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Beyond the divide

An attempt to reconcile constructivist and rational choice views on deliberation in Europe

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Abstract

The recent increase in deliberative modes of governance in the EU has renewed interest in constructivism. However, this constructivist literature has few empirical tests regarding the impact of those deliberative modes in EU policy-making, especially on individual preferences, which remains the realm of rational choice. This paper uses insights on how policy-makers assimilate new information as a result of deliberation from recent rational choice models to inform the constructivist/rational choice debate in European studies. It uses a survey-based methodology to test whether individual attitudes change as a result of deliberation. Findings suggest that individuals change their beliefs through deliberation, while preferences change more parsimoniously according to participants' country of origin, function and the position of the majority, meaning that individuals are more likely to bargain on preferences. Those findings provide evidence to reconcile constructivism and rational choice.

Key words: beliefs, constructivism, deliberation, preferences, rational choice.

Over the past decade, European studies have known a ‘deliberative turn’ (Neyer, 2006). This ‘turn’ articulates itself around the constructivist argument according to which people agree as a result of a convergence of preferences arising from an exchange of arguments in deliberation (Lewis, 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Risse, 2000). This ‘deliberative turn’ is motivated by recent empirical developments: the multiplication of deliberative spaces in the European Union (EU) through the Open Method of Coordination and committees means that deliberation occurs at many stages of the European policy-making process.

To some extent, a large part of the European studies literature on deliberation has mostly normative and functionalist concerns on the ability of deliberation to lead to pareto-optimal outcomes (Lord, 2003:17), and leaves aside the question of the impact of deliberation on individual preferences. For example, one would expect constructivists to explain and empirically inform the crucial question of how deliberation changes preferences to understand decision-making. This question, although it is increasingly considered in other parts of the literature, remains empirically under-researched in European studies. Constructivists often assume that deliberation changes preferences but few focus on how this change occurs. This apparent gap in the literature leads to unforgiving criticisms. For example, Checkel (2000: 1) pointed out that : ‘they (constructivists) typically argue that fundamental agent properties have been reshaped by prevailing social norms, but fail to theorise or empirically document the process of social interaction through which this occurs; agents act ‘as if’ their behaviour become rule-governed’. In the field of preferences, rational choice still prevails. Rational choice is apparently antinomic to constructivism, and in its most traditional version used in

European studies, rational choice assumes that people reach an agreement after having bargained on exogenously fixed preferences, despite some considerations on the importance of deliberation (Lewis, 2003; Magnette and Nicolaïdis, 2004).

This article addresses this gap in the constructivist literature by focusing on how participants assimilate new information in European deliberations. To do so, this paper gets inspiration from recent rational choice models to differentiate between two types of preferences. Some preferences, called *derived preferences* - mostly related to superficial and instrumental issue dimensions, change as a result of new information (called *beliefs*) received through deliberation. But other preferences, called *fundamental preferences* - regarding more normative issue dimensions, remain fixed (List and Pettit, forthcoming)¹. This distinction merges constructivism and rational choice, because it acknowledges that some preferences may be exogenously fixed while others are formed by the socialisation process.

This paper tests this mechanism through a survey-based methodology. Surveys have extensively been used to measure the impact of deliberation, but have not often been used with deliberations involving 'real' policy-makers in European settings. This paper provides an attempt to apply such methodology to European higher education deliberations (Bologna Process). The Bologna Process represents an ideal laboratory to study changes of beliefs and preferences. It is similar in shape to the OMC, meaning that results are relevant to EU politics in general, stretches over a period of time long enough to observe change (from 1998) and contains a variety of issue dimensions, such as the fundamental issue of universities' competition or the more superficial issue of the length of undergraduate degrees.

To measure the impact of deliberation, this paper draws upon the fundamental assumptions of rational choice and constructivism. European studies' account focusing on deliberation use an ideal-type of rational choice which predicts that decisions come from bargaining and preferences remain fixed. They also view constructivism as predicting that decisions arise from a convergence of preferences through deliberation. Hence, if the survey shows that preferences converge, this would indicate that participants reached agreement through deliberation. If the survey reports that preferences remain fixed, it would mean that decisions were reached by bargaining as opposed to deliberation.

As mentioned above, only derived preferences are prone to change and would validate the impact of deliberation. Fundamental preferences, of a more normative character, would remain fixed. Finally, if deliberation is to change derived preferences, it should do so through the exposition of participants to new information and hence individual beliefs would also change as a result of deliberation. This scenario would validate both constructivism and rational choice: deliberation would affect some elements (beliefs and derived preferences), but other elements would remain indifferent to deliberation and would stay fixed (fundamental preferences).

This article firstly discusses investigations of deliberation in the literature, and suggests theoretical refinements with the distinction between beliefs and preferences. It secondly presents survey research as a methodology to measure the impact of deliberation. The paper thirdly outlines the results of the survey on the Bologna Process and concludes with an attempt to conciliate constructivism and rational choice. Results show that beliefs change with deliberation, and while fundamental preferences remain

mostly fixed as predicted, a change of derived preferences occurs. But the country of origin, function and the position of the majority have a more significant impact than deliberation does on this change of preferences. The change of beliefs with very narrow deliberation-induced change of preferences provides evidence to support both constructivism and rational choice and reconcile those two theories.

Deliberation in the EU

The literature on deliberation in the EU so far has had two major trends: a descriptive and a normative trend. The first trend focused on identifying and defining deliberation in the EU (Joerges and Neyer, 1996; Cohen and Sabel, 1997; Jacobsson and Vifell, 2003; Bohman, 2006; Sabel and Zeitlin, 2007). For example, Cohen and Sabel (1997) and Sabel and Zeitlin (2007: 9) view the EU as a directly deliberative polyarchy. Deliberative because it uses arguments to disentrench settled practices and open for reconsideration the definitions of the group; directly deliberative because it uses the concrete experience of actors to generate novel possibilities for consideration rather than buffering decision-makers. It is polyarchic because it is a system in which the local units learn from and set goals for each other. Bohman (2006) followed up on this idea, arguing that the Open Method of Coordination is a direct deliberation of a reflexive nature with multiperspectival enquiry, tied to political rights and accountability. Recent governance models in the EU, such as the OMC, are decidedly pluralistic, with many actors involved. They are also direct because they rely on actors exchanging best practices.

The second tendency in the European studies literature has been highly normative, stressing the benefits of deliberation. Those values include efficiency, quality (Neyer,

2003), reaching moral value (Eriksen, 2006), a shift in loyalties (Trondal and Veggeland, 2000) identities (Checkel, 2000), legitimacy (Eriksen, 2003: 217) and integration (Eriksen, 2006).

But two major criticisms arise from the literature. Firstly, so far this literature has provided little rigorous empirical tests on the actual impact of deliberation on preferences.

The literature has provided extensive accounts of the OMC and committees (Beyers and Dierickx, 1998; Van Schendelen; 1998; Hanny and Wessels, 1998; Joerges and Vos, 1999; Christiansen and Kirchner, 2000; Trondal and Veggeland, 2000; Lewis, 2003; Maurer, 2003; De la Porte and Nanz, 2003; Jacobsson and Viffell, 2004). This literature finds some evidence in favour of constructivism. For example, Lewis (2003) underlines the socialisation process in committees. Beyers and Dierickx (1998:308) look at how participants increase confidence between each other.

But little empirical evidence is available on the impact of deliberation on preferences as such. When available, research relies mostly on case studies (Jacobsson and Viffell, 2003; Magnette and Nicolaïdis, 2004). Those case studies find limited changes of preferences. But these results may not be valid because the impact of deliberation has an indirect delayed effect (Mackie, 2006). Research on individual changes of preferences in European deliberations was also particularly difficult, especially in the early stages since committee and OMC meetings were not public (only agendas were available, Joerges, 2006) while the Bologna Process deliberations, for example BFUG working groups, broadcast minutes and a list of participants. A recent

large scale experiment has provided more methodological diversity (Boucher et al., 2007). But this experiment suffers from a certain bias, since participants are likely to behave differently in an experiment than in “real life” (Lusk et al., 2006) especially if participants usually represent particular political interests.

