Departure

Most concern the purpose of DD (there can be overlap):

- One school argues that DD must allow marginalized and minority voices to influence outcomes (D. Kahane)
- Another argues that getting a generally representative mini-public is enough for DD and legitimizes democracy (J. Dryzek)
- Another argues that as long as people are educated through deliberation, that is sufficient for DD (J. Habermas)

DD – Some of Main Tensions

- Procedural justification vs. standards for reaching decisions
- Freedom vs. Equality
- Pluralism vs. Minority Rights
- Ideals of deliberation and participation (in the Forum) vs. complexity of society (in the Market)
- OR: Forum vs. Market

Green Theory (GT) – Why DD?

DD is expected to:

- Increase legitimacy of collective decisions
- Foster critical awareness
- Lead citizens to freely give reasons for choices
- Push citizens to be reflective on questions of common purpose

Hence: Citizens should bridge the gap between strong democracy and demanding environmentalism

GT – Expectations of Behaviour

With DD, people must:

- Respect different opinions
- Acknowledge other positions
- Be inclusive when considering other positions
- Consider other arguments with open mind
- Be tactful in rejecting other positions

Hence: people continue deliberating and collaborating with each other

GT – DD Transforms People

Speaking to others and defending positions leads people to:

- Grow beyond self-interest
- Act in morally responsible way

Eventually, this should lead to:

- Reflection and self-correction
- Recognition that present neoliberalism is unsustainable

GT – DD and Policy Making

Policy-making has input side (deliberation):

- Procedural and democratic qualities of DD should improve it

Policy-making has output side (actual decisions):

- Input side has in increased problem-solving capability and performance
- If better input, then better output

GT – Problematic Assumptions

- 1. People will be transformed
- 2. DD Forum will be sufficiently inclusive
- 3. Deliberation is unconstrained
- 4. Deliberation will lead to common good

GT – Input vs. Output

- No mention of how others might try to manipulate input
- No mention of businesses trying to influence both input and output

GT Wicked Reality

- Wicked issues are the highly complex, circular, fluid and changeable social problems that society faces to which there is no one simple solution.
- Most people do not want to:
 - see lifestyles lowered or cramped
 - have economy negatively impacted by action

GT – People and Technology

Most People hope for:

- Technological solution

Technology:

- Cannot definitively prove that Climate Change is due to Human activity
- Hence:
- People put off making hard decision hoping everything turns out well

GT – Putting of Decision

By not making decision:

- Global Warming might take away options
- People might have decisions forced on them
- Then, people must accept less-than-optimal decision

In sum, GT lacks:

- Psychological dimension of real world problems
- Recognition of how rational inputs can lead to irrational outputs.