The London School of Economics and Political Science

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Deliberative Democracy Within Parties

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Declaration

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Statement on work published from this thesis

An earlier version of chapter 1 of this thesis has been published as "A Deliberative Model of Intra-Party Democracy" in the *Journal of Political Philosophy* (2016). Passages from chapters 3 and 4 are used in a paper entitled "Intra-Party Democracy Beyond Aggregation", which is forthcoming in *Party Politics.* I acknowledge John Wiley and Sons and Sage Publishing for permission to reproduce the material.

Abstract

Political parties serve a number of vital functions in representative democracies. Connecting citizens to government is perhaps the most important one. This is how parties were traditionally conceived, and it continues to be the main standard according to which their legitimacy as representative institutions is evaluated. In recent times, observers have noted a growing disconnect between citizens and parties. Parties have gradually transformed from agents that mediate between state and civil society to agents of the state. This sits uncomfortably with the ideal of parties as connectors of citizens and government. How can their capacity to perform this function be restored?

This thesis seeks to offer a new answer to this question. Its main argument is that to revitalise their capacity to connect citizens and government, parties need to become more internally democratic, and that they need to become more internally democratic in a particular way, namely more internally *deliberative*. By this is meant that parties need to strengthen channels of communication from the bottom up and avail themselves of their internal deliberative resources: of the partisans on the ground, who deliberate over the demands of their community in local party branches. The theoretical part of the thesis proposes a model—called a "deliberative model of intra-party democracy"—showing how these traditional sites of partisanship can be empowered.

The empirical part of the thesis then asks whether such a model can be realised in real-world parties. The main focus is here on the deliberative capacity of organised party members, which is likely the first target of scepticism. I examine three questions, drawing on the findings of a small-scale study of deliberation in party branches in Social Democratic parties in Germany and Austria: (1) Do party branches provide favourable preconditions for deliberation? (2) Are the political discussions in the branches "deliberative", in the sense that they are marked by respectful exchanges of reasons? (3) When does intra-party deliberation fail? Though mainly indicative, the analysis of the empirical material suggests that party members do possess the deliberative capacity required to realise a deliberative model of intra-party democracy, and that possible deliberative deficiencies can be countervailed using simple institutional fixes. In light of this, the thesis concludes that making parties more internally deliberative in order to reconnect citizens with government is well within reach.

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[T]he condition of the parties is the best possible evidence of the nature of any regime.—E.E. Schattschneider, *Party Government*

One of the most important questions concerning the political party [relates to] the party's capacity to react against force of habit, against the tendency to become mummified and anachronistic.—Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*

Believing in progress does not mean believing that any progress has yet been made. That would not be belief.—Franz Kafka, *Aphorisms*

Introduction

The crisis of parties and the ethics of representation

Parties are perhaps the most discredited political actors in the democratic world. Long is the list of wrongs they are being charged with. To pick just a few examples: parties have been said to have colluded and formed "cartels", through which they distribute public resources amongst them as they see fit; to be unable to offer voters real political choice, having become ideologically indistinguishable from one another; and to be decoupled from the demands and concerns of the wider citizenry, serving the interests of (trans-) national political and economic elites instead of the interests of society.

What exercises us about these tendencies is that they signal a growing disconnect between citizens and parties. To put it simply, it seems that parties are more concerned with governing than with representing citizens. More to the point, parties have gradually transformed from agents that mediate between state and civil society to agents of the state (Katz and Mair 1995 and 2009). There is much talk of this in recent conceptual work on parties in political science. Party scholars have charted the widespread decline of mass parties, and a concomitant shift towards models of party which depend increasingly on public finance and are dominated by professionalised administrative elites whose principal concern is holding on to office. Those parties do not so much stand up for principled alternatives but promote policies that are, as two prominent observers put it, "more generically policies of the state than they are policies of any particular party or coalition" (Katz and Mair 2009, 759).

This shift of party models occurred in the second half of the 20th century, parallel with two momentous transformations: the decay of traditional cleavage politics and the transformation of statehood that resulted from the crisis of national Keynesianism in the 1970s and 1980s. Bickerton (2012) argues that the latter transformation brought with it a "dilution of representation". At least in Europe, national governments began increasingly to relate to societies in a "distanced and sceptical way", assuming that "representation needs to be qualified by a consideration

—at the executive level—of how public expectations and desires fit with a considered, long-term, and expert-based assessment of public policies" (70). With this declining belief in state-managed social transformation, national governments—and thus parties—became less and less bound by domestic constituencies and "more dependent upon international rules and norms for their own identity and sense of purpose" (Bickerton 2012, 75).

One way of looking at the just-described trends is to say that the empirical reality of parties is out of sync with the normative ideal that parties should provide a "linkage" (Lawson 1988) between citizens and government. This ideal, captured neatly in Giovanni Sartori's (1976, ix) classic definition of party as "intermediate and intermediary structure between society and government", is rooted in traditional conceptions of party. It emerged in the era of mass political mobilisation, where parties established themselves as the principal vehicle for citizens to exercise collective self-rule. Those days are long gone, of course. But the view that parties should connect citizens to political power encapsulates an important, time-insensitive point about parties, namely that their legitimacy as agents of popular representation hangs on their ability to mediate between the citizenry and the political institutions of the state.

To better understand why, think of the expectations parties instil in us citizens, and the corresponding moral constraints this generates for them. In asking for our vote, parties usually promise that they will be attentive to our demands and concerns. Sometimes they even assert that they would do anything in their power to represent our will. At the very least, they insist that our preferences and interests matter to them and that they take us seriously as mature citizens. Thus, when they get elected and then go on to govern largely autonomously from the citizenry, promoting policies that are ultimately "policies of the state" (as Katz and Mair suggest), it seems that there is a more general moral complaint against them: they violate what might be called norms of *responsiveness.* To be sure, these norms do not generate absolute requirements of deference: not any deviation from what citizens presently prefer is morally impermissible. But they create *pro tanto* reasons regarding how parties can

permissibly behave.[1] Parties that violate these norms therefore become a proper target of moral blame and its family of negative reactive attitudes.

Moralism about parties and political representation is not an abstract, purely philosophical way of criticising the disconnect between citizens and parties. It appeals to basic moral intuitions about the demands of integrity. These intuitions are widely present in ordinary folk morality, which informs the way in which ordinary citizens look to parties. Arguably part of the reason why many citizens grow wary of parties as they draw further and further away from society, and gravitate towards the state and each other, is that parties do not discharge the duties they incur by promising responsiveness (see Mair 2013a). Insofar as parties claim to represent citizens, citizens are correct to treat the degree to which they are responsive to their preferences and concerns as the yardstick for their credibility and legitimacy.[2] Thus, even if the days of mass political mobilisation are long over, it is still vitally important that parties are connected to the citizenry; the ideal of "linkage" is as relevant as ever. The forward-looking task is therefore to imagine ways in which the capacity of parties to provide a link between citizens and government can be restored. It is to ask how the empirical reality of parties can be brought back in sync with the normative ideal of party as "intermediate and intermediary structure between society and government."

Bootstrapping a new model of intra-party democracy

The point of this thesis is to offer a new answer to this question. My focus is on the internal life of parties: this, I suggest, is where most work needs to be done. The main argument of the thesis is that to restore their capacity to connect citizens and government, parties need to become more internally democratic, and that they need to become more internally democratic in a particular way, namely more internally *deliberative*. By this I mean that parties need to strengthen channels of

[1] On moralism about representation as I understand it here, cf. Guerrero (2010); Beerbohm (forthcoming).

[2] This is also one explanation for the widespread appeal of the new populist parties on the fringes of the political spectrum, who proclaim to represent "the people" without ifs and buts.

communication from the bottom up and avail themselves of their internal deliberative resources: of the partisans on the ground, who deliberate over the demands of their community in local party branches. The thesis proposes a model in which these partisans can be empowered, and empirically explores the prospects of whether such a model can be achieved.

The model, laid out in Chapter 1, locates the emancipatory force of intra-party democracy in the deliberations of the partisan base. It argues that the tendency of conventional models of intra-party democracy (which focus on candidate selection or direct decision mechanisms) to reinforce the status quo and cement the power of the party elite can be corrected for by deliberative exchanges among the organised membership, in which they critically question the party line and develop alternative proposals that are informed by the demands of their local constituencies. A democratically meaningful conception of intra-party democracy must therefore empower those organised members and lend them more opportunities to have their voices heard. In addition to offering a normative argument for why parties should be made more internally deliberative, the chapter also sketches several potential institutional design paths parties could follow if their traditional modes of preference transmission and delegation are defective.

The decision to invest my hope in local party branches, these very traditional sites of partisanship, was a deliberate one: if the task is to reconnect parties and citizens, it makes sense to bring into focus those sites of partisan activism that are still closely connected to the citizenry, even if they perhaps exist only sporadically. Participants of branch meetings are not professional politicians but politically active lay citizens who engage in a local community. They are constantly in touch with the wider constituency and, therefore, especially sensitive to their concerns. Thus, the positions that will emerge from their deliberations are more likely to reflect what the voters want than the official party line. For they will not be guided by the preferences of the "median voter," this amorphous hypothetical citizen who lacks a coherent political identity, but by those of concrete people whose particular demands and concerns ought to be taken seriously if the party is to perform its representative role.

The model I propose seeks to connect these positions to final policy decisions and the party's more general direction.

Three initial worries, and why they are unwarranted

Let me anticipate three objections to this enterprise. Perhaps the reader thinks that there are promising alternatives to party—deliberative polls, citizens juries and other "democratic innovations" (Smith 2009)—and that our efforts to bring citizens closer to government should focus on supplanting parties with these institutions.

Without denying that institutions of this kind have their virtues, at least two counter-arguments can be given to show why trying to replace parties with such institutions is not a fruitful proposal. First, there is a major practical constraint on abolishing parties: in virtually all democratic legislatures parties are responsible for devising their own regulations (Katz and Mair 2009, 756), and it seems highly unlikely that they would acquiesce in their own eradication; so it is hard to see how parties could be replaced with democratic means. If, as I assume here without further discussion, the option of installing democratic innovations as a substitute for parties in an undemocratic, perhaps even violent, fashion is off the table, this implies that these institutions can at best be established to *supplement* parties.

The second and more positive argument against replacing parties with deliberative polls or citizens juries is that parties can perform important functions that these democratic innovations can't perform. Above all, parties can instil in citizens a robust commitment to democratic self-rule. Jonathan White and Lea Ypi (2010) endorse a strong version of this view, appealing to the principle-driven and cross-temporal character of parties. They argue that whereas democratic innovations "have no past and no present: no history of joint struggles and defeats, no political errors to reflect upon, no projects to articulate in common", parties can "create enduring constituencies", "support principled alignment" and "provide a sense of shared commitment to a collective political project" (821, 820). For in contrast to deliberative polls or citizens juries, which convene on an ad hoc basis in order to

develop collective responses to emerging or long-standing problems (see Fung 2003, 341), parties are cross-temporal political projects representing principled views of how power should be exercised and social and political institutions should be designed (see also Ypi, forthcoming). Even if the reader might want to resist the idealising pull of this argument—it is after all open to question whether partisanship is necessarily principled, rather than driven by sectional interests (Kelsen 1920)—it is arguably true that parties can cultivate a more powerful and lasting participatory commitment among citizens than short-lived participatory institutions.

A second objection contends that the much-discussed decline of party memberships speaks against my proposal. Empiricists might be inclined to dismiss empowering party branches as illusory, arguing that there are simply too few active party members left for them to form the foundation of a model of intra-party democracy.

There are at least two ways to answer the empiricist worry. The first is itself empirical in focus. The most detailed recent research on party members suggests that the decline of party memberships is much less extreme than commonly assumed. Different, and less dramatic, figures emerge once we look in more detail at the data on which studies of party membership usually draw, and probe their reliability. The main problem with party membership data is that in cross-national surveys, differences in question wording and institutional differences in the meaning of party membership produce unstable results. Studies that systematically control for this and use cleaned-up data, like the recent work of Susan Scarrow, tend to reach the conclusion that even if there are clear tendencies of membership decline, traditional party membership is "far from obsolete" (Scarrow 2014, 216; also see Clark 2004). Indeed, many parties, especially established ones, still have a membership base at their disposal on which they rely in order to mobilise support and enhance the party's aura of legitimacy.

The second argument that can be given in reply is normative: it does not follow from the fact that parties have fewer members today than they had in the past (and thus fewer vibrant local party branches) that those members who still engage in the party should be bypassed. To understand why, consider the following analogy. Suppose someone would suggest that just because voter turnout is lower today than in

the past, the votes of those who still turn out should not be counted. This rightly strikes us as democratically suspect. For to evaluate the appropriateness of democratic participatory institutions solely on the basis of *how many* citizens make use of these opportunities is to discount democracy's intrinsic value as a mode of organising political decision-making that instantiates equal respect for persons qua self-determining agents, capable of leading their lives pursuing their ends and goals (for a defence of the intrinsic value of democracy, see Christiano 2004; Valentini 2012a). In other words, disenfranchising groups just because some of their members do not actively participate in democratic procedures fails fully to honour the democratically important commitment to equal respect. The same is true for democracy *within* parties, and true for the same reasons. Empowering those members who are still committed to partisan activism has a moral claim as a way of recognising their democratic equality—even if they are few in number (I defend this point in more detail in Wolkenstein, forthcoming).

A final argument that could be held against the deliberative model of intra-party democracy proposed in this thesis is that it implies a return to the old mass party model, which, as many commentators have objected, is "out of sync with the opportunity structures for political mobilization in contemporary democracies" (Biezen and Romée Piccio 2013, 45). Let us unpack this objection step-by-step. To begin, what might the mass party and the deliberative party share in common? The mass party was a type of party organisation that arose in the late 19th and early 20th century as a result of extended suffrage. It incorporated previously disenfranchised segments of society, most importantly the industrial proletariat, into the political process. Often this model of party is glorified as epitomising bottom-up decision-making and the empowerment of the party base, and it is here that one may detect a parallel to the deliberative model of intra-party democracy, which equally seeks to promote the transmission of preferences from the base to the legislature.

But there are important differences between the mass party and the internally deliberative party envisaged in this thesis. Consider first the formal structure of internal democracy in the two party models. The mass party's bottom-up process is meant to unfold over several levels of organisational hierarchy. Preferences are

supposed to be "passed on" from the branches to local and regional assemblies to the national party congress. While this "multi-level" model of preference transmission is in principle an appealing way of designing intra-party democracy, in practice it has proven largely dysfunctional, in the sense that it failed effectively to democratise the parties, and possibly even promoted internal oligarchy (for classic treatments of the mass party and its organisational defects, see Michels [1911] 1989; Duverger [1954] 1989). Blyth and Katz (2005, 37) explain the problem as follows.

> If party was the political arm of a particular social segment, then it followed that the party on the ground should control and direct the party in public office which is in effect its delegate. However, since the party congress (or equivalent body) cannot be in continuous session, it needs to elect an executive committee to act in its place. This executive then becomes the core of a central office that, though nominally subordinate to the party on the ground, in fact solves the coordination problem of networking leaders, members and constituents by effectively rising above all of them.[3]

The internally deliberative party I propose in this thesis is (amongst other things) intended to correct for this democratic defect. It aims at minimising the distance between party members and party officials by offering novel deliberative institutions like partisan deliberative conferences or problem-oriented members' fora, through which members can more directly exercise influence on party elites and hold them accountable. This may involve bypassing different hierarchical levels of the party. In this sense, one may say that the deliberative party seeks to deliver the democratic promise of the mass party—but it does so in an entirely different way than intended by the traditional mass party model.

The internally deliberative party also differs from the mass party in that it is, well, internally deliberative. Because it relied on strong social segmentation, the mass party did not have to place particular emphasis on internal deliberation: its membership could be expected to have largely aligned preferences (e.g. a clearly identifiable class interest). Benevolent party elites could simply "read off" these

[3] Scholars of parties sometimes see this feature of the mass party as leading to the further decoupling of party members and party elites in the course of the second half of the 20th century (cf. Katz and Mair 1995 and 2009). I will discuss this more in chapter 1.

preferences and weave them into a cohesive partisan agenda. To the extent that political discussion among members *did* occur in real existing mass parties, moreover, its purpose was not so much to induce reflection but to reinforce class consciousness and mobilise "the masses" for political action (Duverger [1954] 1990, 39-40). The deliberative party, in contrast, does not assume mainstreamed preferences or "class consciousness" among party members. That would in any case be a dubious supposition in an era where the class roots of party ideologies are—to put it mildly—loosening. Instead, the deliberative party starts from the presumption that the members of a party do not necessarily always favour the same policies for society, and sometimes even disagree on how the shared principles they subscribe to should best be interpreted. This triggers a demand for procedures of mutual justification and compromise: absent fixed, pre-politically established preferences, the preferences of party members and activists have to be developed in a give-and-take of reasons, in continuous discussions about aims articulating how political power should be exercised and what appropriate alternatives to the status quo there might be. It is these exchanges that the deliberative model of intra-party democracy takes to be the central ingredient of any internally democratic party; it is these exchanges that it seeks to empower. Thus it does not signal a revival of the mass party but differs sharply from it.

It should be clear now that the objection that I am simply suggesting to revive the mass party in deliberative guise fails. Here is a final related point I want to make in support of the internally deliberative party proposed in this thesis. While there can be no doubt that the mass party, with its reliance on the mobilisation of a particular segment of society, is "out of sync" with today's opportunity structures for political mobilisation, I think that the deliberative party proposed in this thesis is especially attuned to these changed structural changes. This is because its emphasis on preference formation and refinement through discourse and reasoning caters to the more individualist and cognitively mobilised citizenry of contemporary, post-industrial societies, whose members have the tools to develop their own preferences independently of their material circumstances. It caters to those kinds of citizens because it allows them openly to express their views irrespective of whether or not

these views are consistent with the party line, and, even more importantly, because it signals to them that their views are taken seriously in the process of internal will formation. These characteristics of the deliberative party—being able to speak one's mind and being taken seriously—stand in stark contrast to the widespread perception of parties as hierarchical and ideologically streamlined organisations in which individual voices do not count and reasoned debate rarely occurs (cf. the analysis in Neblo et al. 2010).[4] This might increase the attractiveness of parties as participatory venues and generate an incentive for politically committed citizens to engage more in partisan politics (I discuss this point elsewhere, namely in Invernizzi Accetti and Wolkenstein, forthcoming).[5] Surely, making parties more internally deliberative is no panacea for all the problems of popular dissatisfaction facing parties. But it can go a long way in meeting the demands of politically interested citizens for whom social bonds and political preferences are "a matter of taste and choice rather than of obligation" (Streeck 2014, 123)—citizens who seek political self-expression without subordinating themselves to a bureaucratic leviathan.

From theory to empirics: studying partisan deliberation in practice

Though its centre of gravity is theoretical, this thesis also explores the deliberative potential of party branches empirically. Since the normative model of intra-party democracy proposed in Chapter 1 is tightly pegged to the empirical reality of parties, investigating the model's resonance in real-world party branches is a natural route to follow. Specifically, the thesis discusses the findings of a small-scale empirical study of deliberation in party branches in Social Democratic parties in Germany and

[4] This objection is of course not new. Even Nietzsche, in his *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, scorned parties as suppressing independence, suggesting that "democracy must [therefore] prevent all measures that seem to aim at party organisation" (Nietzsche [1880] 1988a, Aphorism 293).

[5] Empirical studies of the public willingness to deliberate reveal that those citizens who want to deliberate tend to be dissatisfied with existing partisan politics (Neblo et al. 2010). They look for opportunities to discuss politics which leave space for articulating individual views and what Neblo et al. call "republican consultation", that is, communication between citizens and representatives in which the latter seek input from the former in forming political agendas. I think that more deliberative parties could cater to these demands and so make parties generally more attractive participatory venues (Invernizzi Accetti and Wolkenstein, forthcoming).

Austria, which was conducted between Winter 2013 and Spring 2015. Party branch meetings were approached in this study as "natural" (as opposed to artificially designed) deliberative fora. Through group interviews, the preconditions for deliberation in party branches as well as actual discursive exchanges among the branch members were explored. The main objective was not to "test" the normative theory, but rather to refine the conceptualisations of the model and show what intra-party deliberation looks like in practice. So, the guiding concerns were not so much those of the empiricist, but those of the applied normative theorist—or, to use an expression coined by Jeremy Waldron (2013), the "*political* political theorist".

Although mainly indicative, the analysis of the empirical material suggests that realising a deliberative model of intra-party democracy is far from utopian: indeed, the party base exhibits plenty of deliberative potential. Even if there is little candid appreciation of partisan deliberation in the literature on deliberative democracy, however,[6] the fact that committed partisans deliberate well with their peers is hardly surprising. After all, like-minded partisans share a lot in common—and that can facilitate deliberation. For example, it is a distinguishing feature of intra-party deliberation that deliberators enter the exchanges with some agreement on the value of certain political ideals. Even if they disagree on how particular ideals should be interpreted, they usually agree on the fundamental value of those ideals. Using the language of deliberative theory, we might say that there is typically a "normative consensus" (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006) among partisans that shapes the way in which their deliberations play out. And, as Chapter 4 shows, this normative consensus promotes the kind of ethical and principled discussion deliberative theorists would like to see prosper. Partisans may be said to approach each other as "political friends" (Muirhead 2014, ch. 5; Ypi, forthcoming) whose commitment to shared principles serves as the basis for mutual respect and reason-giving.

No doubt, the party members who participated in this study are largely "model partisans". They are politically committed "all the way down" and generally well-informed about politics; some of them are also highly educated. An obvious worry here is that these party members are not representative of the wider partisan base, and

[6] For important exceptions, see Gundersen 2000; White and Ypi 2011.

this worry is certainly warranted. As Chapter 2 explicates, there is an inevitable bias in the case selection: since most of the party branches that were contacted in the course of the recruitment process did not react to my initial recruiting efforts, those party branches who ultimately proved willing to participate are likely to be extraordinarily vibrant ones. Thus, one should be cautious with extrapolating from the findings. To say that the party branches this study investigates are lively sites of deliberation is not to suggest that political discussion is of equally high quality in *all* the branches of a party.

But there are good reasons not to be overly concerned about the bias that is built into the study's case selection. The party members whose deliberations have been studied are probably more committed than many of their peers, yes—but if the task is to restore the capacity of parties to link citizens and government, then there is nothing wrong with focusing on the most active and committed partisans. The passive members one is likely to find in branches that rarely convene, for example, or outside of the party's organised domains, would in any case be unable to contribute much to the linkage between voters and parties that the deliberative model of intra-party democracy seeks to resuscitate. Bringing citizens closer to government requires party members to be at once continually in touch with the local constituents and willing to make efforts to channel their demands into policy or the party's internal debate. So even if the case selection is far from perfect in terms of randomness and variation, the fact that it includes only strongly dedicated parties does not undermine the significance of the study as a whole. Indeed, prioritising more committed partisans in efforts to reinvent parties is broadly in line with the normative considerations put forth in Chapter 1.

Three contributions

Partly a work of normative political theory and partly an empirical study of parties, this thesis contributes to three different bodies of literature. Firstly, in approaching political parties as a subject for normative reflection, it contributes to the nascent

political theory literature on the topic of parties. In part as a response to the widespread discontent with parties across the democratic world, a number of political theorists—in particular Nancy Rosenblum (2008), Russell Muirhead (2006; 2010; 2014), Jonathan White and Lea Ypi (2010; 2011; forthcoming)—have recently advanced spirited defences of parties, showing convincingly why democracy needs its partisans. While their accounts successfully establish the desirability of parties, however, they offer relatively little in the way of institutional prescriptions as to how parties could remedy the numerous shortcomings they are being charged with. Reacting to this, this thesis takes a distinctive prescriptive turn. It asks not so much what is generally desirable about partisanship, or how partisanship "at its best" would look, but what parties as organisations can do so as to redeem their ability to perform the functions that make them desirable in the first place.

On the one hand, this enterprise is inevitably more "non-ideal" in character than some of the other theoretical work on parties. It takes as its starting point political parties as they are not as they should be, factoring a wealth of real-world constraints into the analysis. In this respect it differs sharply from White and Ypi's work, whose principal concern is with reconstructing an ideal conception of partisanship. On the other hand, the thesis shifts the focus from the practice of partisanship to the party as an institution. Here it differs above all from Muirhead and Rosenblum's work, which, written primarily with the U.S. experience in mind, largely neglects questions of membership, intra-party decision-making and institutional design. Besides these differences of methodology and research focus, however, the thesis is driven by much the same considerations that have given rise to these renewed efforts to rehabilitate parties as democratic agents and reinvigorate the theoretical study of partisanship. It assumes, that is, that parties are indispensable vehicles for exercising collective political agency, and that partisans' passionate concern for policy and the common good is a virtue rather than a vice in a democratic polity.

Secondly, in proposing to conceive intra-party democracy in deliberative terms, the thesis also contributes to the vast political science literature on intra-party democracy. In contemporary scholarship on intra-party democracy, two aspects of the topic usually receive attention. The first is candidate or leadership selection methods

(LeDuc 2001; Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Cross 2013; Rahat 2013; Spies and Kaiser 2014); the second opportunities for party members directly to participate in the making of internal decisions (Sussman 2007; Scarrow 2014, ch.8). Procedures of deliberation, on the other hand, are widely ignored. Some scholars mention deliberation in passing—as something that may or may not occur prior to candidate selection, for example (Hazan and Rahat 2010, 163-164). But they take little interest in studying deliberative procedures as systematically as candidate selection and direct participation. Thus, by bringing intra-party deliberation into the focus of attention, this thesis enlarges the current research agenda. It adds considerable complexity to predominant understandings of intra-party democracy, and shows why party scholars should care about deliberation within parties.

Thirdly, in empirically studying deliberation within political parties, this thesis also contributes to the growing empirical literature on democratic deliberation. Scholarship on deliberative democracy has taken several "turns" in the last decade, of which the empirical turn is the latest (for an overview of these developments, see Dryzek 2012, ch.1). Parties seldom make an appearance in this proliferating literature, which is perhaps because of the general dearth of interest in parties in political theory (the recent theoretical works on parties that I have mentioned above are an exception to the rule and a reaction to this lack of interest). Indeed, deliberativists have traditionally looked to partisanship as an *obstacle* to good deliberation, assuming that partisans are unwilling to revise their preferences and values in light of others' arguments because of their strong commitments. But this view fails to acknowledge that there is an important difference between (a) *inter*-party deliberation and (b) *intra*-party deliberation. The former is indeed prone to be of relatively low quality, since it involves clashes of incompossible policy preferences and sometimes irresolvable disagreement over normative principles—think for example of debates in the British House of Commons, which characteristically violate virtually any norm of good deliberation one may imagine. This is the type of partisan deliberation most deliberativists have in mind; hence their dismissive attitude. *Intra*-party deliberation, on the other hand, is much less susceptible to these problems as it usually proceeds on the basis of shared values (and possibly even partly shared policy preferences). And,

as I have argued earlier, shared values are likely to raise the quality of deliberation, facilitating respectful reason giving in circumstances of disagreement at other, less fundamental levels. By affording an insight into this kind of partisan deliberation, the thesis fills an important gap in the empirical literature on deliberative democracy. It establishes that partisans do practice deliberation with each other, and clarifies what is particular about their deliberations.

Outline of the chapters

The thesis divides into six chapters. Chapter 1, as already mentioned, is concerned with the theoretical groundwork on which the remainder of the thesis rests. It develops a deliberative model of intra-party democracy, suggesting a way in which parties may be reorganised so as to restore their capacity to provide linkage. The empirical part of the thesis is structured around the normative considerations this chapter puts forth.

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology of the empirical study conducted for the thesis. It defends a qualitative and interpretative approach to studying deliberation. This approach eschews the abstraction inherent in quantitative studies of the practice. Rather than moving away from the particulars, it looks to deliberation as a practice that is shaped by local norms, and so best understood if the experiences of those involved in deliberation are taken into account. None of this demands abandoning norms of good deliberation (e.g. mutual respect), but it requires acknowledging that these norms are open to different interpretations in different social contexts.

Chapter 3 kicks off the empirical part of the study and looks at the circumstances of deliberation at the party base. It asks whether party branches provide the conditions that are necessary for good deliberation to arise, namely that participants have equal opportunities to influence the deliberative process, and that they hold a variety of different viewpoints so as to ensure that the issue under deliberation is considered from multiple angles. It argues that party branches satisfy these two desiderata, showing that diversity is ensured by members' different

occupational backgrounds, and that partisans' joint commitment to shared political ideals establishes an egalitarian "deliberative field" in which everyone's voice is heard. What I have earlier referred to as "normative consensus" proves to be a defining feature of party branches as sites of deliberation, and plays out as a equality-enhancing force. The existence of common adversaries—a byproduct of having shared normative commitments—also contributes to the equal standing branch members enjoy; thus, partisanship's inherent exclusionary dynamics have the happy effect of rendering branches supportive environments for deliberation.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus from the circumstances of deliberation to actual deliberative practice. It begins by distinguishing two different types of disagreement within party branches: ones about organisational matters and ones about issues concerning society at large. It then goes on to examine several exemplary text passages that illustrate how partisans "deliberatively" handle these kinds of disagreements. The central point that emerges from the analysis is that members of party branches engage in acts of reason giving that may reasonably be interpreted as satisfying the normative demands of political justification; so the deliberative capacity of party branches is affirmed. One of several interesting specificities of party branch deliberation is that it is marked by tensions between pragmatically-minded partisans and more ideological ones. This, it turns out, is a further important source of diversity within party groups. Another notable detail is that the political principles underpinning partisanship can facilitate mutual justification. The partisan "normative consensus" plays a crucial role in this connection: partisans' pre-deliberative agreement on a certain set of political principles ensures that appeals to those principles are immediately resonant. This makes reaching agreements and compromises easier. The upshot is that even though deliberation in party branches is a particular kind of deliberation, it is undoubtedly *good* deliberation. If this is any indication, then there is plenty of potential for involving these partisans more in the party's wider deliberations and giving them bigger deliberative tasks.

Although the picture of intra-party deliberation that emerges in chapters 3 and 4 is generally very positive, it is important to note that some of the party groups that were studied for this thesis proved to be less deliberative than others. Interestingly,

those groups provided good preconditions for deliberation, yet their actual deliberations displayed numerous shortcomings. Chapter 5 examines these shortcomings, looking closely at three types of "deliberative failure": (a) group splits and defection; (b) cases where deliberation does not arise, or only seldom arises; and (c) polarising tendencies. The chapter also sketches a number of institutional devices for making deliberative failures tractable and concludes that even though deliberative failures will be difficult to avoid in an internally deliberative party, their most harmful effects can be limited through institutional design. So the fact that deliberation sometimes fails does not speak against a deliberative model of intra-party democracy as a whole.

Finally, chapter 6 puts all those pieces together and concludes the thesis. It reflects on the prospects of establishing deliberative institutional designs within parties as well as on directions for future research, and discusses three challenges facing the proposals put forward in the thesis.

Chapter 1
A Deliberative Model of Intra-party Democracy

Introduction: Parties and Linkage

Political parties serve a number of vital functions in representative democracies. Connecting citizens to government is perhaps the most important one. This is how parties were traditionally conceived, and it continues to be the main standard according to which their legitimacy as representative institutions is evaluated.[7]

Intra-party democracy is instrumental in establishing and sustaining this connection between society and government. Internally democratic parties empower the members on the ground, who have privileged access to the demands of the constituents, and provide them with opportunities to channel these demands into policy decisions (for a classic statement on this "linkage" function of parties, see Lawson 1988).

In this chapter, I begin by arguing that existing models of intra-party democracy—which focus on candidate selection and direct participation, respectively—are not adequate to the task of linking citizens to government. I suggest that these models run the risk of simply reinforcing the preferences of the party elite, thus weakening, instead of strengthening, the members on the ground. What is missing from these models are fora of discussion and debate, in which the party base can critically question the status quo and devise alternative positions on specific policies as well as the party's more general direction. It is these fora that parties need to establish and empower to make internal democracy meaningful.

[7] As Sartori (1976, ix) put it more than a quarter century ago, "parties are *the* central intermediate and intermediary structure between society and government." This understanding of parties continues to inform scholars' normative judgments about parties. See, for example, Biezen and Saward (2008); Dalton et al. (2011); Mair (2013b).

With this in mind, I then outline a deliberative model of intra-party democracy.[8] At the centre of this model stand processes of preference-formation at the partisan base, in particular the deliberations of local party branches. I argue first that these traditional sites of partisan activism provide favourable circumstances for good quality deliberation, and go on to examine several ways in which their deliberations could be connected to decisions. I also suggest a set of novel institutional designs that practitioners can avail themselves of if conventional channels of preference transmission are defective. In closing, I run through several objections to the model and show that they are less weighty than might at first appear.

Why a deliberative model of intra-party democracy?

Two models of intra-party democracy

To see the relative merits of a deliberative model of intra-party democracy, it is necessary first to audit the main alternatives to it: the *candidate selection model* and the *direct participation model*. These are the two standard models of intra-party democracy. In this section I show that these models are, by themselves, inadequate. They bracket out processes of preference-formation, which has adverse implications for the capacity of parties to link citizens to political decisions.

Consider first the candidate selection model. In recent times, this has become perhaps the most popular model of intra-party democracy. The basic idea underlying it is that the procedures of selecting who will gain a place on the party list should be inclusive and give a large number of members the opportunity to voice their preferences (for an overview treatment, see Hazan and Rahat 2010). Some add to this the rider that candidate selection procedures should also be reasonably competitive

[8] References to the possibility of such a model have surfaced on a few occasions in the relevant theoretical literature (see Cohen 1989; Teorell 1999; Biezen and Saward 2008; White and Ypi 2011), but a systematic treatment has not emerged yet. Of the existing treatments, Teorell's piece comes closest to a discussion of a deliberative model of intra-party democracy. Yet Teorell pays little attention to concrete institutional design questions, and his theoretical framework is by today's standards outdated.

and designed in such a way as to ensure that women's descriptive representation on the party list is adequate.

This model is problematic for at least two reasons. First, for many active party members, it may simply not provide a sufficiently meaningful channel of participation. Of course, party members will generally be favourably inclined towards taking part in candidate selection processes, especially if these processes are the only opportunity for them to exercise voice. But those members who want to engage on a more regular basis are likely to become disenchanted when internal participation involves only candidate selection (cf. Invernizzi Accetti and Wolkenstein, forthcoming). The obvious problem with this is that it is usually these active and committed party members that sustain the party's ties to the citizenry. They engage in door-to-door campaigning, organise events for the local community and meet regularly with other partisans to discuss the community's most pressing problems, thus having a heightened awareness of citizens' concerns. To connect the party with the citizenry in large, a model of intra-party democracy must offer its active members more substantial participatory opportunities.

The second problem the candidate selection model holds is that it treats members' preferences as simply given. But I want to set aside this problem for the time being and return to it after outlining the second standard model of intra-party democracy, since this problem affects the second model as well.

The second standard model of intra-party democracy focuses on *direct participation*. This model of intra-party democracy operates with a much "thicker" conception of participation than the candidate selection model. It holds that, rather than indirectly influencing the party's decision-making through selecting candidates, party members should be able to translate their preferences directly into decisions.

The most common form of direct intra-party democracy are membership ballots, in which policy or personnel questions (which are usually pre-selected by the party leadership) are referred to the members for a direct decision. Since the mid-1990s, parties across the democratic world increasingly made use of such ballots (Scarrow 2014, 181-185). Another well-known example of direct participation within parties are "rotation schemes" for MPs. In the 1980s, the German Greens have

experimented with such schemes. The idea was to limit the term of office to two years (two years less than the full legislative term of four years) in order to "prevent the estrangement of MPs from their grass roots" (Poguntke 1992, 244; also see Scarrow 1999), and to give more people the opportunity to directly influence policy making processes.

Although the direct participation model grants party members more influence than the candidate selection model, it holds a number of problems that make it ill-suited as a self-standing model of intra-party democracy. If a party adopts rotation system for office holders, the lack of expertise of those who have just been propelled into office may place disproportionate power in the hands of experts who lack democratic authorisation. Thomas Poguntke has noted this problem in a study of the German Greens:

> [A] high turnover of MPs means that the informal power of permanently employed parliamentary assistants, who can rely on accumulated knowledge of parliamentary procedures, is likely to rise. Hence, rotation may lead to the situation where functional oligarchies replace democratically legitimized power centres (Poguntke 1992, 243).[9]

Ultimately, this of course weakens, rather than empowers, party members.

Membership ballots, on the other hand, may cause a problem of disaffection similar to the one I have highlighted in the discussion of the candidate selection model. The reason is that in intra-party referenda, the agenda-setter and the initiator are often the same actor, namely the party elite (Sussmann 2007). So the party elite controls both the *question* that is referred to the members for a decision and the *timing* of the referendum. This lack of control over the terms on which the referendum is held may dishearten those members who want to have more influence. Active and organised members might demand a right to initiate referenda themselves, for example. And where they already have such a right, they may want to be offered more channels to promote their cause.