Secondly, this literature adopts a somewhat idealised view of the workings of the EU and a possible mispecification of social interactions in the EU. Deliberation is not the only mode of communication and bargaining may arise in a supposedly deliberative forum (Gehring, 2003). And it is possible that agreement arises out of bargaining rather than deliberation in deliberative spaces. Because one way to identify deliberation is through individual changes of preferences (Checkel, 2001), it becomes important to analyse rigorously whether individual preferences change to see whether deliberation has an impact.

Properties of deliberation: preference and belief change

Two important properties of deliberation are crucial to measuring the impact of deliberation. The first property is that deliberation changes preferences. The second property is that deliberation improves information. Those two properties are fundamental to distinguish deliberation from bargaining, where preferences remain fixed and no assumption is made on the information gained by participants. How does deliberation shape individual preferences? The constructivist literature surprisingly does not explain the mechanism under which deliberation would lead to preference change. It is contempt to assume that preferences would change as a result of deliberation and comments on the direction and strength of preferences (Eriksen, 2005: 17; Caporaso et al., 2001: 14; Börzel, 2001). Scholars tend to assume an absence of effect, or a very moderate

convergence (Jacobsson and Viffell, 2004). According to Sabel and Zeitlin (2007), deliberation does not change preferences as such but has the property of making participants realise the preferences of others. Eriksen (2006) supports a similar idea, claiming that deliberation may not lead to a consensus based on fully harmonised preferences, but a '*working agreement*' accomodating different preferences. This literature inspires the first hypothesis:

H1: deliberation leads to a convergence of individual preferences

I assume that individuals assimilate the information they receive under the form of a belief. A belief is a representational attitude on the state of the world, which is either binary or expressed under the form of a probability (List and Pettit, forthcoming). This assumption comes from the literature which shows that deliberation improves information (Jacobsson and Viffell, 2003). From this, I derive the second hypothesis of this paper:

H2: deliberation leads to a change of individual beliefs

Does the information individuals receive through deliberation influence their preferences? Is there a relationship between beliefs and preferences? Such relationship seems intuitive: if individuals receive new information disproving their previous preferences, they are likely to change those preferences. The literature on European studies does not elaborate on this. But more recent rational choice models in game theory

and social choice theory include the relationship between new information and preferences. To do so, they distinguish between two types of preferences (see for example Austen-Smith, 1992; Steiner, 2008; List and Pettit, 2008): fundamental and derived preferences.

[Figure 1 about here]

There are two ways to distinguish fundamental from derived preferences. The first way relates to the type of issue dimension covered by each preference: fundamental preferences cover normative issue dimensions. Derived preferences cover more superficial and instrumental issue dimensions. The second way to distinguish fundamental from derived preferences is through their scope: the more fundamental an issue dimension is, the more relationships it has with other issues. A fundamental preference hence leads to a derived preference. But a derived preference is not only formed on the basis of a fundamental preference. It also takes into account new information on the state of the world, i.e. beliefs.

For example, individuals may have a fundamental preference in favour of competition between universities to attract students. This fundamental preference leads individuals to adopt many derived preferences, i.e. instrumental decisions, to make their universities more competitive. One of those derived preference could be to shorten the length of degrees. This derived preference does not only come from the fundamental preference for competition (Figure 2). It also relies on the belief that universities are becoming more and more competitive (hence universities need to adapt to increasing competition by becoming more and more competitive themselves) and on the belief that degrees are increasingly similar across Europe (hence the need to acquire a competitive

advantage by shortening degrees if we assume that short degrees are attractive to students).

[Figure 2 about here]

Since derived preferences are formed on the basis of beliefs and fundamental preferences, and fundamental preferences remain fixed, then intuitively a change of beliefs should result in a change of derived preference. If an individual changes from believing that universities are not competing to believing that universities are competing to attract students, he may be more inclined to change his derived preferences to make his university more competitive.

Is a change of beliefs the only reason why a participant would change his preferences? One problem complicates this mechanism. The relationship between belief and preference is not exclusive because one preference is not only formed on the basis of one belief. In reality, preferences are formed in a multidimensional setting, and may come from multiple fundamental preferences and many beliefs. For example, in the case of the length of degrees, a policy maker may not only take into account competition, but also the issue of costs: he prefers to minimise the costs of higher education (fundamental preference 2), and believes that the price of a long degree is higher than the price of a short degree (belief 2). Given this belief on the costs of a degree and the policy-maker's preference on those costs, he would derive a preference for shortening degrees (final derived preference). There may therefore not be a direct relationship between a change of belief and a change of derived preferences because many fundamental preferences come into play when deriving a preference. It would be quite difficult to identify all the fundamental preferences and beliefs across all issue dimensions which contribute to the

formulation of a derived preference. In this paper, I only focus on changes in two issue dimensions, i.e. one fundamental preference on competition between universities, one derived preference on the length of degrees and two associated beliefs on those dimensions.

Simply looking at whether changes have occurred in beliefs and preferences provides a prior indication of whether deliberation has had an impact or not, bearing in mind that other fundamental preferences on other issue dimensions may have impinged on this process. If none of the three elements (fundamental and derived preferences and beliefs) change, but yet consensual agreement occurred, this means that bargaining took place and confirms rational choice.

If at least one element changed as a result of deliberation, this provides evidence in favour of constructivism. But both deliberation and bargaining could occur. For example, if only beliefs change as a result of deliberation, this means that participants deliberated on their beliefs, but probably bargained on their preferences. Hence both deliberation and bargaining occurred for different elements of decision-making.

Conditions for deliberation-induced change

Given the difference between fundamental and derived issue dimensions, a first condition for deliberation-induced change is that the issue dimension be derived and not fundamental. Magnette and Nicolaïdis (2004) echo that distinction, explaining that member states have strong opinions on some issue dimensions but not on others because some issues are more entrenched than others. Hence:

H3: deliberation-induced change is a negative function of the level of entrenchment of a policy issue.

The level of deliberation is another condition for deliberation-induced change: High level inter-state meetings are very formal. But participants are less likely to speak their minds freely in formal meetings (Checkel, 2000) or even trust each other (Eriksen, 2006); all the more so as participants would have prepared their positions in national or European preparatory meetings before those high-level meetings. Hence:

H4: The higher the level of deliberation, the less likely deliberation-induced change is to occur.

Another important element to understand deliberation is how participants influence each other. Deliberation should lead to a convergence of preferences and beliefs if it leads to a consensus. But what is the direction of this convergence? According to the literature, either deliberation leads to the preferences and beliefs of the majority or to the preferences of an oligarchic minority (Tucker, 2008). We test this claim through the hypothesis that:

H5: the furthest a participant is from the majority, the more likely he is to change his beliefs and preferences.

Characteristics of participants themselves also influence the impact of deliberation. Neyer (2003: 241-242) argues that knowledge-base arguing is by nature deliberative. According to Adler and Haas (1992), the expertise of epistemic communities has a lot of influence over international policy outcomes, when governments have not yet identified their 'national interest'. Experts have already been exposed to a substantial amount of information, acquiring experience of other national policy systems as well as their own. They have formed beliefs and preferences on that basis. As much as experts are capable of influencing other participants' beliefs and preferences by sharing the information they hold, they are less likely to change their own beliefs and preferences simply because they already know the information that non-experts will receive during deliberation. Hence:

H6: the more expertise participants have, the less impact deliberation will have on beliefs and preferences.

Further constraints can structure change. In European deliberations, the profession of the participants, or their countries of origin can constrain the impact of deliberation. Regarding the function, the literature has hypothesised that being at a rather junior and novice level with not much decision-making power increases the probability to change one's preferences (Hubbard and McGraw, 1996: 161-62; Gibson, 1998: 833-5; Checkel, 2001b: 31). Being at a junior level increases the probability of change because junior participants have less at stake, or in other words less strong fundamental preferences, since they do not make decisions. Therefore:

H7: non decision-makers are more likely to change their preferences and beliefs than decision-makers.

Besides, as mentioned earlier, some member states have more at stake in deliberation than others. Magnette and Nicolaïdis (2004) argued that new member states were more likely to change their minds than old member states because they had less at stake. New member states were mostly candidate countries waiting for adhesion, and old member states were mostly Western and richer European countries:

H8: participants from newer member states are more likely to change their preferences and beliefs as a result of deliberation than older member states.

