

Abstract

A deliberative debate is a process of communication focused on finding good arguments for specific evaluations and solutions to the issues discussed, and addressing important stakeholder issues. The aim of the article is to present the course and results of observations made with regards to the theoretical and scientific discourse of deliberation that took place in September 2016. Participants were academic experts, thinkers and representatives of civil society organisations working in European affairs, as well as doctoral students and other activists. The questions concerned the way to understand the guiding motto of the meeting: More Europe and the way to define and to perceive the crisis in the process of European integration. Deliberation concerned the assessment of the model of European integration and the question whether the current formula is endorsed or contested. In addition, arguments on the best and worst effects of the integration process should be identified, who can challenge the integration process and for what reasons. The purpose of the deliberation was to assess the process of European integration, identify the ground for the criticism thereof, diagnose crisis situations and indicate the desired target model.

Keywords: deliberation, democracy in the European Union, crisis in the European Union

Deliberacja jako narzędzie poszukiwania rozwiązań przezwyciężenia kryzysu w Unii Europejskiej

Streszczenie

Debata o charakterze deliberacji to proces komunikacji zorientowany na poszukiwanie wystarczająco dobrych argumentów przemawiających za określonymi ocenami oraz rozwiązaniami dyskutowanych kwestii i odnoszących się do istotnych problemów interesariuszy. Przedmiotem artykułu jest prezentacja przebiegu i wyników obserwacji poczynionych wobec dyskursu teoretycznego i naukowego o charakterze deliberacji, które miało miejsce we wrześniu 2016 r. Uczestnikami byli eksperci akademicy, przedstawiciele think-thanków oraz organizacji społeczeństwa obywatelskiego, działający w obszarze spraw europejskich, a także doktoranci i inni aktywiści. Pytania dotyczyły kwestii jak należy rozumieć hasło przewodnie spotkania: więcej Europy („More Europe”) oraz jak definiować i gdzie postrzega się kryzys w procesie integracji europejskiej. Deliberacja dotyczyła oceny modelu integracji europejskiej, czy obecna formuła jest aprobowana czy też kontestowana. Ponadto należało wskazać argumenty dotyczące najlepszych i najgorszych efektów procesu integracji, kto może kontestować proces integracji i z jakich przyczyn. Celem deliberacji było wypracowanie oceny procesu integracji europejskiej, określenie podłoża jego krytyki, zdiagnozowanie sytuacji kryzysowych oraz wskazanie pożądanego modelu docelowego.

Słowa kluczowe: deliberacja, demokracja w Unii Europejskiej, kryzys w Unii Europejskiej

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Deliberation as a tool to find solutions to overcome the crisis in the European Union¹

Deliberation is defined as an advanced form of discussion in the context of democratic form of government in which important political and social problems are subjected to public discussion governed by strictly defined normative requirements. A deliberative debate is a process of communication that is aimed towards finding good arguments for specific evaluations and solutions to the issues discussed addressing important stakeholder issues (Cohen 1997: p. 75 et seq.).

The article presents the course and results of observations made with regards to the theoretical and scientific discourse of deliberation that took place in September 2016 in the framework of the deliberative workshop around the slogan “More Europe to overcome the crisis.” Participants were academic experts, thinkers and representatives of civil society organisations working in European affairs, as well as doctoral students and other activists. The discussed deliberative workshops were one of the first to be organised at the University of Warsaw. According to the deliberation formula participants were invited to present the topics and questions that were expected to be answered and discussed during the workshop. The questions concerned the way to understand the guiding motto of the meeting: More Europe and the way to define and to perceive the crisis in the process of European integration. Deliberation concerned the assessment of the model of the European integration and the question whether the current formula is endorsed or contested. In addition, arguments on the best and worst effects of the

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integration process should be identified, who can challenge the integration process and for what reasons. The purpose of the workshop was to assess the process of European integration, identify the ground for the criticism thereof, diagnose crisis situations and indicate the desired target model.

The main aim of the article is to analyse the course of these deliberative workshops in terms of deliberation tools used to conduct public discussion. This analysis will be based on the assumptions of Jürgen Habermas' theoretical communication approach (1999). In addition, the following assessment features will be included in the evaluation: the quality of the arguments put forward, the degree of convergence of opinions and the quality of the consensus reached.