[9] This is why Kelsen (1920, 24) thought that permanently employed bureaucrats undermine democracy, and that democracies, therefore, ought not permit what he called *Berufs- und Fachbeamtentum.*

Are these problems intrinsic to the direct participation model? One possible reply to the argument I have just put forward is that direct-democratic forms of participation are as good as their design. When they are designed in such a way as to privilege elites, of course they are normatively troubling. But when this is not the case, they may also prove genuinely empowering, giving the majority of party members direct command over the party (on this point, see Altman 2014). In short, the problem with the direct participation model of intra-party democracy is not that direct participation is *per se* disempowering, but the fact that the model is often poorly put into practice.

Clearly this reply has some force. Despite its poor empirical track record, it is certainly possible to imagine a well-designed direct participation model of intra-party democracy, which is not hijacked (as in the rotation model) or unilaterally controlled (as in membership ballots) by party elites. For example, the right to initiate membership ballots may be restricted to ordinary party members, who in this way could determine the exact question of the referendum, its timing, and how the final decision should be implemented.[10] But even if we concede that some of the direct participation model's shortcomings may be contingent on institutional design, it is still inadequate as a self-standing model for intra-party democracy. This is because of the second problem the model holds: it presumes that only the act of expressing one's preferences is normatively and practically relevant. Indeed, the direct participation model does not valorise the process of preference-formation prior to the decision. Instead, people's views and preferences are treated as simply "out there". As I have mentioned earlier, this problem affects also the candidate selection model. Both models draw on concepts of participation which revolve around expressing preferences but ignore the processes through which preferences come into being (Teorell 2006).

Why exactly is this problematic? Primarily because it undermines the democratic potential of intra-party democracy. Democratic theorists widely criticise such "aggregative" conceptions of democracy, arguing that taking preferences as

[10] Notice that many parties have enacted statutory reforms to provide party members with the formal right to initiate an internal referendum. Again though, evidence suggests that it is far from clear whether awarding members those formal rights can outweigh the power of the party elite to shape the internal agenda (Sussman 2007; Detterbeck 2013).

given risks cementing the existing state of affairs (Cohen 1989; Gutmann and Thompson 2004; Mansbridge et al. 2010). Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (2004, 16) put the classic worry in this way:

> By taking existing or minimally corrected preferences as given, as the base line for collective decisions, the aggregative conception [of democracy] fundamentally accepts and may even reinforce existing distributions of power in society.

It's main shortcoming, they argue, is that it does "not provide any process by which citizens' views about those distributions might be changed" (Gutmann and Thompson 2004, 16).

To understand this point, consider the potentially problematic effect of involving the whole party membership, rather than just the active party members, in candidate selection procedures. Evidence suggests that making candidate selection thus inclusive ultimately buttresses the party leaderships' power, since it strengthens those large groups of passive members who are "at once more docile and more likely to endorse the candidates proposed by the party leadership" (Mair 1997, 149).[11] Contrary to the active members, who deliberate with their partisan peers, those passive members are not provided with an opportunity to jointly debate and question the leadership's candidate choices. As a result, they are usually more inclined uncritically to accept these choices.[12] (Notice, however, that the problem here is not the candidate selection procedure's inclusiveness *per se*, but the lack of opportunities for non-organised members to deliberate.)

If this is correct, it should give proponents of the standard models of intra-party democracy pause. Intra-party democracy becomes obsolete as a means of bringing citizens closer to government when it merely serves to legitimise the party

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[11] For an in-depth empirical study of these problems in parties in Great Britain and Spain, see Hopkin (2001). See also Faucher (2015) and Garland (2016, 25).

[12] Katz and Mair (2009, p. 759) suggest that this is in fact the party leadership's calculus: "Although the objective is a kind of party oligarchy, the means ironically (…) may be the apparent democratization of the party through the introduction of such devices as postal ballots or mass membership meetings at which large numbers of marginally committed members or supporters—with their silence, their lack of capacity for prior independent (of the leadership) organization, and their tendency to be oriented more toward particular leaders rather than to underlying policies—can be expected to drown out the activists."

leadership's position. This is the main deficiency of the two dominant models of intra-party democracy and the institutions they prescribe.

A closely related problem is that the methods of preference expression we have auditioned so far—candidate selection and direct participation—hardly provide ways to challenge these methods themselves. In membership ballots, for example, it is not possible to express a preference for using a different method of decision-making to deal with the issue at stake (cf. Gutmann and Thompson 2004, 16-17). Perhaps members think that a ballot is not the appropriate way to resolve the issue: they might think, for instance, that a yes/no referendum on a divisive issue could undermine party cohesion. But the ballot itself does not provide opportunities to raise these concerns and propose a different decision-making process.

Candidate selection methods equally fail to provide a process through which their own configurations can be challenged. *Who* is included in the selectorate, for example, is a decision that needs to be made prior to the actual selection process. In practice, this decision is usually made in top-down fashion by the party elite.[13] Members hardly have a say here, thus being effectively excluded from deciding on the terms of the decision-making process they are supposed to participate in at a later stage.

In sum, the candidate selection and direct participation models of intra-party democracy are concerned only with participation qua expressing views and preferences, but provide no room for participation qua *forming* views and preferences. This limits their democratic potential in important ways. What we need is a corrective to the limitations of these models.

Deliberation as corrective and complement

A possible way forward is to shift the centre of gravity from processes in which preferences are expressed and aggregated to processes of preference formation and clarification. Most important amongst these processes is *deliberation*. Deliberation is

[13] For an in-depth case study of British parties, see Mikulska and Scarrow (2010).

a practice that involves jointly engaging in discursive exchanges about specific issues. It is about finding agreements on, or getting clear about the nature and depth of disagreement over, these issues in conversation with others. All of this presupposes that people's positions and perspectives are, at least to some degree, open to reassessment and revision. In this sense, deliberation is transformative in its aspirations: a procedure to question, rather than reinforce, the status quo. This distinguishes it from the forms of "preference-expressing" participation we have considered up until this point.

When we think about deliberation within political parties what naturally comes to mind are internal debates over ideology, policy, and personnel. We think perhaps also of party conferences, in which party elites give speeches and ordinary members respond. And possibly we think of everyday discussions among partisans, informal encounters where they talk about politics with their peers. Taken together, these and other intra-party deliberations form a complex arrangement of discursive interactions, a "deliberative system" in which each component performs different roles (on the systemic approach to deliberative democracy, see the programmatic statement by Mansbridge et al. 2012). Not all of the system's components are connected to decision-making procedures, and the quality of deliberation they produce will be very different. But each component contributes to a larger deliberative whole.

The main aim of a *deliberative model of intra-party democracy* would be to coordinate the party's internal discussions and debates in such a way that the members on the ground are more connected to policy decisions. It appears that three things must be achieved:

- First, that members on the ground deliberate about issues of common concern, and that they deliberate well;
- second, that the preferences and opinions these deliberations generate are transmitted to the party elite, either face-to-face or (more likely so) through democratically elected delegates;

- and third, that party elites and ordinary members engage in regular discussions where they explain to each other the reasons for why they think as they do, actualising what one may call "deliberative accountability".[14]

Before looking at the model's different components, several clarifications about the nature of this model are in order. First, the deliberative model would not wholly replace candidate selection processes or occasional direct-democratic initiatives, for these practices serve important functions in parties that deliberation by itself cannot serve. (It is for example a practical necessity in representative democracies that parties compose lists of candidates for election; and membership ballots can be useful in helping parties to increase the formal legitimacy of their decisions.) The point of the deliberative model is that it (a) *corrects* for the tendency of these practices to cement the status quo, and (b) *complements* these practices with participatory venues that emphasise discussion and debate. By offering new opportunities to exercise voice, it can also counteract members' disaffection with the meagre opportunities for participation that the candidate selection and direct participation models provide.

The second issue that needs to be clarified concerns the main protagonists in the model. Why does the deliberative model of intra-party democracy centre on the deliberations of the "party on the ground"? Recall in this connection the linkage function of intra-party democracy that was mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. To connect citizens and government, parties ought to empower first and foremost ordinary members and activists, who are directly in touch with the rest of the society (see Lawson 1988; Michels [1911] 1989). This means essentially that members at the partisan base must be given adequate power to influence the party leadership. Although this does not preclude two-way communication between the party elite and the wider membership, it does involve placing limits on the discretion

[14] It might be objected here that some of the just-sketched discursive interactions are already implied in existing conceptions of intra-party democracy. For example, in practice candidate selection processes are likely to involve deliberations among members concerning the strengths and weaknesses of different candidates and their agendas. However, none of these interactions are recognised as normatively desirable or practically relevant in existing articulations of these models. It is the distinctive feature of a deliberative model of intra-party democracy that it is sensitive to the broader significance of these discursive interactions.

of party elites. Institutional designs must aim at neutralising power asymmetries. (I return to this point below.)

Notice, however, that a deliberative model of intra-party democracy naturally engages a more agentive conception of linkage than is conventionally deployed. The traditional idea underlying linkage is, to repeat, that grassroots activists and ordinary members have privileged access to the demands and concerns of the party's constituents, and should be empowered so as to channel these demands and concerns into decisions over policy or the party's more general direction. Party members are meant to serve as *messengers* or *delegates* of the constituents in this view. In the deliberative model, by contrast, the emphasis is not only on channeling the inputs of citizens into the party, but also, and more strongly so, on processing these inputs discursively by pooling relevant arguments and specifying interpretations in discussions and debates. Thus party members are not merely messengers, but *deliberative agents* who jointly subject the information provided by citizens to critical scrutiny.

In the next section, I look more closely at deliberation at the party base. In a later section, I discuss how these deliberations can be connected to decision-making authority, and how decision makers can be held accountable. Before proceeding though, it should be mentioned that less than a decade ago the idea that parties should be treated as sites of deliberation would have sounded somewhat controversial to democratic theorists. For a long time, advocates of deliberative democracy regarded deliberation as incompatible with partisanship, the worry being that partisans are incapable of changing their minds because of their strong cognitive bias—or because they are in any case more interested in promoting their own sectarian interests than in engaging in reasoned discussion about common ends (for an overview of these arguments, see Muirhead 2010; for contributions that address the [limited] compatibility of partisanship and democratic deliberation see Gundersen 2000; Williams 2000; Hendriks et al. 2007). However, as deliberative theorists increasingly shifted the focus of their theories "from an ideal conception of the political to the phenomenological" (Bächtiger et al. 2010, 42; also see Young 2002; Mansbridge et al. 2010 and Azmanova 2012), an opening for partisanship was created.

There are several ways of looking at partisanship that see it as compatible with democratic deliberation, two of which are directly relevant for the argument put forth here. One stresses that partisanship is deliberative to the extent that it is "ethical". Ethical partisans, writes Nancy Rosenblum (2008, 402), reject the "uncompromising extremism" that glorifies "intransigence as an avowed good" (also see Muirhead 2006). They are aware that their own perspective is partial and acknowledge that others, even within their own party, might reasonably disagree with them. Despite their strong attachment to particular ideas, they defend their views with great respect for the other side and exhibit a disposition to listen and compromise (which presupposes that they relax the intensity with which they hold their views). This makes respectful and constructive debates possible, and facilitates reaching prudential and widely accepted outcomes—goals on which most deliberative democrats place high value (Gutmann and Thompson 2010, esp. 1134-1137).

A second argument holds that even if partisans do not always meet the standards of good quality deliberation, this is no reason for concern. For once we accept that a party forms a self-standing deliberative system, we also need to acknowledge that the failures of one of its parts to produce good deliberation can be compensated for by another part if the individual parts are "concatenated in the right way" (Goodin 2008, 186).[15] If, for example, a group of members at the party base polarises over an issue, this is likely to be the result of bad quality deliberation, where views are reinforced without weighing alternative arguments. But polarisation may help put the demands of this group on the agenda of other party groups and party elites, and these can critically re-examine those demands in their own deliberations. So, the interaction between different deliberative agents within the party can raise the overall systemic deliberative quality.

[15] Note that there is nothing unfamiliar in thinking about parties in "systemic" terms. Katz and Mair (1993) famously distinguish "three faces" of party, casting the "party on the ground" (i.e. the membership base), the "party in central office" (i.e. the professionalised administrative body of the party) and the "party in public office" (i.e. the party in parliament) as three differentiated but functionally interdependent parts that interact with each other in a continuous fashion. Besides this more recent account, we also find references to internal functional differentiation—the basis of a systemic understanding of party—in the classic literature on the topic, for example in Robert Michels' classic *Political Parties* ([1911] 1989), where the functional differentiation between party members and the party leadership is considered the root of internal oligarchy, or in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* ([1971] 2007), where it is highlighted that different elements of party have different characteristics and functions. Thus Gramsci says that "In analysing the development of parties, it is necessary to distinguish: their social group; their mass membership; their bureaucracy and General Staff" (211).

Deliberation and the "party on the ground"

With this preliminary outline of a deliberative model of intra-party democracy in place, we are now in a position to look more closely at its individual components. Most important amongst these are, as I have argued, the deliberations of the party base. But what precisely is the "party base"? Which of the numerous organisations and participatory venues one typically finds at the bottom of the party hierarchy should be included in a deliberative model of intra-party democracy? This is the first question I want to address in this section.

The answer to this question will depend first on the extent to which a given party grassroots organisation is connected to the wider citizenry (in the sense that it is not a "siloed" and self-referential association but trying actively to engage with the public) and second on its capacity to produce good quality deliberation. If it satisfies these two desiderata—*connectedness to the citizenry* and *deliberative capacity*—then it may be integrated into the deliberative model. To foreshadow, my contention is that it is only *local party branches* which, in virtue of their design as inclusive participatory institutions and their members' commitment to discussion with like-minded partisans, satisfy these desiderata. Alternative grassroots fora may satisfy one of the two, but not both, desiderata.

We can proceed by a process of elimination here. *Milieu organisations*, such as party academies or partisan sports clubs, traditionally played a crucial role in connecting parties with their supporters. They offered opportunities for partisans to socialise with like-minded people, thereby functioning as sites of political identity formation. The problem with these organisations is that they exist only in very limited form today. As a result of falling levels of party identification, milieu organisations have diminished to the point of insignificance in most Western democracies (Scarrow 2014, 162). So regardless of whether they satisfy the desiderata—where they still exist, they almost certainly satisfy the connectedness desideratum—including them in

a deliberative model of intra-party democracy is hardly a fruitful direction. We need to look for more vibrant sites of partisan engagement.

Might the various *online platforms* through which parties involve their membership base be a good place to look for ordinary party members who are willing to debate? In recent times, parties have increasingly tried to offer members opportunities for online participation.[16] The target of these initiatives are partisans who want to interact with a political party but commit as little as possible to it—partisans, that is, who do not want to regularly meet on a face-to-face basis with other partisans, and thus look for "ad hoc engagement" with few costs and obligations (Gauja 2015, 94). To cite just one example of such a partisan online platform, the British Labour party's consultative forum *Your Britain.org.uk* allows members (as well as non-members) to communicate their ideas on how Labour policy should look in the future. The format of communication are online posts, which are collected and thematically organised by the website's administrators.

Insofar as online platforms of this kind give citizens easy access to political parties, they in principle have the potential to link parties and society. Thus they are likely to satisfy the connectedness desideratum. However, their deliberative credentials are questionable. This is principally because they work on a no-commitment basis: people can vent their ideas and log off. There is no requirement to justify one's statements and claims, nor will participants be inclined to respond to others' concerns. Stephen Coleman (2004, 117) has observed this in Labour's 2003 *Big Conversation* online consultation exercise, the predecessor to *Your Britain*:

> [N]obody responds to what anyone else has said, rather like a phone-in programme in which caller after caller makes a short speech and then disappears into the ether.

Online fora of this kind, he (2004, 117) concluded, "lack any scope for interactivity".

[16] Recent empirical studies reveal a considerable change of party structures. Scarrow (2014) speaks in this context of "multi-speed memberships parties", in which a range of different membership options are offered.

Thus, partisan online platforms seem ill-suited as basic building blocks of a deliberative model of intra-party democracy.[17] For like any conversation, deliberation presupposes a level of interactivity. It requires people to give and hear reasons in a way that makes plain the respect citizens ought to have and express for one another even when they disagree. In this sense, deliberation is not a "no-commitment" activity. People must be willing to invest time and intellectual resources in formulating arguments and engaging with others' viewpoints. While this might be a lot to ask from many ordinary citizens, for some party members it is part and parcel of their political engagement. The party members I have in mind are those who regularly engage on a face-to-face basis with other partisans, discussing politics and devising political proposals. It is those members that the deliberative model of intra-party democracy revolves around.

Where might those members be found? Typically they are organised in *local party branches*. In most parties (that is, in most developed democracies other than the U.S., where parties are quite differently organised)[18] local branches are the smallest cells of party organisation. They consist of groups of members who meet in regular intervals to discuss politics and coordinate party activities in their local community, including door-to-door campaigning, organising party events, and providing political information to citizens.[19] The members who attend these meetings usually hold a strong commitment to the party, and voluntarily spend considerable amounts of time engaging in grassroots politics.

Party branches, as I said, satisfy our desiderata of connectedness and deliberative capacity. First, party branches are closely linked to the local communities

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[17] Research on party blogs shows that committed online discussion can certainly possible occur in a partisan context (Gibson et al. 2012). The problem is that participants in these discussions are almost exclusively partisans of the same stripe; non-partisans rarely join the debate. Thus these discussions they probably don't satisfy the connectedness desideratum.

[18] Note that I do not mean to suggest that US parties could not draw on internal deliberative institutions. Although US parties have no direct equivalent to party branches, their "county committees" serve similar local-level functions as party branches. Thus they might exhibit similar deliberative characteristics as party branches. This issue must of course be settled empirically and cannot be discussed more here.

[19] Consider how the Austrian Social Democrats (SPÖ) define the functions of their local party branches: "We inform the people in our area about political changes of all kinds. Above all, the branch (*Sektion*) is a place where people who live in the surrounding neighbourhood meet, talk to each other and help shape their environment." http://www.sektion.at/index.php?article_id=105, retrieved 19 January 2015.

in which their members are based. They are directly in touch with the local constituency, and have the authority to delegate representatives to hierarchically higher party bodies to make these concerns heard.[20] (I will say more about delegation below.) For many aspiring party members, moreover, branches provide the starting gate for their politically active life. Where they exist, they are the primary contact point for those who want to engage in the party, allowing citizens to get to know other like-minded people and participate in a range of activities with them.[21] Thus, although their vibrancy has decreased as party membership figures fell over the previous decades, they are still crucial for sustaining the party's roots in society (Scarrow 2014; also see Clark 2004; Pattie et al. 1995).

Second, local party branches are, as it were, "natural" deliberative fora. Deliberation typically occurs at the branches' regular meetings, where activists, ordinary party members, and some party officials convene to discuss local issues and current politics. These meetings are likely to exhibit characteristics that are typically thought to promote good deliberation, namely (1) a relative equality of opportunities to influence the deliberative process and (2) a relative diversity of viewpoints which ensures that issues are considered from multiple angles (on these criteria, see Mansbridge et al. 2010, 65-69).

Let me explain why I think party branches can be expected to display these features. First, participants in party branch meetings may enjoy relative equality because social status differences are typically diluted in a partisan context. Membership in parties can equalise status inequalities by giving people of less advantaged social backgrounds the opportunity to engage in politics as equals (Cohen 1989, 31). This means not only that membership in a party gives underprivileged people an equal standing with their political adversaries (that too, worker's parties being the obvious example here). Party membership is also a source of equality *among allies*. More particularly, it is the *partisanship*—the identification as part of a collective promoting shared political and social goals—in party membership from

[20] As Clark (2004, 40) notes, "articulating interests to a local party can therefore be a way of getting an issue into the forefront of debate."

[21] That party branches are highly *inclusive* was already highlighted by Maurice Duverger ([1954] 1990) in his classic study of political parties. According to Duverger, party branches are "wide open"—"you only need to wish to belong to be able to do so" (39).

which a sense of equality and solidarity with fellow party members flows. Nancy Rosenblum advocates this view of partisanship. Partisanship, she argues, is a distinctive form of collective identity characterised by an "avowed connection to what 'people like me' value, think, and do politically" (Rosenblum 2008, 344). It is about recognition for those one stands together with in the political struggle, and about a sense of being at home with those people. In party branches, this sense of "being at home" is further reinforced by the fact that members know each other well. As a result of their regular meetings and their joint engagement in the local community, they will be familiar with each others' backgrounds and personal histories, and friendships will have germinated over time.

If all of this is correct, then deliberations in party branches are deliberations among "people like us"—equal, open, and empathetic. Even if there are some social and economic status inequalities among participants, mutual recognition and acknowledgement ensures that their voices have equal weight. Elements of the "ethical partisanship" I have mentioned in the prior section may well be palpable in the party branches' deliberations.

Moving now to the second feature, to what extent do participants in local party branch meetings exhibit a diversity of viewpoints? Is it not more likely that they hold rather similar views? After all, they are members of the same political party and based in the same local context. However, this might not dramatically limit opinion diversity. On the one hand, most party branch members are not professional politicians, but politically committed lay citizens who pursue different kinds of professions; and their individual occupational backgrounds and corresponding everyday experiences are likely to result in a plurality of perspectives.[22] On the other hand, opinion diversity may also be a consequence of age differences between the members. For example, young partisans who have just started their work in the party in the local district might enthusiastically promote new ideas, whilst older members may be more concerned with protecting what has been accomplished. These kinds of conflict are particularly likely to occur in large and established parties where the average age of party members tends to be higher than the average age of the

[22] Compare also empirical evidence showing that party members generally become more and more like members of the wider citizenry (Scarrow and Gezgor 2010).

population in large. Empirical studies reveal that, especially in traditional parties on the left, older members often hold more traditional (that is, more leftist) views than younger members. Some of these older members even see themselves as ideologically at odds with the rest of their party (Haute and Carty 2011).

To be clear, I do not mean to suggest that *all* local party branches one finds across Western democracies will exhibit the just-described characteristics. Party branches are diverse and some of them may indeed have serious deliberative defects —they may, for example, be colonised by strongly polarised party members who deliberately ignore facts that support alternative positions. All I am claiming is that, given the tendency of these groups to be socio-economically diverse, and given the integrative force of partisanship, party branches are overall likely to be promising sites of intra-party deliberation.

Someone might still object that the meetings of local party branches are more likely to produce loose everyday talk than serious political discussion. People attend these meetings to socialise with like-minded people, "talking about sports or having a summer picnic", rather than to debate politics (Katz 2013, 52-53). But though I do not want to deny that some of the activities of party branches are non-deliberative (party branches for example often organise events for the local community, in which political debate often plays a minor role), it is unlikely that their members generally eschew political discussion. Even if some members are less politicised than others, their shared political commitment will prompt regular political discussions, since it brings with it a heightened sensitivity to particular grievances in society as well as a sense of responsibility for resolving them.[23]

The "systemic" uptake of deliberation at the party base

[23] Another point is that even if some of their exchanges do look like the reasoned deliberation theorists would like to see flourishing, this might not imply that they do not contribute to deliberation in a wider, more systemic, sense. Evidence from empirical studies of deliberation suggests that even loose everyday talk can serve deliberative functions. As Conover and Searing (2005, 281) argue, it provides people with an opportunity to explore different arguments, try out justifications for their views and "develop confidence about performing in the public arena."

Having established the deliberative credentials of local party branches, the next question is how the deliberations of these groups can be connected to substantive decisions. This section addresses this question, looking at mechanisms of delegation and accountability which normally should ensure the transmission of members' deliberated preferences to the party elite. The section also canvasses novel institutional designs to make parties more deliberative if these mechanisms are defective. So we now shift the focus from the party base as a site of deliberation to the ways in which it interacts with the other components of the partisan deliberative system.

Preference transmission, delegation, and accountability

In most political parties, the party base is *indirectly* linked to decision-making authority. Typically grassroots members delegate to representatives at higher hierarchical levels of the party, just like voters delegate to MPs in elections. Essentially, there are two modes of intra-party delegation. The first and more direct one is, indeed, *candidate selection*. How does candidate selection allow party branches to bring their deliberated views to bear on decisions? Mainly through selectorates. Those who select the candidates can influence later decisions by choosing candidates with whom they share views and values.[24] If selectorate member A is also a member of a party branch—and this quite often the case, especially if the method of candidate selection is decentralised (Hazan and Rahat 2010, 55-63)—then her selection is likely to be influenced by the deliberations of her branch. In a pre-selection meeting, for instance, the branch's members may reach a reasoned agreement regarding which candidate to support, and commit A to select accordingly.

Furthermore, selected candidates may themselves be members of party branches, and correspondingly ground their decisions in their branch's deliberative judgments. Undoubtedly, this is the most direct way for party branches to influence

[24] Empirical studies show that selectors tend to choose candidates according to this logic. As Gallagher (1988, 2) notes in a classic study of candidate selection practices, "the values of the selectorate (…) frequently have more impact than those of the voters."

policy decisions. It allows local deliberations to directly feed into the legislature. This is certainly not an unfamiliar scenario: in many parties the road to candidacy in legislative elections necessarily involves engagement at the local level, since the support of the local base is an important requirement to gain a place on the party list; thus, some elected MPs will inevitably engage in a local branch. When that is the case, the members of the party branch can also hold their parliamentary delegate accountable by demanding explanations and justifications for her decisions in the group's regular meetings, thus actualising a form of deliberative accountability.[25]

The second and more indirect mode of delegation is what I call *multi-level delegation.* By this I mean that elected delegates of the party branches carry the branches' deliberative judgments to various assemblies at different levels of the party hierarchy, where they are either channeled into decisions or, alternatively, delegation proceeds to higher organisational levels. Multi-level delegation is a hallmark of parties that adopt a territorial organisational structure comprising several hierarchical organisational levels. Typically this form of organisation implies that the membership is represented at all organisational levels by a members' or delegates' assembly, which is composed of or elected by the party membership, with the local and regional assemblies as well as the national party congress constituting "the supreme decision-making organs of the party at the respective organizational echelons" (Biezen and Piccio 2013, 43). In these assemblies, and in the party congress, the branches' judgments are again made the subject of deliberative reappraisal.[26] In addition, delegates can be held accountable by the branch members when they return from the assemblies. Similarly to cases where members of party branches hold a seat in the legislature, they can respond to their questions and explain them why decisions played out as they did.

Empirical challenges to preference transmission

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[25] Note that a potential shortcoming in this scenario is that a single party branch would gain disproportionate influence on policy decisions compared with those party branches which have no elected representatives among their members.

[26] Compare Pettitt's (2007) account of internal dissent at the party congresses of the British Labour Party and the Danish Socialist People's Party.

These are the two standard ways for party branches to link their deliberations to decision-making authority. To the extent that they permit communication flows between the party base and the decision makers in the party, they can in principle provide the kind of linkage I have earlier singled out as desirable.

Once we consult the empirical literature on political parties, however, doubts arise as to whether these modes of delegation work sufficiently well to perform their linkage function. First, if multi-level delegation is to successfully connect the party branches' deliberations to policy decisions across several hierarchical levels of the party, it needs to proceed largely from the bottom-up.[27] Otherwise the party branches' deliberations are likely to be bypassed by more powerful actors in the party. In reality, though, parties seldom work in this way (Houten 2009). Even if party laws prescribe a bottom-up organisational structure (as is the case in many European countries), and even if the parties *formally* adopt such a structure, they are *de facto* organised from the top down, or indeed stratarchically, as in Katz and Mair's much-discussed cartel party model (Katz and Mair 1995 and 2009). On the latter model, the relationship between party members and the party leadership is in fact characterised by "mutual autonomy", which is to say that the party's different hierarchical levels are effectively decoupled from one another. At best, real existing parties "*combine* bottom-up and top-down government", but even in those cases the deliberative judgments of the party base are often overruled by party elites (Allern and Saglie 2012, 966; for another case study, see Carty and Cross 2006).

Second, parties across Western democracies increasingly adopt candidate selection methods that shift power away from the party branches and activists to the passive and uninvolved membership (and sometimes even to non-members) (Hazan and Rahat 2010, 39-44). I have earlier alluded to this tendency. According to one prominent commentator, this is "one of the most commonly distinct trends we see today" (Mair 1997, 149; for a restatement see Katz and Mair 2009, 759). Parties tend to make selectorates more inclusive, which carries the aura of greater internal

[27] As I have said earlier, on my understanding this does not preclude leaving room for two-way communication between party elites and ordinary members, for instance in party conferences (see Pettitt 2007). But certain institutional checks are necessary to restrict the discretion of the party elite, notably formal rules that require party elites to consider and take seriously the members' judgments.

democratisation but often diminishes the influence of party branches and their activists on the selection of the candidates. For example, party primaries in several parties in Germany, New Zealand and Finland formally incorporate *all* party members in the selectorate and thus concentrate the power over the party list in the hands of members who ordinarily engage little (or not at all) in the party, and in any case are more inclined to support the candidates nominated by the party leadership (Rahat 2013, 138). By implication, this decreases the extent to which the deliberative judgments of party branches impact on election candidates. In sum, the standard pathways of linking the deliberations of the party base to substantive decisions appear defective in most contemporary parties.

Making parties more deliberative

The general trend I have just mapped gives plenty of reason for scepticism concerning the capacity of real existing parties to make their branches' deliberations consequential: organisational realities appear to undermine parties' capacity to provide linkage. This raises the question of how linkage could be re-established. How might one bring the deliberations of party branches to bear on policy decisions despite the unfavourable institutional environment most parties provide today?

One way that is consistent with the propositions laid out so far would be to make increased use of deliberative institutional designs within parties. Recent years have seen a proliferation of these kinds of institutions—examples include deliberative polls, citizens juries, and other types of deliberative consultative fora—and it seems worthwhile to consider integrating them into parties, too. Rather than merely trying to make candidate selection methods more democratic, practitioners could avail themselves of a vast array of deliberative innovations.

In the final part of this section, I want to point out some possible institutional designs. Although mainly indicative, the following three proposals highlight ways in which parties could draw on their internal deliberative resources to strengthen the link between the members on the ground and the party elite.

The most obvious deliberative institutional design is what one may call a *problem-oriented forum*.[28] This kind of forum is a specially established assembly for deliberation over one or multiple predetermined issues. Problem-oriented fora could for instance convene the members of several randomly selected party branches in a larger deliberative setting to devise a strategy for the party in a particular policy field. They could make tasks like drafting a party or election manifesto a more collaborative and interactive exercise, and its results are likely to enjoy more legitimacy than if such tasks are left to a small elite.

An innovative approach to using party branches as problem-oriented fora has been taken by the Australian Labour Party (ALP). In December 2011, the ALP's party conference has endorsed the establishment of issue-based branches, called Policy Action Caucuses (PACs). PACs are established and run by party members; setting them up requires thirty members. Once established, they "receive financial support and resources from the party in the same way as a geographic local branch, and [they are] entitled to convene meetings, policy forums and put policy motions to conference" (Gauja 2015, 98). This provides party members with an opportunity to pool relevant knowledge relating to a particular issue and work out policy proposals. While the deliberative credentials of PACs have yet to be examined, it seems clear that issue-based fora of this kind are a vehicle of membership empowerment that is much in line with the institutional recommendations put forward here.

Second, to handle bigger deliberative tasks, single fora could also be "networked" (on the idea of deliberative networks, see for example Rummens 2012). This design bears resemblance to the way in which internal sites of deliberation would ideally interact in multi-level delegation. A *partisan deliberative network* would comprise a number of dispersed fora of deliberation within the party that are linked together. In such a network, local branches would form single nodes that address limited aspects of specific issues in their deliberations, perhaps with an eye to the demands of their local constituency. The information from each node would subsequently be channeled together so that their recommendations can guide decision-

[28] Note that this proposition differs starkly from the partisan deliberative fora Hendriks and her colleagues (2007) have examined. In contrast to these "stakeholder forums", which include representatives of different businesses as well as advocacy groups, the type of fora I am proposing here convene only grassroots members of a single political party.

making in large. Upon concluding its deliberations, each branch could for example elect a representative to a single national forum, which in its turn could pool all the deliberative judgments of the party branches across the country and work out a highly integrative decision.

Note that establishing partisan deliberative networks might not require much institutional effort. After all, according to much recent research, parties are in any case best conceived in terms of networks of partisans, that is, dispersed and decentralised systems of interconnected partisan groups.[29] If this is true, then making these networks more deliberative would involve simply improving the channels of communication that connect individual partisan groups, and coordinating their deliberations better. So, networked partisan deliberation might have plenty of pre-existing resources to build on.

The third and final institutional design I want to sketch here is a *partisan deliberative conference.* This type of deliberative assembly differs from the problem-oriented forum in that it brings grassroots members together with party elites, rather than convening the members on their own. Its chief purpose is to strengthen accountability by promoting face-to-face encounters between members and elites, in which they "ask questions and give answers, exploring whether or not they remain mutually aligned and whether the grounds of their alignment might have changed" (Mansbridge 2009, 384 fn. 57). This strong focus on member-elite contact, accountability and mutual justification also distinguishes a partisan deliberative conference from normal party conferences, where usually much less emphasis is placed on party leaders and ordinary members talking at "eye level" and on the "deliberativeness" of the exchanges (see Pettitt 2007). Moreover, partisan deliberative conferences need not result in immediate collective decisions. They could also only prepare the way for decisions that are taken at a later point in time, or be organised with a retrospective outlook to evaluate previously taken decisions.

One potential use of partisan deliberative conferences is to supplement direct democratic procedures. For example, the members' conferences the German SPD

[29] This topic has recently received special attention in research on party politics in the U.S., see for example Desmarais et al. (2015). For a theoretical (and rather critical) statement on the "party as a network", see Katz and Mair (2009, 761-762).

organised in several federal states prior to its membership ballot on the coalition agreement with the CDU/CSU allowed large numbers of members and activists to debate the terms of the coalition pact face-to-face with the party leadership. In these conferences, the party leadership was compelled to explain the reasons for their support of the "grand coalition" and engage in two-way communication with the membership. While the party base in the end supported the coalition agreement, the initial resistance by segments of the membership (notably the JUSOS, the party's youth organisation) which mobilised internal protest against the coalition, and the ensuing pressure on the leadership to more extensively justify the coalition agreement vis-à-vis the members, is indicative of the democratic potential of such conference-style fora.

Readers might wonder at this point exactly how much autonomy party elites should be granted in an internally deliberative party. Should they have some discretion in the making of decisions (e.g. in parliament), provided that they take the outcomes of members' deliberations as a point of orientation? Or should they be mere delegates of the membership, who are meant to decide in accordance with the deliberated will of the party members without modifying it? The answer to this question is that party elites should indeed be granted some discretion. The reason why has to do with the well-known limits of a purely delegative conception of representation (see Urbinati and Warren 2008, 400-401 and Guerrero 2010): without some "room for manoeuvre", party elites might struggle to translate the members' deliberated preferences into decisions. This is true especially when a decision has to be made jointly with other parties or stakeholders. When that is the case, being bound to act strictly in accordance with the will of the membership may undermine the capacity of party elites to reach integrative compromises. At worst, it can lead to deadlock. Nonetheless, party elites must remain accountable to the membership in the way I have outlined above. They must defend and justify their actions and decisions, and respond to the members' concerns.[30] Otherwise the linkage between parties and citizens could not be sustained.

[30] In practice, one potential way of making this possible would be to hold deliberative conferences on a more regular basis, perhaps involving only selected representatives of single branches to reduce the scale of the event.

Importantly, this means that making parties more internally deliberative does not involve doing away with the "division of labour" between party members and party officials. That would in any case be very difficult to achieve in large, complex party organisations. Rather, making parties more deliberative involves *democratising the internal division of labour* by introducing deliberative accountability mechanisms. These mechanisms not only give party members the opportunity to question the party officials' decisions and demand justifications for them. They may also over time reinforce solidarity among party elites and party members. For if members and party elites engage in regular exchanges about the party's principles and ends, they may come to understand better each others' authentic motivations and so build a relationship of mutual trust and respect. This is bound to further enhance the democratic character of the internal division of labour (cf. Christiano 2012, 37-38).

Another question that might be asked is whether the just-proposed institutional designs can be adopted by *any* party. After all, parties come in a variety of different forms, and it seems likely that different organisational features and programmatic commitments would affect the feasibility of internal deliberative democratisation. Absent in-depth empirical research on deliberation within parties, however, taking a definitive position regarding the compatibility of deliberative designs with different party types is difficult. But given the variegated contexts in which non-partisan deliberative designs proved to work, I think it should be possible to experiment with such institutional designs in different kinds of parties. A minimum condition would seem to be that their membership is organised to some degree.

Of course, some parties are much less deliberative than others, which naturally makes it more difficult for them to enact deliberative reforms. In populist parties on the extreme fringes of the political system, for example, deliberation is likely to be of rather low quality, as members of those parties are often uncompromising and uncooperative due to their strong political commitments.[31] Making parties of this kind

[31] For example, recent psychological studies suggest that supporters of populist parties tend to score low on a personality trait called "Agreeableness", which is to say that they are likely to be "egoistic, distrusting towards others, intolerant, uncooperative and [to] express antagonism towards others" (Bakker et al. 2016, 305). "The populist anti-establishment message—accusing the political elite of incompetence, insubordination and profiteering at the expense of the common people—matches a distrusting, tough-minded, cynical and intolerant personality" (Ibid.). These personality traits are likely to undermine deliberation, which is based on cooperation, mutual trust and a general willingness to listen to what others have to say.

more internally deliberative will, therefore, be a great challenge. While it is certainly possible to imagine that the deliberative capacity of these parties could rise as they win over more and more supporters from across society and so become more internally diverse, at the present moment it is difficult to see how deliberative reforms could be successfully implemented.