Using survey research to study deliberation

This paper suggests survey research to test the hypotheses mentioned above. Researchers in EU studies have used case studies and survey-based experiments extensively (see Boucher et al., 2007). Yet, in comparison to those methods, surveys which are not conducted in experimental settings have clear advantages. The distance introduced between the respondent and the researcher through the anonymity of the survey may increase the incentive for participants to reveal their true individual preferences and not their official positions in comparison to interviews. A survey also allows researchers to measure the impact of deliberation “in real life” as opposed to a

setting such as experiments containing behavioural bias (Lusk et al., 2006). Besides, a survey provides a larger N than case studies, more capacity to make inferences (Babbie, 2001: 268) and therefore leads to more precise measurements on the change in individual preferences.

A panel survey sent at two different time periods t1 and t2 would provide an appropriate way to measure change (Bruter, 2003). But this type of panel survey requires the researcher to have a full knowledge of the topic discussed between t1 and t2. In analysing real deliberative settings, the researcher at t1 does not decide, may not know or be able to anticipate the content of discussions between t1 and t2. The content of those discussions is determined by participants throughout the process and makes such longitudinal studies difficult.

The type of survey used in this paper is a retrospective survey: respondents were asked to answer a nearly identical set of questions twice in the same survey. In a first part of the survey they had to provide their current preferences and beliefs. In a second part, respondents were asked to remember their preferences and beliefs prior deliberationⁱⁱ. This design is admittedly not ideal. It clearly raises the issue of respondents' memories and reconstruction bias. A bias is introduced if participants do not remember or remember incorrectly their past preferences and beliefs. If respondents do not remember their past preferences and beliefs, they will have indicated a 'do not know' or missing value, and the entire observation is deleted. This leads to a loss of information (Honacker et al. 2001: 49), but prevents bias in measuring change. Comparing results from various methodologies provides a check for retrospectivity. For example, conducting interviews and asking interviewees about other participants' preferences and beliefs gives an

indication of whether participants have provided their true preferences or beliefs if those participants have communicated their true preferences or beliefs with others. If the participant has not communicated his true position to other interviewees, those interviewees may at least have a suspicion that the participant did not reveal his true preference or belief which can inform the researcher. For example, descriptive analysis shows that respondents in France have increasingly preferred competition between universities since their involvement in the Bologna Process (83.16% of them versus 50% prior to deliberation). Interviewees support this finding, reporting a change in preferences among the French higher education community (FCM2, 22 May 2007; FF3, 16 May 07). This confirms the results of the survey and gives confidence in the robustness of the results despite problems arising from retrospectivityⁱⁱⁱ.

The Bologna Process, an ideal laboratory

The Bologna Process provides an idea laboratory to measure whether deliberation changes preferences and beliefs. The Bologna Process started with the Sorbonne declaration of 25 May 1998 and will end in 2010. It aims at creating convergence in European higher education. The Process has gradually increased its participants from four to forty five countries.

Although it is more an intergovernmental process than a European Community one, decision-making in the Bologna Process follows similar patterns to deliberative fora in the EU, such as the OMC (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2007), which means that the results from this survey can be extent to EU policy-making.. Firstly, decisions are made by consensus after argumentation. Secondly, decisions are not binding. Thirdly, the Bologna Process is

polyarchic just like OMC meetings. Participants include: secretaries of states, ministers, civil servants, the European Commission and other EU institutions, academics, heads of universities, university administrators, students, and interest groups: EUA for heads of universities, EURASHE for vocational education, ESIB, now ESU for students and ENQA for quality assurance agencies.

[Figure 3 about here]

In addition to being similar to EU deliberations, the Bologna Process offers variation on the type of deliberation and topic discussed. Deliberations are of different types (Figure 3). The most formal type of deliberations is ministerial conferences, taking place every two years and gathering around 200 participants. In those meetings, ministers agree on the agenda for the following two years. In between those conferences, preparatory deliberations take place, organised by the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG). The BFUG is the management body. The head of the BFUG is the member state hosting the following ministerial conference. The BFUG holds board deliberations, attended by thirty members, and members' deliberations, including representatives from all Bologna countries. It also organises seminars and conferences, to exchange best practices. Finally, national representatives also meet in nationally organised deliberations.

The Bologna Process covers many issue dimensions of higher education. It started to promote the attractiveness of European higher education through the convergence of the length of undergraduate degrees and a common credit system on 25 May 1998. The Process progressively extended to promoting international competitiveness, the autonomy of universities, and quality assurance with the Bologna declaration of 19 June 1999. Since participants change and ministerial meetings take place every two years,

deliberations on those dimensions continually occur and agreements are updated and made more precise. For example, although the agreement to have an undergraduate degree in a minimum of three years has been included in the Bologna declaration of 19 June 1999, deliberations prior to the London ministerial meeting of 17 May 2007 still included negotiations on the length of degrees. The UK for example still defended degrees of a flexible length to accommodate their two-year accelerated degrees in 2007 (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2007: 52). Overall, the Bologna Process constitutes a structural change in most dimensions of higher education policy, from a supply-oriented to a consumer-based provision (Floud, 2006). For parsimony, this paper focuses on two issue dimensions of the Bologna process: competition between universities to attract students and the length of undergraduate degrees, later referred to as curriculum or qualifications framework. These two dimensions have different levels of entrenchment. Having competition between universities is a fundamental issue. The length of curricula is a more superficial issue. As summarised in Figure 1 above, participants will prefer undergraduate degrees to be shorter to attract students, assuming that shorter degrees are more attractive to students, if they prefer universities to compete and believe that universities are competing and degrees are becoming similar.

Questionnaire design and data collection

610 participants to various Bologna Process deliberations received the questionnaire by email for the first time at the end of January 2007. Those participants mostly included the population of individuals having taken part in interministerial deliberations. They received two reminders beginning of October 2007 and during the

third week of October 2007. Respondents had the choice between a French and an English version^{iv}. 155 participants from 36 countries and more than 10 functions have filled in the questionnaire. The response rate was of 25.4%, with around 75% of responses in October 2007. This response rate, even if it seems rather low (Babbie, 2001: 256), is actually close to the average response rate for online surveys of 26% (PeoplePulse, 2008).

To measure beliefs on the idea of competition between universities, the questionnaire asked: *'To which extent do you agree or disagree with the statement that 'there is no competition to attract students between universities'? a- strongly agree; b- tend to agree; c- neither agree nor disagree; d- tend to disagree; e- strongly disagree; f- I don't know.'* To measure preferences on the idea of competition between universities, the question was: *'Would you prefer universities to... a- compete among each other to attract students? b- not compete among each other to attract students; c – I don't know'.*

Concerning curricula, respondents answered the following question: *'To which extent do you agree or disagree with the statement that 'the qualifications frameworks across Europe are different? Please indicate your level of agreement on a scale of 1 to 100, with 100 meaning that you fully agree. Please write 'don't know' if you don't know about this issue'.* Regarding their preferences, respondents had to answer the question *'How many years would you ideally like the first cycle, i.e. undergraduate degree, to take?'* *'a- two years; b- three years; c- four years; d- I don't know; e- other (please specify).'* These questions are inspired by the Bologna declaration of 19 June 1999 and successive Bologna Process documents, which underline the competitiveness of universities as a key theme and curricular reform as an action line for Member states. In a second part

of the questionnaire, the questionnaire asked respondents to remember prior beliefs and preferences for the same questions.

Statistical method and operationalisation

Statistical method

The main purpose of this research is to identify a change of individual belief and preference through deliberation. A straightforward but necessary step to measure this change is to present descriptive statistics on the magnitude and direction of change. A first part of the results focuses on descriptive percentages and present the interquartile range (IQR), i.e. the range containing 50% of observations. A reduction in the IQR indicates convergence. Descriptive statistics provide a measure of change, but do not indicate whether this change comes from deliberation.