The implementation of these aims will be supported by the operationalisation of J. Habermas's theoretical concept. This is a scale for evaluating the quality of the discourse designed for this article. It provides the following dimensions of speech analysis: (1) freedom of free participation in discussions of all the parties concerned; (2) justification of the claims put forward in the discussion; (3) consideration of the problem from the perspective of the general good; (4) mutual respect for the participants, including their ideas and demands, as well as the social groups they belong to; (5) putting counter-arguments against someone else's position; (6) striving for a rational consensus. The unit of analysis consists of one statement of the person delivered during the debate. A similar scale was used by Bächtiger, Steenbergen, Spörndlie and Steiner (2005).

The first part of the article contains the characterisation of deliberation containing its theoretical sources, understanding and practical application. The next part will contain selected statements related to the main points of discussion during the discussed deliberative workshops. The conclusions and observations made during the observation were concluded at the end. The table containing an assessment of all the statements made in the debate using the scale of discourse quality assessment is attached in the annex.

Description of deliberations – theoretical sources, understanding and practical application

The deliberative understanding of democracy is a developing stream of research. In recent decades, the idea of deliberation has found its fulfilment in public and scholarly discourse as a remedy for the imperfections of the democratic system. Deliberation can

lead to adopting solutions that take into account different social perspectives and are therefore widely accepted (Wesołowska 2010: p. 7).

The sources of the idea of deliberative problem solving should be sought in the Jürgen Habermas' theoretical communication approach (1999). The Habermasian model of deliberative democracy assumes the possibility of convergence of the interests of different individuals and communities that will allow for decision-making through consensus. In this model, the decision-making process does not involve counting votes, but discussing, exchanging views and proposing solutions to achieve consensus (Wesołowska 2010: p. 13). The transformational potential of the participants' beliefs is attributed to the deliberation. According to J. Habermas, a consensus on the proper direction of action and on values and facts should be the desired effect of discourse. This in turn fosters the development and construction of common interests (Wesołowska 2010: p. 13). This model of discourse raises a lot of debate and controversy, both in terms of applicability and effects.

Proponents of the use of deliberation are convinced that it is a good tool in situations of limited resources, ie. in situations where there is no possibility of fulfilling the claims of each party (Wesołowska 2010: p. 28). Under these conditions, deliberation should be judged by the quality of group discussions. It should not be considered only in instrumental terms as a decision-making tool.

Deliberation is characterised by an argumentative form of communication, overt and open-ended debates. Conversation is conducted in good faith and everyone has equal opportunities to be heard, to submit proposals, to formulate arguments and to confront them (Habermas 2005: 324 et seq.). It should be emphasised that the deliberation is far from the aggregation or articulation of certain group interests. It is usually a process of working out a common understanding of the community interest (Sroka 2009). In the course of deliberation, new solutions are sought and at the same time a self-learning effect with a possible change of attitudes of the participants is obtained.

Other researchers have found that deliberation is optimal if the following conditions are met: the discussion is potentially available to a variety of listeners; each listener has a chance to be a speaker and express his or her own position on the subject; participants are to develop a common position (Landwehr, Holzinger 2010).

Theoreticians propose a threefold use of deliberative arrangements: educational, consultative and decision-making. In the framework of the first use, deliberation serves only to educate citizens and to form specific skills and attitudes useful for effective functioning in the democratic system. In the second - deliberation means a method of

consulting citizens, it can provide information about the public, needs and values of the community. In the last sense, deliberation can be a real decision-making process (Wesołowska 2010: p. 29).

Presentation of selected speeches of participants during the deliberative workshops

The deliberative workshops, the search for answers to questions and for the evaluation of the process of European integration have been introduced by quoting the President of the European Commission and his “Message about the state of the Union in 2016” (Juncker 2016). Firstly, the President explicitly called for the acceptance that “our European Union is, at least in part, in an existential crisis” (Juncker 2016: p. 6). Secondly, he stated that “never before have I seen such little common ground between our Member States. So few areas where they agree to work together.” Moreover, he said that “never before have I seen national governments so weakened by the forces of populism and paralysed by the risk of defeat in the next elections” and pointed out that “never before have I seen so much fragmentation, and so little commonality in our Union” (Juncker 2016: p. 6).