To be sure, there appears to be a demand for voice and empowerment among present members and supporters of populist parties. Ultimately, one of the reasons why populist parties are increasingly gaining electoral ground in established democracies is that they promise to give voice back to sections of the citizenry that were left behind by mainstream politics. Whether this demand for voice amounts to demand for *deliberation* is questionable, however. Insofar as supporters of populist parties endorse the standard claim of these parties that the people constitutes a unified sovereign with little internal divisions (see Müller 2016)—or perhaps more accurately, insofar as they view themselves as being part of a unified people—probably they will in any case see little point in deliberating.[32] If the people stand as one, there are simply no substantial internal disagreements that have to be deliberated. Instead, and consistent with the demands of their parties, they will "support direct democratic mechanisms and other strategies that allow an unmediated relationship between the constituencies and the leader" (Kaltwasser 2014, 479).

Deliberative parties in the age of party decline?

Although I have responded to a number of objections throughout the chapter, it might still be worried that some of the arguments I have laid out are excessively optimistic. The most obvious worry, which I have mentioned already in the introduction of the thesis, is that the near universal decline of party memberships across democratic countries puts the possibility of internally deliberative parties out of reach (Biezen et al. 2012; Mair 2013a). Absent active members, it may be said, turning parties into

[32] A similar point is made by Jan-Werner Müller (2016, 55-56) in his recent book on the topic: "If there is only one, clearly identifiable people's will, which the leader or leadership can single out—what does one need intra-party debate for?"

deliberative assemblies in which reasoned collective judgments emerge from the membership base is illusory. The membership at the local level is too thinned out and fragmented to be meaningfully involved in the party.

But whether it is inferred from this that intra-party democracy is generally pointless, or that parties should involve more non-members into their democratic procedures (for instance through candidate selection methods that include unaffiliated supporters), arguments of this kind lack persuasive force. Let me reiterate the two replies I have given earlier, in the thesis's introduction. Firstly, from an empirical point of view, one should be cautious with overstating the decline of party memberships. Of course, membership parties are not what they once were. But their decline is not absolute in the sense that there are no active members left in today's parties.[33] Secondly, and this is the more important point, bypassing existing active members on the grounds that they are fewer than in the past appears democratically suspect: indeed, providing them with inclusive channels to participate has a moral claim as a way of recognising their democratic political equality (Wolkenstein, forthcoming).

A second challenge arises from what Peter Mair has called the growing tension between the "demands of responsiveness" and the "demands of responsibility". Parties, the argument goes, are subject to increasing pressure from lobbyist and special interests as well as supranational or international bodies that "have a right to be heard and, indeed, the authority to insist", and this makes it more and more difficult for them to respond to the demands of their members (Mair 2013b, 145; also see Bickerton 2012; White 2015). In Europe, for example, the EU level has assumed responsibility in a large number of policy fields, which naturally limits the scope of policy goals parties can realistically pursue (Rose 2014). Thus one may say that irrespective of what the members decide in their deliberations, party leaders lack the discretion to translate these decisions into policies.

The problem here is similar to the problem facing parties with regard to their voters: institutional constraints reduce the range of policies that can be offered and

[33] In fact, several recent studies of party members suggest that "traditional party membership is far from obsolete" (Scarrow 2014, p. 216). Although party membership figures declined in the last two decades, the number of politically active partisans remained surprisingly consistent (Ponce and Scarrow, forthcoming).

pursued. But that does not speak against intra-party democracy. There are always practical limitations that make the realisation of political goals more difficult, without it following that seeking to attain these goals is fruitless. Indeed, even if party leaders are bound only to achieve partially integrative agreements in their policy negotiations, that they seek to represent the demands of the membership (as well as their constituents) would seem a minimal condition for citizens to exercise collective political agency. Such is in fact the rationale and justification of intra-party democracy, as I have argued at the outset of the chapter.

A third objection to the deliberative model of intra-party democracy I have proposed raises the issue of the slow-moving nature of deliberation. Finding agreements and compromises can take a lot of time when the issues at stake are discussed in a thoroughgoing fashion. Does making parties more internally deliberative thus involve sacrificing their capacity to act swiftly? If this were so, it would give us reason to question the desirability of an internally deliberative party. For oftentimes a party must act quickly so as to effectively respond to emerging problems, or in order not to be outpaced by its adversaries in a campaign. In these situations—often critical moments—there is arguably little time to sit down and deliberate about what best to do.

This objection is plausible. Deliberation is no doubt a slow-paced activity: its emphasis on reflection and dialogue stands in opposition to "fast thinking" (Stoker et al. 2016) and hasty decision-making. It is possible to temper the objection, however, by pointing out that the proposal of making parties more internally deliberative does not involve abolishing the division of labour between party members and party officials. On the contrary, the model leaves space for executive discretion. For example, while party members deliberate about (say) general policy visions (e.g. in partisan deliberative networks) or more concrete policy proposals (e.g. in problem-oriented fora), party officials could take fast decisions to respond to urgent problems. So long as they act broadly in line with the aims and ideals that party members have collectively defined, and justify their decisions to the party members, ideally engaging in two-way communication with them (e.g. in partisan deliberative conferences), there

is nothing normatively troubling about this. In this way, an internally deliberative party can retain its capacity to respond to pressing issues.

So to sum up, a deliberative model of intra-party democracy faces a number of challenges, though none of them would seem to fatally compromise the possibilities of it being realised. Doubts are warranted in the light of the dire state of parties in Western democracies—but to see the gradual decline of parties as a reason to give up on their potential to bring citizens closer to government amounts to questioning whether democracy as such is thinkable. To be sure, when it comes to making parties more internally deliberative, still much depends on political will. Especially the implementation of deliberative institutional designs within parties would require party elites to renounce some of their authority and discretion, and one may reasonably doubt whether they would readily do so. But these are ultimately secondary points, none of which undermine the potential of the model suggested here. Making parties more internally democratic requires making them also more internally deliberative.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for a deliberative model of intra-party democracy that centres on the deliberations of the organised party base. This model *corrects* for the adverse effects of standard models of intra-party democracy, and *complements* these models with additional and more empowered participatory opportunities for party members. I have suggested that this could help parties revive their democratically important linkage function and bring citizens closer to government again.

Whether reforming parties in terms of the model I have proposed is viable would seem to depend in large part on the deliberative credentials of real-world party branches. Demonstrating that citizens can deliberate well is an important way of establishing the potential of deliberative institutional designs (see Mackenzie and Warren 2012); so it would need to be shown that there is indeed vibrant deliberation within party branches. If, contrary to the expectations I have articulated in this chapter, it turns out that political discussion in party branches is non-deliberative—if,

for example, party members merely vent complaints without reflecting on each others' viewpoints—then the normative claims of this chapter may be treated not so much as prescriptions for institutional design, but as a yardstick for measuring how much actual parties are failing compared with ideal ones.[34] Given the evidence I have marshalled in this chapter however, my wager is that members who regularly convene in party branches *do* deliberate well.

To find out whether this is really the case, the remainder of this thesis will look closely at the deliberations of local party branches. I will address three broad questions, drawing on a small body of material collected in group interviews with party members in two social democratic parties in Austria and Germany. (1) Do party branches provide favourable preconditions for deliberation? (2) Are the political discussions in the branches "deliberative", in the sense that they are marked by reflective exchanges of reasons? (3) And what can be done to resolve possible deliberative deficiencies?

The thesis will proceed as follows. In the next chapter, I outline the methodology used to study deliberation at the party base. The subsequent chapters look closely at different aspects of partisan deliberation, examining the empirical material collected for the purposes of the study. Chapter 3 addresses question (1) and asks whether party branches provide a supportive environment for deliberation. Chapter 4 addresses question (2) and examines how ordinary partisans deliberate, that is, how they argumentatively resolve disagreements. Chapter 5 addresses question (3) and discusses cases where, despite favourable preconditions for deliberation, deliberation fails, relating the issues raised by these "deliberative failures" to questions of institutional design.

[34] On the distinction between "yardstick" and "prescriptive" theorising, see Valentini (2012b, esp. 660).

Chapter 2
Studying Partisan Deliberation

Deliberative democratic theory and empirical social science

Topics of normative political theory are seldom made the subject of empirical research. Empirical and theoretical work tends to proceed on separate tracks, largely uninformed by each other. Deliberative democratic theory is an exception. Empirical interest in public deliberation has grown considerably over the last decade. The recent proliferation of empirical studies of deliberation initiated what has been called the "empirical turn" in deliberative democracy, the latest of the many "turns" the theory has taken so far (Dryzek 2012, ch.1). Theorists and practitioners of deliberative democracy have widely acknowledged that deliberative theory requires an empirical check to fully realise its potential (e.g. Bohman 1998; Mutz 2008; Thompson 2008). Though empirical research, as one theorist notes, "cannot be either the last or the leading word in deliberative democratic theory" (Chambers 2003, 320), it can help refine deliberative theory's guiding principles, render more clearly how deliberative institutions should be best designed, and more generally demonstrate that deliberative ideas have a bearing on the world out there.

One can divide the empirical literature on deliberative democracy into three related families. The first deals with the effects deliberation has on citizens. Studies of this kind have examined, for example, how deliberation transforms individual preferences and perspectives, or how it contributes to the perceived legitimacy of decisions (e.g. Gastil and Dillard 1999; Mutz 2008; Druckman and Nelson 2003; Barabas 2004; Fishkin and Luskin 2005; Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger 2009; Niemeyer 2011; Talpin 2011). The second family is addressed to the structural features of deliberation. Scholars have here looked at the ways in which justifications are presented or the function of rhetoric in deliberation (e.g. Boltanski and Thévenot 2006; Polletta and Lee 2006; Ryfe 2007; Black 2013). Finally, in the third family of literature, the focus is on the overall quality of deliberation, that is, the extent to which real-world deliberation reaches deliberative ideals. The principal aim of these studies

is to evaluate a whole range of normative criteria that are thought to be essential features of good deliberation in different institutional contexts (e.g. Steenbergen et al. 2003; Steiner et al. 2004; Hangartner et al. 2007; Bächtiger et al. 2008; Bächtiger and Hangartner 2010; Steiner 2012; Lord 2013; Lord and Tamvaki 2013). These three families of literature comprise the main empirical work done on deliberative democracy to date.

Although it draws loosely on the insights of all three families of literature, the empirical part of this thesis is mainly concerned with the circumstances and quality of deliberation in a specific institutional setting, namely local party organisations. Thus, it belongs in the third category of studies. However, it departs from the bulk of the existing work in significant ways for reasons to do with methodology. In the next section, I explain why and how the approach taken here differs from the majority of studies of deliberation quality. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I introduce the research design and case selection.

Existing research on deliberation quality and its limitations

In research on deliberation quality, the work of Jürg Steiner and André Bächtiger (Steiner et al. 2004; Bächtiger et al. 2008; Bächtiger and Hangartner 2010; Steiner 2012) has perhaps had the greatest impact in recent years. Steiner, Bächtiger, and their collaborators have developed a Discourse Quality Index (DQI), a formal text coding scheme to measure the degree to which real-world talk approaches the ideals of deliberative theory. The DQI's codes are based on a set of criteria of good deliberation that are derived from classic versions of deliberative theory. Examples include the level of justification (how many reasons a speaker offers in support of a claim), the content of justification (e.g. whether the speaker refers to the good of a part or the good of the whole), and different degrees of respect actors show vis-à-vis others (e.g. whether the speaker acknowledges others' demands and counterarguments). The data generated in the text coding is typically used in statistical models to determine the

effect of different institutional (e.g. consensus- vs. competitive political systems) and sociological (e.g. age and gender) factors on the quality of deliberation.

The DQI is undoubtedly the most innovative tool available to empirically investigate democratic deliberation. Not only is its operationalisation of the "essentials of the Habermasian logic of communicative action" (Bächtiger et al. 2010, 38) a paragon of making normative theory empirically useable. The fact that DQI data can be used in statistical models also brings deliberative democracy closer to empirical political science, contributing to cross-disciplinary dialogue (for two recent studies, see Lord 2013; Caluwaerts and Deschouwer 2013). Research of this kind is important for the acceptance of deliberation as a democratic ideal beyond the boundaries of democratic theory, and the DQI's creators deserve credit for facilitating such work.

Nonetheless, some problems arise from studying deliberation in such a formalistic fashion. On the one hand, there is the methodological problem that formal coding bypasses the richness of phenomena pertaining to deliberation. On the other hand, there is a related normative problem, namely that the DQI engages a too narrow, and thus unnecessarily exclusionary, model of deliberation. Let us examine these problems in turn.

Beginning with the methodological problem, the DQI elides many contextual components of deliberation that can influence the quality of deliberation in important ways. One reason why this is so is that it focuses only on text. Consider the example of interpersonal respect. With a text-based metric we are able to ascertain disrespect only if it comes in the form of speech acts that explicitly degrade others and/or their proposals and claims. Once rhetorical devices or gestures are at play, however, this becomes much more difficult. These elements of interpersonal communication can be hard to detect in transcripts. Yet it seems clear that the respectfulness of a statement often depends not only on what has been said, but also on how it has been said. Utterances that look respectful on paper might have been made with an ironic or sarcastic undertone; and even physical gestures can affect a statement's respectfulness. Losing track of these crucial details may generate a distorted picture of deliberation quality.

Another reason why the DQI misses important contextual components of deliberation is that it draws on a relatively narrow set of evaluative criteria. Most importantly, the DQI evaluates the *level of justification* by looking at whether, and to what extent, an actor provides reasons in support of a proposition and links these reasons to the proposition. Moreover, it stipulates that at least two reasons have to be offered by a speaker for any proposition to be considered adequately justified (Steiner et al. 2004, 172-173). However, in most real world deliberations such extensive justification is typically not necessary because participants share enough common knowledge to make sense of communicative shortcuts. This is why, as Robert Goodin put it (2008, 88), "Rather then belabouring the point, we typically offer the merest of gestures towards arguments, expecting others to catch the allusions." Indeed, we "talk principally in terms of conclusions, offering (...) only the briefest argument-sketch describing our reasoning leading us to those conclusions" (Goodin 2008, 88). And although "brief argument-sketches" do not meet the DQI's criteria of good justification, those addressed might still view the point as sufficiently (and persuasively) justified. Therefore, it would seem that a minimum requirement to avoid distortion is that researchers are present at the actual deliberations. Researchers need to familiarise themselves with the context of talk and, if possible, observe the participants in action. This can to some extent alleviate the problem that formal coding strips away the context of deliberation. As we shall see shortly, however, the normative problem appears unsurmountable.

What is the normative problem raised by the DQI's narrow evaluative criteria? It is that assessing the quality of deliberation with a fixed framework of deliberative norms pre-empts people's deliberative capacities. Why? Because deliberative communication takes different forms in different social and cultural contexts, and there is not just one way of getting it right. As the argument of the previous paragraphs suggests, that forms of communication do not fit the DQI's norms of good deliberation need not mean they are less deliberative. Contextually contingent speech conventions, norms of politeness, and group dynamics can influence the ways in which people address one another in discussions (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; on

groups and deliberation see also Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2007, esp. 649).[35] In some environments deliberative processes "are formal or ritualized", in others "informal, even haphazard" (Sass and Dryzek 2014, 4). In some contexts, people typically justify their claims with personal narratives or images, in others they may draw routinely on more generalisable or logic-driven evidence. In short, a variety of modes of talk can display deliberative characteristics. Admitting these in a model of deliberative democracy has a moral claim as a way of recognising what is sometimes called the "separateness of persons."

The argument from inclusion is usually associated with the work of "difference democrats" like Iris Young. In their view, deliberative theory should respect people as concrete beings who are embedded in particular social contexts. For Young in particular, this is chiefly a matter of avoiding the speech norms traditional deliberative democrats avow. She argues that the "identification of reasonable public debate with polite, orderly, dispassionate, gentlemanly argument" (Young 2002, 49) one finds in much of the classic literature has exclusionary implications. As Sanders (1997, 364) provocatively put it, deliberation thus conceived ultimately privileges the "[w]hite male with a college degree". To include people outside an educated white middle-class context (and, of course, those inside that context who simply are less articulate) into deliberative processes, deliberative theory should, therefore, eschew narrow principles of good discourse. Even if some of deliberative democracy's ideals can be meaningfully asserted across different contexts, one needs to make space for different forms of expression, including agonistic and narrative speech, understood, respectively, as the spirited disputing of competing arguments and the telling of personal stories for justificatory purposes.

Notice that the normative argument against using the DQI is also more consistent with intra-party democracy's aim to lend ordinary party members voice. To

[35] One way of looking at different "styles" of deliberation is to see them as shaped by what sociologists sometimes call "speech norms". Speech norms are "assumptions about what appropriate speech is" that individuals develop and adopt in their peer groups and social environment (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003, 739). These norms are likely to influence what people view as good deliberation in that they affect what kind of speech people consider respectful, what kinds of justification they accept; and so on. A circle of educated middle-class deliberators, for example, might view dispassionate and polite talk as most respectful, while in less privileged social contexts more confrontational speech can still be seen as perfectly acceptable. Likewise, a group of religious deliberators will see no problem in accepting traditionalist arguments with references to a sacred higher order, whilst most atheists will be compelled to reject such reasonings. The DQI's static framework glosses over these important details.

recall: the principle of intra-party democracy is predicated on the idea that parties should permit their broader membership to have a say in internal decision-making. The party on the ground includes however people who are likely to not always be highly educated and articulate. Thus, limiting our concept of deliberation to the kind of rational discussion that privileges "white males with college degree" seems a less than promising direction; indeed, it would seem that the emancipatory potential of intra-party democracy would be undermined by a such narrow concept of deliberation.

The argument from inclusion has another important methodological implication. If people ought to be respected as concrete, situated subjects, it follows that researchers also should take seriously the participants' perspective when studying the quality of deliberation. That is, researchers ought to acknowledge that what good deliberation is—that is, what good reasons are, what respectful speech means, and so on—can only be properly judged from the point of view of the participants themselves. Here again, the DQI proves problematic, for it evaluates the quality of deliberation from a third-person perspective and bypasses the participants' viewpoints. In reducing the study of deliberation quality to a text coding exercise it gives the researcher the power to decide what good deliberation means without consulting those directly participating in it.

Bächtiger and his colleagues (2010, 40-41) acknowledge this shortcoming of the DQI but maintain that the problem of ignoring the participants' viewpoint "presses less forcefully when judging the formal properties of arguments" as opposed to their specific content. They claim, for example, that when it comes to justification the DQI can "measure whether an argument is *accessible* to rational criticism", and that this be a sound "proxy for substantive justification". But how should accessibility to rational criticism be adjudicated if the DQI codes "only assess *whether* the speaker provides supporting evidence" (Bächtiger et al. 2010, 41, emphasis added)? Clearly, the fact that evidence is provided does not yet tell us whether that evidence is accessible to rational criticism. Evidence may be rational in the most profound sense of the word but inaccessible to those addressed, as in a scientific study whose validity can only be evaluated by experts. Such evidence may, to borrow a formulation from Rousseau,

"convince without persuading", but it cannot be subjected to critical scrutiny by most speakers. So it is highly questionable whether simply providing evidence is a reliable proxy for substantive justification. It seems that the burden of taking the participants perspective into account cannot so easily be avoided. As we shall see in the next section, adopting an interpretative approach is a promising alternative.

Before proceeding, though, let us summarise the above discussion. Taken together, the arguments examined in this section strongly suggest we should look for alternatives to the DQI when studying the quality of deliberation. Although the DQI has its merits as a tool that facilitates dialogue across sub-disciplines, its shortcomings (which, it should be noted, the DQI's creators are largely aware of) ultimately outweigh its advantages. From a methodological point of view, coding the formal properties of deliberation is problematic because it misses important contextual factors on which the quality of deliberation often depends. From a normative point of view, the DQI's rigid framework of deliberative principles proves exclusionary vis-à-vis many different styles of communication that can perform a deliberative function. This point weighs especially heavy in light of intra-party democracy's emancipatory aims: to make parties more inclusive and participatory, we ought not limit deliberation to forms of speech that ultimately privilege an educated few. At the very least, we must acknowledge that different forms of communication can be deliberative. Understanding these forms of communication requires us to pay close attention to the viewpoints of those participating in deliberation. So even if one thinks that insensitivity to context is a price well worth paying for methodological rigour, theoretical consistency requires that we take a different approach.

An interpretative approach to partisan deliberation

It seems clear now that an appropriate methodology to study deliberation at the party base must be particularly sensitive to intersubjective and phenomenological considerations. This points naturally to methods that are traditionally classed as *interpretative*. Interpretative approaches, a hallmark of anthropology and qualitative

sociology, concentrate on "beliefs, and discourses, as opposed to laws and rules, correlations between social categories, or deductive models" (Bevir and Rhodes 2006, 70). Scholars in the interpretative tradition hold that the meanings of these beliefs and discourses can be accessed through interpretation (for a classic treatment, see Taylor 1971). This means that the researcher needs to draw on his or her own resources rather than trying to abstract from them to achieve scientific rigour. The aim is not to arrive at generalisations about social behaviour that are divorced from the particulars, as in the dominant quantitative tradition of social-scientific inquiry, but to make sense of the specific meanings that constitute people's actions and practices and explain phenomena and events "in terms of actors' understandings of their own contexts" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 52).

Interpretative approaches typically engage such research techniques as in-depth interviews, focus groups, discourse analysis, and participant observation. And most of these techniques have also been previously used in empirical research on deliberative democracy (e.g. Hendriks 2006; Ryfe 2007; Landwehr and Holzinger 2010). So although there is clearly a growing tendency to study deliberation with quantitative methods, there is nothing unfamiliar in taking an interpretative route. In fact, echoing some of my concerns with the DQI, much of the motivation underlying scholarly support for interpretivism in research on deliberative democracy derives from dissatisfaction with the abstractness of quantitative approaches and their disconnectedness from the politics on the ground. As Ercan and her colleagues (2015, 6 and 12) argue in a recent paper, the virtue of interpretative methods is that they can "capture the perspectives of participants in the deliberative process" and so provide insight into the "lived experiences … and complexities of public deliberation."[36] For more practically-minded scholars like Gastil and his colleagues (2012, 222), interpretative methods are simply a "pragmatic" choice of method insofar as "the meaning of texts [i.e. transcripts of deliberations] can be revealed only by attention to the particular context in which it is embedded."

[36] Ercan et al. (2015) list a range of advantages in their paper that I do not mention here. This is because many of the benefits they note refer specifically to the empirical study of "deliberative systems", an approach to deliberative democracy that understands deliberation as occurring in multiple spaces at once (such as living rooms, coffee shops, or social movements), and are not directly relevant for the methodological propositions put forward in this chapter.

A common worry, one that needs to be addressed here, is that interpretative methods give the analyst too much latitude for interpretation, at the expense of methodological rigour. This worry is usually expressed by those who think that that quantitative approaches, which carry the aura of hard science, provide the gold standard of social-scientific rigour. Dryzek (2005, 198), for instance, who is generally favourably disposed to interpretivism, objects that in much interpretative research "too much has to be taken on trust."[37] Interpretation, in his view, is eventually "inescapable" in the study of deliberative democracy—but it is "potentially deadly" (Dryzek 2005, 198). But the fact that interpretative methods rely on the researcher's situated judgments does not imply that interpretation is completely impressionistic and unsystematic; rather, since interpretivism is predicated on different ontological and epistemological assumptions than quantitative approaches, different standards of rigour apply. Briefly, quantitative methods start from the presumption that there is an observer-independent world about which facts can be discovered with scientific methods, and correspondingly holds that rigour requires subjecting hypotheses to empirical testing. Interpretivism, on the other hand, rejects the assumption that there exists an observer-independent world (or at least that such a world can be accessed by humans), and looks instead at the ways in which people invest the world with meaning by carefully interpreting what they say and do.[38] Interpretative researchers can achieve rigour, then, by saturating their instruments with theory and being reflexive and transparent about their approach. In this way, they can avoid the pitfalls of unconstrained interpretation.

Now, which interpretative research techniques are best suited to study deliberation at the party base? Ethnographic approaches certainly provide the greatest level of detail and nuance. Recent empirical work based on observation and

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[37] Dryzek (2005) argues that mixing methods (combining surveys and focus groups, for example) can correct for the weaknesses of individual interpretative methods. But one should be cautious with such moves, especially when these involve mixing interpretative and quantitative methods. Different methods ultimately rest on different philosophical assumptions, and compounding methods can result in philosophical inconsistency. As Ahmed and Sil (2012, 936) rightly note, claims emphasising mixed methods' "ability to reduce error and deliver cross-validated findings are viable only for methods predicated on sufficiently similar ontologies and sufficiently similar conceptions of causality."

[38] Note that treating the world as a social construct is also more consistent with the idea of deliberation. Deliberation is about exchanging observer-dependent viewpoints, and such an exchange would be pointless if it were possible to discover that any of those viewpoints corresponded to an ontological 'fact' in an observer-independent world (see the discussion of inter-subjectivism in Reckwitz 2002).

immersion has proven to afford a crucial insight into the lived experience of deliberation (e.g., Baiocchi 2005; Talpin 2011; Doerr 2012). But though this work is indicative of the great potential of ethnographic methods in the study of deliberative democracy, a purely ethnographic approach appears unsuited for studying the deliberations of local party groups. Ethnography is best suited, and usually used, to address *one* case in maximal depth. Rather than aiming at overview or comparison, it serves to "chronicle aspects of lived experience" through "immersion in the place and lives of people under study" (Wedeen 2010, 257). It seems, however, that we need to include some variation in our case selection to meaningfully explore the potential of a deliberative model of intra-party democracy. Recall that the party groups we shall examine in this study not only exhibit considerable variation regarding the sociological composition of participants but also convene with different frequency and debate different topics. Because of these differences, taking an ethnographic approach and focusing only on one or two groups over extended time is likely to leave us with an overly partial picture.[39]

More appropriate research techniques may be found in research with similarly exploratory goals as the present study. In her study of the support for public deliberation by actors with vested interests, for example, Carolyn Hendriks (2006) draws on in-depth interviews and document analysis. Donatella della Porta's (2005) study of deliberation in social movements also uses in-depth interviews, in combination with document analysis and focus groups, while Pamela Johnston Conover and Donald Searing (2005) use focus groups to enrich survey results and content analysis data in their work on the deliberativeness of everyday political talk. Like the present study, these studies sought to map uncharted terrain, so to speak. And although their results are not generalisable in the strict sense of being statistically representative, there is certainly room for some more general conjectures. (When, for example, no new information emerges after conducting a number of group interviews one may—tentatively and preliminarily—assume that the findings reflect more general realities.)

[39] I am by no means suggesting that such an approach would not be *per se* worthwhile. An ethnographic study of activism the party base would be a welcome addition to the bulk of quantitative studies of the decline of membership-based politics, and could generate novel insight into citizen engagement at the party-public nexus.

So, what research techniques should we opt for? Given that the present study is addressed to *group discussion* at the party base, drawing on the insights of focus group research naturally suggests itself. Let me first explain in a bit more detail what a focus group is and then discuss whether the logic of focus group research can be applied to local party groups.

First, focus groups are typically understood as moderated thematic group discussions that revolve around a specific topic. Ideally people speak openly and in their "own language", with relatively little control imposed by the researcher. In other words, focus groups are "artificial deliberations": insofar as people interact and influence each other in discussion, they can "echo the social context within which people discuss public affairs" (Johnston Conover and Searing 2005, 273). Their scholarly value is two-fold. On the one hand, they allow researchers to investigate the meaning of arguments and concepts as people understand them. (Although the researcher tends to keep a low profile in a focus group discussion, he or she can always ask participants to clarify their statements and elaborate how they arrived at their viewpoint.) On the other hand, focus group discussions admit an insight into the particular ways in which people discuss. They enable us to gain an understanding of what one may call *discursive practices*, that is, routinised patterns of talk. In short, focus groups are not only particularly suited to examine how people reason together, but also to study collective discussion from the point of view of the participants themselves.

If this is so, can we meaningfully draw an analogy between focus groups and local party groups? Although local party groupings clearly *resemble* focus groups, they also differ from focus groups in several ways. The most obvious difference is that party groups are not designed by researchers. First, typically researchers recruit focus group participants according to a specific socio-demographic profile. They determine the topic and timeframe of discussion, as well as the number of participants. In local party groups, by contrast, participants come from different social backgrounds and age cohorts. Discussion topics vary, and the number of participants differs from group to group. Second, focus groups are usually discussions among people who meet for the first time. Local party meetings, on the other hand, are

regular exchanges among people who are acquainted with one another. That party groups meet on a regular basis furthermore means that they are likely to exhibit what Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003, 739) call a "group style", that is, they may share assumptions about "what the group's relationship (…) to the wider world should be", "what members' mutual responsibilities should be while in the group context", and "what appropriate speech is in the group context".

But while it is important to be aware of those differences, the fact that party groups have not been designed by researchers certainly does not speak against treating them as focus groups. We may here adopt what David Morgan calls an "inclusive approach" to focus group research and view focus groups simply as "a research technique that collects data through group interaction" (Morgan 1997, 6). On such a perspective, informality is one of the core strengths of focus group research. Rather than establishing formal criteria of what qualifies as a focus group and what doesn't, methodological restrictions should relate to the researcher's specific goals and the nature of the research topic. So even if the suggested analogy is imperfect in some way, party groups can reasonably be treated as focus groups. Of course, we need to bear in mind that doing so implies altering the normal course of discussion in these groups in significant ways, since in focus group discussions the researcher remains foreign to the group, and his or her presence will likely be felt by the participants. Thus the researcher cannot simply take the role of an observer. Usually he or she needs to ask some introductory questions, breaking the ice, as it were, before the discussion can take a more natural course. Moreover, sometimes the researcher will be required to intervene in the discussion and remind participants to keep to the point, or ask them for clarification (see for example Duchesne and Haegel 2006, 12-13).[40]

Outline of the study

[40] The researcher's prominent role in focus group research may lead one to draw analogies to designed deliberation. In designed fora moderators usually have been trained to encourage a deliberative discourse. However, in the focus group the researcher's role is not to ensure that people argue well; rather, interventions are generally made to keep the discussion going, and to keep it within the boundaries of the theme of interest.

With these methodological preliminaries in place, I will now elaborate the research design of this study. The research with which I examined the deliberative potential of local party branches involved using these groups as "natural" focus groups. The group discussions that were conducted revolved around two sets of themes. The first, and the starting point of each discussion, concerned the *group members' motivation to engage in the party, and their experience participating in the party branch's meetings and activities*. The success of deliberation depends on the extent to which participants (individually and as a group) exhibit traits that are conducive to deliberation, so it is crucially important to gain an understanding of the participants' self-conceptions and the reasons for their engagement. For example: Were participants driven by normative commitments, or did they join the party for other reasons? And if the former is the case, are they highly ideological in their outlook or ready to accept and discuss different viewpoints in a critical fashion? Moreover, since group dynamics can affect the quality of deliberation, specific attention must be payed to the views participants hold concerning the party group and their role in it. Do participants feel themselves to be equals in the group? Are there individuals who assume specific roles that might affect deliberation, as in dominant or especially articulate characters?

The second and more important set of themes the group discussions concerned the *group's internal disagreements*. Disagreement is usually thought to be a necessary condition for deliberation to arise. As one author puts it, "Some basic disagreement is necessary to create the problem that deliberative democracy is intended to solve" (Thompson 2008, 502). Addressing disagreements served two functions in this research. The most obvious is that it made participants talk about past disagreements and how they recall resolving them. This not only provides an insight into how participants evaluate their own deliberative experience. It also points towards the nature and depth of their disagreements, as well as to the quality of their past exchanges. At the same time, drawing attention to disagreements in the group also proved to make participants take up some of these disagreements and start deliberating over them again. It thus created an opening to analyse the actual process of deliberation at the party base. The focus was specifically on the argumentative repertoires of party members and the fashion in which they address one another (e.g.,

Are participants disposed to offer one another reasons and to evaluate and respond properly to the reasons they are offered?) as well as on the proposals that emerge from their giving and hearing reasons. The specific terms of analysis are further explicated throughout the empirical chapters of the study.

The study focuses on local party groups in social democratic parties in Germany and Austria. The choice of countries corresponded to the so-called logic of diversity: the two countries are similar on many dimensions, but differ in one important respect relating to the potential quality of intra-party deliberation. To start with, Germany and Austria are similar in that they are both consensus systems with multi-party structures, and tend to have grand coalitions. Since this institutional setup presupposes a "spirit of accommodation" (Lijphart 1968), both countries are generally likely to exhibit a compromise-oriented *Gesprächskultur* (talk culture) (Steiner et al. 2004, 3-4). On the other hand, Germany and Austria differ considerably when it comes to the level of what Daalder (1966) calls "party permeation", that is, the extent to which parties reach into the state and into institutions that are formally non-partisan. Party permeation mainly refers to political patronage exerted by parties, not only in the sense of clientelism (i.e. an exchange of such goods as subsidies, access to public housing, and jobs for political support) but also in the sense of it being an organisational resource. On this latter understanding, patronage represents a form of "institutional control or (…) institutional exploitation that operates to the benefit of the party organization" (Kopecký and Mair 2012a, 7).

Let us briefly zoom in on these differences and then consider how they affect the deliberative capacity of party members. In Germany, party patronage performs mainly a recruitment function at the top level of the federal architecture (in minister's cabinets, for example). Even at the elite level, however, patronage "it is not always *party* patronage in a narrow sense" since "professional qualification is essential", and has grown in relevance over time (John and Poguntke 2012, 141). Moreover, because of their relative ideological and regional fragmentation, German parties typically do not coordinate in strategically appointing their members to positions in the civil service. In Austria, by contrast, party patronage has been a "mass phenomenon" (Treib 2012, 48) in the post-war era up until the 1980s. While

patronage used to include a wide range of clientelistic practices, today it serves mainly as an organisational resource, subjecting many state-owned enterprises and semi-public institutions to partisan control.[41] However, despite the apparent decrease of clientelism since the 1980s, levels of patronage remain high in Austria in comparison with most EU countries, and there is no evidence that patronage palpably declined in Austria in the last two decades (Kopecký and Mair 2012b; Ennser-Jedenastik 2013).

One way of putting the point is to say that Germany has a less developed "culture" of party patronage than Austria. Whereas patronage is a crucial structural feature of the Austrian political system, and widespread across parties' organisational levels (Müller 1989), in Germany it is predominantly exercised by party elites. To be sure, in Germany parties control virtually all political offices, and many civil servants and public sector employees are party members. But not only did German parties never exercise control over formally non-partisan institutions and organisations to the same extent Austrian parties did. In sharp contrast to Austria, German parties also appear to gradually lose their influence in formally non-partisan domains. This loss of influence is traceable in particular at the federal state and local levels—the focus of the present study—where "the practice of party patronage has declined because privatization has simply removed organizations with very considerable manpower from political control" (John and Poguntke 2012, 140). The different levels of party permeation in Germany and Austria are also reflected in stark differences in party membership size: 17.27 per cent of the Austrian electorate are party members (as of 2008), compared with 2.3 per cent (as of 2007) in Germany (Biezen et al. 2012, 28).[42]

Why does the degree to which parties reach into state and society matter for the quality of deliberation within parties? In Austria party membership is a crucial requirement for career advancement and career maintenance in many job fields, particularly publicly owned enterprises and the state bureaucracy. So a significant

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[41] Note though that clientelistic practices have not disappeared in Austria. For example, a recent report in the newspaper *Kurier* revealed that party membership remains a crucial factor to gain a job with one of the federal state's main gas providers. Even at the level of low-income technicians, party membership and/or "referees" within the party were here a crucial prerequisite to gain a job in the company. See http://m.kurier.at/wirtschaft/wirtschaftspolitik/wirtschaft-von-innen-postenbesetzungen-81-fuer-die-spoe/59.321.018, accessed April 7, 2014.

[42] By comparison, according to Biezen et al. (2012, 28) the EU (27) mean is 4.65 per cent.

number of party members are likely to initially have joined the party to obtain career support, rather than to promote specific political ends or give expression to their social identity. Career-seeking party members, however, will probably be poor deliberators. Not only will they care less about many political issues and thus be inclined to be passive when it comes to talking politics. Since other party members may be seen as competitors in the struggle for patronage they may also lack the empathic outlook towards others that is a prerequisite for good deliberation. Of course, career-related reasons for party membership are not wholly apolitical in the sense that people will tend not to join parties they find objectionable as a whole. But becoming a party member in order to receive political patronage is clearly quite different from becoming a party member for reasons to do with political commitment: even people who are not initially much interested in politics may join a party if it brings with it a significant structural advantage for their career development.

Conversely, since German parties exercise patronage mostly at the elite level, and since party networks are relatively thin due to the regional and ideological fragmentation of parties, incentives to join parties for career advancement are altogether smaller. Career-related incentives for party membership certainly exist for a number of aspiring public sector employees—but not for the majority of party members (John and Poguntke 2012, 142). Especially at the local and federal state level where parties lost much of their control over formally non-partisan domains party membership will help less for career development than other qualifications. Party members in Germany are, therefore, more likely than in Austria to have joined their party becomes of genuine political commitment. And party members who are driven by political commitment are generally likely to be good deliberators—at least much better deliberators than those who are only motivated by career-related considerations. Party members who are driven by their political commitment will be more dedicated to the deliberative process and more appreciative of the force of the issues under deliberation; they will be more aware of the arguments at stake and more capable of justifying their position vis-à-vis others and the general public.