A popular and reliable way to further explore the impact of deliberation on individual change of opinion is to conduct a regression analysis. The dependent variables to investigate – changes of preferences and changes of beliefs - are essentially binary and a logistic regression is appropriate^v. The difference of scale between beliefs and preferences - beliefs are measured between 0 and 100, and preferences between 0 and 1 or 0 and 5 - makes it more likely to observe variation in beliefs than preferences. To correct for this bias, I coded the dependent variable change of preferences as 1 if there is a change of preferences and 0 if there is no change. I have coded the dependent variable change of beliefs as 0 if there is little change of beliefs (up to a difference of 20 in

absolute value) and 1 if there is a higher change of beliefs. Since little change is expected of fundamental preferences in competition, the regression models incorporate both the curriculum and competition dimensions. The sample size for the logistic regression results in Table 1 is higher than the actual sample size because each individual has two observations for the two dimensions of competition and curricula.

The coefficients reported are odd-ratios. An odd-ratio multiplies the odds of a change, or increases the likelihood of a positive occurrence of the dependent variable by x%. Odd-ratios inferior to 1 suggest a negative relationship between the dependent and independent variables, and odd-ratios superior to 1 suggest a positive relationship (Agresti and Finlay, 2004: 581) Odd-ratios are easier to interpret than log-odd coefficients, but are even more easily interpreted if turned into predicted probabilities. To convert odd-ratios into predicted probabilities, I use the post estimation commands developed especially for categorical variables by Long and Freese (2006).

Operationalisation

Deliberation

To measure the impact of deliberation, a reliable proxy is the revealed number of deliberations (interministerial meeting, board, working group or members' meetings in the Bologna Process) that respondents took part in. I aggregate the number of meetings by levels: high level ministerial meetings; more informal follow-up meetings (including board, working group and members' meetings) and national meetings (including one-to-one meetings). This excludes other international and European meetings not related to the

Bologna Process. On average, respondents have attended 2 interministerial meetings, 15 to 16 follow-up meetings, and 13 to 14 national meetings.

Another proxy for deliberation includes the length of time in deliberation, calculated in number of years. The number of years is the difference between the start and the end date of participation in deliberation. The length of time in deliberations ranged from less than a year to more than 11 years with the average being 4 years. The number of years spent in deliberation could provide some indication of the impact of deliberation. But it is not as reliable an indicator to measure the impact of deliberation as the total number of deliberations attended. For example, it is possible that a respondent indicated that he took part in the Process for four years but attended only two meetings and had little exposure to deliberation. Conversely, a participant may have been involved in deliberation for two years, but intensely took part in many meetings. The number of years provides some information, but is not entirely indicative of the time spent in deliberation. The number of years is also an indicator of expertise: a participant spending many years in the Bologna Process accumulates experience on the content of the process outside deliberation through the pursuit of daily professional tasks. I therefore use the time spent in deliberation as a proxy for deliberation, although this proxy requires careful interpretation.

Proximity to the majority

A factor of change could be the proximity to the majority. The proximity to the majority is measured by dividing the value of the response prior deliberation by its corresponding mode for participants who have changed and not changed their beliefs.

The mode for beliefs in competition was 20, 100 for curriculum, 1 (compete) for preferences on competition and 2 (three years) for preferences on curriculum. The closer an observation is to 1 after such computation, the closer it is to the majority. Observations similar to the majority are then coded as 1 and observations further from the majority coded as 0.

Expertise

Knowledge of other national higher education systems is a sign of expertise. Therefore, whether a participant has taken part in implementation (dummy variable) is a proxy for his knowledge of his own national system. The number of years a respondent has studied abroad is a proxy for whether a respondent has gained experience of other higher education systems. Finally, I also use age as a proxy for expertise, since the older respondents are, the more likely they are to have gained relevant experience^{vi}.

Function and country of origin

The country represented by the participant and his function can alter the impact of deliberation. The countries represented by the participants are grouped into dummy variables. Countries highly involved in the Bologna Process, joining as early as 1998 for France, the UK, Germany and Italy; taking an active role because they had the Council presidency at the time (Finland and Austria) or are generally strongly pro-European (Belgium) (European Commission, 2000:10) are coded as 1. Those countries are also richer, as classified by the GNI per capita World Bank indicator (2006), and roughly correspond to the Western and Northern European area (apart from Italy and Spain in this

category because of their early involvement and high GNI per capita). Those countries include 63 respondents from the UK, France, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Liechtenstein, Italy, Spain and Andorra. The baseline category includes other countries that have joined later. Those latecomers correspond to Eastern, Southern European and non-European regions. This category includes 60 respondents from Georgia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Kosovo, Malta, Azerbaijan, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Cyprus, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Portugal, Iceland, or New Zealand and 23 other respondents not affiliated to any member state.

Function is divided as a dummy variable between respondents who have a profession with decision-making power in their daily activity and those who do not. Participants who have a decision-making power include 75 respondents: secretaries of state, ministers and their cabinets, heads of universities or rectors, diplomats, experts, academics and respondents accumulating many functions (mostly political and academic). The baseline category includes participants with little or no decision-making power such as students, civil servants, university administrators, participants from other public bodies, interest groups and participants with other functions.

Results

Descriptive statistics illustrate to which extent beliefs and preferences have changed throughout deliberation before the presentation of regression results.

Description of convergence of beliefs and preferences

Descriptive statistics suggest a substantive amount of change throughout deliberation. Tables 1 and 2 present statistics on beliefs and preferences prior and posterior to deliberation for universities' competition and curricular reform^{vii}. Those Tables differentiate the observations of respondents who have not changed their beliefs or preferences (stable participants) from those who have changed their beliefs and preferences.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 1 presents beliefs regarding competition and curriculum in percentages, with 0 indicating a full disagreement and 100 a full agreement with the stated belief^{viii}. Among stable participants (24 of them), the majority agreed that there was competition between universities, indicating a belief between 61 and 100. Among respondents who have changed their beliefs (98 of them), 54.8% did not think there was competition between universities before they deliberated – those respondents indicated a belief between 0 and 40. But since participating in deliberation, those respondents have significantly changed their belief toward a strong agreement that there is competition between universities with 81.64% of them between 61 and 100. This means that the majority of respondents has switched from disagreeing to agreeing with the belief that there is competition between universities.

Another significant indicator of change of belief on competition is the decrease in IQR. The IQR was 40 before deliberation and moved to 30 since deliberation for participants who have changed their beliefs. This reduction in IQR provides an indication that the beliefs of all participants are closer and have converged toward the belief that there is increasing competition between universities to attract students.

Regarding curriculum, only a minority of participants remained stable. 76.68% of the 30 stable participants believed that curricula were different across Europe, indicating between 61 and 100. Prior to deliberation, 67.32% of participants having changed their beliefs also believed that curricula were different across Europe, indicating between 61 and 100. This belief is less strong after deliberation for those respondents who have changed their mind, with the majority (68%) located between 41 and 80 since participation in deliberation. Participants having changed their minds on the curriculum dimension have grown increasingly different from stable participants on the curriculum dimension, unlike for competition, where the beliefs after deliberation of participants who have changed their minds converged with the beliefs of stable participants. Besides, similarly to the competition dimension, the IQR has decreased in curriculum from 45 to 30. This reduction in IQR indicates that participants having changed their minds have converged toward a belief that curricula increasingly similar across Europe away from the beliefs of stable participants.

[Table 2 about here]

Regarding the changes of preferences, Table 2 shows that unlike beliefs, only a minority of participants change preferences, meaning that participants integrate new information during deliberation but may not change their preferences for different policy options as a result. Preferences change very little on the fundamental issue of competition, but more on the derived issue of curriculum: 12 participants out of 106 changed their preferences on competition and 40 participants out of 109 changed their preferences on curriculum. Participants having changed their preferences for competition originally preferred no competition (84.61%) but moved to prefer competition (91.67%)

between universities, aligning themselves to stable participants. Regarding curriculum, the mode prior deliberation went to a degree in four years (30%) but changed to a degree in three years after deliberation (59.46%) for participants who have changed their minds; in alignment with the mode for participants who have not changed their minds (62.32% of those 69 participants preferred an undergraduate degree in three years). The majority of participants after deliberation came to prefer the options which became the outcome of the Bologna Process (universities compete and undergraduate degrees should last three years). This indicates that a minority of participants changed its preferences to match those of a stable majority of participants who have not changed their minds and dictated the outcome.