These reflections have been the starting point for discussions about the EU crisis, where it appears and what the slogan “more Europe” means for the participants of the deliberation. There was an argument that the theses of the President of the European Commission defined the crisis situation and that the crisis was manifested at the level of the Member States. Since the Member States are in crisis and they are part of the Union, it is possible to conclude that the Union is in crisis. For many citizens, the slogan “More Europe” is understood as the delegation of power in the framework of the new policy areas for EU institutions. The argument behind this thesis is that the governments of the Member States call for more democracy in the EU, suggesting that national parliaments should play a greater role in EU decision-making. Another point is that often the Member States are acting protectively and in place of decisions taken at national level, fearing public opinion and a loss of support for the government, they promote a decision unwanted at the EU level. As a result, when decisions are approved by the public, we are talking about the success of the Union and when they are contested, we point out that the Union is a technocratic Moloch that imposes its decisions on the citizens.

Theses on the dissolution of the Union or criticising it should be compiled, for

example, with the data from the opinion polls referring to confidence in the European Union. In 2016, the percentage of citizens' confidence in the process of European integration decreased, compared to the previous years, and amounted to 33% in the UE and 39% in Poland. In Poland, the percentage of trust in the Union is two times higher than the percentage of confidence in the public authorities, the parliament or the government (Parlemeter 2016). Hence, there is an argument that one of the solutions to the crisis of European integration may be the strengthening of the so-called integration core, even if it appears to a small degree, for fear of criticism. The very slogan is a cause for many associations and also has pejorative connotations. In its mildest form it corresponds to postulates of opponents of further deepening integration in the form of the Europe à la carte (more: Witkowska 2015).

In the discussion on the understanding of the slogan "More Europe", a voice emerged indicating that this may be the degree of approval of European Union powers and strengthening of the competence of its institutions in the federation formula. The observation of politicians representing the mainstream European political parties indicates that they are trying to avoid the subject of deepening European integration in their statements. They feel that there is a lack of social acceptance for decisive integration towards federalisation. The solution to the crisis could possibly consist of deepening integration in several areas that will bring immediate visible benefits to the societies of the Member States, which will be noticed by citizens. The problem arises from the fact that the effects of integration so far, the added value of the Union in its present form, with its freedoms and the single market, are treated by the young generation as something natural, and not an attraction or an engine of integration. The current generation of young Europeans has always enjoyed the freedom of the single market, has had the opportunity to study abroad, and does not know how to live without it. Hence, they do not take these effects of the integration process as arguments for its continuation. They perceive the current problems and worsening of the financial situation as a result of the financial crisis, and these are the effects of globalisation processes. Globalisation has made citizens frustrated and discouraged and they blame the EU for everything. Only the measures improving the existence of individuals, stimulating the economic development of the Member States may be the solution to the situation. In the context of social inequalities and divergences in terms of economic and social development, it is difficult for the EU Member States to talk about the creation of a common identity.

Another participant to the discussion referred to the issue of looking at the European Union through the eyes of citizens. The Union represents a window into the world, has

given rise to opportunities for development, including civilization development, has created open, existential conditions, guarantees respect for the law, especially fundamental rights. Many citizens identify the UE with a culture-minded body that exemplifies the European identity. A single citizen is not interested in the cause of the EU crisis, does not make any reflection on this issue, nor does it diagnose the situation. Citizens are interested in a quick end to this crisis, they expect concrete solutions to save this common organism made up of Member States. Citizens are not interested in indicating which side is responsible for this situation, whether the EU side or the Member States'.

The next participant cited the arguments put forward by young people who are very supportive for the main pillar of European integration – the single market. The economic dimension of integration, the freedom of the single market are fundamental values for young people. They do not want to lose it. They are aware of the shortcomings and gaps in regulations, especially regarding capital markets. They perceive that the idea of a common market should be further developed. However, it does not represent a common identity for them. They expect the EU institutions to be more effective and they are aware that this will only be possible by transferring further areas of competence to the EU level. They expect increased security and the building of a common army which are more important for young people than the regulations of the common market.

Another participant pointed out that the crisis in the EU is not one-dimensional. We are currently dealing with crises: leadership, economic, institutional (efficiency, institutional efficiency, transparency, democratic deficit), identity (what the EU is, what it wants to be), communication (how to communicate EU knowledge and information) etc. For this reason, there is no easy way to overcome this situation. In some areas, eg. the common market, the actions aimed at federalisation of the EU will be the cure. In other domains there is not such a clear answer.

Another participant in the deliberation recalled important statistics. The EU is an organism representing 7% of the world's population and producing $\frac{1}{4}$ of the world economy. At the same time, we are seeing negative trends in the fall of fertility, stagnation in demographic development and recession in economic development. Recent developments have highlighted the weak state of democracy in the Member States, the negative attitude of citizens to foreigners and their reluctance towards the process of European integration. During the referendum on the so-called Brexit British nationals outside the United Kingdom and foreigners of another nationality living in the UK, which together account for some 5 million people, were deprived of their right to vote.