In sum, because the quality of intra-party deliberation hinges on the extent to which people join parties for career-related reasons, we can expect the quality of

intra-party deliberation to be lower within Austrian parties than within German parties. If the argument I have outlined is correct, Austria indeed presents a hard case for any study of deliberation within parties. In a context where disenchanted motivations for partisan engagement are likely to prevail, deliberation will presumably be rare. If deliberative tendencies can be shown across these country-specific divides, on the other hand, we have all the more reason to believe that a deliberative model of intra-party democracy is a workable ideal. I will return to this point several times in the next chapters.

One objection facing this case selection rationale is that those party members who are willing to invest much of their time (and other resources) in regularly participating in local meetings—the subjects of this research—are generally unlikely to be driven by career-related incentives. Rather than being dispassionate and calculative career-seekers, party members who voluntarily engage in low-profile partisan activities of this kind will probably be the most committed party members. In light of the apparent disconnect between ordinary party members and party elites in today's parties (Katz and Mair 2009) it seems in fact that one must be hopelessly idealistic to engage at the the party base.

But this objection is less weighty than might at first appear. As the empirical material examined in the subsequent chapters shows, it is certainly possible to find highly committed activists at the party base—but given that local party groups are the entry point to the party for most people, even those who merely join in order to improve their career prospects will often need to get more deeply involved. They will have to acquire visibility within the party, and this usually requires engaging first at the local level.

This reply seems to weaken the force of the objection without entirely rebutting it. It shows that a culture of extensive patronage will also affect the party base, but it does not resist the claim that there are many local party activists who are actually highly committed to the party's principles and objectives. Yet to say that in Austria *more* party members will be driven by career-related motivations than in Germany is not to say that *all* party members in Austria will be career-seekers, or conversely that career-seeking partisanship is non-existing in Germany. The argument

advanced rather describes a general trend within party memberships in the countries in question, without ruling out that the motivations driving people's engagement at the party base can be diverse. So I do not exclude the option that some party groups are unaffected by the tendency described, but assume that these would be exceptional cases. Thus the general point holds that the quality of intra-party deliberation can be expected to be lower within Austrian parties than within German parties for reasons to do with the pervasive presence of career-related motivations for party membership in Austria.

Next, social democratic parties were chosen because they were traditionally parties with large memberships and some commitment to sustaining a broad membership organisation. In fact, party branches—our main object of analysis—have originated in socialist and social democratic parties. It is worth quoting Maurice Duverger ([1954] 1990, 40) at length here:

> The branch is a Socialist invention. The Socialist parties which became organized on a purely political basis and direct structure naturally chose it as the fundamental unit in their activities. (…) The choice of the branch by Socialist parties was perfectly natural. They were the first to try and organize the masses, to give them a political education, and to recruit from them the working-class élites. The branch corresponded to this tripe requirement. In contrast to the caucus, the middle-class organ of political expression, it seemed the normal organ of political expression for the masses.[43]

Now of course social democratic parties underwent considerable changes in the course of the last century. With the waning relevance of class-based membership, they transformed into strongly hierarchical "catch-all" parties, and indeed increasingly resemble professionalised and stratarchical "cartel parties" (Katz and Mair 1995; also see Bartolini 2007). (I take no position here regarding the most appropriate ideal type, though I would not be surprised if most social democratic parties could best be

[43] Duverger also notes that even though branches were "invented" by socialist parties, they generally provided a successful model of party organisation. Since the masses "did not all accept Socialism", "various middle-class parties tried to attract them in their direction by the very methods that were making the working-class parties so successful. In many countries the parties of the Centre and even of the Right changed their organization and replaced the caucus by the branch as a basic element. Almost all the new parties have followed these tactics, but many old parties as well: this is an interesting example of contagious organization."

classed as hybrids with both catch-all and cartel party features.) But most social democratic parties still exhibit one important feature of the mass party model: their grass-roots organisations form a core component of the party and tend to be relatively densely organised, at least compared with other parties. And even though party branches have become less vibrant (some of them have even disappeared), they have not altogether vanished (cf. Scarrow 2014).

The party branches were recruited with the help of party insiders, notably academics who themselves engage regularly at the party base. This strategy was chosen because a considerable number of groups at the party base are rather passive in Austria and Germany; some in fact exist "only on paper." Although there is not much reliable data available on the activities of local party groups in German and Austrian social democratic parties, there is ample evidence suggesting that levels of activity are generally low. For example, a 2010 members' survey by the German SPD found that almost half of the responding local party organisations (only 44 per cent of the SPD's 4234 local party organisations even responded to the survey) convene only on a bi-monthly basis, or even less frequently (Butzlaff and Micus 2011, 17). Similarly, recent calculations reveal that only 2522 (76 per cent) of the 3312 formally existing local party organisations in the Austrian SPÖ exist in reality, notably because smaller groups have merged or dissolved as a consequence of falling and ageing memberships.[44] Identifying more active groups therefore requires assistance from people who possess in-depth knowledge of the respective party organisations. The general aim was to target groups that convene at least once a month.

Cross-regional variation was included with presumed diversity in mind. In Austria, two group discussions were conducted in Vienna (SPÖ Sektion Sandleiten and Sektion am Wasserturm), one in Linz (SPÖ Sektion Innenstadt-Mitte), and one in Gampern (SPÖ Ortspartei Gampern). Vienna is the largest city in Austria, the country's capital, and the SPÖ's prime stronghold (Micus 2011, 43)—hence two groups—while Linz is a medium-sized city and the capital of the federal state of Upper Austria. Gampern, finally, is a small rural town in Upper Austria. In Germany, one interview has been conducted in Berlin (SPD Abteilung Berlin Mitte), the capital

[44] See http://www.spoe-urabstimmung.at/daten-fakten-zur-urabstimmung/#more-428, accessed March 31, 2014.

of and largest city in Germany; one in Bonn (SPD Ortsverein Beuel), the former capital and a medium-sized city in North Rhine-Westphalia; and one in Theilheim (SPD Ortsverein Theilheilm), a small community close to Würzburg in the southern state of Bavaria. This selection of groups follows a similar pattern: one large, one medium-sized and one small city. The reason why more interviews were conducted in Austria than in Germany is that the SPÖ has a proportionately much higher degree of organisation than the SPD (the total numbers of party branches cited in the previous paragraph bear testimony to this).[45]

A major challenge in recruiting the party groups was that only very few of the groups that were identified as active by the party insiders responded to my initial contacting attempts. Many emails and calls remained unanswered, and in some cases the party insiders had to intervene on my behalf to make the groups respond. Those who eventually responded responded relatively slowly. And about one third of the responding groups declined participating in the study for reasons such as members being unwilling to have their statements recorded on tape. Those groups which were principally willing to participate suggested to make "participating in a social-scientific study" an agenda item for the next branch meeting, which members were supposed to vote for or against. So in each case, the question of whether or not they want to partake in the study was referred to the members of the branch for a majority decision. One consequence of this admirably democratic approach was of course that a fair bit of time passed from the first contact to the actual interview: on average about six months. This considerably slowed down the research process.

Given that potentially active party groups were pre-selected by party insiders, and given that of these selected groups only a handful was willing to participate in the study, the final selection of groups is of course far from perfect. Two obvious shortcomings must be made explicit. First, the local distributions of power within which the party branches operate are not comparable across all cases. In Berlin and Vienna, and in Theilheim and Gampern, distributions of power are largely similar. In the two capitals, the respective social democratic parties are the strongest parties in the state parliament. In the small rural towns, the social democrats are in opposition,

[45] Note: The interviewees' names were not changed unless they withdrew consent to use their real names.

facing a dominant conservative party. In Bonn however the SPD is weaker than the CDU/CSU—that is, in terms of seats in the city council (*Stadtrat*), though Bonn's directly elected mayor is a social democrat—while in Linz the SPÖ is by some distance the strongest party in the city parliament. Variation of this kind can in principle influence deliberation in the party branches. The party's relative strength in the local parliament or council may have an effect on the topics and proposals that are being discussed, and possibly on the enthusiasm with which they are discussed. Second, the selection of German party branches does not include East-West variation, which would seem important given the political differences between the *Länder* of the former East and those of the former West. It is likely that social democratic parties face other problems in the East than in the West (for example high levels of polarisation over the topic of immigration) as well as other political adversaries (for example the radical right-wing party NPD). The case selection controls for neither of these shortcomings.

Yet although the selection method and the *de facto* selection of party branches is far from perfect in terms of standard case selection practices, a more positive interpretation of the case selection rationale can be given. This is that the most vibrant groups of party members have self-selected into the final cluster of party branches, whereas the more passive and inward-looking groups did not respond to my recruitment attempts in the first instance. If this assessment is accurate, then the party branches that agreed to participate in the study are likely to represent precisely those committed partisan groupings the "deliberative model of intra-party democracy" proposed in chapter 1 invests its hope in: small collectives of activists, who seek actively to shape policy, and promote their commitments within the party and in the local community. The empirical material analysed in the subsequent chapters offers much to corroborate this presumption. Thus, even if there are some potentially problematic selection biases, the interviewed groups may be seen as paradigmatic examples of those local partisan associations that need to be empowered in order to revive the capacity of parties to link citizens and government if the arguments laid out in the previous chapter are accepted.

Some readers will be inclined to think that this potentially stands in tension with the country-selection rationale, which is that there are differences in deliberative quality in Germany and Austria due to different levels of political commitment among party members. For if the participating party groups are very committed, then they might be completely unaffected by the identified differences between the countries. But this is not necessarily true. First, in order to obtain party patronage, career-seekers will arguably have to join active partisan associations, which are connected to or visible for party elites. In passive and disempowered organisations, their efforts use the party as a career springboard will likely remain fruitless. Second, even if the majority of the selected branches' members have joined the branches for political reasons, some of them might still be involved for patronage-related reasons. This might be only a small minority of party members, but they could nonetheless impact on the branches' deliberations.

Table 1: ***Overview of group characteristics***

	Berlin Mitte	**Bonn Beuel**	**Theilheim**	**Vienna Sandleiten**	**Vienna Wasserturm**	**Linz Innenstadt**	**Gampern**
Frequency of meetings	Monthly	3 times/ month	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Quarterly
Main activities	Organising public talks	Local campaigning, intra-party agenda promotion, running a public "information stand", organising events for political debate.	Local campaigning; publishing local party newspaper	Organising events for local community; community counselling	Organising events for local community	Administrative work; local campaigning; organising events for local community	Local campaigning; organising events for local community
Membership	Chiefly young (i.e. under 40)	Mixed	Chiefly old (i.e.60+)	Mixed	Chiefly old (i.e. 60+)	Mixed	Chiefly young (i.e. under 40)
Contact with party elite	✓	✓	–	–	In limited form, through chairman	In limited form, i.e. within the municipality	✓

Table 1 briefly summarises the main commonalities and differences between the party branches that were studied for this thesis. Two things most branches share in common are (1) the frequency with which their meetings take place and (2) the activities in which they engage in their local communities. Most groups meet once a

month, and focus on organising public events of some kind—ranging from talks with local-level politicians to children's parties for the kids of local residents—as well as on campaigning and promoting the party's agenda in the local community. A deviant case is the SPD branch in Berlin, which concentrates only on organising public talks and does not engage in any other political activity. Where the groups differ most is with regard to the socio-demographic composition of their membership, though these differences say little about how politically active and committed members are. Members of the Berlin and Gampern groups are predominantly young, whilst the Theilheim and Vienna Wasserturm groups are dominated by older party members. The remaining branches have a very mixed membership as far as age is concerned.

Notice furthermore that the members of the branches generally enjoy limited access to the party's higher hierarchical echelons. Exceptions are the Berlin, Bonn and Gampern groups, albeit each for different reasons. In the Berlin Mitte group, MPs, members of Berlin's federal state parliament and members of Berlin's city government (Berlin is both a city and a federal state) frequently take part in branch meetings. This is first because the branch provides an opportunity for party elites easily to get in touch with the party base, and second because party elites are often invited to speak at the branch's public events. In Bonn, on the other hand, contact with party elites accrues from the group's high level of intra-party activity: members continually try to exercise influence on decisions that are taken at higher hierarchical levels of the party and therefore proactively approach party elites (for example by making use of their right to put forward motions to the national party conference [*Bundesparteitag*], a right granted to all branches in the SPD). Moreover, Bonn's only directly elected MP in the *Bundestag*, Ulrich Kelber, is a member of the Beuel branch, which provides the group with a more direct link to the party's "power centres." The same is true of the Gampern branch, whose chairwoman, Daniela Holzinger, holds a seat in the Austrian national parliament.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for an interpretative approach to studying partisan deliberation, and outlined the research strategy used in the empirical study conducted for this thesis. We are now in a position to proceed to the analysis of the data generated in the group discussions with party branch members. The following chapters explore three different aspects of deliberation in party branches: whether party branches provide favourable preconditions for deliberation (chapter 3), how partisans deliberate in situations of disagreement (chapter 4), and why sometimes deliberation fails despite favourable preconditions (chapter 5). Examining these aspects will allow us to see whether a deliberative model of intra-party democracy is a viable prospect, and help us better understand the specificities of partisan deliberation. Understanding what is particular about the political talk partisans engage in also promises to provide leads for us to refine the deliberative model of intra-party democracy that was sketched in chapter 1.

Chapter 3
The Circumstances of Partisan Deliberation

The first foray into partisan deliberation

In the "deliberative model of intra-party democracy" outlined in chapter 1, the deliberations of local party branches are the focal point of membership activity. I suggested that empowering these deliberations can strengthen the capacity of parties to connect citizens to government and offset the potentially adverse implications of non-deliberative mechanisms of intra-party democracy, notably the tendency of these mechanisms to reinforce the will of the party elite. My argument was first, that in deliberative exchanges, branch members can scrutinise the plans and presuppositions of the party elite, and develop positions of their own; and second, that, because members of party branches are directly in touch with the citizens on the ground, their deliberations are likely to be informed by the demands of the local constituency, thus bringing citizens' preferences to bear on a partisan agenda.

So far, so normative. In this chapter, I want to shift the focus to the empirics and turn to the interviews with members of local party branches that were conducted for this study. The task ahead is to examine what deliberation in party branches looks like in practice, analysing both the quality of partisan deliberation and it specificities. What I want to look at here, under the heading of the "circumstances of partisan deliberation", is whether party branches provide favourable conditions for deliberation. This is an important indicator of deliberative quality, for two reasons. The first is theoretical: ever since Jürgen Habermas suggested the possibility of an "ideal speech situation", in which speakers are completely free of coercive influences and motivated by the aim of achieving rational consensus, it is assumed by most deliberative democrats that good deliberation requires certain enabling conditions (for a review of the more recent literature, see Steiner 2012, ch. 9). But even more pertinently, I conjectured in chapter 1 that party branches ordinarily provide a supportive environment for deliberation. Specifically I argued that branch meetings are likely to be marked by a relative equality of opportunities for participants to

influence the discussion, and a relative diversity of viewpoints among participants, which ensures that issues are considered from multiple angles. In what follows, I want to investigate how much these expectations are borne out by the data collected for this study, and explore what equality and diversity means in a partisan context.

Do party branches provide favourable conditions for deliberation?

If we want to explore whether party branches provide favourable conditions for deliberation, this of course raises the prior question of what it means to say that "favourable conditions" for deliberation are present in a deliberative setting. What exactly are favourable conditions for deliberation, and why would it matter that such conditions are given? Let me take the questions in reverse order, since if we do not know why good deliberation requires some preconditions, we need not get into the intricacies of determining what exactly these preconditions are. To understand why deliberation requires a supportive environment, consider what I have said about deliberation in chapter 1: it is a very demanding democratic practice, requiring people to invest time and intellectual resources in formulating arguments and engaging with others' viewpoints in a respectful and reflective manner. Thus, deliberation would seem to require several things to "fall into place". Citizens ought to display an unusual willingness to give thought to the arguments they give and hear.[46]

The question then becomes under what circumstances citizens "display an extraordinary willingness to give thought to the arguments they give and hear." What properties must a group of people exhibit for their discussions to become "deliberative"? In chapter 1, I suggested that some commitment to discussing politics is essential. This is why the deliberative model of intra-party democracy focuses on those party members who generally devote themselves more to the party, and actively

[46] Note that even though I speak of deliberation being "demanding" and requiring citizens to be respectful vis-à-vis each other, I am not asserting a universal standard for good deliberation here. That is, I am not suggesting that there is only one way of expressing mutual respect (for example), and that whether participants to deliberation treat each other with respect is, therefore, immediately clear to a third party (such as a researcher). Consistent with what I have argued in chapter 2, I think that all the demands of good deliberation can find different expressions in different contexts. Thus, the "deliberative experience" of citizens is more important than the researcher's third-party perspective if we want to find out whether deliberative demands are met.

participate in local branches, rather than, say, those who participate only in low-commitment activities such as discussion in unmoderated partisan online fora. The reason why commitment matters is that committed deliberators are willing to engage closely with each others' arguments and that they put special effort into the soundness of their argumentation (Fung 2003, 345).

But there are several other preconditions for deliberation that appear relevant. If we follow the larger part of deliberative theory, we find that two prominent features of deliberative fora are typically identified as favourable conditions for deliberation. The first is that a diversity of viewpoints is represented in a deliberating group (see e.g. Barabas 2004, 689; Jackman and Sniderman 2006; Mutz 2006; Hendriks et al. 2007; Thompson 2008, 502; Sunstein 2009, 145-148).[47] The second is that group members enjoy a relatively equal standing (see e.g. Cohen 1989; Young 2002, 24-25; Thompson 2008, 501; Mansbridge et al. 2010, 65-66; Morrell 2010). Scholars of course acknowledge that identifying the right preconditions for deliberation is difficult since deliberation is a multi-dimensional and sequential phenomenon (see Goodin 2008, ch. 9). But it is uncontroversial that an equal standing among participants to deliberation and a relative diversity of viewpoints among deliberators are key. Thus, I will take these requirements as the baseline for assessing whether party branches provide favourable conditions for deliberation. I will refer to them in the following as the *diversity desideratum* and the *equality desideratum*.

If these desiderata sound familiar, it is because I have argued in chapter 1 that party branches are likely to satisfy both of them. My point was, first, that the integrative force of partisanship can establish a sense of equality among partisans, and second, that because members of local party branches are usually voluntary activists who pursue a range of different (non-political) careers and come from different age groups, it is likely that a broad diversity of viewpoints will be represented in the branches. In the remainder of this chapter, I will look at whether these expectations are supported by the empirical data collected in the group interviews, and, perhaps more importantly, examine what equality and diversity mean in a partisan context. I will take diversity and equality in turn, expounding first on their theoretical

[47] Scholars use different terms for this, e.g. "cross cutting exposure" (Mutz, 2006) or simply "disagreement" (Thompson, 2008: 502).

significance and then considering relevant text passages relating to each desideratum. Since my concern is with capturing the perspectives of participants in the deliberative process and providing insights into the lived experience of partisan deliberation, I draw here mainly from the first part of the group discussions, where participants discussed their experience of engaging in party branches, paying particular attention to the references evoked to describe the regular debates and discussions in the group.

Diversity

In deliberative theory, there are at least two arguments for why participants to deliberation should exhibit a diverse cross-section of views. Both are essentially pragmatic. The first and more fundamental argument is that disagreement among a group of people is a necessary precondition for deliberation to arise. Without disagreement, there would be nothing to deliberate about; and disagreement presupposes that participants hold different views and opinions. Dennis Thompson (2008, 502) puts the point in this way:

> If the participants are mostly like-minded or hold the same views before they enter into the discussion, they are not situated in the circumstances of deliberation. They do not confront the problem that deliberation is intended to address.

The "problem" Thompson talks about is that a group of people have to take a collective decision on an issue they all disagree on. Deliberation can solve this problem insofar as exchanging arguments for and against certain courses of action can produce an agreement about how to decide. Or, perhaps more realistically, deliberation can yield what Alfred Moore and Kieran O'Doherty (2014) call "deliberative acceptance", understood as a "deliberative agreement to let something stand as the position of the group even if its is not fully shared by every members of the group" (303). But again, all of this presupposes that participants to deliberation *disagree* on some particular matter. There is not much point in deliberating if there exists a pre-deliberative agreement in the group as to how to decide.

Of course, there are different types of agreement not all of which threaten deliberation: to be in the "circumstances of deliberation", participants to deliberation do not have to disagree on every level. Quite the opposite is the case. Consider Dryzek and Niemeyer's (2006) distinction between normative, epistemic and preferential agreement—agreement, that is, about values, facts or preferences. Agreement on one of these dimensions can facilitate finding agreement on another. For example, like-mindedness concerning the values that should predominate in a decision might be an enabler of deliberative decision-making, since it generates a sense of equality among speakers and renders appeals to shared ideals immediately resonant. I will say more about this later in this chapter and in the next chapter. So, the relationship between disagreement and successful deliberation is not linear but complex and multidimensional. Thompson's point is in principle correct but simplifies matters too much. Our takeaway point is therefore simply that deliberation requires disagreement at *some* level. Otherwise discussion would hardly arise and people would not be put in a position where they are confronted with competing arguments about issues that matter to them.

The second argument for diversity in deliberative fora contends that a diversity of perspectives "ensures that the issue under deliberation is considered from multiple angles" (Hendriks et al. 2007, 366). This makes deliberation at once a learning experience for its participants, since exchanging differently situated knowledge broadens the perspective of all the participants, and improves the quality of decisions, since such an "enlarged view" enables participants to find better solutions to collective problems (e.g. Gastil and Dillard 1999; Young 2002, 115-118; also see Landemore 2012, ch. 4). In addition, diversity is typically said to reduce the likelihood of group polarisation, where views are strengthened, perhaps even radicalised, rather than questioned and refined (Sunstein 2002 and 2009). The point is that insofar as people are confronted with views that are different from theirs, they are less prone to overestimate their own moral and factual justness and shift to extremes. Notice, however, that even if this looks *prima facie* like a desirable effect of group diversity, it is not so clear whether polarisation is actually something to embrace or to

avoid.[48] As Lea Ypi (forthcoming, 23) notes, whether polarisation is always a bad thing ultimately depends "on the nature and value" of the commitments at stake "and on whether there are good reasons for cultivating and seeking to protect and uphold specific political projects." I take no position here on when polarisation is desirable or not. Readers can choose for themselves whether they want to take sides in this matter. All I want to do is draw attention to the issues raised by this further argument for group diversity.

These are the main normative arguments in favour of group diversity in democratic deliberation. Now, how internally diverse are the party branches that were studied for this research?[49] One of the first notable things about diversity is that, across the different groups, participants repeatedly point to the fact that their group is rather heterogenous. Most groups are very diverse in terms of age and social and occupational backgrounds, and it is the latter—members' different occupational backgrounds—that participants most commonly identify as the main "source" of diversity in the group. Daniela from the Gampern group is not atypical when she stresses that "it was not a circle of friends that got together because one shares hobbies in common. Rather it's a ragtag crowd [engaging in the party] in our municipality; from social pedagogues to locksmiths…to students." This connection between occupational diversity and a diversity of viewpoints is repeatedly drawn when speakers reflect on group composition. Georg in Linz similarly makes a clear link to the different professions of the participants: "I think we have a rather exciting cross-section [of people] from different domains of society. We all work in different fields, and when we discuss together one is being exposed to different points of view." Notice the positive overtone: diversity of job backgrounds is "exciting"; it enriches debates.

Different views about diversity are found in the Vienna Sandleiten group, where participants generally seek to avoid disagreements, and the Berlin group, whose members purport to agree with each other to the extent that discussion is unnecessary

[48] Political scientists tend to disparage polarisation effects, see Hetherington (2009) for a review of the literature.

[49] A note on the presentation of the empirical material: the symbol '[. . .]' indicates where the text has been abridged; '. . .' indicates where a speaker pauses or trails away.

—a claim that runs counter to their reports of intra-group disagreements, as we shall see shortly. We will return to these two groups in chapter 5, in which we consider "deliberative failures" in party branches.

A second source of diversity participants single out is age differences. These are however not explicitly mentioned as a feature of group composition, but alluded to in an entirely different context: as the root cause of recurring disagreements that are not enriching but tiresome. Indeed, while participants often explicitly attach positive value to differences of opinion that arise from different occupational experiences, where present references to age differences tend to conjure an image of avoidable, sometimes annoying, conflicts between younger and older participants. An example that is mentioned in this connection by both the Berlin and Vienna Wasserturm groups are arguments over cycling policy. In both cities, this is a central urban policy issue, and there is a natural age gap between supporters and opponents of more space for cyclists. The following statement from Julie in Berlin brings out the problem at stake:

> This is an "everyday topic" for me. And it is also a topic that annoys me massively in our party … and [it is a topic] where the difference is very big between the younger people, who cycle a lot, because that is their means of transportation, and the older [people], who never cycle, who also know this from the viewpoint of pedestrians … and [complain] 'again one of them almost knocked me over'. And this often leads to … really … these discussions can sometimes get out of control.

Julie is a young partisan (she turned 29 shortly before the interview) and strongly in favour of making Berlin more "cyclist-friendly". From her point of view, the intransigence of the older generation is hard to understand. She regards the antithetical interests and experiences of the younger and the older members as the origin of this perennial disagreement, and explains, not without frustration, that in the debates about the rights of cyclists basic norms of mutual respect are sometimes transgressed. What is interesting is that even though the majority of the Berlin group's active membership is young, once older members attend the meetings these conflicts

arise time and again. Participants suggest that this is because of the contentiousness of the cycling topic, trivial though it may appear to outsiders.[50]

Speakers in the Vienna Wasserturm group express similar annoyance with arguing over the cycling issue. Michaela notes for instance that "one definitely can't reach agreement" on this issue. "Some [members] say 'the cyclists are all mad and I open the door [of the car] whenever I want.' And when I hit one [with the car] I run him over! And the others perhaps want to cycle a bit in the city. And perhaps have a few more cycle lanes in the district." In short, the debate has become too emotional and any progress seems out of reach. At best, one can agree to disagree. (As Michaela finishes the sentence, Annemarie, one of the older group members intervenes, "No, we had enough cycle lanes!", reigniting the discussion.) Such perceptions intensify the negative connotation of the relationship between age differences and diversity of viewpoints in some of the groups.

However, even if participants look with discontent to those specific conflicts, they generally embrace the diversity of viewpoints available in the party branches and the disagreements triggered by it. To put it simply, repeatedly arguing with elderly members about the appropriate infrastructure for cyclists in a modern city may be exasperating, but exchanging viewpoints and hearing different perspectives is generally valued. Maxim in Bonn is not the only participant to welcome the perennial disagreement in the group: "a party is actually not a place where I look for harmony. It is not a place where I look for consensus, but where I want to [engage in order to] bring positions 'out on the street'. […] Disputes are part of the trade; disputes are important … it is important that we argue." So disagreement is widely seen as fruitful and productive, as something the groups profits from rather than a reason for despondency.

To sum up: the dominant pattern across the party groups is that participants perceive groups as being characterised by a diverse cross-section of perspectives. This diversity is rooted in participants' different occupational backgrounds, on the one hand, and age differences, on the other. So it would seem that the party groups studied

[50] One potential explanation for why participants in the Berlin group claim that there are hardly any arguments within the group is that they only refer to the "core team" of young activists, disregarding the wider membership of the branch with whom there is plenty of potential for conflict.

in this research satisfy what I have called the "diversity desideratum". To be sure, the two sources of diversity we have identified have notably different connotations. But although disagreements arising from age differences tend to be seen as avoidable and tiresome, differences in opinion are not generally regarded as problematic; rather, diversity is widely celebrated as enriching the group experience. In the next chapter, I will look more closely at the content of participants' disagreements, that is, *what* precisely they disagree about. At the present stage I am simply trying to explore whether the party branches that were studied for this thesis are internally diverse, and how their members relate to diversity.

Equality

In contrast to the diversity desideratum, the justification of what I have called the *equality desideratum* is not primarily empirical.[51] On the contrary, this second desideratum derives mainly from a general principle of equality which, in the eyes of most democratic theorists, constitutes the bedrock of any plausible account of democracy (for a classic treatment, see Dahl 1989, ch. 6).[52] So it is principled in nature, but it does not require us to endorse a controversial ideal that might fail to secure support in our reflective equilibrium. In essence, the equality principle holds that democratic politics "requires some form of *manifest equality* among citizens" (Cohen 1989, 69), that is, citizens should enjoy an equal standing in democratic procedures. This is instinctively familiar in the context of voting: everyone ought to count for one. But what exactly does it mean in the context of deliberative procedures?

When asked how one should conceive equality in a deliberative procedure, deliberative theorists usually insist it involves participants treating each other with

[51] Notice though that it can in principle be justified in empirical terms, in that it is quite commonsensical that the demands it triggers produce *better* discussion in virtually any imaginable context. But it would be inappropriately reductive to strip down the justification of equality in deliberation to such factual claims. There is a deeper moral dimension to equality.

[52] Some deliberative theorists operationalise this principle in terms of *reciprocity* (e.g. Gutmann and Thompson 1996 and 2004; Thompson 2008).

"mutual respect and equal concern" (Mansbridge et al. 2010, 65-66), though there is considerable disagreement about what this entails. Some suggest it requires that participants to deliberation listen to each other empathically and try to take seriously each others' concerns (Morrell 2010). Others argue that speakers ought to refrain from asserting "their own interests above all others'" or insisting "that their initial opinion about what is right or just cannot be subject to revision" (Young 2002, 24-25). Ultimately, writes Thompson (2008, 506), "most [deliberative theorists] agree that the more the deliberation is influenced by unequal economic resources and social status, the more deficient it is." In what follows, I shall thus employ a deliberately broad standard of deliberative equality *qua* discussion unaffected by status and resource inequalities. This is likely to involve empathy, mutual respect, equal opportunities to participate in the deliberative process and openness towards others' arguments, but it cannot be reduced to any one of those things.

Notice that partisans of the same stripe might be better able to reach the ideal of deliberative equality than ordinary citizens. This is because they hold a shared commitment to a specific political project, which generates a special connection between them that can eradicate obstacles to deliberative equality (such as differences in socio-economic status). It is worth recalling a passage by Nancy Rosenblum (2008, 344) I quoted in chapter 1, in which she argues that partisanship is a particular form of "collective identity", and marked by an "avowed connection to what 'people like me' value, think, and do politically." "People like me" refers here not so much to shared socio-demographic characteristics like a similar job background, but to similarities of belief in the worth of particular ideals, aims and policies. This is why partisanship can have integrative force independent of people's material circumstances. Partisans are, to use a term that has become popular in the recent political theory literature on parties, *political friends* (Muirhead 2014, ch. 5; Ypi forthcoming). Moreover, in the local partisan groups we concentrate on members will know each other personally, and sometimes even be friends outside the arena of political activism. This adds another layer of familiarity and equality. For all these reasons, these groups could provide especially favourable conditions for the kind of equality deliberative theorists would like to see instantiated in political discussion.

How far are these expectations borne out in the group interviews? Overall, members describe their meetings as marked by equality and mutual respect. While no group of participants describes their group dynamics in the same way, references to the fulfilment of different requirements of deliberative equality (e.g. empathic listening, mutual respect) were considerably more common than references to their non-fulfilment. Sometimes even an explicit connection between norms of equality and democracy as a normative ideal was established. An emblematic example of this is a statement by Meo from the Linz group, in which he explains that the disposition to "put oneself into the position of other members and view things from their point of view" is widespread among the members of the group, and goes on to suggest that empathic perspective taking is "simply part of democracy". But though the data contains a number of references to aspects of deliberative equality which involve a link to democracy or democratic values, such references are altogether rare. That a connection between democratic ideals and equality is drawn specifically in the Linz group might be because the members of that group are disproportionately educated. Some have backgrounds in the social sciences or humanities, and might promote an awareness of philosophical arguments for democracy and justice within the group.

More frequent than such high-minded statements about equality were references which see it expressed in the equal weight that is given to everyone's opinion in the group. Participants generally note that they consider the branch meetings a forum in which they can speak their mind and will be taken seriously by others; "everybody is entitled to an opinion here", as one participant in Bonn puts it. The data is replete with references of this kind. "It wouldn't be democracy if we were not allowed to state our opinions", says a participant in the Linz group. Similarly a member of Vienna's Sandleiten group: "We tell our opinion to each other's faces, and we say what we think and everyone accepts that…and nobody imposes anything on others." However, it is also often pointed out that the deeper purpose of speaking one's mind is contributing to the formation of a shared position on a political issue. Venting opinions is not an end in itself, a therapeutic exercise in which participants "blow off steam". Rather, participants make efforts to persuade one another of the rightness of their point of view, and are ready to be persuaded by others. For Markus

from the Gampern group, for example, "the best point of view crystallises when one can really convince the others, or when one lets oneself be persuaded that one has oneself … thought, as it were, in the 'wrong direction', or that the direction in which one thinks doesn't receive the support of the majority in the party group". Dispositions of this kind are palpable across the groups. They become even more apparent in the deliberative exchanges that were analysed for this research, some of which are presented in the subsequent chapter.

If participants freely speak their minds in their regular party branch meetings, this implies plenty of potential for conflict, not least because of the diversity of viewpoints represented in the groups. But though disagreement is indeed mentioned as persistent across groups, it is never seen as undermining the unity of the group. Instead, perhaps with the exception of the above-mentioned debate over cycling policy, even heated debates are generally described as being marked by the kind of good cheer that typically characterises minor squabbles among friends. Maxim in Bonn for example stresses with collective approval that "it's great fun […] when we get on to [talk about] concrete topics and rant at each other [*sich anschnauzen*] in the end. And […] we hit the table with the flat of our hands. And in the end we get along again…this is how I envisage politics, this is how I envisage discussing, this is how I envisage opinion-formation [*Meinungsbildung*]." Such statements signal that even a confrontational style of debate is not seen as violating mutual respect. Participants know each other, and generally know their limits. They know that even if debates become heated, others will not take it personally if an adversarial tone is struck.

There are, however, clear ethical boundaries within which the discussions proceed. This emerges most clearly in Vienna's Sandleiten group, which operates in the conflict-laden environment of a large municipal building in which people with immigrant backgrounds, and citizens who work in low-income jobs or are unemployed, live side by side. In this context, explain the group's members, treating others with equal respect is of paramount importance—and indeed can have a de-escalating effect. Treating others unequally, on the other hand, is unacceptable: it jars with social-democratic ideals. The group's objective is to set an example, not out of necessity but out of moral conviction. Equality in the group means, then, that the

background of individuals ought not influence the way in which they address each other in political discussion. Bojan, who throughout the discussion emphasises his own immigrant background, having moved to Austria from former Yugoslavia as a child, explains that this basic rule has never been broken thus far:

> Erik [another member of the group] and I often disagree for example…and we never had any conflict. That he would say, 'you are a *Yugo* [chiefly derogatory expression for people of "Yugoslav" origin], you have no idea', or that I'd say to him 'who do you think you are, Austrian?' - that never happened … I never heard anything discriminatory from Erik! We always found a compromise. He states his opinion, then I explain why and how [I disagree]. But I never heard anything disrespectful from Erik.

But of course, equality means not only that different countries of origin do not play a role in the participants' interactions. Other salient socio-economic differences, such as different educational backgrounds, are also irrelevant, in the sense that those who are more educated do not use their education to overrule those with a different background. "I never heard Elisabeth [the group's chairwoman, who is the only member of the group who has a university degree] say 'I am a university graduate and you [the other group members, who are on average much less educated] don't know what's going on'", Bojan goes on. "On the contrary!" In short, deliberative equality *qua* discussion unaffected by status and resource inequalities is clearly palpable here.

The sources of mutual respect in particular and the equal standing participants enjoy in general are rarely rendered explicit in the discussions. Only in the Linz group do references to a "source" of equality emerge: participants single out their joint commitment to the party as the "foundation" on which their discussions proceed. A shared sense of dedication to a collective political project is seen by participants as exercising a more general enabling and constraining effect on their interactions, shaping the way in which they relate to each other. But perhaps the fact that participants in other groups do not make explicit what exactly it is that promotes equality among them reflects that they take some sort of "common foundation" for granted. Perhaps they presume (*ex hypothesi*) that those with whom they deliberate in the branch meetings are driven by similar concerns simply because they engage in the

same political party. Lending support to this interpretation is that in each group participants record a strong commitment to the party as the principal reason for their political engagement. Participants are unequivocal that they widely seek to promote similar normative commitments, and the value of these commitments is assumed without discussion. To cite just two illustrative examples, while Gisela in Bonn stresses that she joined the SPD "out of my political conviction … my concerns were always: peace, social justice and gender equality", Markus in the Vienna Wasserturm group notes "the belief in, and struggle for, a better, more solidaristic society" as his main motivation to engage in the party.

