

Changing preferences towards redistribution: How deliberation shapes welfare attitudes

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1. Introduction

Redistribution and the reduction of social inequality is at the core of the welfare state. The basic question of who should get (respectively contribute) what and under which conditions directly affects the programmatic institutional structure of welfare state arrangements and tackles fundamental issues of legitimacy and acceptance (Mau 2004; Rothstein 1998). Hence, it is no surprise that research on attitudes towards redistribution is a crucial topic within welfare state research, and scholars have studied various facets of preferences for redistribution. Results show broad support for existing social security institutions (Svallfors 2012), a higher preference for universal than for targeted programmes (Rothstein 1998), and relatively clear distinctions regarding the deservingness of different target groups of welfare programmes (e.g. van Oorschot 2006).

However, when digging deeper into redistributive preferences (and welfare attitudes in general), the opinions individuals express towards different aspects are often inconsistent, ambivalent, or even contradictory (van Oorschot, Meuleman 2012; Roosma et al. 2013; Svallfors 1991). Often, critical views on inequality do not translate directly into preferences for redistribution, or, another example, attitudes towards taxation do not really match with attitudes toward redistribution (Mau 2002). Redistribution is a highly complex and multidimensional matter (Svallfors 1991; Roosma et al. 2013), and people might be poorly informed, incapable of grasping the ‘bigger picture’, or influenced by the research context (Goerres, Prinzen 2012, p. 518; Zaller, Feldmann 1992).

For understanding such contextual aspects, it is helpful to briefly reflect on the underlying concept of attitudes. Attitudes are usually understood as observable evaluative responses to an object (Goerres, Prinzen 2012, p. 516). The traditional concept of attitudes in survey response psychology saw them as relatively stable and based on pre-existing evaluations, which are consulted when answering survey questions (this has been called a ‘file-drawer model’; Wilson, Hodges 1992, p. 38). This view has been crucially challenged by scholars arguing that attitudes are not fix and stable, but – at least to some extent – constructed in response to a question. Consequently, they are considered as open to context effects and are often seen as being triggered by the questionnaire itself (Tourangeau et al. 2009). With reference to Zaller (Zaller, Feldmann 1992) and also earlier work by Converse (1964), Tourangeau and colleagues developed the so-called ‘belief-sample model’, which understands an attitude as a kind of database consisting of a mix of different ‘considerations’ (Tourangeau et al. 2009, p. 179). These considerations can be feelings, beliefs, and knowledge about an issue, and “which considerations a person retrieves [for making an attitudinal statement] will depend on their momentary accessibility” (Tourangeau et al. 2009, p. 179). Accessibility can be affected by factors such as wording, instructions, or content of earlier questions in a survey.

The following research departs from the finding that people draw on different stocks of knowledge when they express preferences for redistribution; this includes: information on the redistributive design of the system they live in, their personal interests, own experiences with redistributive measures or outcomes, or underlying values such as egalitarianism. When expressing their attitudes in standard surveys, they may draw on these considerations – but which of them are at the forefront and dominate their evaluation remains mostly hidden.

Adopting a context-dependent perspective on attitudes also means assuming that attitudes can be subject to change. It is known that although political attitudes and preferences are linked to people's values or interests (Kulin, Svallfors 2013), they are also influenced by public discourse, information, deliberation, or social interactions (Converse 1964; Zaller, Feldmann 1992; Tourangeau et al. 2009; Wikman 2007). These discursive and socio-psychological factors have rarely found attention in survey-based research on welfare attitudes, which is not surprising when taking into account the methodological challenges of including contextual or discursive aspects.

In order to broaden the horizon of welfare attitudes research and capture the dynamic aspect of attitudes, this paper will introduce a new qualitative method for the study of welfare attitudes, namely deliberative forums. These large group discussions ('mini-publics') were originally developed not for data gathering, but for participatory decision making in the context of deliberative democracy. Attitudes, opinions and preferences are core aspects of the deliberation process, and the entire setting is designed to ensure that people express, justify and weigh them equally, freely and with sufficient time. The basic idea of deliberation is that the discursive process should lead to a (r)structuration of the participants' preferences (Dryzek, Niemeyer 2006; Setälä, Herne 2014). The underlying assumption is that "citizens do not have fully informed preferences in place and do not know about each and every collective problem" (Chappell 2012, p. 47), and thus their preferences may be refined in the course of deliberation, or revealed preferences and underlying normative principles become more coherent (e.g. Niemeyer 2011; Isernia, Smets 2014). In other words, the expectation of attitude change – including formation, realization or calibration – is a crucial aspect of any deliberative format. This makes deliberative forums a fascinating setting for attitudes research from a dynamic perspective. Deliberation requires the reflection of one's own standpoints (Setälä, Herne 2014), and we can expect that people do not only express preferences towards a particular topic or policy, but also justify and explain their views by referring to individual experiences, previous knowledge, others' statements, expert information, or underlying values. Hence, we can observe attitude construction 'in vivo'.

