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INTRODUCTION



Introduction: democracy, diversity

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The collection of essays published in this special issue represents the final outcome of a research project – URBANITAS which we carried out, respectively as principal investigator and as researchers between 2013 and 2015.¹ The project was focused on the social and cultural diversity characterizing contemporary democracy and on the political response to the tensions and conflicts produced by the encounter of so many differences in the same political space.

The issue of cultural diversity has been at the center of the debate over multiculturalism for few decades now, and more recently on the discussion over interculturalism (Cantle, 2012; Guidikova, 2014; Lægaard, 2015; Meer, Modood, & Zapata-Barrero, 2016; Meer, Mouritsen, Faas, & de Witte, 2015; Modood, 2014). On the one hand, social diversity represents an opportunity, widening the horizon of social options, and perspectives of innovation, but, on the other, it creates problems for social cohesion and peaceful coexistence of many groups, be it majority or minority. In this special issue, *social diversity*, with its potential conflicts and disagreements, is considered mainly from the viewpoint of democracy, concerning both the responses of democratic institutions to citizens' claims related to diversity issues, and the effects of pluralism on democratic process and deliberation.

This two-fold *reflection on democracy and diversity* calls for a preliminary inquiry into the nature of the conflicts arising from cultural and social differences before any sensible political response be considered. First, it is relevant to distinguish between conflicts that arise from doctrinal disagreements and/or different conceptions of the good, and conflicts that are due to the clash of different social standards and mechanisms of social cooperation in daily interactions among majority and minority members (Galeotti). Second, it is theoretical compelling to assess what impact the fact of political pluralism has on the general theory of democracy, and specifically on deliberative accounts (Martí, Biale and Liveriero, Ottonelli). Third, it is central to assess whether the traditional consensus-oriented model of deliberation is still adequate for dealing with such diverse and multicultural political societies (Rostbøll, Weinstock).

Concerning the analysis of conflicting social interactions between members of majority and minority groups, we will defend a deflationary approach with regard to cultural conflicts that are too often described as unsolvable, and will explore the role of the virtue of civility in improving respect-based interactions among agents and when civility has to give way to toleration, in case social standards are not shared and known (Galeotti). Relating to the philosophical debate about the legitimacy of normative models of democracy (Christiano, 2004; Dahl, 1989; Manin, 1987), we will defend a deliberative perspective because such paradigm does not reduce political agency to the mere expression of preferences, but acknowledges citizens as reflexive political agents who need to develop, challenge, and critically assess their claims (Marti, Biale and Liveriero). Furthermore, we will evaluate whether certain strategies of deliberative inclusion must be set aside, as they might end up disrespecting people as agents who have practical authority over their own lives (Ottonelli). As for the possibility of having principled forms of compromise substituting consensus-oriented conceptions of deliberative democracy (Gutmann & Thompson, 2012; Habermas, 1996), our analysis will show that this strategy can properly be justified appealing to two normative arguments that, again, highlight the reflexive agential capacities of citizens. First, compromise can be justified showing that the concept of democratic respect requires us to treat fellow citizens as co-rulers (Rostbøll). Second, deliberation that aims at compromise can be defended as most adequate, showing that it grants a full acknowledgment of the normative requirement of reciprocal concession at the heart of the exchange of reasons that characterizes democratic decision-making processes (Weinstock).

The six essays of this special issues deal with different, though related, topics concerning the tense relationship between democracy and diversity. All the contributions share the theoretical insight that diversity is one of the *raison d'être* of democracy and, still, all acknowledge that the fact of pluralism poses challenges to the legitimacy of democratic procedures of decision-making. If citizens had the same values and preferences, collective decisions would be easily achieved and the institution of democratic procedures would be redundant. Yet, the wide pluralism of doctrines, habits, social standards, conception of the goods, and typical of contemporary societies, has often led citizens to challenge the legitimacy of democratic decisions because these choices do not fit their preferences or values. To address these challenges, following recent accounts of democratic decision-making (Bächtiger, Niemeyer, Neblo, Steenbergen, & Steiner, 2010; Dryzek, 2010; Mansbridge et al., 2010), in this volume different strategies will be introduced, defended, criticized, in order to outline a perspective that is able to guide actual decision-making processes (*guidance*), define standards that everyone has equal opportunity to fulfill (*inclusion*), and grant that citizens exercise their reflexive control on the whole democratic system (*reflexivity*).

The philosophical arguments and analyses presented in the essays of this volume aim at depicting a democratic ideal that can ensure legitimate outcomes in a context of deep pluralism by acknowledging *members of the polity as reflexive agents*, rather than mere beneficiaries of policies imposed from the top by institutions. The guiding question of this volume concerns whether democracy in general, and deliberative models more specifically, once readjusted to deal with the challenges posed by diversity, can be defined as decision-making procedures that respect the agency of every citizen and grants them the opportunity to influence public choices. A normatively legitimated system of decision-making should respect pluralism, allowing citizens to express their differences and disagreement properly, and still must be able to provide acceptable political solutions. The articles in this volume will depart from the intrinsic connection between democracy and diversity – and the unavoidable challenges that pluralism poses to decision-making procedures – investigating, from different perspectives, how the normative requirement of fully respecting agents' reflexive agency impacts the revision of democratic decision-making procedures and the way in which institutions react to citizens' justice-based claims.