There is of course a great deal of indeterminateness in these statements. But perhaps this is part of what it means to be a partisan. As Nancy Rosenblum has recently argued (2008, 340), party identification is "based on a voter's mental image of who partisans are, of the party as a social group", and "partisan self-conceptions much more closely resemble ethnic or religious self-conceptions than they do evaluations of political leaders, opinions about party platforms, or voter intentions." If this is correct (I believe it is), then it is no surprise that participants have very personal reasons to why they identify as partisans and what the party means to them. In a sense, partisans' shared normative commitments involve what is sometimes called "incompletely theorised agreements" (Sunstein 1998). Partisans, that is, may invoke many different grounds for their shared beliefs about what the party stands for and what aims it should pursue.

The flip side of having shared normative commitments is having *common adversaries*, and the data contains material suggesting that this also strengthens equality among branch members. Rival parties, rival partisans, and indeed non-partisan agents who pursue goals that are seen as being at odds with those of the party (sometimes a whole organisation, sometimes specific individuals) are identified as adversaries in the Theilheim, Bonn and Vienna Wasserturm groups. And where adversaries are identified, participants often make explicit that their presence buttresses group unity, in terms of fostering a sense of being "equally committed to prevailing over one's rivals" among the members of the group. The rival parties or partisans who are singled out as adversaries are mainly the other large "people's

parties" in the two countries—the CDU and CSU in Germany, and the ÖVP in Austria—and specific members of these parties.[53] Non-partisan agents that are mentioned as pursuing conflicting, sometimes even repugnant, political goals include lobbyist and special interests. In the eyes of many participants, for example, transnationally organised business interests seek to impose the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) onto European countries, which undermines the ability of those countries to effectively regulate big firms and enforce standards of product quality and social protection. To be sure, references to such actors often remain vague: *who exactly* those adversarial actors are is left open. But insofar as participants define their own position against the position of these actors, there can be no doubt that these "indeterminate adversaries" perform the same unifying function as more concretely identifiable rivals.

As one would perhaps expect from activist groups at the party base, moreover, some participants also view the party leadership as rivals, in the sense that they accuse them of ignoring the party base and promoting policies that run counter to the party's lead principles. Bernd in Theilheim is only one of many participants across the groups who complain that "the party base is simply being ignored…and that entails that the party 'overtakes' the base on the right [*rechts überholen,* figuratively for being more right-wing in one's political views than someone else]." But such views are never shared by all the members of the group. In each group, some participants vocally endorse the party's general direction. So even if a number of participants define their own positions as incompatible with those of the party elite, the party elite is not one of the "shared adversaries" that strengthen equality among members. In fact, given that many groups perceive a considerable distance between themselves and the party leadership one would expect the motif of the party elite as adversary to be much more prominent.

Sometimes participants overdraw the unifying effect of common adversaries. Asked whether the group experiences internal disagreements, for example, Marita in the Theilheim group responds, "not at all." Bernd, in turn, adds that this is because of "our common 'bogeyman'", meaning the town's mayor, whose politics they

[53] These parties are identified as adversaries despite the fact that the social democrats are in a coalition government with them at the state level in both countries.

passionately oppose. By and large, however, there is little evidence in the data that the existence of common adversaries can *eradicate* internal disagreements. It is of course important to recall here that the Theilheim branch operates in a rather hostile political environment, where a rival party (the conservative CSU) holds the absolute majority of seats in the local council and thus significantly constrains the social democrats' ability to shape local politics. So what might lead participants to overstate the "enemy-character" of those wielding political power in their community is their own inability to influence local politics. But even in Theilheim the divisions between different parties are barely as severe as the just-cited passage suggests. At a different stage in the interview Marita emphasises that in small municipalities like their own "one should seek to jointly work for the good of the community" and "put ideological conflict to one side." Thus in spite of deep-seated rivalries some participants exhibit a belief in the worth of cooperation across party lines.

In short, it seems that there is an *inclusionary* and *exclusionary* side to having and upholding shared normative commitments. We may say, with Nancy Rosenblum (2008, 358), that there is always a partisan "we" that "aspires to be as inclusive as possible" while "casting the partisan 'other' as sectarian, narrow, and few." This relationship between "partisan we" and "partisan other" shapes the way in which equality manifests itself within the partisan groups. Participants stand *for* something, and this *standing for* cultivates a sense of equality among partisans that is not reducible to any prior identity participants share. And they also stand *against* something else, and reminding themselves of who their adversaries are (and of why they are adversaries) in its turn reinforces the feeling of jointly standing for something.

Accepting this reading of the material, can it be said that the party members' experience of equality in their group meetings satisfies the demanding equality desideratum? I think yes. What emerges from the above discussion is certainly a complex picture: equality among participants takes different forms across the groups, and it can hardly be said that one particular manifestation of equality is dominant. But regardless of this variation, the evidence examined suggests that participants face a relatively "level playing field" in their regular deliberations. They can freely speak

their minds, and can expect others to listen respectfully, possibly even empathically. Sustained and enhanced is this basic sense of equality by a pre-deliberative agreement on certain political commitments, on the one hand, and by the corresponding awareness of common adversaries, on the other. Interestingly, although there exist personal friendships among participants (as many of them acknowledge during or after the interviews) they make no mention of them as a potential source of equality in the groups. Nor is there any evidence suggesting that tacit knowledge of friendships is pertinent to the equal standing participants enjoy. What establishes and sustains equality seems to be the shared commitment to certain ideals, aims and policies.

Discussion

Table 2 summarises the observations of this chapter, highlighting the relevant patterns that have emerged from the empirical analysis that was carried out. Divided into four boxes, the table recapitulates both what diversity and equality mean in the context of the partisan groups, and where diversity and equality flow from. One striking discovery is the generally positive view of difference and diversity. Participants regard the plurality of perspectives present in the groups as widening their own perspective and so making the discussions more rewarding. With the exception of some age-difference related disagreements, they appear to thrive on disagreement and debate. One may say that this reflects a highly "deliberative attitude" in the sense that it signals that participants are willing to reflect on their own standpoints and preferences in light of arguments put forward by their peers. This lends credence to the first chapter's claim that, in intra-party deliberation, partisanship is not an obstacle to deliberation but may in fact be conducive to it.

If one presumes that those who actively engage at the party base are the most dogmatic and intransigent partisans, as both the ordinary folk understanding of party politics and mainstream political science tend to do, this is certainly an unexpected finding. If we follow John May's still much-cited "Law of Curvilinear Disparity" (1973), for example, we should expect members of party branches to be

not reflective but uncompromising with respect to their own standpoint. We should expect them not to relish disagreement but to be overly concerned with group unity and sceptical of division. However, none of this is the case in the groups that have been studied for this research; quite the opposite.[54] The idea that active party members are naturally unyielding zealots might have intuitive appeal, but this research finds little evidence in support of it. This also means that empowering the active party members would not result in them imposing vote-losing policies on the party because of their extreme views. We can confidently discard this worry.

Table 2: ***Preconditions for deliberation in party branches***

	Precondition 1: *Diversity*	**Precondition 2: *Equality***
Perceptions and meanings (i.e. what does diversity and equality mean in the context of party branches?)	Different viewpoints in the group enrich debates and make them more rewarding; disagreement is a part of the political process, and one to be embraced. *Variation:* Disagreements are avoided in the Vienna Sandleiten group.	Being able to speak one's mind, be heard and taken seriously. Being considered equal regardless of socio-economic or national background.
Sources (i.e. where does diversity and equality flow from?)	Occupational differences *Connotation:* positive, contributing to an overall broader perspective on issues Age differences *Connotation:* primarily negative, resulting in unnecessary and unresolvable disagreements	*Tacit:* agreement on shared principles, aims and policies. *Explicit:* common adversaries, i.e. rival parties, partisans or non-partisan agents pursuing aims contrary to the party's

This leads to the—perhaps also surprising—expectation that deliberation among partisans has the potential to reach a high quality. Contrary to the presumption of classic deliberative theory that partisan commitments pose an obstacle to good deliberation (I have touched on this in the introduction and briefly in chapter 1), and contrary to the slightly more favourable recent assessment that deliberation among partisans merely "fails to rise to the level political philosophers model or democratic theorists organize in actual experiments" like deliberative polls but still "conforms to a latitudinarian view of argument and evidence employed in the process of negotiating

[54] Note that there is some evidence suggesting that the Law of Curvilinear Disparity is empirically groundless (Norris 1995; Scarrow and Gezgor 2010; Scarrow 2014). However, none of these studies look in detail at the political views and ethics of party activists, drawing instead only on large-N survey data. This leaves open many questions concerning the ideological dispositions of party activists.

and compromise" (Rosenblum 2008, 361), partisans might turn out to be model deliberators—if not in the sense that their discussions exhibit all the features theorists ordinarily wish to see present in political discussion, then at least in the sense that they are better than ordinary citizens at discussing respectfully in circumstances of disagreement.[55] The requisite preconditions are certainly in place.

Another notable observation relating to participants' deliberative capacity concerns the tacit agreement on shared principles that shapes the way in which they relate to each other (and to the world outside the group and the party). Insofar as this agreement exercises an enabling and constraining effect on participants' interactions, it forms a central pillar of what sociologists sometimes call "group style", that is, a set of shared assumptions among members of a group about "what the group's relationship (imagined and real) to the wider world should be", "what members' mutual responsibilities should be while in the group context", and "what appropriate speech is in the group context" (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003, 739). This has implications not only for how equality is practiced in the group (whether people can speak their minds; be taken seriously by others; and so on). It plausibly also influences participants' *justificatory practices* (how they present their arguments so as to render them acceptable to others in the group). This is because an implicit consensus on "what appropriate speech is in the group context" entails not only that (for example) certain forms of explicit disrespect are ruled out but also that there exists an understanding among participants as to what kinds of argument will carry persuasive force. Discursive exchanges will therefore be more successful in the sense that agreements on contested issues can more easily be found. If this is correct, then we have another argument in hand for why deliberation among committed partisans may be especially fruitful.

Finally, it is important to mention that contrary to expectations, the evidence examined in this chapter does not reveal noticeable differences between the two countries under study. Recall that in the previous chapter I have hypothesised that German parties are likely to be more "deliberative" than Austrian ones, since in

[55] Obviously, we are here looking only at deliberation among *fellow partisans*, and not at deliberation across party lines. Inter-party deliberation is likely to look very different from intra-party deliberation, even if the latter is of high quality. But this is not the focus of this study.

Germany party membership is less often motivated by career-related considerations than in Austria. This expectation has not been borne out here. One possible explanation for this is that those members who only joined the branches in order to obtain patronage or other career benefits have remained quiet during the interviews (in each group, some participants did not speak up), or simply chose not to participate and abstain from the group's meeting when the interview took place. Alternatively, it might be the case that career-seeking members seldom join active and politically committed party branches of the kind that was studied for this thesis. Given that it is hard to ascertain on the basis of the available evidence why the presumed differences between the two countries did not reveal themselves, however, I shall take no position on which of these explanations is more plausible. The point to note is that there is a significant mismatch between expectations and evidence in this particular respect. This is arguably a good thing: if party branches provide a supportive environment for deliberation even in contexts where career-related motivations for party membership are likely to prevail, we have all the more reason to see the realisation of a deliberative model of intra-party democracy as something that is not contingent on contextual factors. At the very least, we should not think of the context in which party members deliberate as exercising a deterministic effect on their deliberative capacity. The subsequent chapter corroborates this conclusion.

Conclusion

The introduction of this chapter poses a question: do party branches provide favourable preconditions for deliberation? To find out, I have explored whether the two basic desiderata of equality and diversity are satisfied by the party groups. The answer that has emerged from the analysis is that these desiderata are indeed satisfied, and that party branches, therefore, do provide an environment that is conducive to good deliberation. In the next chapter, I will look at the actual deliberations that occur in the branches, considering first the content of the disagreements facing branch members and then their reason-giving practices.

Chapter 4
When Partisans Deliberate: Disagreement and Justification

> In our politics each major party has become a compound, a hodgepodge, of various and conflicting interests; and the imperatives of party struggle, the quest for victory and for offices, have forced the parties themselves to undertake the business of conciliation and compromise among such interests.—Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*

Preliminaries: the party as compromise

Originally intended to describe the great American parties in the age of Jefferson and Madison, the above quote captures an important truth about political parties: parties are always a compromise. Even if partisans broadly agree on what principles should inform political decisions, they are not protected from conflict. Due to the plurality of different interests and preferences within parties, "intra-party dissension flares all the time, unsuppressed" (Rosenblum 2008, 361). Therefore, partisans need to "undertake the business of conciliation and compromise". They need to accommodate dissenting voices and find middle ground on potentially divisive issues. Otherwise the unity of the party and its collective capacity to act are at risk (cf. Boucek 2012).

The requirement to negotiate compromises arises not only among policy-making elites at the top level of the party. Often it also arises at the party base. The organised members, like those who engage in local branches, tend to disagree about a plethora of issues. One classic example is the impact and defensibility of the party leadership's decisions. Was it right to coalesce with party X? Did it cost votes to promote policy Y? Ought we take a different stand on issue Z? Another set of issues organised members routinely disagree about concerns concrete courses of action they might pursue. How should the next campaign be framed? What can be done effectively to address pressing problems in the community? What stakeholders should we cooperate with in the pursuit of shared goals? In all of these cases, finding compromise is important in the sense that it is a prerequisite for concerted action. Without some sort of agreement on what the position of the group is on those matters,

the group will struggle to exercise collective agency (cf. List and Pettit 2011, ch. 2).[56] In other words, if partisans fail to agree, they will likely fail to act.

Normatively, there are at least two reasons for why the organised members at the party base should be capable of acting together. Firstly, the collective capacity to act is necessary in order for the party base to effectively contest the decisions of the party elite. Internal dissent is unlikely to be heard and taken seriously if dissenters do not speak with one voice and act in unison. This point is especially pertinent in the context of the model of intra-party democracy I have defended in chapter 1, which proposes the empowerment of the organised membership as a way to strengthen parties' capacity to provide linkage.[57] Following this model, successful preference transmission from the bottom up requires that members *jointly* question the position of the party elite and promote alternatives that are grounded in their own deliberations. Secondly, the collective capacity to act is crucial when members at the party base could take actions that would improve on the status quo and be backed by a majority of those affected—for example helping to promote a policy that the local community would benefit from, and that the larger part of its denizens would endorse. No doubt a failure to act here would not be normatively neutral, since it would favour the status quo and potentially disempower collective responses to emerging or long-standing problems.

These preliminary reflections serve to remind us of the wider significance of effective deliberation within parties. The success of internal deliberation is an important determinant of the ability of the organised party members effectively to address local problems, and correspondingly impacts on their trustworthiness as

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[56] I say "some sort of assent" because an agreement to let something stand as the position of the group can take different forms. It can take the form of *full normative unanimity*, for example. This occurs when the members of the group through discussion come to share beliefs. But it can also involve only *partial normative unanimity*, by which is meant an agreement on a group position without unanimity at the level of the substantive belief itself (see Moore and O'Doherty 2014, 303-305).

[57] Note: as far as the party's overall capacity to act is concerned effective internal dissent might have a *decreasing* effect—that is, if there can be no quick compromise found between the party elite and the organised members. It is a recurring finding in the empirical political science literature on parties that internal divisions undermine parties' agentive capacities (and lead them to de-emphasise policy) (e.g. Katz 2014). This presents us with a complicated trade-off in which the value of intra-party democracy needs to be balanced against the value of a party's general agentive capacity. Though I cannot discuss all the intricacies of this trade-off here, I suspect that no definitive rationale for why one should be privileged over the other can be given. Much seems to depend on the gains and losses action or non-action brings with it.

collective agents who are capable of changing political institutions in accordance with their normative commitments. Be that as it may, my primary concern in this chapter is not with what happens once deliberation has concluded. Instead, I will focus on how members of party branches discuss in circumstances of disagreement. So the chapter shifts the focus of the analysis from the preconditions for deliberation in party branches to actual deliberative practice.

I begin in a plain and descriptive fashion by listing the kinds of disagreements that arise in branch meetings, distinguishing between disagreements about organisational issues and disagreements about societal issues. I then clarify how I understand and operationalise the concept of justification in a brief excursion into democratic theory, before embarking on an in-depth analysis of two selected text passages. These two exchanges exemplify the type of political conversation one appears likely to find in party branches, exhibiting patterns that are dispersed more widely across the groups. In the course of the analysis I will also foreground what's distinctive about deliberation among partisans, weaving the findings into the bigger picture that has emerged so far.

Domains of disagreement

In the previous chapter I have argued that disagreement is an important prerequisite for deliberation, and I have shown that, in party branches, disagreement arises for reasons to do with group diversity. What I have said little about was *what* branch members actually disagree about. Now I want to zoom in on the content of the branch members' disagreements. In chapter 3 we have already encountered one concrete issue of conflict, namely cycling policy; but there are also other areas of disagreement. Indeed, the data from the group discussions suggests that participants disagree on a wide range of issues. While there appears to be among participants an agreement on the values that should predominate in the making of policy, differences surface when it comes to epistemic and preferential questions, that is, when it comes

to beliefs about the impact of a policy or a given course of action, as well as the expressed preferences for a policy or a course of action.

For purposes of analysis, a distinction can be drawn between two main domains of disagreement. The first and perhaps more common one encompasses matters relating to the strategy and organisation of the party. I call disagreements that belong in this domain disagreements about *organisational* issues. In these kinds of disagreement, participants are divided over such issues as the appropriate strategy of the party elite vis-à-vis political adversaries or coalition partners; the degree to which members should be involved in internal decision-making; or the future of the party more generally (disagreements over these particular issues arose across the groups). Usually divisions run here between (a) participants who hold what one might call "pragmatic" views, and see strategic behaviour and compromise as necessary for holding on to power and exercising influence on policy, and (b) participants who endorse what one might call "purist" views, and wish to see the party adopt a more principled, indeed sometimes uncompromising, approach in reaching certain political and organisational goals. This divide between "pragmatists" and "purists" in fact seems to be another important source of diversity in the groups. Even though it remains unmentioned in participants' reflections on their deliberative experience in the group, it becomes readily apparent in the deliberative exchanges.

Notice that the pragmatist-purist divide that cuts through the party branches challenges two commonplace assumptions in political science. One is that activist groups at the partisan base are uniformly purists (the classic exposition of this view is May 1973). The other is that, insofar as there exists an ideological gulf between purists and pragmatists, this runs between the party elite (who are pragmatists because they have to compromise in order to win elections and govern) and the party base (who are purists because they care about principles and want to see these principles realised in full), but not *across* the party base (for such a perspective, see e.g. Katz and Cross 2013, esp. 171). As I have already suggested in the previous chapter, it seems that the party branches are much more internally complex than one would expect in light of the contemporary political science literature on the topic.

The second domain of disagreement, then, involves what I call *societal* issues, that is, issues to do with grievances that are manifest in the local community or society in large, usually with more or less direct policy implications. Examples include growing social inequality, rising living costs, and public fear from immigration. Typically these kinds of issues are brought up in connection with references to current public debates, or in connection with the personal experiences of participants. These references in turn often serve as a point of orientation for the discussion. Principal causes of disagreement in this domain are contrasting personal experiences and different viewpoints on which values (of those that are central for the party) should inform the party's stance on a given issue, or how specific values should be interpreted. A major reason why there exist different positions on the relative priority or substantive interpretation of values is, again, the pragmatist-purist divide within the groups. Those with a more ideological outlook tend to argue for a narrow interpretation of values, or assert that some values are too central to be compromised in the making of policy. The pragmatists, on the other hand, usually do not disagree about which values should predominate but tend to regard an outspoken commitment to certain values as compatible with a cooperative and compromising outlook. For them, what counts is concrete political achievements, not maintaining ideological purity.

Table 3 presents an indicative (but not exhaustive) list of points of disagreement participants mentioned in the group interviews.

Table 3: ***Issues of disagreement***

Organisational Issues	Societal Issues
• Is the party leadership committed to internal democracy? • Are direct-democratic forms of intra-party democracy preferable to delegated ones? • What is the best electoral strategy for the party in EU elections? • Is the current party leader capable of winning the next election? • Should the party conduct more sociological studies about its constituency to better meet their demands? • Who should gain a place on the party list in the forthcoming council elections?	• How can more social housing be provided in the community? • What can be done about the rising rents facing the less well-off? • Should the minimum wage be raised? • What can be done about the adverse affects of inflation on people's lives? • Should a (local) tramway line be extended? • Does TTIP (and especially ISDS) endanger democracy? • How can people living in poverty be appropriately supported? • Should more bike lanes be built in the city?

What this list shows is that branch members problematise topics with direct implications for both the structure of the party they support and the political community in which they reside. Their discussions do not only touch on purely local issues or on intra-party politics. Nor are they exercises in non-decisional, purely theoretical reasoning. Even if individual branches have no authority to make final decisions regarding many of the topics under deliberation, each branch counts as a locus of practical reasoning. All of this lends more weight to the idea, developed in the foregoing chapters, that party branches are promising sites of deliberation. To be sure, whether the actual discussions of branch members actually qualify as *deliberative* has yet to be established. This is examined later in the chapter in an analysis of two particular instances of disagreement within the branches. The next section introduces the main category of analysis: justification.

Justification: norm and practice

The main question I want to address in this chapter is this: if the members of party branches disagree over a wide range of issues, and if their meetings provide favourable preconditions for deliberation, how is disagreement being dealt with in practice? What I want to do in particular is look at practices of *justification* among branch members, which serve as an indicator of how well conflict is discursively processed. First, though, we have to get clear about what precisely justification is, why it is normatively important and how we can operationalise it for empirical inquiry. This requires a brief excursion into democratic theory.

Justification as a normative ideal

Justification or "reason giving" is a central requirement in all theories of deliberative democracy (for overviews, see Thompson 2008, 495; Chambers 2010, 895). It is often indeed treated synonymous with deliberation; so it is perhaps *the* central requirement

of deliberative democracy. In essence, the justification requirement stipulates that participants to deliberation should offer each other an account of their viewpoints, providing reasons for why they think as they do.[58] Importantly, justification is conceptually distinct from *explanation* in that it involves speakers "recommending" their views to one another, framing their reasons in such a way that they can be appreciated even by those who are initially inclined to disagree. This means, for example, that a view or a proposal is presented as reflecting values that others could come to share. Explanation also involves the provision of reasons (accounting for the emergence of, say, a particular problem), yet not necessarily an effort on the part of the speaker to present her arguments in such a way that those addressed could accept them. In other words, it does not require that the reasons one gives are placed in a favourable light.[59]

Why is justification thus central in deliberative theories? The answer is that most deliberative democrats regard justification as nothing less than a *moral requirement*. The lineup here includes such influential theorists as Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (1996 and 2004), Joshua Cohen (2009) and Rainer Forst (2007). There are many differences at the level of detail among the specific theories of these authors, but by and large they all agree that citizens have an "obligation to justify to one another (…) the laws and policies that govern their public life" (Gutmann and Thompson 2004, 134). This obligation is derived from citizens' more general moral duty to respect each other as free and equal. When we fail to justify to others the rules we would impose on them, so the argument goes, we flout our duty to respect them as

[58] Notice that this point is rarely presented in such a stripped-down version. It usually comes with a number of provisos, which are equally derived from moral considerations. One standard qualification is that justification ought to be practiced in public. This is because when "public things" that affect the political community as a whole—like laws, constitutions or the basic social structure—are at stake, the addressee of justification ought to be the public in large; private conversation does not suffice. Another typical caveat is that citizens are obliged to limit their justificatory efforts to providing only reasons of a certain kind, though what this exactly means is contested. Especially theorists who traffic in public reason endorse this latter clause, since they believe that not all types of reasons reflect the mutual respect citizens ought to have for each other. Accordingly, citizens should prescind from referring to their self-interest or their "comprehensive views" (that was Rawls's term) about justice, right and wrong, etc., presenting instead reasons that appeal to widely shared ideals (for an excellent discussion, see Bohman and Richardson 2009). But since defending any particular conception of justification would take us too far from the topic of the present chapter, I will limit myself to an ecumenical definition here.

[59] It is important to note that in practice it may sometimes be difficult to distinguish between the justification and the explanation. Whether an utterance is received as justification or explanation may in fact depend much on the listener.

free equals and treat them solely as means—as objects of coercion, rather than as ends in themselves. We arrogate to ourselves a specific moral status we deny to others. This in turn would justify imposing moral sanctions like blame and indignation.[60]

Justification as an empirical concept

Having clarified what the normative value of justification is, the next question we have to address concerns the appropriate *operationalisation* of justification. If our task is to examine justificatory practices among partisans, how can we recognise acts of justification when we encounter them? And once identified, how can we evaluate their deliberative credentials? A good place to start looking for answers to these questions are existing empirical approaches to deliberative democracy. In Jürg Steiner and André Bächtiger's influential Discourse Quality Index (DQI), for example, which I have discussed (and criticised) in chapter 2, a distinction is drawn between the (a) level and the (b) content of justification (Steiner 2012, 270-271). First, the level of justification is operationalised in terms of the number of reasons given by a speaker and the extent to which the speaker makes clear that these reasons speak for or against the course(s) of action under deliberation. By way of illustration, here are some sample codes for different levels of justification as presented by Steiner (2012, 270).

1. The speaker does not present any arguments (asks, for example, merely for additional information).
3. The speaker justifies only with illustrations why X should or should not be done.
6. The speaker gives at least two reasons why X should be done and for at least two reasons a linkage is made with X.

Second, the DQI's "content of justification"-code is disaggregated into three components. It asks (1) whether the speaker makes explicit her proposals' costs and benefits for his own group and other groups; (2) whether references are made to abstract principles like equality or social justice; and (3) whether stories are told in

[60] On why this might be a position even so-called "realists" can endorse, see Jubb (2015, esp. 685-686). For an important criticism of strongly moralised views of justification, see Beerbohm (2011, ch. 4).

order to reinforce the point. These codes are derived from the above-mentioned provisos that figure prominently in theories of political justification.[61]

This approach holds many of the problems I have mentioned in chapter 2, in my critique of approaches to the study of deliberation that are too far removed from actual deliberative practice. Above all, it de-contextualises justification, treating it as a practice whose quality can be meaningfully evaluated from a third-person perspective, without taking into account the situated and particular character of the deliberating collective in question. This is problematic because, as I suggested in chapter 2, justification is a highly contextual activity. It is about the deployment of reasons in a particular social environment, with a particular set of persons as addressee: the justificatory audience. What matters, therefore, is not so much how many reasons a speaker gives, or whether she makes a connection between those reasons and the proposed course of action. Nor is it necessarily relevant that speakers refer to abstract principles and discuss all the costs and benefits their proposals entail for society in large. Rather, reasons and arguments must be adapted to the specific justificatory audience that is being addressed (see Young 2002, ch. 2; Goodin 2008, ch. 9; Bächtiger et al. 2010, 42-48; Mansbridge et al. 2010, 67; Dryzek 2012, ch. 4).[62] Otherwise efforts at justification are unlikely to be resonant and dialogue will come to a halt, rendering the whole exercise of justification pointless.

To better understand this point, consider a literary example. When Nietzsche's Zarathustra for the first time addresses the village dwellers at the market place, his sophisticated philosophical considerations are met with laughter and incomprehension. "When Zarathustra had thus spoken (…) all the people laughed at Zarathustra" (Nietzsche [1886] 1988b, prologue, III). Zarathustra's deliberations strike us as eloquent and sharp, but they are simply out of sync with his justificatory audience's patterns of understanding. This frustrates his efforts at justification. Putting

[61] For example, the code stating that speakers should refer to the costs and benefits of their proposal to other groups is inspired by the widespread idea that good justification is sensitive to the common good.

[62] This point is often made in discussions of the role of rhetoric in deliberative democracy. Second-generation deliberative democrats, that is those who approach deliberative democracy in non-ideal terms and eschew Rawlsian public reason, allow that rhetoric does have important roles to play (e.g. Dryzek 2012, ch. 4). Similarly to what I am arguing here, many of them suggest that rhetoric raises the inclusiveness of deliberation, since particular, rather than universal, appeals are more likely to connect to individuals from different social and cultural contexts. I have discussed this issue in greater depth in chapter 2.

the point in another way, even though Zarathustra's arguments are, at least from a philosophical standpoint, of high quality, they prove unintelligible in the specific setting in which they are aired. Thus, there is a potential gap between the "objective" quality of reasons and their force and plausibility in the context in which they are deployed. This gap cannot be overcome by the DQI's one-size-fits-all operationalisation of justification. What we need is a looser operationalisation, one that ratchets down the requirements a speaker practicing justification ought to satisfy.

With all this in mind, I want to suggest a strategy that is both normatively modest and phenomenologically plausible. If, as I have argued, justification's principal currency is appeals that recognise the situated and particular character of the justificatory audience in question, and if the quality of justification cannot be ascertained without taking into account the justificatory audience's engagement with the reasons offered by a speaker, then the satisfaction of two basic conditions should stand at the centre of our analysis.

> (C1) *Reason-giving condition*: A speaker must provide reasons rather than simply state her point of view or preference, though she retains discretion as to what kinds of reasons these are (in order to render them resonant to her justificatory audience).
>
> (C2) *Uptake condition*: The speaker's justificatory audience, or some members of that audience (if the group is large and not everyone can be expected to speak), must react to the reasons provided by the speaker in a way that signals comprehension and reflection.

Some readers will find the formulation of these conditions frustratingly imprecise. But there are good reasons for making use of placeholder terms here. If justification is intersubjective and necessarily situated, insisting upon any narrowly defined threshold of permissible actions may unduly call for false precision. Any empirically meaningful conception of justification must leave room for agency. It must permit reason-providers to give an account of their views in terms that makes sense to those they address, rather than limiting the range of permissible forms of

communication (C1).[63] And, accepting that the justificatory audience has an important role to play in the process, it must allow a wide range of reflective reactive moves on the part of the reason-recipients—provided, that is, that the reasons they were offered were understood and recognised as worthy of consideration (C2).[64] We ought not impose onto deliberators a normative straightjacket just for the sake of reducing necessary degrees of underdetermination.[65]

A closely related worry is that the proposed operationalisation of justification is too normatively modest. If justification is couched in such permissive terms, it may be said, almost any dialogue may satisfy C1 and C2 and so count as "good justificatory practice". Justification, then, loses its critical edge as a normative ideal. But I think this concern is unwarranted. For at closer inspection, the demands of C1 and C2 are far from normatively hollow. C1 explicitly precludes speech acts where no reason is given, which weeds out a substantial amount of utterances from the category of valid justifications. For example, statements such as "I prefer X" or "I think Y is better" do not classify as justification. Participants must say *why* they those certain preferences. C2 in its turn demands some reflection on the part of those to whom justification is given and so guards effectively against docile reactions like passive acceptance, and against disengagement triggered by reasons that are not meaningfully received.[66] Thus, it should be clear that not any dialogical exchange can satisfy C1 and C2. Though we have loosened the requirements of the justification criterion, there is no reason to think the operationalisation presented here is normatively empty. Instead, it strikes a balance between showing recognition for pertinent normative demands and the necessity to accept the situatedness of justificatory procedures. The

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[63] Some theories of deliberative democracy proscribe certain forms of communication. See the above discussion of the "provisos" in fn. 59.

[64] For example, they may ask questions of clarification, critique the reasons given by a speaker or the mode in which they were delivered, provide evidence that tells against the validity of the speakers' argument, etc.

[65] On this point, see also my methodological discussion in chapter 2.

[66] C2 may also be criticised for making participation in a justification procedure a mere option citizens may choose to exercise, allowing as it does that "only some" members of a justificatory audience might react to the reason-providers' arguments. Yet if we accept that justification is not a moral demand but at most morally desirable, as I have argued earlier, there is no reason to tighten the reins on reason-recipients and impose a blanket participatory duty on them. The source of such a duty would be very difficult to determine. Moreover, in practice most deliberative groups will in any case be too large for each participant to be given the floor and present reflections on the reasons that were voiced.

next sub-section examines whether the political discussions of party branch members satisfy C1 and C2, and looks closely at patterns of justification across groups.

Two deliberative exchanges

The preceding theoretical discussion was quite lengthy, but it has done the necessary conceptual groundwork in order for us to embark on our empirical analysis. It has clarified why justification matters and how we may think of it as an empirical concept. What I want to focus on now is two discursive exchanges among members of party branches. These exchanges were triggered by internal disagreement about issues falling, respectively, into the *organisational* and *societal* categories discussed at the beginning of the chapter. While in principle there are numerous passages of text that could be selected and usefully analysed for justificatory moves, those explored here were chosen because they present patterns that are dispersed more widely through the empirical material. The disagreements that prompted the discussion arose quite naturally in conversation, as participants talked through particular problems. No interventions on the part of the researcher were made. This free-flowing discussion provided an opportunity to study political reason giving among party members in its perhaps most natural form: as something that flares up in the course of repeated encounters among likeminded, politically committed citizens.

I have chosen to present only two examples of partisan deliberation for reasons to do with readability and analytical leverage. As far as readability is concerned, in-depth textual analysis of the kind engaged below tends to require great amounts of space, making it sometimes difficult for readers to follow the argument. Focusing on two examples, which correspond neatly to the two umbrella categories of organisational and societal disagreements, elegantly avoids that problem. But besides these "aesthetic" motivations, I think that the two examples that are discussed in what follows are sufficient to make the broader analytical point this chapter seeks to make, and to make it in a adequately robust way. Presenting further examples of deliberative exchanges would not add anything of import to the argument and ultimately compel

us to sacrifice some of the analysis' depth. Readers who are interested in more textual evidence of deliberation within party branches may turn to the thesis's appendix, which offers additional empirical material. This material affords more insight into the wider context in which this chapters' argument is embedded.

In order to examine whether C1 is satisfied, we shall focus in what follows on speech acts that contain (a) an evaluative statement about a given issue, and (b) a reason that is given in support of that statement. For example, "I think X is a good thing. This is because it can promote Y through Z." In this example the speaker's first sentence signals that she takes an evaluative stance with respect to issue X, while the utterance "This is because it can promote Y through Z" communicates a reason for why the speaker has come to think the way she does, and draws a link between the earlier evaluative statement and that reason. To see whether reason-recipients satisfy C2, on the other hand, we shall focus on whether they react in a way that may reasonably be interpreted as indicating comprehension and some degree of reflective engagement with the speech acts of the reason-provider. To pick a few examples of possible responses: reason-recipients may ask questions of clarification, critique the reasons given by a speaker or the mode in which reasons were delivered, or offer evidence that challenges the validity of the speakers' argument. Both of the just-described categories are deliberately loose, consistent with the normative arguments laid out above. They treat moments of deliberation as instances in which speakers exercise discursive agency, drawing only on minimal standards of good discursive practice.

In addition to fielding these two operational tests, I want to explore what *kinds* of arguments partisans exchange. The motivation behind this is not that some reasons are normatively more desirable than others, as some deliberative democrats believe. I have rejected this view earlier as imposing inappropriate constraints onto speakers. Rather, exploring the properties of the arguments aired in party branches allows us to understand what (if anything) is particular about partisan deliberation. Specifically we shall concentrate here on patterns in *what is deemed relevant to justifying a given point*. I make this the focus of attention because in practice a good portion of justification lies not in explicit reason-giving but in the assumptions of relevance that

are embedded in the utterance. Speakers often merely provide brief argument-sketches that hint at the reasoning that leads them to their conclusions, assuming that others will receive these as equally relevant to the justification of their point (Goodin 2008, 88; Boltanski and Thévenot 2006; also see chapter 2). In exploring these patterns, I shall employ familiar categories, for example "storytelling" or "principled justification", yet without implying that these categories carry any special value apart from usefully describing the particular instances of justification analysed. The point of this exercise is simply to make sense of salient patterns of political reasoning across the groups. In sum, we shall explore in the following (1) whether the justification criterion is satisfied in the political discussions of party members, and (2) what party members' patterns of argumentation look like.

Exchange 1: questioning the legitimacy of membership ballots

Let us then move to the empirical material, looking first at a disagreement over an *organisational* issue. This occurs in the Theilheim group, its starting point being that one participant questions the appropriateness of membership ballots as a means to enhance intra-party democracy. To put things in context: the issue of membership ballots proved to be particularly contentious across the German groups. This is because the legitimacy of the ballot over the coalition agreement between the SPD and the conservative CDU/CSU party that was held after the 2013 *Bundestag* elections remains bitterly contested within the SPD's membership. In each group, there were supporters of the ballot initiative (and of the "grand coalition" between CDU/CSU and SPD more generally). For them, the ballot represented a legitimate instance of direct democracy within the party. Yet there were also opponents, who usually objected that the ballot was procedurally flawed (we shall see shortly what exactly is meant by that). Perhaps unsurprisingly, supporters of the ballot were mostly what I have called "pragmatists", that is, party members who see strategic behaviour and compromise as necessary for holding on to power and exercising influence on policy. Opponents tended to be what I have called "purists", partisans who more

generally wish to see the party adopt an uncompromising, purely principled approach to reaching certain political and organisational goals. In the following passage, which appears about 38 minutes into the interview, the different priorities of supporters (Hans-Peter, Marita and Herbert) and opponents (Bernd) of the ballot become manifest.