Overall, Tables 1 and 2 provide three main results. Firstly, both beliefs and preferences converge during participation in deliberation. But beliefs change more easily than preferences: the majority of participants has changed its beliefs but only a minority has changed its preferences. Secondly, preferences regarding competition change less than preferences on curriculum. This result is in line with the assumption that preferences on competition are fundamental while preferences on curricula are derived. Thirdly, when participants change their preferences, they adopt the preferences of a stable majority, from which the policy outcome follows. Those descriptive statistics provide interesting insight, but are insufficient to show that there is a relationship between deliberation and convergence of beliefs and preferences. Many other variables may have contributed to this change. To what extent did deliberation lead to those changes?

Logistic regression results

Table 3 presents two logistic regression models to measure the impact of deliberation on those changes. The first model had change of beliefs as a dependent variable. The second model had change of preferences as a dependent variable.

[Table 3 about here]

Deliberation

Looking at the impact of deliberation on whether respondents changed their beliefs and preferences provides a test for hypotheses 1 and 2, according to which deliberation would change respondents' preferences and beliefs, and hypothesis 4, according to which the impact of deliberation varies with the level of deliberation. Findings show that two types of deliberation have a significant impact on beliefs, but that only the number of years spent in deliberation influences preferences.

Regarding beliefs, only lower level deliberations, i.e. European follow-up group and national meetings are significant at the .05 level for the change in beliefs. Those two types of meetings have different impacts on the likelihood of changing one's beliefs: attending one European follow-up meeting significantly increases the odds of changing one's beliefs by 7%, holding all other variables constant. This makes the influence of European follow-up meetings rather high, since on average participants have attended 14 follow-up meeting: attending an average number of 14 European follow-up meetings increases the odds of changing one's belief by 98%, holding all other variables constant. At the opposite, attending national meetings decreases the odds of changing one's belief. One national meeting significantly decreases the odds of changing one's belief by 8%, holding all other variables constant.

[Figure 4 about here]

To explore the substantive meaning of those results further, I have calculated the predicted probabilities of changing one's belief depending on the number of European follow-up meetings and national meetings attended. Those predicted probabilities are represented on Figure 4. Figure 4 compares the probabilities of changing one's belief depending on the number of European follow-up meeting for a participant having attended no national meeting and for a participant having attended the mean number of national meetings, i.e. 14, holding all other variables constant at their means. Controlling for the number of national meetings by setting it as zero, the probability of changing one's beliefs increases from .6 when having attended 5 European follow up meetings to .94 when attendance of European follow-up meetings increases to 40. For a participant having attended 14 national meetings, the probability of changing one's beliefs varies between .32 for 5 follow-up meetings .87 for nearly 40 follow-up meetings. This suggests in line with hypothesis 2 that deliberation changes beliefs: the more European follow-up meetings participants attend, the more likely they are to change their beliefs. But active participation in national meetings is likely to reduce that likelihood to change beliefs, which could be because national meetings may contain more homogenous information. And formal ministerial meetings do not have any significant influence, reinforcing hypothesis 5 according to which the higher the level of meetings, the less impact deliberation will have.

Regarding preferences, an additional year spent in deliberation increases the odds of changing preferences by 19%, which provides some evidence in favour of hypothesis 1. This result should be taken cautiously, since the number of years spent in deliberation

can also be a proxy for expertise, and the different types of meetings showed no impact on preferences.

Overall, findings show that deliberations lead to a change of beliefs. Different types of deliberations have different impacts on the odds of changing one's beliefs, with less formal meetings having more impact than higher level ones. Finally, the impact of deliberation on the change of preferences is disputable given that only the number of years spent in deliberation was significant.

Proximity to the majority

Both preferences and beliefs are significantly affected by the proximity to the majority. But proximity to the majority affects the likelihood of change in a different way for beliefs and preferences.

[Figure 5 about here]

Being part of the majority prior deliberation decreases the odds of changing one's preferences by 90%. Figure 5 presents the predicted probabilities of changing one's preferences depending on the number of years spent in deliberation and whether or not a participant belongs to the majority. If a participant is from the majority, he does not have a high probability of changing his preferences no matter how many years he spends in deliberation (between .02 and .18). If a participant belongs to the minority, the time spent in deliberation will positively affect his probability of changing his preferences. If a participant from the minority has spent less than a year in deliberation, he has a probability of .21 of changing his preferences. This probability increases to .68 when twelve years are spent in deliberation. Participants spend on average four years in the

Bologna Process, and hence have a probability of around .35 of changing their preferences when belonging to a minority. A participant belonging to the minority is therefore likely to be convinced by a stable majority to change his preferences.

[Figure 6 about here]

Beliefs are positively influenced by the proximity to the majority. If a participant belongs to the majority, the odds of him changing his beliefs are multiplied by 2.36 times in comparison to participants from the minority. This simply suggests that the majority of participants change their beliefs. Figure 6 compares the probabilities of changing beliefs depending on the number of European follow-up groups attended and whether a participant belongs to the minority or to the majority. Figure 6 shows that the impact of the number of follow-up meetings is highly positive for both the minority (from .3 to .82) and majority (from .5 to .91). Although participants from the majority have an overall higher probability of changing their minds, the higher the number of follow-up deliberations, the more participants are likely to change their beliefs for both the minority and majority. The majority is more likely to change its beliefs, but also to influence the preference of the minority.

Expertise

There is no single expertise variable influencing both preferences and beliefs. Participation in implementation at the national level does not significantly affect preferences or beliefs. But each additional year of studying abroad significantly reduces the odds of changing beliefs by 19%. The odds of changing preferences are 26% less likely for a participant as he gets one year older ($p < .1$). This suggests, confirming

hypothesis 6, that the more expertise individuals have, the less likely they are to change their beliefs and preferences as a result of deliberation.

Function and country

The country of origin and function have a significant impact only on preferences. Having a profession with decision-making power reduces the odds of changing preferences by more than half. This result confirms H6, according to which decision-makers have more interests at stake and are therefore less likely to change their minds.

Besides, coming from Western and Northern Europe doubles the odds of changing preferences. This infirms hypothesis 8, according to which new member states would be more likely to change their preferences, and subsequently invalidates the explanation from the literature, which suggested that new member states were more likely to change their minds because they had less at stake. Previous results have shown that the change of preferences is a positive function of the length of time spent in deliberation. New member states would have spent on average less time in the Process than older member states^{ix}. And older member states may be more likely to change their preferences because they have spent longer in the Bologna Process.

[Figure 7 about here]

Figure 7 provides predicted probabilities of participants changing their preferences according to their functions and countries. It shows that a non-decision maker from an old and rich state has a 2.5 to 3 times higher probability of changing his preferences than a decision-maker from a newer state. Preferences are therefore shaped

by institutions while beliefs are not. This may explain why preferences change less than beliefs.

Conclusions

This paper contributes to the literature by providing an attempt to conciliate constructivism and rational choice. The paper relied on survey research to measure the impact of deliberation on individual preferences, and to provide much needed empirical evidence to the rather normative literature on deliberation in European studies. This paper distinguished two types of preferences inspired by recent models in rational choice: one type, fundamental preference, remains fixed. The other type, derived preference, changes. Derived preferences change as a result of a change in beliefs. The paper started off by assuming that if none of those three elements (fundamental preference, derived preference and belief) changed, then agreement most likely occurred through bargaining according to rational choice predictions. If at least one element changed as a result of deliberation (beliefs or derived preference), this would provide some evidence to support deliberation and constructivism.

This paper tested this assumption with a survey of Bologna Process participants. Understandably, the results call for cautious interpretation, because of the low response rate and peculiar methodology of retrospective surveys. Further research needs to replicate those results and extend the use of surveys on deliberation to increase reliability, possibly using different deliberative fora than the Bologna Process, such as OECD meetings. That said, the study still provides interesting findings with regard to the impact

of deliberation. The basic finding is that deliberation has a higher impact on beliefs than on preferences.

The majority changed beliefs on both competition and curriculum, and convergence occurred in both dimensions. Deliberation, measured by the relatively robust proxy of the number of meetings attended, had a significant impact on this convergence of beliefs. This confirms the constructivist assumption according to which deliberation provides more information.