Most of essays presented in the volume concede that looking at deliberation as necessarily focused on consensus, in contexts of deep pluralism, may be problematic both for theoretical and practical reasons. On the one hand, an overly-idealized approach to decision-making process may lose track of actual decision-making processes, provoking a lack of guidance in political decisions. On the other hand, seeking consensus, through the establishment of deliberative standards that some individuals or groups have less opportunities than others to fulfill, may engender exclusion and disrespectful treatment of certain groups. However, the authors reasonably disagree in suggesting strategies for revision such model for political decisions. For Marti consensus is still the ideal option, though compromise should be considered fully legitimate in our imperfect world; for others (Biale and Liveriero, Rostboll, Weinstock) compromise is the ideal outcome of a process that aims at fully respecting citizens and their values.

Along different lines, the special issue addresses thorny aspects of the ideal of inclusiveness. In fact, it is important to cast a light on the fact that certain strategies that seem to be guided by the ideals of implementability and inclusiveness, might end up in frustrating the reflexive agency of members of society. Galeotti argues that the tendency to describe cultural conflicts as the outcome of strong incompatibility between different ideals and values (especially incompatibility among western and non-western values), far from portraying a respectful full-fledged narrative of agents' most relevant principles and desires, ends up inflating the conflicts with an intolerant overtone and, mostly important, introducing value-laden obstacles to groups' integration in a diverse society. Ottonelli, instead, criticizes the inclusion of the practice of personal storytelling among the new forms of deliberative interactions, showing that these non-reflexive forms of public interaction are unfairly burdensome for minorities and

marginalized individuals. We will now give more detailed summaries of the six articles included in this volume.

Anna Elisabetta Galeotti, in the first article, invites to look at cultural conflicts from a perspective different from the prevalent political rhetoric which emphasizes the incompatibility of many alien practices with the core values of liberal democracy. Instead of starting from the most controversial questions, and from the point of view of doctrinal disagreement, the essay proposes to consider the frictions in daily interactions between the society's majority and minority groups. This move is based on the claim that most cultural conflicts do not concern irreducible disagreement about worldviews and principles but more mundane conflict over social standards. This strategy, Galeotti claims, allows to uncover a much-neglected dimension of diversity conflicts, namely that at stake there are social conventions and norms governing daily interactions more than incompatible principles. If doctrinal disagreement is set aside, the merging of social norms and the redesigning of social cooperation are complicated and insidious in their own way. Galeotti's essay shows that promoting an understanding of the nature and functioning of social standards for social cooperation is both normatively necessary and practically relevant (for local strategies), as this conceptual analysis helps in highlighting the often-dismissed agential status of members of minority groups that are usually treated as mere patients of social transformation.

Jose Luis Martí analyses political diversity with the attempt to clarify which are the relevant forms of political disagreements for deliberative democracy. According to his model, the fact of political pluralism, understood as the existence of a diversity of moral and political views and perspectives, rather than being a problem for the ideal of deliberative democracy, is one of the main contributing factors to its quality and legitimacy. This fact of pluralism not only makes deliberation possible and plausible, but it also contributes, under the right conditions, to the epistemic value of democracy. Furthermore, respect for political pluralism seems to derive conceptually from the basic democratic values of freedom and political equality. However, Martí notices, deliberative democracy also aims ideally at generating sufficient consensus, maybe even unanimity, provided that it is for the right reasons. Martí addresses the challenges that pluralists developed against this consensus oriented structure of the deliberative paradigm. According to their view our actual decision-making procedures should be designed to accommodate pluralism, and any attempt to reduce or eliminate it would undermine the very grounds of legitimacy in our liberal deliberative democracies. Once showed that the main dispute between consensualists and pluralists is about the role of disagreement in actual deliberative processes, Martí provides a clear analysis on the different kinds of disagreement (pre/post deliberative, inherently political/s order disagreements) that can occur in a deliberative process. The second part of the essay explores the main differences between consensualist and pluralists regarding the role

of disagreement in actual deliberative procedures and shows that their dispute circumscribed to adjudicative reason-based consensus as opposed to the corresponding reason-based disagreement. Since this small niche lacks practicality Martí claims that it only affects the kind of personal ideal commitment or aspiration that virtuous deliberators should have when entering into a deliberative process, and has no concrete consequent institutional implications.