The second example is Luxembourg, where about 48% of the population is not nationals of that country. In such a very European society during the referendum on whether EU citizens should have the right to vote in the national parliamentary elections, the majority spoke negatively.

Another participant has proposed evaluation the crises in the EU by referring to poverty measures characterised by scope and depth. By analogy, these measures can be applied to the EU. The crisis with respect to certain values has its scope and depth. There are values that drive the integration process, such as egalitarianism, high levels of economic development and the associated social well-being, currently also security. It results from the need to protect ourselves against threats, we fear as citizens of the rise of populism, other external threats like terrorism, and yet we have not created one community of values. Referring to earlier statements, the debater referred to the crisis in the political sphere and the growing frustration in society. He sees their source in the excessive expansion of the integration project to new areas and spheres of socio-economic life and as a consequence, the Union cannot experience rapid success everywhere, which is perceived as stagnation, lack of effect – the crisis.

The next speaker referred to an earlier statement on the core of the European integration project, which is the single market. In addition, he positively receives the speeches of major European politicians, such as the President of the European Commission in the European Parliament. This is a sign of openness and readiness to conduct policies in a clear and accessible to citizens manner.

Another speaker referred to the predecessor's statement and added a commentary on the diagnosis of the EU state, made by the President of the European Commission. Diagnosis is apt, but the speaker sees many examples of problems that have not been addressed or omitted. An example of such policies / areas of integration which the society expects are among others common tax base of CIT or wider social integration. EU institutions are afraid to take up these topics. The hasty closing of free trade agreements with Canada and the United States is not accepted by the public as they are beneficial only to selected individuals. Secondly, he referred to earlier themes in the discussion of universal acceptance for the idea of the single market and the exercise of its freedoms. He pointed out the reasons for the previously mentioned difficulties related to the fact that many young people treat the freedoms and benefits of the common market as normal and existing, and do not compare it with the situation before the establishment of the Communities, that they are not treated by the younger generation as a success of the EU. This is mainly due to misaligned narratives and errors in the communication poli-

cy presenting the Union. Keeping the community in the belief that the Union is good, because it offers funds, is good in the short term.

The arguments in the discussion were summed up by another speaker. He recalled that the European Union was defined as a project of liberal pacifism. Economic cooperation and its deepening were meant to consolidate peace on the continent. Every generation means different needs and values, not covering the same narrative. The young generation understands Europe through the prism of their experience which does not contain any narration about warfare. Thus, it is guided by other needs and the resulting values, not just the idea of liberal pacifism.

The next speaker pointed to the problem of discrepancy between law and European reality. Citizens feel that the European law does not deal with matters of importance, for citizens it is associated with the regulation concerning snails, carrots, etc. But this right is passed by the representatives of the governments of the Member States sitting on the Council and the European Parliament. The Union is often accused of a democratic deficit. But over the years, much has been done to overcome this problem. Among other things, the powers of the EP have been extended and the controlling powers in respect to the principle of subsidiarity have been granted to the national parliaments. In the face of growing controversy over the European project and in the context of the UK's decision to exit the European Union, a participant to the discussion quoted the study saying that over the last 40 years about 95% of decisions in the EU Council had been approved by the UK. The participant underlined that this divergence of public opinion with the reality derives from narrative dominance in debates in the Member States. The widespread message is dominated by the falsification of the image of EU law and regulations. This message is to shock the citizens.

In response, another participant contradicted the logic of the argument cited above, arguing that decisions for which there is no consensus within the Council are not taken. They are forwarded to reconciliation at the lower levels of the decision-making process or deferred in time. Hence such a high consensus ratio in the decisions taken.

The next discussant referred to, among others., the question of associating the EU law with derogatory regulations. He stated that this is a media model that promotes sensational events.

The defiance or opposition to the European integration increased due to the ongoing and unresolved migration crisis. The problem is to achieve a coherent vision of the EU's socio-economic development or to choose a strategy that will be acceptable to

such diverse countries as Germany, Italy and Romania. The interests of different countries are very different. Due to the politicisation of the EU project, the Member States are less likely to compromise.