The survey observed some change of preferences. Derived preferences saw most of the change as predicted. The preferences of the minority converged toward a dominating stable majority dictating the outcome. This could suggest that the majority was convincing in presenting valid arguments to the minority. One proxy for deliberation, the number of years spent deliberating, had a significant influence on this change of preferences. But one should not overestimate the impact of deliberation on the change of preferences. The proxy used, the number of years in deliberation, was not the most reliable indicator, and this proxy is not entirely reflective of deliberation. The country of origin and function, or expertise such as age, had a more significant and valid impact on the change of preferences than deliberation. This indicates that participants have probably not changed their preferences toward those of the majority because of deliberation. Instead, they may all have had similar changes in their respective environments resulting in similar but independent changes in beliefs. It is also possible that the changes do not represent actual individual change of preferences but instead show the result of the outcome reached by bargaining. In other words, individuals would assimilate to a change

of individual preferences what is in fact a concession made by bargaining, which confirms the rationalist claim that agreement occurs through bargaining.

If participants are open to deliberate on beliefs but not on preferences, this shows that constructivism and rational choice may not be two opposite explanations, but may explain different aspects of the decision-making process. Both constructivism and rational choice therefore need to be reconciled and not contrasted. Bargaining on preferences may take place more easily and agreements could take less time to emerge if participants have harmonised their beliefs a priori through deliberation, because at least participants would share similar views on the state of the world.

Finally, a key finding is that change is more likely to occur on derived dimensions such as curricula than on more fundamental dimensions like competition. This paper could not provide a detailed test of the relationship between fundamental and derived issue dimensions. But could a change in derived issue dimensions lead to a change in more fundamental issue dimensions? Further research should test how preferences relate to each other. If a change in derived preference leads to a change of fundamental preference, then one could expect a penetration of change through issue dimensions over time.

Endnotes

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Figure 1: Articulation between preferences and beliefs at the individual level

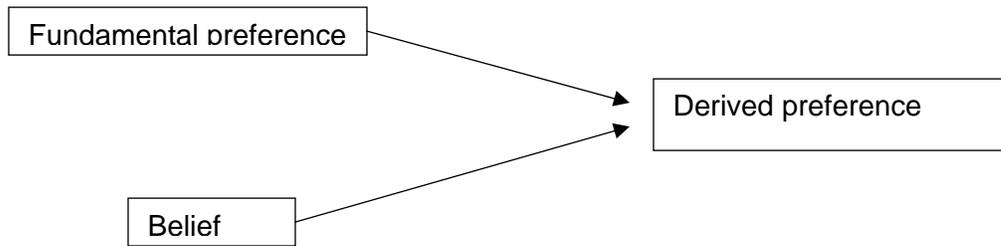


Figure 2: Articulation between fundamental and derived issues of competition and length of degrees

Fundamental preference for
competition between universities
to attract students

+

Belief that universities are
competing for students

+

Belief that degrees are
becoming increasingly similar
across Europe

+

Assumption that short degrees
are attractive



Derived preference
to shorten the length
of degrees

Figure 3: Types of deliberation in the Bologna Process

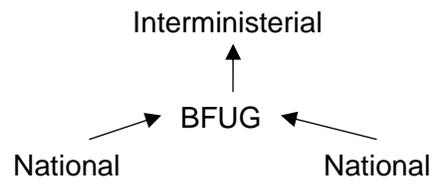


Table 1: Change of beliefs (in %)

Strength of belief	a - Competition			b - Curriculum		
	No change	Change		No change	Change	
		Before	After		Before	After
0-20	12.5	28.57	3.06	3.33	15.38	2
21-40	16.67	25.51	12.24	0	3.84	10
41-60	12.5	26.53	3.06	20	13.46	34
61-80	37.5	11.22	40.82	33.34	23.09	34
81-100	20.83	8.16	40.82	43.34	44.23	20
IQR	40	40	30	30	45	30
N	24	98	98	30	50	50

Table 2: Change of preferences (in %)

Preference options	Competition			Preference options	Curriculum		
	No change	Change			No change	Change	
		Before	After			Before	After
Compete	75.53	15.38	91.67	Two years	0	20	0
Not compete	24.47	84.61	8.33	Three years	62.32	27.5	59.46
				Four years	33.33	30	29.73
				Other	4.35	22.5	10.82
N	94	12	12		69	40	40

Table 3: Logistic regression results

	Beliefs	Preferences
Deliberation		
Ministerial	1.11 (.14)	.89 (.16)
European follow-up group	1.07 (.03)**	1.04 (.04)
National	.92 (.03)**	.94 (.04)
Years in deliberation	.97 (.06)	1.19* (.10)
Proximity to majority	2.36 (.85)**	.10**** (.04)
Expertise		
Implementation	1.71 (.71)	1.44 (.71)
Study abroad	.81 (.08)**	.99 (.13)
Age	.91 (.11)	.74* (.13)
Institutional variables		
Country	1.92 (.36)	2.02* (.86)
Function	.94 (.34)	.45* (.21)
N	190	203
LR chi2	24.67	55.99
Prob > chi2	.0060	.0000
Log-likelihood	-119.31	-78.12

Note: * significant at $P \leq .1$; ** significant at $p < .05$; *** significant at $p \leq .01$; **** significant at $p \leq .001$. The coefficients are odd ratios, standard errors in brackets

Figure 4: Predicted probabilities of changing beliefs with the attendance to European follow-up group meetings

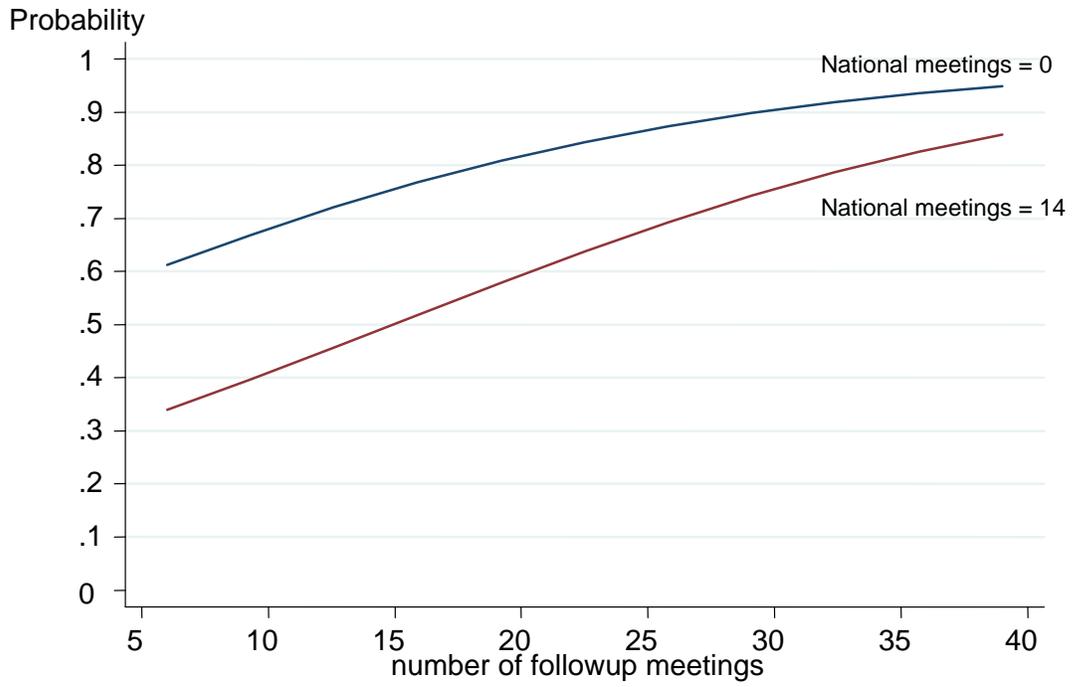


Figure 5: Predicted probability of changing one's preference depending on the number of years spent in deliberation and the proximity to the majority