> **Bernd:** Membership ballots are in principle a good thing. But of course, if one manipulates them and bludgeons [*niederknüppeln*] one's adversaries in gatherings where there should be discussion about [the issue on which the ballot is held] … then this has nothing to do with grassroots democracy [*Basisdemokratie*] and it has nothing to do with a democratic decision. […] One could have saved this money. … Since there was ultimately also the argument "this ballot was so expensive that we can hardly afford campaigning now" [if the members had voted against the coalition and forced a re-election]. This was, amongst other things, a reason that was given for why one must agree [to the coalition agreement]. I thought that was really questionable.
>
> **Hans-Peter:** I have to say, Bernd: I absolutely disagree. Because there is certainly much more manipulation in the […] elected party committees than in a membership ballot. [That] is my opinion. So … I just cannot imagine that one can manipulate many people in the same way as when one wants a specific result in […] a committee.
>
> **Bernd:** Whoever uses party funds to advertise in big newspapers, but does not offer the same [financial] means to adversaries [within the party] … is democratically highly dubious. […] I think this was a waste of party funds.
>
> **Hans-Peter:** Then one has to abolish membership ballots, then one should have to say: "pointless!" … that is what follows from your reasoning.
>
> **Bernd:** Yes! If one does not conduct it in a democratic fashion, then one has to abolish it. Either everyone is provided with the same opportunity to argue with impact or not.
>
> **Marita:** I have a different view. […] When one refers an issue to others for a direct decision, then I will have a personal point of view on it. You will have a different one [pointing at other participants], you will have a different one, you will have a different one … [let's] suppose. Then everyone will try to win over the majority for his position … for whatever reasons. What I do not like is the thing with advertising in big newspapers. Yet I have made my decision on the grounds of my own reflections. And I am a realist, I am businessman [sic], and I find it more important to hold public office

and exercise influence than sitting somewhere on the opposition benches and […] be unable to exercise influence. And so I bit the bullet and said: yes, let's be part of this, so we can […] have a say and table our proposals and see … and if you look at the results today, then—

Bernd [interposing]**:** We have put some ideas into practice [*Inhalte umgesetzt*], yes. But how does the party benefit from it?

Herbert: Well, how does the party benefit? We have achieved things for the people!

Marita: We want to achieve something for the people, not for the party!

Herbert: The party is not an end in itself, Bernd!

Marita: Consider the [higher] minimum wage of €8,50. That's still not much but now it's been achieved!

In this passage one sees several justificatory moves taking place. Central is Bernd's expression of disapproval concerning the 2013 membership ballot, which initiates the discussion. Bernd claims that internal criticism of the coalition agreement between SPD and CDU/CSU—the issue on which the ballot was held—was suppressed by the party elite prior to the ballot. Three instances of suppression are cited in support of this claim, namely that the party elite lashed out at internal critics in the debates that took place before the ballot; "blackmailed" members into voting in favour of the coalition by suggesting the party would lack the funds to set up a new campaign; and used party funds to promote their plans to join a grand coalition in newspapers without offering critics equal opportunities to publicise their views.

Setting aside the question of whether or not it is factually correct that the party elite tried to disempower internal critics in the ways Bernd describes (given that similar accusations were voiced in other groups it seems likely that it *is* correct), there can be no doubt that Bernd's argument satisfies C1. It constitutes a clear case in which reasons are given in order to substantiate an evaluative statement about a certain issue.

How do the responses of Bernd's justificatory audience look? To begin, Hans-Peter and Marita both openly disagree with Bernd, though to a different extent and for

different reasons. Hans-Peter, who reacts immediately to Bernd's argument, appears entirely unconvinced. He first tries to relativise Bernd's charges, and then expresses doubts about whether manipulating the outcome of a decision-making procedure is in fact possible when publics as large as the SPD's membership are involved. Marita, in contrast, reacts in a more nuanced fashion. On one hand, she accepts Bernd's worry about resource inequality in the debate preceding the ballot, at least insofar as she declares that she "does not like" that the party elite used party funds for promoting their position on the coalition agreement in key newspapers. On the other hand, she thinks it was inevitable that the party elite would try everything to win over a majority for their preferred course of action.

Despite the substantial differences between Hans-Peter and Marita's responses, it is not difficult to interpret both as satisfying C2. Far from passive acceptance or unreasoned assertions, it is evident that both reason-recipients are engaging with the argument given to them. Even if some of the points that are being advanced—especially Hans-Peter's—are not developed much, and only gestures towards arguments are offered, the replies constitute instances of spirited disagreement on the basis of reasons.

As far as the specificities of argumentation in this exchange are concerned, perhaps the most notable thing in the discussion is that a key part of the reasoning leading Bernd to his conclusions remains *implicit*. Let me explain. When he criticises the party leadership for trying to silence internal dissent, Bernd seems to have in mind a strongly egalitarian conception of intra-party democracy, according to which resources to influence the process of internal will-formation ought to be equally distributed among the party membership. However, Bernd does not elaborate the details of the ideal of intra-party democracy he has in mind. Presumably he expects that others will catch the allusions and receive them as meaningful and persuasive. This is a risky strategy: it cannot reasonably be expected that one's interlocutors will always be on the exact same wavelength. But here it seems that the others accept, or at least do not reject, Bernd's implicit assumptions. After all, their criticism is addressed not to his premises but his conclusions.

The most plausible explanation for why Bernd's arguments are intelligible to the whole group is arguably that group members are very familiar with one another. To wit, they have a rough idea of "where the others are coming from" in their argumentation. Over time and through repeated exchanges they will have become increasingly aware of each others' beliefs and convictions, and the kinds of arguments they are likely to hear from each other. So Marita, Herbert and Hans-Peter are able to make sense of Bernd's positions on intra-party democracy because he has elaborated these positions in conversations that were held on prior occasions, or because these positions are in harmony with a wider set of previously defended views. Either way, Bernd's claims are enmeshed in a broader history of discussion, one which is kept in the branch's collective memory, so to speak. This sensitivity towards each others' viewpoints and mindsets greatly facilitates reason-giving among the members of the group: it enables them to make their points understandable to each other, and lends them a sense for what is "out of bounds" in a debate. I will return to this issue later in the chapter.

This analysis must be supplemented with one further observation. This concerns the exchange's inconclusiveness. Insofar as there is no sign that Bernd's arguments have managed to persuade Marita, Herbert and Hans-Peter, and vice versa, the disagreement remains unresolved. That things are left open is common across groups when it comes to organisational disagreements: rarely do deliberations over issues to do with organisation or strategy yield consensus or the "joint acceptance" (Moore and O'Doherty 2014) of a position for that matter, even if many constructive proposals are put forward. The reason for this, I suggest, is that there is often simply no need for participants to find agreements on many organisational matters: as the present example shows, organisational disagreements are usually quarrels about issues that have already been decided, or indeed about matters that participants have very little or no direct influence on. However, this should not be read as a "failure" of deliberation. If anything, the spirited attempts at mutual justification and critical reflection that can be observed even when "undecidable" topics are discussed signal reason to believe that the groups' capacity to deliberate can be emphatically affirmed.

Exchange 2: debating poverty and social inequality

We turn now to the second deliberative exchange. This features a disagreement over a *societal* issue in the Linz group, that is, an issue relating to grievances manifest in the local community or society in large. We join the discussion about 28 minutes into the interview, just after one participant explained that the group's regular discussions help him to clarify "what is really at stake" in public discourse as opposed to what is being "singled out by the media as important". Ernest, a participant in his mid-70s, who throughout the discussion stressed his experience of poverty in his youth, reacts to this by identifying the problem that the general public is fundamentally misled and misinformed about their *de facto* material welfare. His contribution immediately receives deliberative uptake by Maria, a social worker, who contests Ernest's moves on the basis of her inside knowledge of the more deprived sections of society.

> **Ernest:** I believe there are many different viewpoints, or rather wrong points of view, misleading views, concerning the development of prices. I have a very good memory of numbers and I can tell you today how much which product had cost 40 years ago, 50 years ago. And if I compare that with how much [money] I earned back then, or how much others earned—because that I also still remember—then I find that we are extremely well off today! And the feeling that we're not comfortably off today… happiness is after all a matter of being content…arises from being told by advertising and commercials: 'You need that [product]! And if you don't have it, then you cannot live properly!' … And I see my responsibility in telling people 'You're actually well off!'
>
> **Maria:** I have to disagree with you in one respect: In my job I am very often confronted with people who have been evicted from their homes. And I can tell you of cases of mothers with two children, who were evicted because of rent arrears of 3000 Euros. These are not big sums. It is getting tough at the moment…the last years in fact. And there are many things such as…many people cannot afford glasses anymore. In the 1990s, I remember, that was not a problem. Back then everyone in Austria was able to buy new glasses every 2-3 years. There are many people in Austria who are secretly [*versteckt*] really poor! And this is about heating, this is about having a piece of meat on the weekend, and so on. And some people are really not doing well in this

sense. And I think one has to calculate again from a…from our secure position what it means to live off 700 Euros [a month].

Ernest: Well, that [i.e. living off 700 Euros a month] is not possible.

Maria: I know, but many people have to do that.

Ernest: I know, but that is not normally possible. I have no illusions about that.

Karl: Well, I agree. I have perhaps an even better insight into what people actually earn because we allocate public homes two, three times a week, and there we look closely at people's income and also see how much the rents are. And then you know how much electricity and heating and so on costs. And, well, it is exactly like Maria says…by now a considerable number of people drag themselves around along the poverty line (*an der Armutsgrenze herumkrebsen*). Of course, you, Ernest, you look at this from your point of view. I could say the same. What did we have when we were children? How was it in our home? There were five of us—that is, three children and two parents—living on 60 square metres. But okay—today the standards are different. And we do not want to go back to lower standards! And many are simply unable to afford their rents for a flat that is appropriate measured by today's standards. They are unable to afford that. That's how it is.

Ernest: Let me put it in this way: there's no point in agreeing with people when they say they are poor, because that doesn't build them up (*aufbauen*). What much better builds people up is when I say 'well, whether I am doing well or not is ultimately never a question of money, but a question of comparison…with others.' And if I only compare the bad bits, then one will feel even worse afterwards.

Maria: And for me it's clear: 500 Euros are relative. Whether I have 1500 Euros or 1000 Euros a month makes a big difference. Whether I have 4000 or 4500 Euros makes no difference. And I utterly resist saying: it depends on you, whether you are doing well or not! Because such an argument is along the lines of 'Me Incorporated' [German: '*Ich-AG'*, a term chiefly used pejoratively to describe the prototypical lifestyle in an individualist capitalist society], where we are solely responsible for ourselves. And this is the exact opposite of the idea of the SPÖ, of social democracy, of solidarity, where there should be a certain standard of life for everyone. And beyond that everyone may consider aiming for more…but a certain shared basis for everyone…

Ernest: [Thinks] Well, yes. Solidarity. You're right!

Does this exchange meet our two justificatory desiderata? I think yes. Both Ernest and Maria advance positions backed by argument, providing reasons for why they think as they do (C1). Maria's several responses to Ernest, moreover, go way beyond the reactions of reason-recipients we have encountered in the Theilheim passage. Rather than merely expressing preliminary intuitions or reflections concerning Ernest's position, she delivers a full-blown counter-argument to it (C2). Her reasoning may thus be interpreted not only in terms of a response to another speakers' act of justification, but in terms of a self-standing justificatory move. What to make of Karl's intervention, in which he balances Ernest and Maria's position against each other? This, too, falls squarely within the purview of C2. Karl's explicit and intellectually honest weighing of different arguments constitutes a paradigmatic example of the sort of reflective engagement with the arguments of others that enriches and sustains the deliberative process. In short, the analysis fully affirms the participants' justificatory capacity.

When one looks at the *kinds* of reasons participants give each other, two things stand out: the strong use of narrative and the effective appeal to the principle of solidarity with which the conversation closes. First, as we have seen, all participants in the above passage draw on personal stories of some kind. Narratives are used to a much greater extent than in the Theilheim discussion. Ernest justifies his viewpoint by talking about his youth; Maria by conjuring experiences collected in her job as a social worker; and Karl, in his attempt to mediate between the others' positions, anecdotally refers to the special insight into people's lives he gains in his job, and invokes an autobiographical story akin that which Ernest articulates. Notice however that while storytelling typically involves the provision of a first person-account of one's own experience, or of the experience of someone with whom certain interests or socio-cultural characteristics are shared (Young 2002, 73-74), Maria, and in part also Karl, use it to a different effect. Central to their stories is not so much their own experience, but the experience of others—others with whom they share little in common. One may call this *second order storytelling.* To see what is meant by this,

consider the following examples. In Maria's statement, "In my job I am very often confronted with people who have been evicted from their homes", the focal point is not the fact that she is confronted with those people but that there are people who struggle to pay their rent and risk homelessness. And when Karl says that "I have perhaps an even better insight into what people actually earn because we allocate public homes two, three times a week", his emphasis is on the differential between people's salaries and housing costs, not on the fact that he is involved in allocating public housing. So the point of those narratives is not to convey facts about the speakers' own situation, or about the situation of people who are like the speaker, but about the situation of completely other persons the speaker cares about in some way.

One way of looking at second order storytelling of this kind is to see it as potentially strengthening the connection between parties and the wider citizenry. Why? Because expressing citizens' concerns in a concrete and empathic fashion can raise consciousness for those concerns within the party. What is meant by this can best be brought out through an example. When Maria empathically speaks of "cases of mothers with two children, who were evicted because of rent arrears of 3000 Euros", she does not talk of abstract social problems or anonymous statistics but of real existing citizens whose suffering deserves attention—citizens we all can relate to in one or another way. This personalised and somewhat dramatised way of presenting a problem can help foster and sustain awareness for that problem in the group (cf. Dryzek 2000, 68; Boswell 2013, 631). It can strengthen the extent to which group members feel responsible for addressing the problem, providing an impulse for collective responses. In this sense, communicating the worries of those the party seeks to represent in terms of second order narrative can be an effective way of translating their demands into political action.

The second notable thing about the sorts of reasons participants offer each other in the Linz group is that Maria's principled appeal to solidarity eventually manages to persuade Ernest. Remarkable is the immediate resonance this appeal finds. It seems to speak directly to Ernest's moral intuitions about political life, for after a brief moment of reflection he concedes that solidarity is an important political principle in the context of the issue under discussion, indicating a change of mind. Remember in this

connection the "pre-deliberative agreement on central political values" that was mentioned in the previous chapter. I have discussed this in connection with the question of whether participants enjoy an equal standing in their discussions. The fact that participants bring to the table such an agreement would seem to be an important enabling condition for arguments like Maria's to succeed: indeed, without it being in place, any appeal to shared principles could easily misfire. For to accept Maria's argument, Ernest arguably needs to recognise the value of solidarity and endorse it as a general principle that ought to guide political practice. He needs to attribute to it the same, or at least similar, importance as Maria does. This means that the participants' like-mindedness regarding certain shared values performs an "agreement-facilitating" function. It plays an important role in finding common ground on potentially divisive issues.

A final point: if one looks beyond the Linz case, it emerges that appeals to abstract principles like solidarity or equality take place more frequently in disagreements about societal issues than in disagreements over matters to do with organisation. One straightforward reason for why this might be the case is that the party's lead principles naturally have a more direct bearing on societal questions than on organisational ones: these principles tend to be a point of orientation for general political agendas and concrete policies, for shaping and designing political institutions, but not necessarily for such questions as who gains a place on the party list. Therefore, it will be more difficult for reason-providers intelligibly and persuasively to link those principles to organisational matters. Of course, principled considerations may play a role in disagreements over organisational issues. In the excerpt from the Theilheim group, for example, Bernd's conception of intra-party democracy is clearly influenced by his interpretation of certain democratic ideals. But, as this very example shows, the principles informing organisation-related disputes are typically not those that are constitutive of partisans' shared activity. In any case, if the observed pattern is any indication then giving party branches more weighty deliberative tasks, and encouraging them to discuss policy issues relating to society at large, as I have suggested in chapter 1, is likely to produce more of the principled kind of justification that we have witnessed in the Linz excerpt; and this might be the best

basis for strong, integrative agreements that are regarded as legitimate by all those involved in making it.

Discussion and conclusion

Tracing the two selected discussions indicates important things about deliberation among party branch members. Most importantly, it suggests that there is reason for optimism concerning their ability to deliberate. As we have seen, both discussions satisfy our two justificatory desiderata: the reason-giving condition and the uptake condition. They are marked by the mutual provision of reasons, with participants listening and responding to each other in a way that signals a degree of reflective engagement with the arguments in question. There are also no relevant differences between the two countries when it comes to party members' capacity to deliberate. Consistent with the results of the previous chapter's analysis of the preconditions for deliberation in party branches, branch members seem to deliberate just as well in Austria as they do in Germany. So again, it seems that we need not worry so much about contextual factors when thinking about the realisation of a deliberative model of intra-party democracy. At least within party branches, certain deliberative tendencies appear to persist independent of the institutional context that shapes party members' participatory motivations.

Why might this be so? The two examined discussions reveal a deeper reason for why deliberation in party branches is likely to reach good quality. Normally, it is a purely contingent matter whether or not basic premises are shared as common ground among all participants to a conversation. That just depends on the nature of the beliefs that are present within the political community. In party branches, this contingency is significantly reduced. It is reduced, on the one hand, because branch members share many premises. Where they do *not* share premises, on the other hand, they are familiar enough with each other to know roughly what underlying premises their interlocutors construct their arguments upon. This is likely to sustain a sense of trust among them—recall in this connection the discussion of how partisanship can be a

carrier of equality—and facilitate the resonance of arguments even in heated disputes over the righteousness of certain policies or course of action.

Table 4: ***Summary of the analysis***

	Issue under deliberation	Justificatory desiderata satisfied	Types of reasons appealed to
(*Example 1*) Theilheim group	The legitimacy of membership ballots and their misuse by the current party leadership	✓	Tacit appeals to normative principles
(*Example 2*) Vienna group	Poverty in contemporary society.	✓	Appeals to shared principles; personal narrative; second-order narrative

That participants are sufficiently familiar with each other to have some idea of the premises underlying each others' arguments manifests first of all in the fact that they hardly engage in what Goodin (2008, 88-90) calls "premise probing". Premise probing usually takes place when it becomes clear to the participants to a conversation that they do not get each others' points. Participants then ask each other why they believe the things they say—"Why on earth do you believe *that*?"—and proceed to elaborate in fuller detail their underlying reasoning. This does not occur in the above passages. Either premises are accepted (call to mind how the Theilheim group deals with Bernd's argument about intra-party democracy). Or, participants disagree over premises, but forego the "probing" process and proceed directly to questioning them (think for example of Maria's final response to Ernest in the Linz passage, in which she attacks his premises without having demanded further clarification). It is no interpretative leap to suggest this has to do with the fact that participants know each other reasonably well, and have discussed many times before. Through repeated exchanges they are likely to have familiarised themselves with each others' standpoints and commitments. They will have understood what kinds of arguments their fellow activists tend to make—who in the group is a "purist" and who is a "pragmatist", for example. As a result, they will have a good sense of "where the others are coming from" when they argue about a given issue.

But as I said, participants also *share* many premises. This comes out most clearly in the concluding moments of the Linz discussion, where Maria's appeal to the principle of solidarity persuades Ernest to change his mind. The premise shared by the two participants is that solidarity is a value that should drive political decisions. This leads them eventually to converge at the same conclusion. The point to note here is that shared premises do important work in making effective deliberation possible. This is a well-acknowledged point in deliberative theory: from Rawls's (1993) plea that good deliberation requires an "overlapping consensus" on the basic institutions of society to Dryzek and Niemeyer's (2006) argument that "reciprocal understanding and recognition of the legitimacy of the values held by other participants in political interaction" (642) is the minimum requirement for civilised democratic discourse, authors have treated some level of shared premises as indispensable to deliberation. What the example of Maria and Ernest reminds us of is that party branches are good places to look for collectives with shared premises: insofar as partisanship rests upon a shared belief in basic political values, sharing premises with others is part and parcel of what it means to be a partisan. By implication, party branches are also good places to look for effective deliberation.

Of course, to recognise the benefits of partisanship for deliberation is not to imply that any party branch can produce good deliberation, and the differences between the two examined passages point to potential variations in the deliberative practice of party branches. But to recognise this limit means only that we need to be prepared for contingencies—not that the generally positive picture of deliberation in party branches that emerged in this chapter should be renounced. On the contrary, if the findings of this chapter are any indication, it seems that party branches could find their place among paradigmatic deliberative fora like town meetings or citizens juries. These sites of deliberation are often glorified as contexts in which ordinary citizens become legislators, as natural laboratories for democracy (Bryan 2003). Party branches seem to share their democratic credentials; they are capable of producing decisions with a distinctively deliberative pedigree.

Chapter 5
Failures of Partisan Deliberation

Introduction

The preceding chapters suggested that party branches are vibrant deliberative fora. We have seen that branch members approach each other as equals; that they belabour a diverse range of internal disagreements; and that their exchanges are marked by the mutual provision of reasons. In this final empirical chapter, I want to add nuance to this picture and look closely at what I shall call "failures" of deliberation in the party branches—non-deliberative moments that occurred despite favourable preconditions for deliberation. To be sure, precisely because the branches generally provide a supportive environment for deliberation, deliberative failures were rare. But those which occurred raise important questions about the limits of partisan deliberation and the design of deliberative institutions within parties. So it is crucial that we devote our attention to cases where deliberation has failed.

The chapter divides into three sections. I first clarify what a "deliberative failure" is, how deliberative theorists conventionally understand it, and why it is often normatively ambivalent. I then discuss three types of deliberative failure in party branches, looking specifically at (a) group splits and defection; (b) cases where deliberation does not arise, or only seldom arises; and (c) polarising tendencies among the groups. In the third section, I reflect on possible strategies for making deliberative failures tractable, suggesting different small-scale reforms to reduce the likelihood that intra-party deliberation goes awry. The chapter concludes that deliberative failures will be difficult to avoid in an internally deliberative party, but their most harmful effects can be limited through institutional design.

Failures of deliberation in deliberative theory

What does it mean to say that deliberation fails? Deliberative democrats are divided over this question. This is because whether deliberation can be said to have failed depends on what ideals one thinks it should reach in the first place, and deliberative democrats disagree over what counts as appropriate deliberative ideals. On a more traditional understanding of deliberation, for example, deliberators' openness to preference shifts is a key indicator of deliberative quality (Gutmann and Thompson 1996, 174). Good deliberation, in other words, requires that people are willing to change their minds in light of others' arguments. If one endorses this view of deliberation, one will interpret the refusal of deliberators to adjust their preferences as a deliberative failure. But this interpretation of the deliberative ideal has been qualified in important ways in recent times. So Mansbridge et al. (2010, 68) stress that "when interests or values conflict irreconcilably, deliberation ideally ends (…) in a clarification of conflict and structuring of disagreement, which sets the stage for a decision by non-deliberative methods." This largely—if not entirely—eliminates the requirement that deliberators change their preferences.

To give another example, some deliberative democrats believe that deliberators should offer each other only arguments of a particular kind. Especially those who are committed to the idea of "public reason" often want to impose narrow limits on what constitutes authentic deliberation, suggesting that deliberators should refrain from appealing to their "comprehensive conceptions of the good" (i.e. their moral and political ideals) as well as to their self-interest. Again, if one supports this conception of deliberation, exchanges in which deliberators openly talk about their personal moral beliefs or about their basic material interests will count as failures of deliberation. There are clear limits to the way in which speakers can permissibly reason in a deliberative setting. But again, this way of conceptualising the justification criterion has been contested by influential theorists. As Bächtiger et al. (2010, 43) note, many deliberative democrats today are ready to admit even "claims cloaked in confrontational language or barely concealed sarcasm, conceding that this very mode of delivery may go hand in hand with the nature of the point that is being made, or necessary to communicate to a particular audience." (This approach chimes with the one I have taken and defended in this thesis.)

However, to say that what counts as deliberative failure "depends on what ideals one thinks it should reach in the first place" is not to say that classifying speech acts as deliberative failures is an entirely subjective matter either. It is not simply the case that one person's deliberative failure is another persons deliberative success. This is because some deliberative ideals are non-controversial among deliberative democrats, even if how exactly they should be interpreted in practice may be. Obvious candidates are the ideals of *reason giving* (stipulating that participants to deliberation should offer each other an account of their standpoints) and *mutual respect* (stipulating that participants to deliberation should treat each other as equals) (for an overview of those ideals, see Mansbridge et al. 2010, 65-69; on mutual respect and equality, see also chapter 3). I would argue that no matter what version of deliberative theory one is committed to, these ideals will play a central role in how one thinks about deliberative success and failure. As I will indicate where necessary, all of the deliberative failures I will trace in what follows fall squarely within the purview of this understanding of deliberative failure.

An important point to note before proceeding is that deliberative failures are rarely "absolute", in the sense that their consequences are unambiguously negative. For one thing, deliberating groups are usually in some ways connected to each other, and one group's failure to produce good quality deliberation might have a positive effect on the deliberations of other deliberative agents. This idea has recently been popularised by theorists of "deliberative systems", who propose to conceive of the various deliberative sites in a society in terms of "distinguishable, differentiated, but to some degree interdependent parts" which are "connected in such a way as to form a complex whole" (Mansbridge et al. 2012, 4; also see Dryzek 2012, esp. 139-140). By way of illustration, let me reiterate an example I have given in chapter 1. If a group of members at the party base polarises over an issue, this is likely to be the result of bad quality deliberation, where views are reinforced without weighing alternative arguments. But polarisation may lead that group of members to promote their position with special vigour, and so help to put their demands on the agenda of other party groups and party elites. Thus, the group's internal polarisation serves the inclusion of views that would otherwise not be heard, which may be seen as a deliberative goal in

its own right (Young 2002). So conceived, deliberative failures are normatively ambivalent. Although they involve violations of some deliberative norms, they may have a positive "systemic" effect and promote deliberative goals elsewhere in society.

That deliberative failures are normatively ambivalent is true even if one does not adopt a systemic view of deliberation. This is because there are potential trade-offs between different deliberative ideals, which become apparent even within single deliberative groups. In recent experimental research, for instance, it has been suggested that there may be a trade-off between the ideals of opinion change and good procedural deliberative quality (Baccaro et al., forthcoming). That is to say, a group of citizens might deliberate well in the sense of providing each other with sound arguments *or* in the sense of performing preference shifts—but it might not produce both good reasoning and changed minds at the same time. The explanation researchers have given is that good reasoning tends to occur when the majority of participants in a deliberating group have relatively strong, and rather developed, views on an issue, while the inclination to change one's opinion tends to correlate with participants having weak and relatively undeveloped viewpoints. If this is correct, then deliberating groups will struggle to reach both ideals simultaneously. But a group's failure to reach one of the two ideals does not disallow the procedure as a whole, either.

These points are important to bear in mind in the context of the analysis that follows. The types of deliberative failure I shall discuss may look normatively troubling, but they may also have positive effects on other deliberative fora within the party or beyond it. Nonetheless, I will not speak much to the "systemic" consequences of party branches' deliberative failures. Though this would be an interesting question to pursue, consistent with the overall focus of this thesis my main concern is with individual party branches, and not with how those branches interact with other

deliberative institutions within the party or society at large.[67] Nor do I want to examine potential trade-offs between different deliberative ideals. Again, while investigating those trade-offs arguably raises interesting questions (notably about the desirable outcomes of a deliberative process) I do not want to go into this here. Instead, I want to look in-depth at three distinct kinds of deliberative failure, and examine the complex reasons for why they occurred.

Failures of deliberation within parties: three types

When we think of failures of intra-party deliberation we think, paradigmatically, of aggressive factionalism. Historically, factional divisions have often made civilised communication within parties impossible. An illustrative example is the famous controversy between orthodox Marxists and revisionists that took place in the German SPD at the end of the 19th century. The two groups were divided by profoundly different views on the nature of capitalism and the role of the party in shaping and designing political institutions in accordance with socialist principles, leading to a serious war of words. At the party's 1899 Hannover congress, for example, the famous Marxist August Bebel accused Eduard Bernstein, the key representative of the revisionists, of strengthening the party's opponents with his attack on Marxism, and a few days later Bebel suggested that Bernstein should leave the party altogether (Berman 2006, 44-45).[68]

The particular deliberative failure in the case of factionalism consists in the rival groups' inability to talk to each other constructively and/or respectfully. Their

[67] Another straightforward reason for not placing too much emphasis on the systemic effects of deliberative failures is sometimes mentioned by critics of the deliberative systems approach. Individual deliberative failures frequently cause harm in the deliberative settings in which they occur. Deliberators who treat others with great disrespect, for example, may cause deep offence and severe emotional distress. If one is willing to accept this for the sake of a more deliberative larger system, one relegates those who are harmed to second-class citizens who do not deserve to be respected as free and equal. Owen and Smith (2015, 223) call this the neglect of "deliberative equality" in systemic approaches to deliberative systems, and suggest that this neglect is "hard to square with the requirement that the subjects of a deliberative democracy can coherently represent themselves to each other as the equal co-authors of the rule to which they are subject."

[68] Of course, factional conflict need not be ideological in nature. It can also be rooted in self-interest, as in the factional wars that led to the break-up of the Italian Christian Democrats in the early 1990s (Boucek 2012, ch. 7).

divisions are simply too deep, or perhaps more accurately: too pronounced with regard to issues they both deem central to their agenda, to find a shared basis upon which deliberation could proceed; and each group is convinced that the other group or groups are harming the party as a whole. Often the result of this is gridlock, in the sense that taking collective decisions becomes extremely difficult (this was the case in the early SPD). Sometimes partisan infighting even causes parties to splinter.

Can similar conflicts arise within party branches? Yes. As I shall discuss shortly, some of the party branches that have been studied for this thesis have experienced corrosive internal conflicts, which put the integrity of the group at risk. These conflicts were of course smaller in scope, and thus much less harmful for the party as a whole, than factionalism at the level of the party elite usually is. Nevertheless, they pushed the individual branches' ability to deliberate to its limits. In one of the two cases I will investigate, the group eventually splintered. In another, individual members defected. It is these extreme cases of deliberative failure I want to turn to first. Later in the chapter, I will look at different, and arguably less dramatic, instances of bad deliberation.

Type 1: Group splits and defection

The perhaps most extreme instance of deliberative failure occurred in the Vienna Sandleiten group. This is a group split, which happened approximately five months before the interview took place and was triggered by irreconcilable differences of principle and opinion. More specifically, a number of people left the group after deep and persistent disagreement over issues of immigration and multiculturalism. While one sub-section of the group promoted an open-minded attitude towards immigrants, and emphasised the benefits of multiculturalism for the local community and society at large, the other sub-section took a contrarian position on these issues, upholding restrictive and sometimes outright xenophobic views. It was the latter sub-group that eventually pulled out, leaving the more open-minded and egalitarian members in charge of the branch.

To better understand the issues at stake, let us begin by looking at how Angelika, one of the remaining members, recounts the conflict:

> The weird (*schräg*) people we had here … ranging from right-wing extremist to brainwashed … we had everything here. When they were part of the group and worked with us, there were only arguments, only quarrels […]. We were only waiting for (*was gerade noch gefehlt hat*) one of them to say 'Hail Hitler!' in a group meeting … that's how bad it was! And then we got rid of those people but still had one person in the group that tried to brainwash us … someone who probably voted for the FPÖ [the successful far right party in Austria] … and we all shut ourselves off (*abkapseln*) and said 'we have a different opinion.'[69]

The references to the Hitler salute and the far right Freedom Party (FPÖ) provide an indication of how deeply divided the group was before the break-up. Indeed, since the current members of the branch strongly oppose xenophobia and disrespect towards minorities (see chapter 3), it is difficult to see how they could possibly have negotiated compromises with members who openly stood for prejudiced and intolerant views.[70] As internal conflict intensified, constructive cooperation became increasingly impossible. Speaking about those who eventually left the group, Angelika recalls that "they did not accept any of our proposals … they were wearing blinkers, so to speak." To which Elisabeth adds, "they actively thwarted every project we started."

What makes the break-up of the Sandleiten branch a paradigmatic case of type 1 deliberative failure is what is referred to in the first cited passage as "shutting oneself off" from those who hold different views: one party to the conflict became unwilling to engage in further communication with the other party. The declaration "we have a different opinion" hereby seems to imply "there is no point in belabouring our differences of opinion any further." Discussion has stopped, and will presumably

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[69] Note: "We were only waiting for" is an inevitably awkward translation of the idiomatic expression "*was gerade noch gefehlt hat*", which may best be understood in terms of "what didn't happen but may well have happened."

[70] Here is how Angelika describes the group's outlook towards others: "We are people who do not pigeonhole others (*wir hauen nicht alle in einen Topf hinein*), right. We are open to everyone. One must say: one needs to get to know people, give them a chance … if they don't want to engage, then so be it. But the group is open to all."

not resume. Some members of the group in fact not only refuse to discuss politics with those who defected from the group. They believe that there is no point in engaging with them at all. Bojan, for example, decided even to symbolically stop greeting them on the street:

> Meanwhile I have stopped greeting [those] people [from whom] I have heard statements […] that attack a certain race, religion, or whatever … statements against other people … even though they are old Social Democrats, yes. They [the people making racist statements] do not deserve this [being greeted]. One must not forget that in Sandleiten [meaning the municipal building complex] there were in the past many people … and luckily so! … with Hungarian or Bohemian roots. Without those people Sandleiten would have been so boring, right? I mean, Sandleiten … from stories I know … we had the best upholsterers, who did not have Austrian roots, we had the best general practitioner, who was shot because of people like those [who hold racist views] … because of his Jewish roots! That was after the war. So those are people do not hear a "good day" or "hello" from me, or, let alone, a "*Freundschaft!*" [the traditional greeting of social democrats and socialists]. They do not deserve that. No matter what […] academic title they have … that doesn't interest me.

Bojan's refusal to greet the former branch members constitutes an especially powerful signal that civilised communication between the rival groupings is not possible anymore. Greeting may be understood as a communicative gesture aimed at expressing recognition and respect for the other. As such, it may constitute a first step towards conciliation between opposing groups, serving the twin functions of asserting "discursive equality" and establishing or re-establishing the "trust necessary for discussion to proceed in good faith" (Young 2002, 60). From this perspective, refusing to greet others, as Bojan does, means denying those others equal respect and recognition; it conveys that one does not regard them as appropriate discussion partners.[71] His words ("they do not deserve that") indeed suggest that he sees the

[71] An interesting question to ponder in this connection is whether it is normatively acceptable, or even desirable, to exclude people who hold views that are as "unreasonable" as the group members suggest from intra-party deliberation. As discussing this question in sufficient depth would take us too far away from the topic of the present chapter, I do not want take a definitive position on this here. My suspicion is that partisans whose views are incompatible with the party's lead principles—which is certainly the case here—may permissibly be excluded from the party.

ousted members not as political adversaries, with whom a level of cooperation is possible, but as enemies, who do not deserve any respect or politeness, irrespective of their formal level of education and party affiliation.

Bojan's passionate statement is met with collective approval in the group. Erik immediately responds, "Right! Nobody should be excluded. And this has nothing to do with skin colour or whatever, but with respect towards others. […] I believe the most important thing is … to treat people the same way you want to be treated yourself." One way of reading this response in the present context is to see it as expressing a belief that is sometimes associated with the doctrine of "militant democracy" (cf. Niesen 2012): everyone deserves to be heard and taken seriously—apart from those who seek to exclude others on what might be called "morally arbitrary" grounds and violate the most basic ethical norms. This belief, it would seem, is deeply rooted in the members of the group and fundamental to their self-understanding. It shapes the group's self-identity as egalitarian vanguard in the conflict-ridden environment of the *Sandleitenhof*, the large municipal building within which the group operates. This explains why the members of the group deem Bojan's symbolic decision appropriate, and why the conflict arose in the first place.[72]

One notable consequence of the Sandleiten group's internal conflict and resultant group split was that it unified those members who remained in the group. The fact that they prevailed over their rivals and seized control of the branch strengthened the sense of togetherness amongst them. Angelika seems to express a shared sentiment among members of the branch when she calls the break-up of the group a "reason why we fit together." Those who are committed to the same political goals and ideals have remained in the group, which enables constructive communication and cooperation among the members. This seems in turn also to have

[72] One way of looking at this case is to say that deliberative failure occurred *because* the members of the Sandleiten group are partisans and consider certain political values non-negotiable. This is the negative effect of partisanship on deliberation many deliberative democrats stress: strong commitments undermine deliberators' capacity to compromise (e.g. Hendriks et al. 2007, see also the discussion of inter-party deliberation and intra-party deliberation in the introduction). Notice however that in the present case the "reasonableness" of one party to the conflict—namely those who hold openly racist views—is open to question. When that is the case, it seems plausible that similarly uncompromising reactions may be observed among non-partisan citizens too. One need not be a partisan in the more narrow sense of the term that I employ here to find racist attitudes repulsive and reject compromise with people who hold these attitudes. So while there certainly is a connection between partisanship and deliberative failure in the current example, the conflict cannot be explained exclusively in these terms.

increased the branch's capacity to act: agreements and compromises on collective action plans are much more easily crafted when there is agreement on desirable political goals and the principles that inform them. So the group split exercised an agency-enhancing effect on the group, restoring their previously impaired capacity to take collective decisions.