Enrico Biale and Federica Liveriero's inquiry is prompted by similar insights. Their essay addresses the possibility of conferring legitimacy to democratic decision-making procedures in a context of deep pluralism. They defend a multidimensional account of democratic legitimacy according to which a legitimate system needs to grant, on the one hand, that citizens should be included on an equal footing and acknowledged as reflexive political agents rather than mere beneficiaries of policies, and, on the other hand, that their decisions have an epistemic quality. They criticize Estlund's account of imperfect epistemic proceduralism showing that such model cannot fully recognize citizens as reflexive political agents and is grounded in an idealized model of the circumstances of deliberation. Biale and Liveriero then introduce an account of democratic legitimacy according to which political disagreement can be described not only as a factual circumstance of democratic decision-making systems, but the perfect expression of democratic ideals because only when citizens disagree and express their dissent can they properly exercise political agency. Furthermore, they claim that an account of democratic legitimacy that depends upon idealized circumstances cannot guide actual democratic procedures efficaciously, because it sets standards and goals that actual democratic systems cannot reasonably aim to achieve. Consequently, they introduce an analysis of what they call 'the actual epistemic circumstances of deliberation' and then argue that the epistemic value of deliberation should be derived from the reasons-giving process established among epistemic peers, rather than from the reference to the alleged quality of deliberative outcomes and/or to the major expertise or ability of specific agents involved in the deliberative process (i.e. experts). Biale and Liveriero then claim that robustness can be adopted as an adequate criterion for establishing when deliberative systems can be vindicated as epistemically successful, because such criterion does not refer to an external standard of rightness and it also reflects the procedural insight of ensuring to everybody the possibility of impacting public choices.

Valeria Ottonelli's essay testes the validity of the deliberative paradigm against the request to citizens' exchange of information and experiences about themselves in a context of deep political diversity. Ottonelli wonders whether, in pluralistic contexts, where people are coming from different cultural and social backgrounds, the practice of personal storytelling is adequate for making agents' internal point of view accessible to others within deliberative settings. Ottonelli confronts advocates of the idea that sharing personal experiences and narratives in the first person is a preferential means to bridge the informational

and motivational gap among members of different social groups. According to the author, whatever the epistemic merits of personal storytelling in democratic deliberation may be, the request for transparency and disclosure of people's private experiences that this practice entails is objectionable on moral grounds because it disrespects people as agents who have practical authority over their own lives. The disclosure of people's personal stories in public may humiliate them, reify them and abridge their personal liberties. What is worse, these harms are especially likely to be inflicted upon members of marginalized or disadvantaged minorities. They may be pressured to disclose personal, intimate or otherwise confidential information; they are often subject to asymmetrical requests of disclosure, whereas the mainstream culture is not questioned; finally, the very presumption that their personal experience and internal point of view can be accessible and become fully transparent can be disrespectful to fundamental dimensions of their agency. After illustrating these claims through some relevant examples, Ottonelli argues that a different route to the overcoming the informational gap that emerges in pluralistic contexts can be taken by resorting to the language of fundamental rights. This requires that the parties recognize each other as hermeneutical authorities on the meaning of fundamental rights as applied to their specific circumstances.

Christian Rostbøll tries to show that compromise has non-instrumental value and that the reasons for compromise are inherent in the democratic ideal, making compromise a democratic imperative and not merely a regrettable necessity. In this essay Rostbøll, in contrast with other authors that have discussed whether there are principled reasons for compromise, defends the thesis that we need a specifically democratic conception of respect and that the latter can supply an intrinsic reason for compromise. If our concern is what is required by democratic respect, we cannot rely on a general idea of what it means to respect others; we need to specify what it means to respect one's opponents as fellow citizens. The essay argues that democratic respect goes beyond both the norm of treating one's fellow citizens as equals and of respecting them as members of the same community. It is a conception of respect, which requires that we treat fellow citizens as co-rulers. Only the latter conception of respect is both sufficient to explain the moral importance of democratic procedures, including compromise, and an inherently democratic ideal. The conclusion drawn by Rostbøll is that respect for citizens as co-legislators supplies a democratic reason for compromise. Compromise can be more democratic than a majority decision, because it shows respect for citizens as participants in collective self-legislation by representing their views in policy in a way that goes beyond what happens in uncompromising majority decisions.

Daniel Weinstock, along similar lines, discusses the normative role that compromise can play in deliberative systems characterized by deep cultural diversity. The essay explores the relationship between deliberation on the one hand, and compromise and consensus on the other. The principal question concerns

whether it makes a difference to the nature of deliberation if compromise or consensus is sought. According to what Weinstock refers to as the 'no difference' view, the question whether participants arrive at compromise or consensus depends not on the manner in which they have chosen to deliberate (for example, on the nature of the constraints that they have imposed upon their deliberations), but on the nature of the case at hand, and of the participants' ex ante positions with respect to it. The nature of deliberation remains the same, regardless of its end result. The most prominent version on the 'no difference' view is that consensus is preferable to compromise, and that to the extent that it is appropriate to impose constraints upon deliberation, they should be those that make consensus more likely. Weinstock challenges this view trying to show that deliberation aimed at consensus is inappropriate, and potentially counter-productive, in the context of pluralist liberal democracies. Deliberation aimed at compromise, rather than consensus, should therefore be promoted and practiced in pluralist liberal democracies. It requires deliberative procedures distinct from those that characterize deliberation aimed at consensus, in that it requires of parties to a disagreement that they be transparent about their comprehensive conceptions of the good, in order to be able to measure the mutual concession that parties make to one another in deliberation.

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