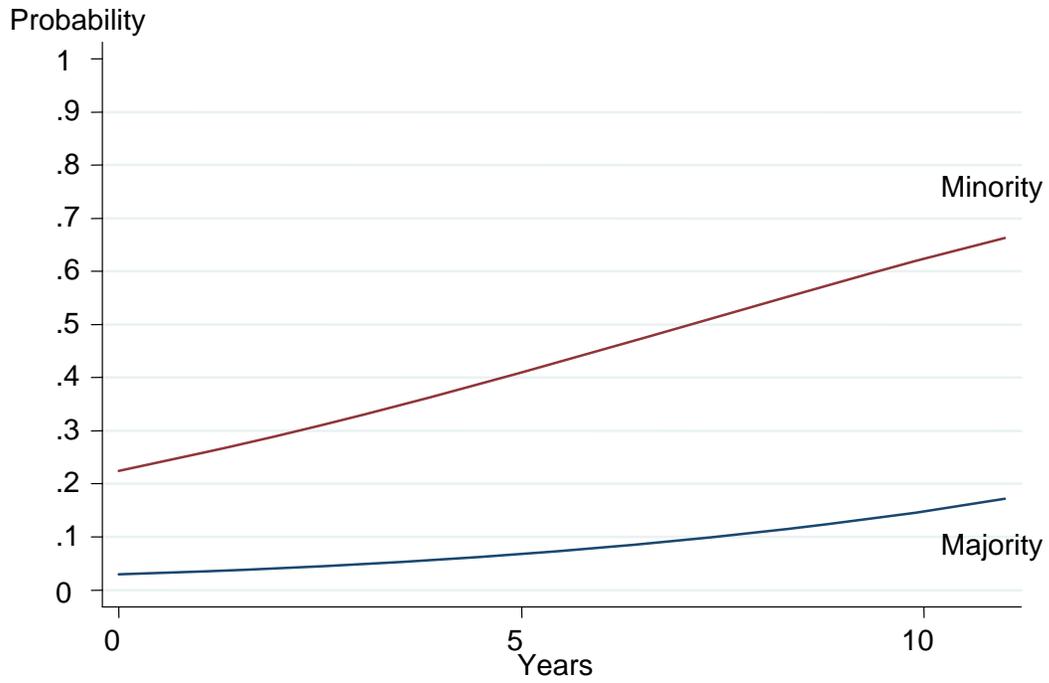


Figure 6: Probability of changing beliefs according to the number of meetings and proximity to majority

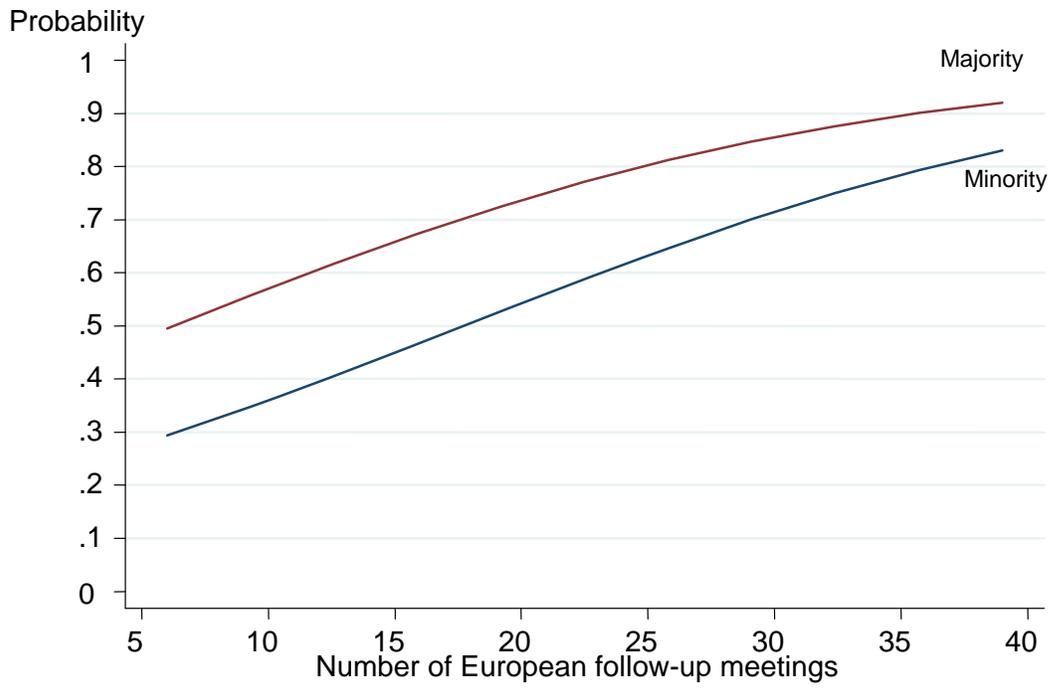
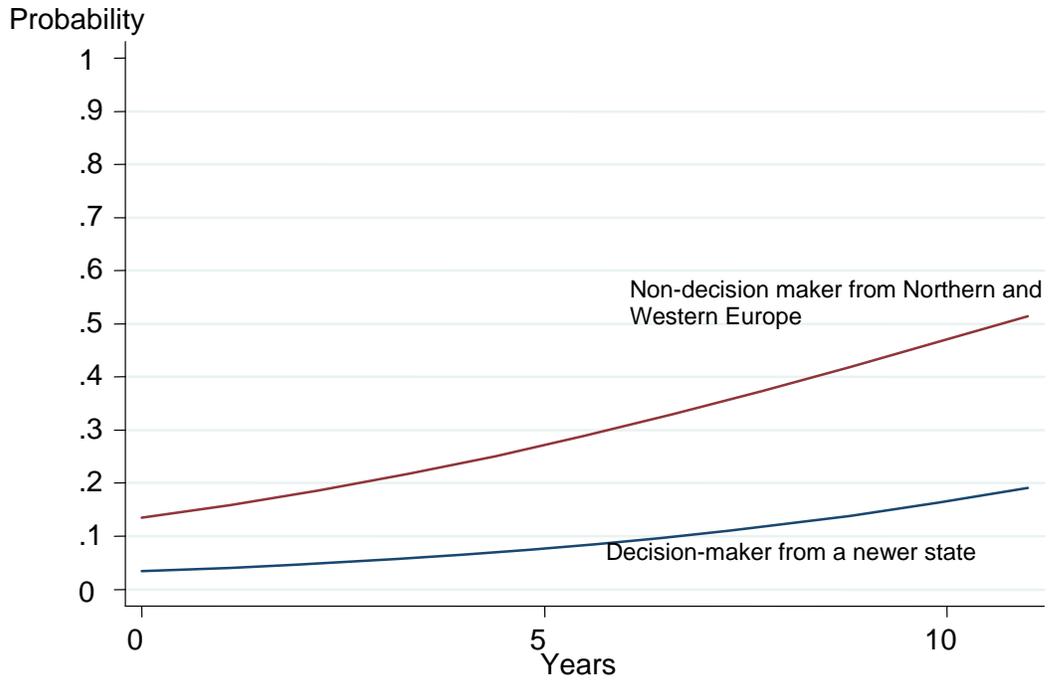


Figure 7: Probability of changing preferences according to country or origin, function and number of years spent in deliberation



Appendix A (made available online upon request).

Reflections and potential solutions to bias arising from retrospectivity in survey research

Retrospective surveys are problematic to use because participants may not remember their past preferences and beliefs or reconstruct their accounts. The survey asks respondents to remember their past and present beliefs and preferences. But do participants reveal their past and present beliefs and preferences truthfully? Respondents may report false preferences and beliefs, either intentionally (1), or because they could not remember those preferences at all (2), a clearly worrisome problem. How can a researcher check and correct for those false responses which bias the results? This appendix discusses potential solutions to intentional incorrect responses before looking at tests for unintentional defaults of memory. The appendix concludes that using multiple methodologies, such as interviews about other respondents' preferences and beliefs, allows checking for bias arising from retrospectivity.

1. Controlling for intentional false responses

How can researchers guess whether respondents revealed their true beliefs and preferences or whether they provided a false response on purpose? This problem is common to most methodologies focusing on individual opinions (Hurwicz et al., 2007). Respondents may provide a false answer voluntarily because they have incentives to reveal altered beliefs and preferences. Those incentives include participants' institutional constraints or the design of the research (Lusk et al., 2006)

To check for intentional false responses, Checkel (2000) suggests **panel interviews** and an analysis of **written documentations**. This methodology provides a valid detection

of involuntary false responses. Presumably, if a respondent provides a false response involuntarily in the survey, other sources would include the true response. But this methodology detects intentional false responses only in so far as the respondent provided his true belief and preference in other sources (press and other written documents for example), but revealed a false belief and preference only in the survey. This methodology becomes less valid if interviewees revealed false preferences and beliefs across all sources, as is common with the '*civilising force of hypocrisy*' (Elster, 1992) and '*laundering preferences*' (Goodin, 1992) when respondents convince themselves of a reconstructed story a posteriori even if this story is not the one which reports the events the most accurately. Besides, a respondent may have even more incentive to reveal his institutional position rather than his true individual preferences and beliefs if the panel gathers participants from different and competing institutions. For example, a participant may not be willing to admit that that a political defeat led him to change his preference or belief if his opponents are also interviewed in the same panel.