Conclusion

The aim of the article was to analyse the discussion conducted during the deliberative workshops in terms of the degree of application of classical deliberation tools in accordance with J. Habermas' theoretical approach to communication. According to the author of this concept, subjecting all values and social regulations to public discussion constitutes an important feature of deliberation. The issue of the future of European integration, directions and model of development of this project, especially the scope of regulations and the shape of implemented policies by the European Union, fall into the most clearly defined object of deliberation. Participants' presentations during the deliberative workshops were evaluated using a developed scale of deliberative quality assessment. From this analysis, the following conclusions were made regarding (1) the mode of communication, (2) the arguments put forward, (3) the course of the discussion, (4) the degree of consensus, and (5) the deliberative effects.

First of all, not all the participants in the deliberative workshops presented rational and logical arguments as put forward by J. Habermas. In some speeches there were longer narratives and they were less systematised. Narratives are longer expression of thoughts and experiences in the form of stories and the interpretation of events as a story. Narratives are allowed by other researchers as an important communication tool in group discussions such as deliberation (Ryfe 2005).

Secondly, not all the participants in the deliberative workshops saw the need to justify their demands. When constructing their statements, they focused on the description of their observations, on putting forward theses on the integration process, not on reasoning, on creating a clear logical connection with the expected activity, or the reasons mentioned consisted of illustrations or examples. Only a few statements included a logical and clear explanation as to why the proposed solution would help to improve the diagnosed condition. Sporadically, there was a concentration on deepening mutual understanding between the parties and exploring common areas within existing beliefs.

The third important issue consisted of the terms of conducting deliberation and its course. In the discussed observation of the deliberative workshops the conclu-

sions drawn by Bruce W. Hardy and Dietram A. Scheufele (2005) are confirmed stating that the willingness to participate in deliberation is demonstrated by those operating within different social settings and those who manifest strong attachment and emotional commitment to some ideology (according to Johnson et al. 2009: p. 67). At the same time it was confirmed that these people are willing to proclaim their own views, but they are not accompanied by the desire to listen to different positions.

Fourthly, the question of the transformation potential of the deliberation was subject to analysis. The Habermasian concept assumes the existence of transformation potential in relation to the convictions of the participants. A consensus on the proper direction of action and on values and facts should be the desired effect of deliberation. These are constructive features of the course of discussion. The discussed practical application of deliberation is rather distant from theoretical modelling. The deliberative workshops should be referred to as group discussion. Participants discussed the topic, they referred to the main problem from their point of view. There was no systematic impact that would stimulate the deliberative debate. The same conclusions were made by other researchers referring to the course of civic discussions (Rosenberg 2007). They argue that in the real world the search for consensus by deliberation is extremely rare. These discussions mention the following deviations from the theoretical model, which also took place during the deliberative workshops analysed: lack of analysis of the problem, lack of justification of proposals put forward by the debaters, solving the problem only from own perspective, attempts to impose own's proposals on a group (Wesołowska 2010: p. 79).

The fifth aspect refers to the findings on the effects of deliberation. Developing an agreement by a group of people may consist of finding the similarities of views of the participants in areas far from the discussed issue. In this situation, the statement refers to the fact that participants to the deliberative workshops have reached a consensus on the value of the existence of the single market and the four major freedoms associated with it, values that are not undermined. On the other hand, they did not respond to the alternative proposals for the development of integration processes in the model of Europe à la carte or federation. The first question does not address the main question of understanding or the mere acceptance of the slogan "More Europe to overcome the crisis."

Annex

The table below contains an assessment of statements in the framework of the five dimensions. This is the operationalisation of the Jürgen Habermas' concept in the form of a deliberative quality scale.

The number of the speaker	freedom of free participation in discussions of all the parties concerned	justification of the claims put forward in the discussion	consideration of the problem from the perspective of the general good	mutual respect for the participants, including their ideas and demands, as well as the social groups they belong to	putting counter-arguments against someone else's position	striving for a rational consensus
	(0-1)	(0-2)	(0-1)	(0-1)	(0-1)	(0-1)
1	1	2	1	1	0	0
2	1	2	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1	0	0
4	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1	0	1
6	1	1	0	1	1	0
7	1	2	1	1	1	1
8	1	2	1	1	0	0
9	1	2	1	1	1	1
10	1	2	1	1	1	1
11	1	2	1	1	1	1
12	1	2	1	1	1	1
13	1	2	1	1	1	1
14	1	2	1	1	1	1
15	1	1	1	1	1	1
16	1	2	1	1	1	1

Source: own work based on the recording of the debate.

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