Is it surprising that conflicts over the issues of immigration and multiculturalism erupted in the Sandleiten group? Probably not. In the conflict-laden environment of a large municipal building, where people with immigrant backgrounds and citizens who work in low-income jobs or are unemployed live door by door, it seems almost inevitable that some people adopt radical views. As Elisabeth, the chairwoman of the group, stresses, however, the quarrel within their group is not an isolated case: "one really has to candidly say this … it is a problem of Social Democracy that there are still, or rather again, … blue [i.e. very right-wing, blue is the colour of the far right FPÖ] ideas (*Gedankengut*) [within the party]. And these are the people who massively oppose foreigners and wage war against openness." If this is correct, then the conflict in the Sandleiten branch may be indicative of larger tensions within the party, especially at the partisan base.

Let us turn now to the second case of type 1 deliberative failure, which concerns the defection of individual party members in the Bonn group. This case only loosely resembles the break-up of the Sandleiten group. At its heart is not so much an intra-group conflict, but the decision of individual members to leave the group for reasons to do with the party more generally, and the failure of the group to convince them to remain within the party. Although the members of the group mention several cases of defection, I want to look only at the most recent one: the case of Petra. This case brings out all the important issues at stake in this form of deliberative failure.

What happened exactly? Petra, explained the members of the group, left the party branch (and thereafter the party) shortly after the membership ballot that the SPD held in 2013. To recall: after the 2013 general elections the SPD held an internal referendum on the coalition agreement with the conservative CDU/CSU, which remains hotly debated among members of the party many of whom question the ballot's democratic credentials. Petra exited the party because she, too, judged the

membership ballot democratically suspect. In her view, the party leadership did not accept any real internal opposition to the coalition agreement, and simply wanted to use the ballot as a means to legitimise its own position. For her, this was intolerable. As Katja recounts,

> If I have understood correctly from what I read on Twitter afterwards, then [she left] because she was of the opinion that the head of the party's executive committee (*Vorstandsspitze*) massively manipulated the membership ballot […] in autumn 2013 … the ballot for or against the grand coalition. And she is not so wrong! It was massively manipulated … so she left because of the manipulation that happened there.

In this passage, Katja not only sums up the reasons for why Petra left the party. She also expresses understanding for Petra's disappointment and, presumably, outrage—if not for her decision to defect. "The members of the party's executive committee exercised massive pressure", says Katja with palpable frustration. "They said, 'if the members vote against [the coalition agreement], then the whole executive committee will resign' … and [they] tried to mobilise (*Stimmung machen*) in this way." Klaus adds, "this pressure really existed … and this is a classic practice of top-down politics … to proclaim from the top [of the party hierarchy] (*von oben*), 'if the [party] base decides in this way, then we resign from our offices … that is indeed dubious, though I would not call it manipulative." While not all members of the branch regard the actions of the party executive committee as thus democratically questionable, even some of those who later in the discussion reveal that they voted *for* the coalition agreement admit that the design of the ballot was dissatisfying on many counts.

Does this mean the group supported Petra's decision to leave the branch and the party, or even encouraged her to "vote with her feet"? No—but if we consider how the members describe the final exchanges between Petra and the rest of the group before her defection, we find that they also did little to persuade her to remain within the branch and party. Even though many members of the branch agreed with Petra's judgement concerning the democratic faults of the ballot, they were united in their

view that exiting the party is not a fruitful direction. As Klaus puts it, "I always say to myself: however much the party leadership blunders, they will never make me leave the 'big tanker.'" Thus, Petra's position on the issue, namely that the party leadership's actions provide a strong reason to exit the party, ultimately found little support within the group. And rather than trying to give her reasons to remain part of the branch (and the party), the others simply asserted their position.

It might be asked at this point whether this case really involves a deliberative failure. Should deliberators not be free to exit deliberations? Is there not, as Warren (2011, 693) puts it, "a close correlation between the force of speech and the freedom of deliberators to exit arguments they do not find credible"? Of course, individuals' capacity to exit deliberation is important to ensure that the deliberation that does occur is among free individuals—*free* in the sense that "they could, without threat to life or livelihood, exit the conversation" (Warren 2011, 694). Yet it must also be acknowledged that unilateral withdrawal is hardly ever the result of good deliberation. Recall that I have, in the previous chapter, conceptualised deliberation's central justification requirement in terms of a "reason-giving condition" (meaning that a speaker must provide reasons rather than simply state her point of view or preference, though speakers retain discretion as to what kinds of reasons they give in order to render them resonant to their justificatory audience) and an "uptake condition" (meaning that the speaker's justificatory audience must argumentatively engage with the reasons provided by the speaker in a way that signals comprehension and reflection). Thus, when deliberators simply exit the conversation, as Petra did when she defected from the Bonn group, this means that they fail to satisfy the uptake condition. In this particular case, it would seem, moreover, that the other members of the group did not manage to render their arguments for staying in the group sufficiently resonant to Petra. In this sense, the case of Petra's leaving the Bonn branch may straightforwardly be interpreted as a failure of deliberation.

Type 2: Deliberation does not arise

Deliberation within party branches may fail in a further respect: despite favourable preconditions for deliberation, branch members may not deliberate much (or at all). In the empirical material that was collected for this study, we find two cases of party branches in which political discussion rarely arises—the Berlin Mitte group and, again, the Vienna Sandleiten group, though there are considerable differences between the two groups. Beginning with the Berlin group, here deliberation does fails to occur because of the non-decisional nature of their meetings. The members of the group usually convene in the context of public talks with external speakers (such as MPs or policy experts) who are invited to speak to a particular political topic. Naturally, there is no requirement to take a collective decision in these talks, or anyway reach agreement on the issue under discussion. As a result, branch members do not discuss much.

Here is how the group's members describe their meetings in their own words:

> **Stefan:** When I think back … we don't have really big discussions about the topics [of the talks].

> **Klara:** I would agree with you here … and with respect to the talks [we organise], I would also tend to say: there are some requests [by] interested [individuals] … but it is not so much about intense (*krass*) discussion, but about … interest in the topic … proper disagreement […] I have not yet experienced.

> **Yannick:** Well, we do not directly formulate a position in the context of such a talk … in this respect … so mostly one discusses a bit and then one splits up (*auseinandergehen*) and then … it was a nice evening [laughter]. It is indeed not the case that one directly [writes] a paper … a position paper about the topic of each event. Then things would be more controversial I believe.

While Yannick suggests that the reasons for the group's lack of deliberation have to do with the already-mentioned non-decisional setup of the meetings, and even acknowledges that a different setup would possibly trigger more discussion, Stefan offers a different explanation, relating it to strong intra-group agreement:

> It has always been like this in the branch (*Abteilung*) … that it was more shaped by consensus than confrontation. Why this is the case, I can't say at all. But strangely enough … we tend to be oriented towards consensus. It's not all rosy or so (*lieb Kind*), but I have rarely experienced issues about which we had really adversarial discussions.

Gino adds to this that there *are* sometimes disagreements in the group, though these are easy to settle.

> There are from time to time different standpoints [among the members], but … those are in part … discussed away through proposals somebody makes, and then one somehow finds agreement. And then everything's alright again.

The general impression one gets from reading these passages is that the group members are unconcerned with, perhaps even appreciative of, the fact that there is so little disagreement and debate—that is, little conversation of deliberative character—in their meetings. At the same time, it seems that this story of internal consensus and harmony is not entirely consistent. Later in the interview, members of the group mention that there are several topics on which they regularly disagree. As I have noted in chapter 3, for example, one recurring conflict within the Berlin group is that over cycling policy, where the views of the older members and the views of the younger members appear almost irreconcilable. In this case of internal disagreement, there is no trace of pre-deliberative consensus and internal harmony whatsoever. So it seems that members like Stefan overstate the unity of the group when they claim that the branch is generally "oriented towards consensus." A more plausible reason for why deliberation does not occur with great regularity is that alluded to by Yannick: the design of the group meetings fails to provide incentives for members to deliberate. If there is no requirement to develop a shared position, there is of course little point in thoroughly discussing complex issues (on this point, see Thompson 2008, 502-504). One might as well just have a "nice evening" together.

Moving now to the Vienna Sandleiten group, this presents an especially challenging case of this second kind of deliberative failure. In short, the group generally conceives itself as a collective of "doers" rather than "talkers", which leads

some members even to pride themselves on their apparent refusal to deliberate. An emblematic example is how Angelika describes the group:

> What we do is political … with a political background. We all know that. But I would put it … in one sentence … thus: we do not talk, like the politicians on TV, but we act. It is political and we do it and everyone sees that. We need not sit down and argue like the politicians on TV, because we anyways see that all the time. Rather we know what we stand for, we know what we want, we know that it is political, and we do it. […] And we will also not sit down and … because Erik has a different opinion, I have a different opinion … and if we'd then start to quarrel about this, this would be useless. It is much smarter to say: we do something for the people, for the elderly, for the children.

The populist sentiment Angelika expresses in terms of juxtaposing the group with "politicians on TV" is widely shared within the group and constitutive of its identity. Most members of the branch see themselves as doing the sort of political work that "really matters"—in contrast to the many party functionaries and elites who, as Elisabeth says, "have only their own career advancement in mind", or, as Bojan says, "have a comfortable life […] and do not think of us." As Angelika's longer statement reveals, one central aspect of this differentiation is the assertion of the primacy of action over talk. Whereas professional politics is associated with cheap talk, the group conceives its own initiatives in the local community as having a palpably positive impact on people's lives. In this connection, group members generally see little value in talking about their views and disagreements—unless it is absolutely necessary in order to, say, organise an event or help others in a coordinated fashion.[73] But these disagreements are rarely substantive political ones.

This position is interesting as it evinces a distinctively non-deliberative self-identity which is not found in any other group. While it is difficult to say how much this actually affects the group's deliberative practice, however, it generally seems as though the group members overdraw their non-deliberativeness. Although the Sandleiten group may be the "least deliberative" group of those that have been studied

[73] Compare Nina Eliasoph's excellent anthropological study *Avoiding Politics* (1998). Studying civic groups in America, Eliasoph traces a culture of apathy, where citizens are "too busy" to care about political issues beyond those that affect themselves or their local environment.

here, it is not the case that its members on principle baulk at discussing political issues. Extended political discussions, in which arguments are weighed and developed, do sometimes occur. In the next sub-section, we shall look closely at one such discussion, which arose in the context of the interview. The analysis will reveal polarising tendencies, meaning that group members tend simply to affirm each other's positions without sustained exposure to competing views. This constitutes a deliberative failure in its own right.

Type 3: Polarising tendencies

There is one remaining sense in which deliberation within party branches may fail. That is that the members of a branch persistently affirm, rather than question, each others' views when they discuss. I call this third type of deliberative failure "polarising tendencies", since groups may move to extreme positions when its members continually hear echoes of their own voices. This phenomenon, standardly called "group polarisation", has been extensively studied by Cass Sunstein (2002 and 2009), who gives two explanations for why it might occur.[74] The first is that members of a deliberating group generally want to be perceived favourably by other group members. As they fear loss of reputation by being in the minority, they adjust their views to those of the majority. The second explanation is that the majority can supply more arguments in support of their position and thereby strengthen their confidence in their views, persuade those who are undecided, and silence potential opponents. In either case, group members take decisions not so much on the basis of arguments, but driven by social dynamics. This makes polarisation a distinctive deliberative failure.

Deliberating groups are most likely to polarise if they see themselves as sharing a salient identity, and if they meet regularly over time while minimising exposure to competing views (Sunstein 2002, 182). This implies that partisan groups

[74] Though standard, the term "group polarisation" is somewhat misleading. As Sunstein (2002, 178) clarifies, "It is not meant to suggest that group members will shift to the poles, nor does it refer to an increase in variance among groups, though this may be the ultimate result. Instead the term refers to a predictable shift *within* a group discussing a case or problem. As the shift occurs, groups, and group members, move and coalesce, not toward the middle of antecedent dispositions, but toward a more extreme position in the direction indicated by those dispositions."

may generally be vulnerable to polarisation. To the extent that members of these groups agree on a wide range of positions, there is a significant risk that deliberation will shift both the group and individuals to positions that earlier they might not have accepted (see Ypi forthcoming, 24).[75] Recall that this was one of the reasons why I have introduced a diversity test for party branches in chapter 3: diversity has a depolarising effect as it counteracts the social dynamics that lead members of a group to shift their preferences toward the dominant view.[76] Recall also that the party groups that were studied for this thesis generally passed this test, which implies that they are unlikely to exhibit polarising tendencies. On closer inspection, however, it turns out that one group leans towards the sort of "self-confirming" talk that often leads groups to polarise. The group in question is, once again, the Vienna Sandleiten group. A passage in which Erik, Bojan and Yvonne discuss what they find most objectionable about today's politics and politicians brings out the problem at stake.

> **Erik:** The economy is dictating our parties, whoever, what they have to do! And our politicians, in my opinion, they only care about having a good job after all those years in politics … in which they have altered the laws in order to have it easy afterwards.
>
> **Yvonne:** Exactly! They only care about themselves.
>
> **Erik:** The cash cow (*Melkkuh*, meaning here "those who have to pay") is he who works.
>
> **Bojan:** Yes, yes.
>
> **Erik:** I always thought that I was part of the middle class … [now] I was told I am not part of the middle class but belong to the poor. Even though I am a skilled worker (*Facharbeiter*) … [and] work accordingly [many] hours.

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[75] Ypi (forthcoming, 24) argues that polarising tendencies play an important role in sustaining partisans' political commitment, as they ensure that "agents do not give up too easily on political projects they have thought worthy of endorsement" despite "epistemic pressure", that is, information that might call into question the value of certain commitments. In other words, some level of polarisation may be required for partisans to remain convinced that their political activism is necessary and worthwhile.

[76] Just how much diversity is required to avoid polarisation is, of course, very difficult to determine. Insisting on any bright-line threshold may unfairly call for false precision. As a basic rule, diversity should ensure that there is no dominant majority prior to deliberation, which is capable of silencing alternative views.

Yvonne: There are only poor people anymore, it seems.

Erik: Yes … that's how it is.

Bojan: No, it would be good if we had people somewhere in politics who also come from normal jobs … as workers or not as entrepreneurs. But now we have only people who have studied and … theory and practice, you know … they are very good at negotiating. […] But it would be good that there are people in parliament who really were workers, who maybe even were on unemployment benefits at some point, who maybe have children too, who they have to raise. […] I do say that people who have studied deserve the money … because they have studied, because they work hard for it. But in politics itself one ought to …

Erik [interposing]: … look more after the people!

Bojan: Look after the people! And think to oneself, "what would I do now if I was a normal worker?"

In this passage, participants affirm and reinforce each others' views, creating an "echo chamber" in which alternative perspectives are barely taken into account. This is precisely the kind of talk that usually produces group polarisation. When we consider the substantive content of the discussion, moreover, we find that the populist refrain of politics and politicians being out of touch with "ordinary people" is consistent with the group's self-identity as a collective of politically committed citizens who are distinctively different from the ostensibly self-interested "politicians on TV." Repeated polarising discussions are highly likely to strengthen and sustain this self-identity, leading to a greater sense of alienation from party elites and top-level politics.

One way of looking at the deliberative deficiencies of the Sandleiten group is to see them as interrelated with each other, or perhaps more precisely, following from each other. When the group split (type 1 deliberative failure), internal opposition was virtually eliminated. The resultant unity among members helped form and strengthen the group's self-identity, which happens to take a non-deliberative shape (type 2 deliberative failure). This self-identity is in turn continually buttressed by repeated

exchanges in which members of the group affirm each others' positions and refuse to take into account competing arguments and opinions (type 3 deliberative failure). It is not difficult to interpret these three deliberative failures in terms of a linear progression, with the break-up of the group constituting the root cause of later deliberative failures. The relatively low deliberative capacity of the Sandleiten group (compared with the other groups) can in this way be seen as directly resulting from the event that gave the group its present shape (i.e. the recent split-up of the group).

A final point worth noting is that although the polarising tendencies of the Sandleiten group present a clear case of deliberative failure, they may have some positive "systemic" consequences, in the sense that they may have a positive impact on the immediate environment in which the group operates. For the branch members' unflinching commitment to equality and inclusiveness, which in part led to the break-up of the group, may perform an integrative function in the conflict-prone, ethnically diverse context of the *Sandleitenhof*, the large municipal building complex that provides the group's main area of activity. The actions and initiatives this commitment motivates—for example the community events the group organises (see ch. 2)—can promote dialogue between different ethnic and religious groups and facilitate peaceful coexistence. From the egalitarian perspective I am assuming by endorsing a deliberative approach to democracy, it may in fact be preferable to have members of the group find epistemic support among their peers (even at the cost of polarisation) than to have them renounce their commitments in an environment where, as we have seen, radically anti-egalitarian views are rife.[77] So there may well be something defensible in the Sandleiten group's polarising tendencies.

However, none of this should distract from the fact that the same deliberative failures may in a different context lead to quite different, possibly normatively objectionable, results. The group of partisans who left the Sandleiten branch when it split up is a case in point: their openly racist and exclusionary political commitments were nourished by repeated exchanges in which they refused to consider alternative

[77] This is not an unfamiliar point in deliberative theory. In a famous article concerned with the tension between deliberation and confrontational political activism, for example, Fung (2005) suggests that the extent of permissible deviation from deliberative norms increases according to the adversity of political circumstances. I think this is in principle correct, precisely for the reasons I have given here. But it is also clear that even if we may reasonably consider a deviation from deliberative norms permissible, it remains a deviation from deliberative norms.

lines of argument. This is why they were unwilling to engage in constructive communication with those who eventually seized control of the branch in the first place. This ambivalence is built into deliberative failures, as I have argued earlier. Whether they are normatively problematic is largely context-dependent and has to be evaluated on a case-to-case basis. One major challenge for designing a defensible deliberative model of intra-party democracy is therefore to maximise the positive effects of deliberative failures, and minimise the impact of their negative effects. How this might be achieved is the question I shall address in the next section.

Deliberative failures and institutional design

It is important to bear in mind that the just-discussed cases of deliberative failure are singular instances: they do not reflect broader tendencies that are found across the party branches that were studied for this thesis. Nonetheless they are indicative of the possible ways in which partisan deliberation may fail. As I have suggested, a tenable deliberative model of intra-party democracy will have to include institutional safeguards that prevent deliberative failures of this kind, or anyway limit their negative impacts. In order to appeal to theorists and practitioners, it will have to make deliberative failures tractable. My ambition in this final section is to reflect on how this might be done. I want to sketch a palette of small-scale reforms for party branches: (1) training moderators; (2) linking individual deliberative groups together; and (3) raising the group's influence. Each of these proposals is consistent with the account of intra-party democracy presented in chapter 1, and responsive to the intuitions animating this larger thesis.

Trained moderators

The first reform I want to suggest is to introduce trained moderators in party branches, whose interventions can reduce the likelihood of deliberative failures.

Designers of deliberative experiments (e.g. deliberative polls) routinely put much effort into selecting and training moderators for the discussions. Typically moderators are advised to make subtle interventions to keep deliberation on track without pushing participants towards certain decisions. To take an example, Luskin and his colleagues (2014, 118) record that they trained their moderators

> to intervene only neutrally and as little as possible. There was no push towards (or away from) consensus; the participants were explicitly told that they need not agree on anything, and that they might come to agree either more or less over the course of the day.

Similarly, Steiner's (2012, 253-255) extensive list of recommendations for deliberative moderators, which is based on evaluations of past deliberative experiments, includes guidelines like the following:

> If participants support an argument with personal or group interests, moderators should welcome such justifications. However, they should relate these special interests to the public interest, with formulations like (…) "We have now heard how this measure will help you or your group, which we understand. Could you now please reflect on how the measure will impact other people, perhaps also in other countries and future generations?" (Steiner 2012, 254)

Such guidelines are intended to prevent deliberation from taking an inward-looking character that might lead groups to polarise.

In party branches, one need of course not specially recruit moderators. Branches usually have an elected chairperson who, in addition to participating in internal discussions and debates, also acts as moderator. My proposal is to acquaint these chairpersons with best practices in deliberative moderation, instilling in them a sensitivity towards all the sorts of problems that might arise in deliberating groups, and giving them the tools to prevent those problems from arising. Parties could achieve this for example by committing branch chairpersons to attend a number of training events when they are elected into their position, in which they receive advice from deliberative practitioners like those who design "artificial" deliberative events.

This proposal targets all three types of deliberative failure. Firstly, specially trained chairpersons could prevent group splits or defections by mediating between rival sub-groups in the branch, or between single members and the rest of the group. They could de-emphasise difference and encourage participants to address each other in a constructive fashion, as moderators have successfully done in deliberative experiments in deeply divided societies (Caluwaerts and Deschouwer 2014; Luskin et al. 2014). Secondly, trained chairpersons could promote deliberation in branches in which deliberation rarely arises by inviting members to reflect on issues from different perspectives, taking into account (for example) how they might impact other groups in society. This kind of perspective-taking could, thirdly, also counteract tendencies of polarisation, where participants to deliberation refuse to reflect on arguments and opinions offered by proponents of radically different views.

Let me guard against a natural worry. Is relying on trained moderators to promote good deliberation within party branches not potentially inconsistent with the context-sensitive conception of deliberation I have endorsed in this thesis? Does instructing moderators to act upon "best practices" in deliberative moderation not imply compelling them to apply decontextualised criteria of how a political discussion should best be conducted? Responding to this concern allows me to clarify an important aspect of my proposal. I am by no means proposing that moderators should lead discussions according to strict guidelines that they are not permitted to modify. The point is rather that moderators should have a basic understanding of how moderation is typically conducted in deliberative settings, what deliberative failures are and how they could be averted. Once familiarised with this information, they should of course be free to make their interventions responsive to the particular circumstances of deliberation in their branch. So there is no trade-off between acquainting moderators with good moderating practice and having sufficiently context-sensitive moderation.

Connecting branches

My second proposal, which targets the second and third types of deliberative failure (i.e. deliberation fails to arise and polarising tendencies), is to assemble the members of different party branches in regular joint deliberative events. One way of achieving this is to create "problem-oriented" partisan fora, as suggested in chapter 1. Such fora could for example convene the members of several randomly selected party branches in a larger deliberative setting to devise a strategy for the party in a particular policy field. They could address tasks like drafting a party or election manifesto, and make these exercises more collaborative and interactive.

Problem-oriented fora could help avert type 2 and 3 deliberative failures in the following way: if the members of two or more party branches are clustered together in a single forum, this increases the diversity of viewpoints in the forum, and so counteracts both deliberation-impeding levels of intra-group agreement (like in the Berlin group) and polarising tendencies (like in the Vienna Sandleiten group). Increased opinion diversity counteracts (1) deliberation-impeding levels of agreement within a group, since it increases the likelihood of disagreements, as well as (2) the twin social dynamics that lead members of a group to shift their preferences toward the majority view, since the more internally diverse a group is the less likely will there be a dominant majority that can silence opposition or instil in members a fear of loss of reputation by being in the minority (see above and the discussion of what I have called the "diversity desideratum" in chapter 3).

Empowering branches

The third and final proposal is to empower individual party branches, connecting their deliberations more directly to decisions. This proposal chimes with much of what I have suggested in chapter 1 of this thesis. And here again, problem-oriented fora may be the most promising design option. If these fora are designed in such a way as to promote a continuous and symbiotic relationship between the party's decision makers and the members on the ground, in which the latter can visibly impact on the actions of the former, this may help prevent deliberative failure in at least two respects. First,

giving branch members decision-making power can offset the anti-deliberative impulses of non-decisional designs like that of the Berlin group, where members have little reason to discuss issues in a thorough fashion. To put it simply, that their deliberations *matter* can create a powerful incentive for branch members actually to deliberate. Second, involving individual branches in collaborative decision-making exercises can disincentivise the kind of "enclave deliberation" that commonly leads to group polarisation. If groups which tend to isolate themselves from the rest of the party (or perhaps even the rest of society), like the Vienna Sandleiten group, are given the opportunity to exercise influence on larger decisions, they will not only be unable to uphold their self-image as marginalised and excluded. Also they might be compelled to consider a much wider range of arguments than they would initially be inclined to. So in addition to serving an important democratic function, empowering party branches can also raise the quality of deliberation and avert deliberative failures.

Conclusion

There are many reasons why deliberation might fail, and perhaps equally many ways in which it can fail. Within party branches, deliberation may fail in at least three ways; or so this chapter has argued. Party branches may break-up or single members may defect. Deliberation may not, or only seldom, arise. Or, branches may display tendencies to polarisation, where branch members shift their preferences towards the majority view without weighing alternative perspectives. To avoid these failures, or at least minimise their negative impacts, an internally deliberative party requires "institutional safeguards"—moderation within branches ought to be professionalised, and individual branches should be connected with other branches in regular joint deliberative events, as well as equipped with more decision-making powers (for an overview, see Table 4). The latter two of these safeguards are already built into the deliberative model of intra-party democracy I have outlined in chapter 1. This proposes to convene members of different branches in problem-oriented fora and to connect their deliberations to decisions affecting the party as a whole.

Table 5: ***Summary of the analysis***

Type of deliberative failure	Reasons for failure	Institutional safeguard
(*Type 1*) Group splits and individual defections	Irreconcilable differences between party members; inability to talk across lines of difference.	Introducing trained moderators.
(*Type 2*) Deliberation does not arise	Members of a group overstate intra-group agreement or hold anti-deliberative attitudes.	Introducing trained moderators; connecting partisan groups; empowering single groups.
(*Type 3*) Group polarisation	Members of a group shift their preferences towards the majority view without considering alternative views.	Introducing trained moderators; connecting partisan groups; empowering single groups.

While I think that these institutional design proposals would already go a long way in addressing the causes underlying most deliberative failures, however, it seems that an internally deliberative party cannot—and perhaps should not—be made completely failure-proof. Insofar as such a model of party is premised on a conception of the citizen as capable of agency and reasoning, there can be no one-size-fits-all strategy for preventing failures of deliberation. Institutional design can make party branches a more supportive environment for deliberation, and make deliberation more constructive, but it cannot not eliminate the possibility that deliberation might misfire. Yet the modicum of uncertainty this leaves us with (Will deliberation arise? Will it succeed?) is nothing to scorn or bemoan, but the natural consequence of a conception of intra-party democracy that entrusts members at the party base with discussing and deciding on the direction of the party. It is the inevitable result of treating them as self-determining agents who are capable of taking reasoned decisions on what the party should stand for and what policies it should support.

Chapter 6
Conclusion: The Challenges of Deliberative Reforms

Summary of the argument

This thesis started with a diagnosis: the linkage between citizens and political parties is waning, weakening the capacity of parties to perform their important representative functions. The thesis then proposed a normatively attractive strategy to counter this tendency and reconnect citizens with parties. I argued for empowering local party branches, bringing their deliberations to bear on decisions about policy and the party's more general direction. Party branches, these traditional sites of partisan activism, were placed at the centre of the "deliberative model of intra-party democracy" I outlined, first because they provide natural fora of political discussion, and second because they are closely linked to the local communities in which their members are based. A third and related virtue of party branches is that they are the only spaces of partisan activism that are open to the wider citizenry; as Duverger ([1954] 1990, 39) observed, "you only need to wish to belong to be able to do so." Linking branches more directly to decisions, so the argument went, could therefore go a long way in strengthening a party's footing in the wider citizenry.

Because it focuses on the *deliberations* of ordinary party members—discursive exchanges, in which they form their preferences about particular political proposals by weighing arguments for and against—a deliberative model of intra-party democracy can also correct for the shortcomings of the dominant candidate selection and direct participation models of intra-party democracy. Since these models lack empowered venues of critical debate, they tend to drown out the voices of those party members who seek to promote alternative party visions, and in so doing reinforce the status quo. The deliberative model neutralises this status quo bias by treating intra-party dissent as a resource the party can harness for its own benefit. It encourages party members to discuss, disagree and cooperate in making collective decisions that will inevitably be more informed and considered more legitimate than a simple majority decision. Importantly, however, the model is not meant to supplant candidate

selection procedures or occasional moments of direct democracy. As I have argued, a functioning party requires these "aggregative" mechanisms. Consistent with the theory of deliberative democracy, the deliberative model of intra-party democracy defines itself not in opposition to more conventional democratic mechanisms but as supplementing and improving these mechanisms in important ways (on such a view, see Goodin 2008).

Taking these theoretical reflections "outdoors", the empirical part of the thesis addressed the question of whether organising intra-party democracy around party members' deliberations is at all a viable idea. Demonstrating that citizens are capable of deliberating well is a standard way of establishing the potential of deliberative institutional designs (see Fung 2003; Mackenzie and Warren 2012); so my principal concern was with probing the quality of party members' deliberations. Drawing on material collected in group interviews with members of local party branches in Social Democratic parties in Germany (SPD) and Austria (SPÖ), I examined whether party branches provide favourable preconditions for deliberation and whether the discussions arising within party branches reach basic deliberative standards. The picture that has emerged from the analysis was overall encouraging. Not only do party branches provide a supportive environment for constructive and respectful deliberative encounters. The exchanges their members engage in are also marked by the mutual provision of reasons, the hallmark of good deliberation. The analysis moreover found no salient differences between the two countries, which disconfirms the initial expectation that divergent motivations for partisan activism in German and Austria will be reflected in varying levels of deliberative capacity among branch members. In short, the empirical analysis emphatically affirmed the deliberative capacity of party branches. In order to complete this picture, I also investigated instances of "deliberative failure" within the branches and suggested institutional designs for making these failures tractable. Here it turned out that some of the deliberative institutions that were suggested in the discussion of the deliberative model of intra-party democracy can correct for many potential deliberative deficiencies. So none of the observed failures of intra-party deliberation would seem to undermine the overall potential of the model.

Although the evidence I have marshalled is tentative and preliminary, and one should be careful with extrapolating from the findings, the results of the study generally give reason to believe that deliberative institutions such as problem-oriented fora, and partisan deliberative conferences and networks could successfully be implemented into the organisational architecture of parties. Parties, at least the established mainstream parties that were studied here, appear to possess the requisite deliberative resources: venues that provide favourable circumstances for deliberative exchanges and members who deliberate. Making parties more internally deliberative may be ambitious, in other words—but it is not out of reach. A deliberative model of intra-party democracy is a "workable ideal."

Are deliberative reforms really feasible?

Some readers might find this conclusion disturbingly naïve. Reforming parties in the way proposed in this thesis, it may be objected, is illusory. Internal reforms cannot be achieved without the consent of party elites, and those elites will resist establishing deliberative designs as empowering ordinary members would imply a significant loss of power on their part. Thus a deliberative model of intra-party democracy is not feasible, though for reasons that have nothing to do with the deliberative capacity of party members.

But even if we believe that the observation that contemporary party elites are fundamentally interested in holding onto power is empirically accurate, the temptation to dismiss the proposal for making parties more deliberative as infeasible on these grounds must be resisted. To see why, let us first consider a more basic question. What does it mean to say a political ideal is "feasible"? To be sure, when it comes political ideals, the only plausible conception of feasibility we can adopt is a permissive one. As Valentini (2014, 791) puts it, we must not understand feasibility in terms of "feasible here and now", since by this standard of feasibility "hardly any political ideal would count as feasible." Imagine someone saying, "the ideal of a just society is not feasible because it cannot be realised tomorrow." This makes little sense and

rightly strikes us as excessively conservative. Therefore, we should think of feasibility in the context of political ideals in terms of having reason to hope that a given ideal can be achieved, or at least approximated, from the status quo (Valentini 2014, 791; also see Gilabert and Lawford-Smith 2012).

Do we have reason to hope that the deliberative model of intra-party democracy proposed in this thesis can be achieved or approximated? I think yes. Even assuming that contemporary party elites are likely to block deliberative reforms, their preferences and behaviour may change over time.[78] Given the serious decline in public support for established parties and the rise of ever stronger competitor parties, it is certainly possible to imagine that the elites who are in charge of the former parties will at some point feel compelled to initiate party reforms that go beyond paying lip service to internal democratisation in order to regain the support of the citizenry (and they might do so for purely self-interested reasons). Seen in this light, a deliberative model of intra-party democracy may indeed be considered feasible.

Let me be clear that I am not suggesting that the resistance of party elites to internal reforms isn't a major obstacle to realising a deliberative model of intra-party democracy. It certainly is, and it will be hard to overcome, not least because parties have gradually established effective ways of minimising the costs of losing office (e.g. continuous access to public money), which significantly reduces the force with which electoral incentives apply to them (Katz and Mair 2009). What I am suggesting is that we must resist thinking about these obstacles in a deterministic fashion, assuming that the current state of parties is unchangeable. Importantly, deterministic thinking is not only implausible when it comes to parties; it is also intellectually hazardous, in that it easily leads one to deny the possibility of shaping and designing institutions in accordance with political ideals, and so to be seduced by the false promises of radical solutions that might lead to outcomes that differ from, perhaps even contradict, those which one has initially favoured. The biography of Roberto

[78] Consider also the possibility that party members themselves may mount successful collective efforts gradually to change the organisational structure of parties. In many established parties one finds internal movements pushing for the democratisation of decision-making procedures, and it is hard to think of a good reason for why none of them could succeed over time. If these movements consist of young party members—as is the case in the *Sektion 8*, for example, a group of young partisans who seek to promote organisational reform in the Austrian SPÖ—they may indeed grow increasingly influential with generational change.

Michels, the great scholar of intra-party democracy, should serve as a warning example: frustrated by his deterministic belief that parties cannot be internally democratic (Michels famously spoke of an "iron law of oligarchy" in this connection), and that an emancipatory mass politics can therefore take no democratic shape, he eventually sought refuge in the authoritarianism of Mussolini's fascism (see the biographical preface in Michels [1911] 1989).

Note that adopting an anti-determinist stance does not imply having to renounce one's critical assessment of contemporary parties. One can retain the view that party elites are self-interested and power-seeking while accepting that, at critical moments at least, they can adjust their preferences and make consequential choices than run counter to our most pessimistic expectations. This has in fact been a long-standing objection to disenchanted accounts of party organisation (like Michels's) which see oligarchy and elite domination as inevitable: they overlook very real possibilities for organisational innovation and renewal (Panebianco 1988, 17).

Can party members cope with complexity?

There is another, more fine-grained, objection to the conclusion I have presented. For a deliberative model of intra-party democracy to get off the ground, it may be said, party members must be able to cope with complex and multidimensional policy issues. If they lack the epistemic competence to navigate complexity, there is no point in giving them the suggested degree of policy influence. The empirical evidence presented in the thesis leaves us guessing here. It shows that party members can deliberate well about basic political topics (Is the party leadership committed to internal democracy?, How can people living in poverty be appropriately supported?), but it says nothing about whether they are also capable of deliberating well about more intricate policy issues. Since this capacity is not established, it is by no means clear that the discussed deliberative reforms will work.

Notice that this objection is mainly an empirical one, and so cannot be rebutted conclusively here. But let me make two points in reply. First, while it is true

that this thesis provides no evidence suggesting that party members can deliberate well about complex policy issues, there is no straightforward reason to believe that they might not be capable of doing so. Empirical studies of designed deliberative events reveal that ordinary citizens can handle complexity with great sophistication, provided that they have access to the relevant information (e.g. the comprehensive volumes on Australian Citizens' Parliament by Carson et al. [2013] or the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly by Warren and Pearse [2008]).[79] If citizens without much political experience can cope well with challenging policy questions, it seems reasonable to expect partisans, who naturally have a deep interest in politics and instinctively draw on a shared partisan platform to make sense of the political world, to cope at least as well. Consider in this connection also the increasingly popular "diversity trumps ability" argument, which holds that larger, more cognitively diverse groups can solve complex problems better than small groups of experts (Landemore 2013, esp. ch. 4).[80] If correct, this argument gives us another reason to think that party members could effectively handle the epistemic challenges of modern policy making. After all, as we have seen in chapter 3, party memberships are internally diverse, encompassing people with a wide range of different experiences and fields of expertise.

The second reply to the objection from complexity is that the issues party members would deal with in intra-party deliberative fora will not always or necessarily be very technical. As I have suggested in chapter 1, the different fora of a deliberative model of intra-party democracy (i.e. the problem-oriented forum, the partisan deliberative network and the partisan deliberative conference) are intended to address rather different deliberative tasks, which need not be extremely epistemically challenging. For example, while the *problem-oriented forum* design is meant to allow

[79] In the studies of deliberative experiments cited here, it is also often noted that trained moderators can help deliberators better cope with complex issues—for example by providing them with additional evidence and suggesting leads as to how this evidence could relate to the problems at stake. This means that my proposal of using trained moderators in intra-party deliberations (see ch. 5) may also have the happy effect of raising the sophistication of those deliberations.

[80] Based on findings from cognitive science and psychology, this argument is perhaps developed in greatest detail in Hélène Landemore's recent book *Democratic Reason* (2013). Note that I do not take a position here on whether the argument is correct: it is, after all, based on contestable empirical findings (see Ancell, forthcoming). All I want to do is highlight that there is potentially a strong epistemic case to be made in favour of involving party members in deliberations about complex policy questions.

deliberation over very specific policy problems, and thus requires party members to cope with complex matters, the *partisan deliberative network* consists of a plurality of single branches (or "nodes") which only address limited aspects of specific issues in their deliberations. In the latter case, party members will presumably not discuss issues that are more complex than those which they presently deliberate about in their branches. The general point here is that the institutions proposed in chapter 1 do not all require party members to be able to handle complex and multidimensional policy issues; so the idea of making parties more deliberative does not stand and fall with the capacity of party members to cope with complexity. But as I said in the previous paragraph, there are in any case good reasons to believe that complexity is a challenge party members can master.