It therefore seems that research has hardly developed any reliable methodology to check whether a respondent has revealed a false response intentionally, and to force respondents to be honest. Therefore, researchers often assume that revealed positions are true preferences (Benoit et al., 2007: 6).

2. Controlling for unintentional defaults of memory

Checking whether respondents remember their preferences and beliefs is more straightforward. A logical first check is to use data from the **survey itself**. Clearly a bias

arising from a default of memory is more of a concern for past preferences and beliefs than current ones. It seems fair to assume that respondents would remember their beliefs and preferences for up to one year (22.58% of respondents have participated in the Bologna Process for about a year). But what about respondents who have been involved for a longer period of time? The majority of respondents 63.23% has been involved in the Process for four years with 8.39% having been involved for 10 years or more. Can those respondents remember the beliefs and preferences they held four to ten years ago accurately?

Defaults of memory do not bias the survey as such as long as respondents indicated this default, for example by choosing the option 'do not know' or not answering the question. But a bias arises if respondents chose any answer instead of indicating that they could not remember.

Two indicators provide a simple first step to measure the extent to which default of memory biased the results: the number of 'do not know' and missing cases. If the number of 'do not know' is higher for past preferences and beliefs than present ones, this indicates that participants chose the 'do not know' option (instead of any option which would bias the results) when they genuinely could not remember. Respondents would also have had more incentive to stop the survey if they could not remember, hence the importance of looking at the number of missing cases.

Table A1 shows that the number of 'do not know' is considerably higher for past beliefs and preferences than for present ones. The number of missing cases is also higher for past beliefs and preferences. Missing values make the researcher lose valuable data, and result in deleting the entire case, as in this paper (Honacker et al., 2001). But missing

values also provide an indication that respondents may have answered as close to their memory as possible, because they stopped filling in the survey when, among other possible reasons, they could not remember.

Table A1: percentage of ‘do not know’ and missing cases

Do not know	Present	Past	Missing	Present	Past
Preference			Preference		
Competition	3.9	12.3	Competition	10.96	18.7
Curriculum	2.27	10.66	Curriculum	14.83	21.29
Belief			Belief		
Competition	0.6	2.6	Competition	10.97	18.71
Curriculum	15.5	27.1	Curriculum	12.9	19.35

N = 155

Looking at the number of ‘do not know’ and missing cases may not be entirely valid indicators because of the variety of reasons justifying the choice of those options. Concerning missing cases, participants have other reasons than not remembering to stop filling in the survey. They could simply have run out of time. Concerning ‘do not know’ observations, participants could also have other reasons than not remembering for choosing that option. For example, they could have chosen ‘do not know’ if they truly did not know about the issue. The different meanings of ‘do not know’ and missing cases however do not affect the results of this paper because all the ‘do not know’ cases have been deleted. Further research could determine the different meanings of ‘do not know’, for example through the interview of a sample of respondents, or could be the object of a detailed investigation during pilot studies in further replications.

More importantly, some respondents may have an incentive to provide any answer instead of admitting that they could not remember or did not know about the issue. This

behavior would introduce a bias in the survey because respondents would prefer to provide false preferences and beliefs rather than none.

Analysing the **pattern** of ‘do not know’ and missing cases according to the characteristics of participants may indicate which type of participant is more likely to cover up for his default of memory or end the survey prematurely. The presence of a certain pattern allows the researcher to control for the randomness of false responses. Table A2 presents the percentage of ‘do not know’ and missing responses per function for past preferences and beliefs. Table A2 shows that respondents who indicated ‘do not know’ were systematically more likely to be non decision-makers than decision-makers. There is no clear pattern in the number of missing cases, because missing cases can be due to many other factors than not remembering, such as a lack of time to entirely fill in the survey as mentioned above. The pattern regarding the distribution of ‘do not know’ shows that at face value decision-makers are more likely to remember past beliefs and preferences than non decision-makers. But decision-makers may also be more willing to provide any answer rather than admitting not knowing or not remembering because they have more at stake in terms of reputation.

Distinguishing which profile of respondent may provide a false belief or preference does not provide a clear cut solution. But those descriptive statistics at least control for some patterns in responses, and provide a basis for the development of more sophisticated methodologies to control for the difference between true and false responses in further research.

Table A2: percentage of ‘do not know’ and missing cases per function for prior beliefs and preferences

		Beliefs		Preferences	
		Non decision-maker	Decision-maker	Non decision-maker	Decision-maker
Competition	Do not know	100	0	52.63	47.37
	Missing	48.28	51.72	48.28	51.72
Curriculum	Do not know	61.9	38.1	76.92	23.08
	Missing	51.43	48.57	51.52	48.48

Apart from looking at survey data, another solution to check for defaults of memory would be to **impute missing data**, using algorithms such as the one developed for example by Honacker et al. (2001). The logic behind this methodology would be to run similar calculations on the imputed dataset and the non-imputed dataset. If the results are similar, this would mean that missing values do not bias the results. But this methodology would introduce a certain number of problems. Firstly, the dataset contains 14% of missing data on average. With such level of missing data, common imputation techniques would bias the results. Secondly, whatever the imputation technique, data is imputed on the basis of selected variables. The comparison between the two sets of results (from imputed and non-imputed dataset) would suffer from a problem of endogeneity.

A more reliable and final option to check for intentional or unintentional false responses could be to use multiple methodologies, for example **asking interviewees about other participants' preferences and beliefs** and comparing those answers to survey results. Asking interviewees about other participants' preferences and beliefs would provide an indication of whether participants have provided their true preferences and beliefs, but only if those participants have communicated their true preferences or beliefs to others. If the participant has not communicated his true position to other

interviewees, those others may at least have a suspicion that the participant did not reveal his true preference or belief and can inform the researcher. For example, descriptive analysis shows that respondents in France have been more likely to prefer competition between universities since their involvement in the Bologna Process (83.16% of them versus 50% prior to deliberation). This finding is substantiated by many interviewees, who reported a change in preferences of different participants among the French higher education community regarding the marketisation of higher education (FCM2, 22 May 2007; FP1, 28 April 2007; FF3, 16 May 07). This confirms the results of the survey and indicates that the problem of retrospectivity may not entirely bias the results of this paper.

Hence this particular interview technique provides a useful complement to survey research to check for the problem of retrospectivity. And in conclusion multiple methodologies relying on qualitative interviews constitute a reliable and necessary addition to retrospective surveys.

References Appendix A

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The dataset will be available online upon request.

ⁱ This terminology is adapted from List and Pettit (forthcoming).

ⁱⁱ Some differences in the formulation of questions were included to avoid an impression of repetition.

Those differences do not occur for the issue dimensions presented above and do not affect the results.

ⁱⁱⁱ For further discussions on retrospectivity, see appendix A (available online upon request).

^{iv} The questionnaire is accessible online. Viewer access available upon request

^v A multiple regression would be inappropriate: it would violate the assumption of OLS regression (the error terms have to be normally distributed) by treating a dependent variable by nature categorical as interval. A probit model provides similar results to the logistic model. But the logistic regression (odds-ratios) are easier to interpret than probit coefficients for an independent variable x . Probit coefficients, when positive, indicate that, when x increases, the mean of the distribution of predicted probabilities for each of the ordered values increases (Greene, 1993: 674).

^{vi} Age is coded by category: 1 = 15-24; 2 = 25-34; 3 = 35-44; 4 = 45-54; 5 = 55-64; 6 = 65 years old and above.

^{vii} To avoid collinearity, this paper focuses on first preferences only.

^{viii} Table 1 presents standardised measurements of beliefs for competition from 0 to 100 so that percentages can be directly comparable to beliefs on the length of degrees.

^{ix} New member states have spent on average one less year in deliberation than older member states.