Is the model sustainable?

A third worry concerns what might be called the *sustainability* of the deliberative model of intra-party democracy. Granted that the model is feasible, does it provide an attractive organisational template for future generations of politically engaged citizens? The specific concern is that the model has been developed and vindicated on the basis of observations about existing partisans and the ways in which they participate politically, without addressing the possibility that the motivational underpinnings of partisan activism may change over time. Is the model sufficiently sensitive to changing participatory demands?

This worry is plausible. Over the course of the 20th century, we have witnessed a tectonic shift in the structure of partisan engagement. While initially citizens tended to participate in parties because they belonged to a particular segment of society (e.g. workers),

> [w]ith more political information available to a more educated electorate, more citizens now possess the political skills and resources necessary to become self-sufficient in politics. These changes mean that contemporary publics are less likely to

> defer to party elites or to support a party simply out of habit" (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, 11).

This transformation is by no means completed. With increasing "cognitive mobilisation"—that is, the increasing ability to process political information and the increasing availability and accessibility of that information—a growing number of politically active citizens seek political expression in non-traditional participatory channels such as online fora, blogs, and so on, and increasingly turn their backs onto precisely the kinds of institutions the deliberative model of intra-party democracy seeks to empower. Assuming that these trends will not arrest or reverse overnight, the question of sustainability then becomes a question of whether a deliberative model of intra-party democracy can provide an appealing alternative platform for more and more cognitively mobilised citizens.

This question can be answered by returning to an argument I have suggested in the introduction of the thesis, in the context of the discussion of the mass party model. This is that the deliberative model of intra-party democracy is especially well-equipped to cater to the participatory demands of a cognitively mobilised and individualist citizenry because it allows them openly to express their views regardless of whether or not these views are consistent with the party line, and, even more importantly, because it signals to them that their views are taken seriously in the process of internal will formation (this point is developed at length in Invernizzi Accetti and Wolkenstein, forthcoming). These characteristics of the deliberative party seem indeed likely to increase the attractiveness of parties as participatory venues and generate an incentive for future citizens to engage more in partisan politics. So, insofar as sustainability is a matter of responding to increasing levels of cognitive mobilisation, the deliberative model of intra-party democracy would also seem to meet the sustainability requirement. At the very least, it seems able to go a long way in satisfying the corresponding participatory demands.

Directions for future research

In establishing that deliberation constitutes an important dimension of intra-party democracy, the present thesis points towards a new research agenda for scholars interested in political parties. In these final paragraphs, let me highlight a cluster of promising areas for future research. Each calls for a fundamentally interdisciplinary approach to the study of parties that draws creatively from the rich resources political theory and empirical political science offer.

Intra-party deliberation and electoral systems. The first promising area for future inquiry concerns the complex relationship between intra-party deliberation and electoral systems. This topic is important in the light of recent theoretical attempts to link the deliberative credentials of parties to the electoral system in which they operate. Perhaps the most notable contribution in this emerging field has come from Daniel Weinstock (2015), who suggests that intra-party deliberation will reach higher quality in first-past-the-post voting systems than in proportional representation systems. This, Weinstock argues, is because first-past-the-post systems tend to create "big tent" parties with platforms covering the full range of policies that are of concern to the electorate. In order to create such platforms, party members have to work out reasonably complete and coherent conceptions of the common good in their internal deliberations (on this point, see also Rosenblum 2008, 359-360).[81] In proportional representation systems, on the other hand, parties need not offer voters comprehensive platforms of this kind. They can campaign on a small set of issues or even on a single issue. This relaxes the requirement of considering questions about the good of the political community at large.

The first question this argument raises is empirical: is it true that parties with comprehensive platforms are peculiar to first-past-the-post voting systems? There is certainly reason to doubt the suggested connection between comprehensive platforms and first-past-the-post elections. For one, the two parties that have been studied in this thesis arguably qualify as parties with wide-ranging policy platforms, but neither

[81] As Weinstock (2015) puts it, in deliberating their party's agenda, party members will have to engage in a "process of integration", wherein they have to "think hard about how to fold the concerns of the party's constituent groupings into a coherent set of policies" and meet halfway on positions that all can accept.

Germany nor Austria are first-past-the-post systems.[82] Consider furthermore the so-called "niche parties" that emerged across Europe in the 1980s. These parties—mostly far-right nationalist parties and Green parties—first campaigned on a small set of issues that were neglected by the political mainstream. Over time, however, and with increasing electoral success, they developed positions on a broad range of policy issues. So, might the comprehensiveness of a party's outlook be the consequence of electoral persistence and success, rather than of the voting system in which the party operates? And might the quality of intra-party deliberation, therefore, be a function not of the electoral system but of the party's age and success?

A second and more theoretical question raised by the argument that first-past-the-post voting systems will incentivise better intra-party deliberation targets the presumption that comprehensiveness is the main ideal according to which we should evaluate party platforms and the deliberative processes in which they are developed. Traditionally liberal theorists find the idea that deliberation produces complete conceptions of the common good normatively attractive.[83] But perhaps we should question this widely accepted proposition when we think about intra-party deliberation. One might argue, with Martin Ebeling (forthcoming), that it is more important that intra-party deliberation generates sufficiently *specific* conceptions of justice than that it gives rise to maximally comprehensive ones, since governing requires that broad views about justice can be translated into specific actions. The problem at stake is familiar from debates about ideal and non-ideal theory: the more comprehensive the conception of justice a particular theory provides is, the less specific and thus practically useful it often turns out to be (see Valentini 2012b, esp. 658-660). Accepting this argument, the question then becomes which electoral system can promote the development of sufficiently specific forms of justice within parties, or indeed the right mix of specificity and comprehensiveness?

Deliberative and aggregative dimensions of intra-party democracy. Another promising topic future scholars could address is the relationship between deliberative

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[82] Germany has a mixed-member proportional system, while the Austrian parliament is elected by proportional representation.

[83] As Rosenblum (2008, 359) notes with reference to Rawls, liberals tend to think that political considerations should be situated "in what we consider the most reasonable and 'complete' conception of political justice we can advance."

and aggregative forms of intra-party democracy. This topic too has empirical and theoretical aspects. Empirical scholars could look for example at the way in which successful deliberation alters the outcomes of candidate selection procedures or membership ballots. Do party members select different candidates or choose different policies when they deliberate well about the candidates or policies in question, carefully weighing arguments for and against? Similarly, scholars could explore whether the degree to which party members can sanction key decision makers who are implicated in joint deliberations influences the quality and outcomes of deliberation.[84] Imagine a local-level partisan forum in which ordinary party members deliberate with party officials who hold a seat in the local council. Does deliberation reach higher quality or yield different results when the former can recall the latter, compared with when party members have no sanctioning devices at hand that would allow them to pressure officials to act in accordance with the collective decision that emerged from their deliberations? Issues like these may seem trivial at first, but they ought to be addressed when designing deliberative institutions within parties.

This leads to the theoretical dimension of the topic: how should deliberative and aggregative mechanisms of intra-party democracy be connected to each other and sequenced? Answering this question is inevitably a normative exercise, but again taking guidance from empirical research is crucial. The just-mentioned example of party members' sanctioning powers explains why. Only if we have evidence of what effects the party members' ability to sanction officials exerts on the quality and outcomes of intra-party deliberation can we infer whether building sanctioning mechanisms into deliberative institutions within parties is useful, and if so, how these mechanisms should look. Dealing with this issue will involve handling normative trade-offs. Most importantly, while many deliberative democrats will find a Mansbridgean "selection model" of representation—a model in which agents have "self-motivated, exogenous reasons for doing what the principal wants" and are moved by reasons rather than sanctions to act in a certain way (Mansbridge 2009, 369)—more appealing than models of representation that centre on rewards and

[84] I should note that this particular issue was suggested to me in different forms by members of different party groups.

punishments, it may well be the case that some degree of sanctioning is necessary for a deliberative model of intra-party democracy to deliver its full potential.

Deliberative institutions within parties. A third area for future research has to do with the deliberative potential of participatory innovations within parties. What I have in mind here is that researchers could closely examine whether newly established intra-party institutions such as the Australian Labour Party's Policy Action Caucuses I have mentioned in chapter 1—to recall: these are issue-based branches which receive financial support and resources from the party and are entitled to convene meetings, policy forums and put policy motions to the general party conference—provide a favourable context for deliberation. Besides their deliberative capacity, scholars could look at whether institutions of this kind succeed in creating participatory incentives for party members and whether the decisions they produce are taken seriously by party officials. These questions are perhaps most directly relevant to students of intra-party democracy and party activists who seek to explore novel ways of enhancing democracy within their own party. Yet they might also be of interest to scholars concerned with "democratic innovations" (Smith 2009), whose trademark interest in new ways of involving citizens in political decision-making has largely led them to neglect established democratic institutions.

These three areas of inquiry—the impact of electoral systems on intra-party deliberation, the relationship between deliberative and aggregative mechanisms of intra-party democracy and the deliberative performance of participatory innovations within parties—could in principle be addressed by theorists and empiricists alike, ideally with the former taking guidance from the latter and vice versa. They harbour the potential of stimulating a productive dialogue between two intuitively related fields that are too often kept distinct: party scholarship and democratic theory.

Coda

One way of thinking about the purpose of norms is to see them as allowing us to take a step back from actual institutions and practices, and consider alternatives to them

(Möllers 2015). The argument I have offered in this thesis is *normative* in this specific sense: it takes a step back from actual parties and existing practices of intra-party democracy and considers a possible alternative. This alternative does not require us to accept idealised views of partisanship, nor does it demand that we reinvent parties from scratch. By the standards of contemporary political theory, the alternative to the status quo suggested in this thesis—namely, a deliberative model of intra-party democracy—is in fact quite modest. It provides the blueprint for a building that can be built, rather than a regulative ideal that can at best serve as a point of orientation but never be reached in full. It exhibits concern for real-world practices and the limitations of the agents who engage in them, rather than abstracting therefrom. My hope is that the distinctive "realism" of the considerations I have presented, that is their non-ideal character and grounding in empirical research, lends them the capacity to inspire practitioners to initiate actual party reforms. This hope is far from modest, to be sure. But if the present state of parties in established democracies is any indication, then there is nothing to lose and everything to gain.

To my mind at least, parties can benefit from adopting deliberative institutional designs in numerous ways. It is not just bringing citizens closer to government that speaks for this strategy, though this appears to be the most important task. As I have noted at several points in the thesis, revitalising the linkage function of political parties through deliberative designs might also help counteract the decline of parties that so many commentators complain about. Much has been written in recent times about the increasing disengagement from partisan politics, growing dissatisfaction with and distrust in parties, problems of accountability and responsiveness, and so on (see, paradigmatically, Mair 2013a). Reorienting parties towards their partisan base—and through their base towards the citizenry—using the kind of institutions I have proposed in this thesis could work against these corrosive trends. Empowered deliberative participatory opportunities for party members could restore popular trust in the willingness of parties to take seriously the judgments of the citizens on the ground, and correspondingly provide an incentive to engage more in parties. Perhaps the decline of party could not be fully reversed with the help of deliberative designs. After all, the just-described trends are not only the result of

organisational failure, but also have to do with the loosening of class identities and the changing structure of the capitalist economy (Streeck 2012). But even if internal deliberative democratisation is no panacea, it could certainly strengthen citizens' belief in the worth of engaging with collective political agency.

Secondly, letting the deliberated views of their party base inform parties' wider agenda could also over time sharpen their distinctive political profile. Especially in Europe, is often lamented that parties fail to offer citizens real political choice, the standard complaint being that the "disintegration of traditional social bases combined with the reduction of ideological differences under the pressure of economic neo-liberalism has made mainstream parties increasingly indistinguishable from each other, and less vote-worthy as a consequence" (Beetham 2011, 127). An empowered membership could counteract this tendency. Especially in centre-left parties, where ordinary members often hold significantly more leftist views than the party elite (Haute and Carty 2012), increasing the members' impact on decisions might lead to a programmatic re-positioning that heralds a renewed capacity to offer voters credible alternatives.[85]

That voters have a choice of orientations within the political mainstream is critical in light of the strident populist challenge that is now a feature of most European democracies: the rise of such parties as the *Front National* in France, the *Sverigedemokraterna* in Sweden or, most recently, the *Alternative für Deutschland* in Germany has arguably been facilitated by the incapacity of mainstream parties to supply choice. To paraphrase one of Peter Mair's most lucid observations about European politics, without opposition *within* the political mainstream, opposition *to* the political mainstream was bound to emerge.[86] Thus in order to stem the tide of the populist challenge, mainstream parties will have to recover their ability to provide citizens with meaningfully different programmatic orientations. Indeed, given the ever-growing electoral strength of populist parties, it seems that both the long-term

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[85] This problem is certainly more a European than an American one. The pervasive political polarisation that characterises American society has in fact led parties to offer citizens "too much choice" as it were, putting compromises on many policy issues out of reach (see Muirhead 2014).

[86] "We know that a failure to allow for opposition within the polity is likely to lead either (a) to the elimination of meaningful opposition, and to more or less total submission, or (b) to the mobilisation of an opposition of principle against the polity" (Mair 2013a, 293-294; cf. also Invernizzi Accetti and Bickerton, forthcoming).

survival of the political mainstream and the health of liberal democracy more generally depend on the capacity of mainstream parties to provide political platforms that reflect a distinctive interpretation of the common good rather than the technocratic consensus that made those parties "indistinguishable" from one another in the first place.

Thirdly, some of the deliberative institutions I have outlined could powerfully aid the flourishing of transnational partisanship. Still a relatively under-theorised idea, transnational partisanship refers to cooperation of like-minded partisans across national borders. Its normative point is to connect what would otherwise remain separate political spheres in the pursuit of transnational political projects (White 2014, esp. 390-393). While this has often been an enterprise of party elites, the "partisan deliberative networks" I have suggested in chapter 1 of the thesis would seem well-placed to transnationalise grassroots partisanship. Networks of this kind could be established to pool knowledge from partisans of several countries: *Europarties*, for example, could use them to draft a unified manifesto for European parliament elections. In such a set-up, designated fora of the respective national parties would form the networks' single nodes; and these fora would in turn send delegates to a pan-European partisan forum.[87] In this way, deliberative institutional designs within parties may contribute to the democratisation of the European Union, a much-discussed goal that is often the target of skepticism and distrust.

In sum, there can be no doubt that parties, and indeed democracy more generally, could profit from the suggested deliberative reforms in a variety of ways. Deliberative institutional designs open up new directions in connecting ordinary citizens to empowered decision-making sites, reinforcing their capacity to exercise collective political agency through the institution of the party; and they carry the potential of reviving the potential of parties to offer citizens political choice and inspire civic engagement. The challenge, then, is to take on these reforms. This thesis has been an invitation.

[87] Europe-wide deliberative fora are not a purely fictional proposal. Consider for example the EuroPolis deliberative poll conducted by James Fishkin and his colleagues (see Isernia and Fishkin 2014).

Appendix

In the analysis of partisan deliberation in chapter 4, I have examined two exemplary passages of deliberation. Prioritising depth over breadth, I have refrained from discussing further examples of deliberation among party branch members. This appendix presents more examples of deliberation within party branches. This serves two primary purposes. Firstly, it corroborates the conclusions I have drawn in chapter 4. Most of the passages cited below easily meet the latitudinarian standard of deliberation I have defended in the thesis; with a few exceptions, the much-discussed ability of party members to engage in a give and take of reasons that conforms to basic standards of political justification is on display throughout. Secondly, offering more examples of partisan deliberation provides readers with a more complete picture of the kinds of discursive exchange that occur in party branches, offering an insight into the rich context in which the argument of the thesis in general and chapter 4 in particular is embedded.

Example 1

The first example is a discussion that took place in the Linz group about the relative merits of letting party members decide on a coalition agreement with another party in a membership ballot—just like the German SPD did after the 2013 general election. The interview was conducted a few months after the SPD held its ballot, and in the passage below participants reflect on the debate that arose within their own party—the SPÖ—about whether a similar direct-democratic procedure should be adopted to decide on future coalitions. The discussion revolves mainly around the delegation of authority and the availability of information to the wider party membership.

> **Meo:** If I haven't looked into the coalition agreement at all [prior to the ballot] … and now I want to claim the right [to decide on it] … this means, at the same time, that I should comprehend the whole thing, and that I should take the time and the resources to read it. One can imagine, a coalition agreement has more than just a few pages … so

it's about comprehension. That is, what does it mean for me? Now if I say, 'yes, I want this', or 'yes, I want to participate in [making] the decision', then I have to have the resources […] for it takes days to read the thing and to understand it.

Ernest: If I am [voting] for it or against it, I have to know what I am for or against. And this presupposes that I have some knowledge about the content of the coalition agreement, and that doesn't even have he who voted for it in parliament. So we don't have it [i.e. this knowledge] at all. Or at least: I don't have it. And so I do not want to subject myself to the responsibility to decide about something when I don't really know what it is am deciding about. […] Therefore I am sceptical. Moreover, we have elected 183 people into parliament … we really elected them ourselves … and they should work for their money. Therefore I am, and I adhere to this view, against it [i.e. voting on a coalition agreement]. Because then we might also say the next time we raise the parking taxes in Linz: ask the citizens of Linz, not the local government. Then the whole thing gets a bit complicated! In the end [*also*], we have elected people and they will in any case be re-elected or not, depending on whether they do what one expects.

[short crosstalk]

Maria: I think it's always a balancing act, that one delegates authority and, so to speak, wants to retain some influence. One needs delegates, as you say, one gives them a mandate and says, 'please do something useful [*etwas Richtiges*]'. But how can I, during the year, say 'hey, I want that you in parliament to do things differently'?

Ernest [interposing]: If get you get an appointment to chat [with an MP] …

Karl: I believe any organisation knows: one needs a structure. Whether this is a sport club, right up to parties like the SPÖ, which is a big organisation … there is always a statute about structure … how who can be delegated, how who is governed, and so on. But I think this is necessary and it is in my opinion also bad if one would make fundamental changes here. That statutes were marginally changed and changes were brought about, this happened often in the history [of the party]. But in principle one needs an organisational structure from which these things follow.

Ernest: If I did not trust my [branch] chairman, I would not sit here. So not every one of us can represent their views there [i.e. in local government]. Only one of us can represent us. And I am 100 per cent sure that Karl represents our views, because [our views are] his own. That is why we sit together. But that each and every one of us participates [*mitreden*] does not work for organisational reasons. And so I find:

> democracy yes, direct democracy for certain questions … we are not the Swiss who vote on paying higher taxes, because if we did [vote on that issue], everyone would say we pay none at all. And so: I think it works the way it is. And certain things can of course be made [i.e. decided] with referenda, but these must be questions everyone understands.

In this passage we see again that participants are willing and able to justify their viewpoints to each other, even in the absence of the requirement to take a collective decision on the topic under discussion. Each speaker puts considerable effort into making a case for her position, presenting it in a way that it could be appreciated by others. Ernest certainly makes his point most forcefully, offering several arguments for why he prefers an internally hierarchical party that is structured around relationships of delegation over one that provides more opportunities for internal participation. And it seems that the concerns he raises are widely shared within the group: Maria signals agreement and Karl makes a point very similar to Ernest's, stressing that parties require a functional organisational structure. Tracing the way in which speakers respond to one another also indicates that the condition of deliberative uptake is satisfied here. Even Ernest, whose main concern appears to be with driving his message home, makes plain that he had listened to and taken seriously what the other participants have said, referencing their contributions in his statements.

A note on the substance of the exchange: it is striking and somewhat unexpected that participants in the Linz group are thus sceptical towards the prospect of directly voting on a coalition agreement. Their views differ sharply from those expressed by the other groups that participated in this study: the members of the German groups were unequivocally in favour of letting the membership vote on coalition agreements, while the members of the other Austrian groups also widely agreed that their party must be made more internally democratic.

<u>Example 2</u>

The next example of intra-party deliberation, which took place in the Vienna Wasserturm group, starts with participants complaining about problems of internal communication within the party. Christian stresses that it is hard for him to communicate to party functionaries that the party base is generally dissatisfied with the party's present chairman (Werner Faymann). After one participant diverts the focus of the discussion to the question of how the party and its leadership should present itself to the voters, participants agree that those representing the party in public ought to be more courageous, in the sense of showing firm leadership when it comes to shaping society in accordance with the party's aims and principles.

> **Christian:** If I let the people [i.e. the members of the branch] vote in a secret ballot … probably 98 per cent would say that they do not want Faymann [the leader of the party] anymore … how do you communicate that in the next [i.e. hierarchically higher] levels [of the party]? Which is doubly difficult in our district because at the next [hierarchical] level, where I work [*sitze*], Faymann's wife works too.
>
> **Fini:** Yes, but that must not be a hurdle!
>
> **Christian:** Yes, it shouldn't!
>
> **Lisbeth** [interposing]: Shouldn't! I would tell that to her face.
>
> **Christian:** Mother [Lisbeth is Christian's mother], if somebody would attack me like this, what do you think how you would treat him?
>
> [Laughter, tacit agreement on Christian's point]
>
> **Christian:** So the question is … so to speak … how does one communicate such a story in the right way? And I know, I am not spared this discussion. Because it is also my duty as elected vice chairman of the SPÖ in Favoriten [the district of Vienna the party branch operates in] to pick up this story and carry it further and to say, 'friends, it's fuming there, they are not content.' These are the things … how do you convey that [within the party]? And this is of course not so easy.
>
> **Robert:** I think what's missing is courage! When I think about the story with Vassilakou [the chairwoman of the Green party in Vienna, who decided to pedestrianise one of Vienna's main shopping streets, Mariahilfer Straße, despite great protests by

local shopkeepers] … the whole of Vienna thought she would fail with [her plans to pedestrianise] Mariahilfer Straße. All of us were sure: this was out of bounds. The way this began, we thought this would be a big failure for the Greens … [but] she had the courage, she took something on. And in the meantime … I was so stunned how resistance vanished … almost everyone is enthusiastic [about it] now. Why? [Because] she had courage.

Marlene: Yes! Yes, indeed!

Robert: We were all wrong [about this]. And this is what's lacking in our own party. Where do we show courage? They [i.e. the party leadership] only try to hold on [*klammern*] [on past achievements] … and where is courage? That's missing. […]

Christian: I have to say, Robert, this is correct. […] They do not think like we do. We think focused on ourselves [*auto-fokussiert*]. […] And you are right about courage. I have by the way said this to Michael [i.e. Michael Häupl, the mayor of Vienna] … I said, 'if one is committed to something and follows it through' … 'in the end this will be rewarded'.

[collective agreement]

Let us focus on the second and substantially more interesting part of the exchange. Though the positions expressed by the speakers are not particularly controversial—I would argue that few people would disagree with Robert's larger point about the importance of leadership and political courage—genuine efforts at justification are made by the speakers, and their arguments are taken up by the others. The example Robert uses to justify his point, namely the Green party's leadership in pedestrianising Mariahilfer Straße, a key shopping street in Vienna, deserves particular attention. Its instant resonance with the other participants can be explained by pointing out the context in which the discussion took place. About six months before the interview was conducted, the topic of pedestrianising Mariahilfer Straße figured prominently in the local (and indeed national) media; and even though public opinion was initially polarised, the initiative enjoyed gradually more support among the general public. Around the time when the interview took place, public opinion was then largely positive about the "new", pedestrianised Mariahilfer Straße. If one

followed the local media, it was easy to get the impression that many people were "enthusiastic" about it, as Robert put it. So in drawing on this example, Robert effectively made use of a case of immediate public relevance to justify his point. This is a paradigmatic example of successful justification in a specific social and political context.

Besides the participants' justificatory moves, note how Robert and Christian describe the leaders of their party. Both suggest, with collective approval, that the leadership is self-referential in its outlook and that party leaders are more concerned with administering the status quo than with shaping society and transforming social and political institutions in accordance with the political goals the party stands for. This sceptical position is much more representative of the way in which most participants of this study describe their relationship to the party than the position of the Linz group we have examined earlier in example 1, where participants endorsed the status quo, appealing to the legitimateness of internal hierarchy and a general feeling of trust towards elected leaders. In fact, many of the exchanges about organisational issues reveal a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction among participants with their party and its present leaders.

Example 3

The third example is again a discussion in the Vienna Wasserturm group. Its topic is how the SPÖ should best deal with the far right Freedom Party (FPÖ), a party that is increasingly gaining electoral grounds in areas that were traditionally dominated by the Social Democrats. This includes Favoriten, the district in which the Wasserturm group operates. The principal concern of the participants is here with the question of what one might learn from the FPÖ in terms of electoral strategy, and whether a centre-left party like the SPÖ should at all look to the far right for inspiration.

> **Christian:** What I think is that the party [i.e. the SPÖ] does not engage seriously with the substantial positions of the FPÖ … in order to …

Michaela [interposing]: I think they [i.e. the FPÖ] do not engage with their own positions …

Christian: … well, the problem is, so to say: when they [i.e. the FPÖ] claim a [political] topic [*eine Position besetzen*], the SPÖ's reflex is, 'that is all bullshit'. And … the truth … the truth is multi-layered … it is not all wrong what they say. But we have to engage substantially with the things at stake so as to analyse this and to say, 'how do we solve the problem' … they [i.e. the FPÖ] capture a general sentiment [in the population] and that is often quite correct … even if some issues are certainly no fun … but it's not only about immigrants [*Ausländer*] …

Nicole: What the FPÖ does … what they permanently do … they conduct damn many studies … social-scientific studies which they pay [research] institutes to conduct … about demography, sentiments among the citizenry, capturing the composition of this city. That they went after the Serbs back in the days [i.e. the FPÖ tried to mobilise voters with a Serbian background], that they tried to drum up supporters, that is a clear sign … [that] they do not select people randomly but strategically. […] It is completely clear, they have clearly analysed the minority groups we have here in Vienna, be it the Serbs, the Bosniaks, Croatians, Poles … and they have analysed this and focused on one group, and this is how they … we [i.e. the SPÖ] capture a general vibe [*Stimmungsbild*] of the city but we do not analyse it. That is, we do not accurately target things, but … just like we don't have strong opinions otherwise, we are vague about what we think is happening in the city. And I believe that … one can make use of what the FPÖ analyses.

Michaela: But what do they analyse? I mean, when it comes to the Serbs … what do you want to do? Fair enough, they are the last Christians in the Balkans … this is why we want [to mobilise] them?

Bernhard: No, with the Serbs and the FPÖ it's about something completely different. They are rather nationalist, that is to say, they have national pride, which they, tragically, carried into the Yugoslav War, and so on. And that fits with the FPÖ's party line, and they consciously make use of that [*stürzt sich darauf*].

Michaela: But that is not yet a [political] position! There is no substance! Nationalism itself is no … substance!

Nicole: Yes, because they are all nationalist … the Poles, the Bulgarians, the Bosniaks too. And why they [i.e. the FPÖ] focused on them was […] first that they are the largest

[minority] group we have in Vienna, they are the most heterogenous group we have, and they are those who were the first [to come to] Austria, 20-25 years ago … where now the second, third generation is here … and [the FPÖ] says, 'listen, you are one of us, you are third generation, you are Austrian, you are born here, you are a citizen, do you really want that the rest … from further away … comes here?' And this is what they play with, with these feelings they play. You have a job, you have built up a life here …

Michaela [interposing]: But this is still without substance …

Nicole: It is an example of what you can make out of an analysis. One has to play to people's emotions. I cannot only … that is what the SPÖ always does … only bring up sober, functional topics [*Sachthemen*]. I also have to play with people's emotions. […]

Christian: One example: the FPÖ analyses population growth and raising social expenditures … this is at the moment very intertwined …

Michaela [interposing]: But so do we. That's why we build enough housing!

Christian: No. We think we're at it but we do not build more. Nothing's changing. This is so for various reasons … but they [i.e. the FPÖ] … they promote these issues and they discuss them. And then we come and say, 'no, all of those problems don't exist, it's not happening.' Like you, Michi [i.e. Michaela]. I hear this also from our city councillor. But I don't believe that. I work in a housing cooperative, I know how difficult it is to even get one's hands on property at the moment. That's how it is. We do not need 7000 [new flats], we need in fact 10.000. The FPÖ occupies [*besetzen*] the topic … and rather than saying, 'how can we develop ways of making things better together?', we do not engage with this. We say straightforwardly that they are wrong. And this puts pressure on us, because the people can see that things are different, they can feel it.

This passage is especially rich in detail. It reflects that the members of the group seriously engage with the electoral and political strategies of their main political rival. Consequently, most participants' efforts at mutual justification are argumentatively profound. Nicole and Christian in particular seek to be even-handed in their judgments, drawing on non-anecdotal evidence in support of their claims. What is noticeable is that Michaela, the only participant who appears to think that there is

nothing the SPÖ can learn from the FPÖ, makes no comparable effort to justify her position. She simply asserts her viewpoint without further defending it. So her statements hardly satisfy what I have, in chapter 4, called the "reason-giving condition", which stipulates that a speaker must provide reasons rather than simply state her point of view or preference. Thus, even though her reactions to the other speakers' contributions indicate a level of critical reflection and so signal deliberative uptake, her statements are insufficiently deliberative. Perhaps as a result of this, Michaela's position does not find much support in the group: absent justifying reasons, her claims lack persuasive force. However, despite the low deliberative quality of Michaela's contributions, the passage should not be interpreted as an example of bad deliberation. For the majority of participants justify their views in a thoughtful fashion and take Michaela's contrarian position seriously, thus satisfying both conditions of successful justification we have established in chapter 4.

Example 4

The fourth example of deliberation among party branch members is a debate in the Bonn group concerning individual members' relationship to their party. This exchange was triggered by the discussion about the defection of one group member following the membership ballot on the coalition agreement with the CDU/CSU. This issue was mentioned in chapter 5, which looked at failures of intra-party deliberation. Klaus's statement about what he describes as his "basic loyalty" to the party kicks off the debate.

> **Klaus:** I always say to myself: however much the party leadership blunders, they will never make me leave the 'big tanker.' So there is a certain basic loyalty to … also to the historical party, yes. And therefore it was always out of the question for me … even when it [i.e. decisions of the party leaders] really goes against the grain for me … so the religious policy of the SPD really goes against the grain for me … but I would never quit the party because of that.

Katja: I see this quite like Klaus. I would not … for me it is always like in a marriage … there are good and bad times, and just because it is now a bad time, that does not mean that I would generally want to separate. I for one in any case only joined the party because I was against Agenda 2010 [a series of labour market reforms enacted between 2003-2005 by SPD chancellor Gerhard Schröder, which have often been criticised as neo-liberal] and I said: if I don't join now, I can never do something against this. And I was also against the grand coalition [in 2013] but I still remained in the party, even if I suffer a bit from that, and even if it's not fun to see that I have been proven right and that we are always punished by the voters for that. But that's how it is. It's like in a marriage, and there one doesn't simply give up without a fight. One has made a choice, and then…

Maxim [interposing]: I think that it is precisely not like in a marriage. I think a party is actually not a place where I look for harmony. It is not a place where I look for consensus, but where I want to [engage in order to] bring positions 'out on the street'. And so … disputes are part of the trade; disputes are important … it is important that we argue, but that we still in the end have a common position or a position for which we can jointly stand for. And I think, that is part of our daily business … that one argues on a daily basis in a party. And therefore I have a different relationship to the party than to my wife. There I do not argue daily, and there I do not think this is the meaning of it all. With respect to a party, I indeed think that arguing is a major part of its meaning.

Katja: But ultimately your marriage is also about consensus. How one gets to consensus, that is again something different, to be sure. But I also can't always aim at love, peace and harmony in a marriage. There are also different ways of attaining consensus. And in politics consensus is achieved by arguing. I think we do agree that these are important differences.

Maxim: [Nods head in agreement.] To get back to the question of quitting the party … when the party in the end promotes a different position concerning certain issues than I, this is no reason for me to quit the party but rather to push within the party for revisiting the issue. When I am still not satisfied after that, I will revisit it again. And in the end I might be 200 years old and utterly frustrated, but this is for me the meaning of this party.

[collective agreement]

There can be little doubt that the normative conditions of justification—reason-giving and uptake—are satisfied here too. Speakers try to make clear why they think as they do and thoughtfully respond to one another. Katja extends toward Maxim an empathy that attends to commonalities and differences. What makes the passage particularly interesting is how, in describing their relationship to the party as a collective project, participants make creative use of analogical reasoning. As they weigh arguments for and against the validity of the analogy between party membership and marriage, one is indeed reminded of political theorists, who often draw on analogies and examples of this kind in order to make their arguments resonant and persuasive (for a scholarly paper on parties that engages similar analogies, see e.g. Ypi, forthcoming). The outcome of the exchange is a collective agreement on a joint position, namely that quitting the party is not an option party members should exercise. Whether one looks for harmony and consensus or disagreement and contestation, membership in a political party ought to involve loyalty to the larger political project to which the party gives institutional expression; Klaus refers to the "historical party" in this connection.

Example 5

The fifth and final example the appendix presents is a rather heated debate in the Theilheim group about citizens' political identities in the local community and the adequate electoral strategy for the party. It begins with Hans-Peter emphasising his failure to understand the SPD's last election result in Theilheim, where the party lost a good deal of voters to rival parties.

> **Hans-Peter:** I must say, since this election I really question my sense of judgment (*Menschenverstand*). I would never have thought … I was one of those who said 'come on, let us work together … if we want to overthrow the current mayor … then we must fight together … we have organised events together … and I would never have thought that the blacks [i.e. the CSU voters] would rather vote for the UWG [i.e. *Unabhängige Wählergemeinschaft*, a local list of activists who do not belong to any of the established parties], and that the SPD-supporters would also rather vote for the

UWG. That is the only way I can explain this election result. And that is why I am still disappointed to this day.

Bernd: But on the other hand … I can understand that if one traditionally supports the SPD, then supporting the CSU is preposterous. So … in different [political] constellations … I could fully understand that one thinks that way.

Marita: I can't understand that.

Alwin: Neither can I.

Marita: I said this earlier: in a small community council (*Gemeindeparlament*) one should jointly aim to make promote the welfare of the community, irrespective of whether one is red, green, black, or whatever. I can understand [traditional partisan rivalries] when it's about politics affecting the federal state, when it's about the country … where it's really about substance. There I can understand when someone says: 'what, they are making a pact with the CSU? For goodness sake, I can't vote for them anymore. They are betraying their principles.' But on such a low level, where everyone should be pulling together (*an einem Strang ziehen*), and it should be in everyone's interest to achieve the best for the community, there I cannot understand such conduct. But well, it is how it is. We can't change it anymore. We can only draw our lessons from it and strive to make it to the top again.

Bernd: In the end we have acknowledge that we, as SPD, are a self-standing party, and we have to fight for ourselves! And that means, that we do not fight for the CSU or the like!

Herbert: But we didn't! We didn't! We had a list of our own.

Marita: We didn't 'fight for the CSU'! We fought for overthrowing the mayor!

Bernd: But we still supported the candidate of the CSU! That was the wrong strategy!

The argumentative dynamics in this exchange are similar to those we have observed in the Theilheim discussion analysed in chapter 4. By this, I mean that participants exhibit pronouncedly different attitudes concerning the way in which their party should deal with political rivals. Bernd evidently holds what I have called "purist" views. He is quite sceptical of cooperation with other parties, especially when

his own party is in a weak bargaining position because of insufficient electoral support. The other participants are more "pragmatist" in their orientation. Marita is particularly outspoken about her commitment to cross-partisan cooperation in the small community that is Theilheim. Even if the particular case of cooperation that is discussed in the exchange has resulted in a loss of votes for her own party, she thinks that working together with rivals for the good of the community at large is more important than the pursuit of narrow partisan goals. These differences of political approach account for the agonistic nature of the exchange; the excessive use of exclamation marks can only inadequately capture the belligerent tone that some participants struck.

Because the pragmatist-purist divide that runs through the group acquires special salience in this exchange, the quality of deliberation is palpably lower than in the other examples I have presented in this appendix. The main problem is that most of the interventions, especially those made towards the end of the passage, consist only of brief assertions and largely lack justifying reasons, thus failing to meet the reason-giving condition. However, it must also be noted that Hans-Peter and Marita make genuine efforts at justifying their viewpoints to the others; Marita in particular delivers her point with great clarity. So even though the passage in part comes close to deliberative failure, deliberative moves do take place. Even more pertinently, as participants remarked at a later point in the interview, the topic under deliberation has repeatedly been discussed by the group before. Participants are thus largely aware of the main disagreements that divide them, and they have already "agreed to disagree" on a previous occasion. Seen in this light, the passage lends itself to a more favourable interpretation: the fact that participants are willing to revisit the polarised issue at all, and the fact that some of them readily offer extensive justifications for their position, may be read as reflecting a more general commitment to political deliberation. But even with that in mind, there can be no doubt that the exchange itself is among the least deliberative of those that were examined in this thesis. Arguably a deviant case, it is clear that it fails to conform to our normative deliberative standards to the same degree as the other examples of partisan deliberation I have presented.

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