In this article, we discuss the dynamics of attitude formation in deliberative settings and substantiate this perspective by findings from a deliberative forum held in Germany in November 2015 on 'The future of the German welfare state'. As we will show in the course of the article, during deliberation participants can get a better grasp of the 'bigger picture of redistribution' by increasing their knowledge on the issue, weighing and reflecting different arguments, or positioning themselves with regard to other participants. All of these facets of deliberation influence the role of different considerations for attitude expressions, and as a consequence we can observe changes – and patterns of change – in participants' responses to a welfare attitudes questionnaire answered both before and after deliberation.

2. Deliberating redistribution – some conceptual reflections

Building on the normative and theoretical underpinnings of the literature on deliberative democracy, since the 1960s a number of scholars have developed practical tools for implementing deliberative elements in democratic decision-making. Here, deliberative polls®, participatory budgeting, or deliberative forums – also called mini publics or democratic forums – are examples which are regularly put into practice (Grönlund 2014). All deliberation tools share common foundations. In brief, the idea is to involve citizens in the policy making process, and to embed this involvement in a setting where an exchange and discussion of different arguments can be attained. Core principles are fair access, equality and inclusiveness in the discursive process, and a reciprocal, other-regarding debate (Chappell 2012, pp. 7–9). Furthermore, an ‘informed discourse’ is of high relevance for deliberation, which should consider the common good (Steenbergen et al. 2003, p. 25) and be based on broad information. The bottom line is to make people listen to each other, frame issues jointly, and to form a reflexive opinion about them.

Research shows that these basic aspects of deliberation may play a crucial role for attitude change: “Deliberation can thus have a function of preference formation, as citizens are required to articulate their preferences in the public forum as well as listen to the preferences of others and increase their factual knowledge. Second, these processes may also lead deliberators to change the preferences they already have in place, thereby inducing preference transformation. Theories of deliberative democracy shift the focus to the creation and transformation of preferences through reciprocal, reasoned discussion.” (Chappell 2012, p. 47) Empirical studies on deliberation indeed frequently report attitude change, usually measured via pre- and post-deliberation surveys (Fishkin 2011, p. 134).

Albeit a fully-fledged conceptualisation of what is actually happening in terms of micro-processes is missing so far (Smets, Isernia 2014, p. 404), especially *information*, *reasoning*, and *group processes* seem to be decisive when it comes to attitude change during deliberation. Among these three, *information* is by far the most frequently mentioned and studied. As mentioned above, deliberative events usually include expert information, because ‘informed reasoning’ is a core feature of deliberation. Indeed, studies show that increased knowledge has a decisive effect on attitudes and attitude change (Niemeyer 2011; Eggins et al. 2007; Isernia, Smets 2014; Grönlund et al. 2010). This is of course most intuitive and in line with what we know from welfare attitude research: When people have a basic idea of the actual functions of redistributive systems, it might be much easier to make evaluations which are in line with their values or interests (Roosma, et al. 2015, p. 16). For instance, informed statements on tax policies seem to be rather difficult against the backdrop of complex tax schemes or for badly informed citizens, while “if tax policy is simply structured and redistribution is a central theme of the policy debate, at least some citizens can make better informed decisions that are in line with their attitudes and interests.” (Franko et al. 2013, p. 934)

With regard to the role of *arguments and justifications*, a similar assumption applies: people might be able to better align values or interests with expressed preferences if they had the chance to argue, justify, weigh, or develop a thought in the course of a discussion and in interaction with others (Smets, Isernia 2014; Mercier, Landmore 2012). Reasoning thus brings

in the more dynamic and social side of deliberation. With reference to the belief-sampling model of attitude expression mentioned above, we could – in a simplifying way – argue that information is about adding considerations, while reasoning is about sorting existing considerations.

The third aspect are *group processes*, as “our attitudes (and our willingness to change them) are necessarily linked to the way we categorise ourselves in relation to the world.” (Eggins et al. 2007, p. 95) The deliberative ideal of taking into account the common good is strongly rooted in group processes: reflecting what particular decisions might mean for others is essential for approaching a common good (‘other-regarding’; Chappell 2012, pp. 45–47). Also, group polarizations or informational cascades (Chappell 2012, pp. 65–67) can be subsumed under the label of group processes. Informational cascades means the ‘herd behaviour’ when people base their evaluations or decisions on what they observe from others. Group polarization happens “when individual preferences become more intense or extreme due to discussion” (Chappell 2012, p. 65), usually with like-minded people, but also when confronted with strongly diverging opinions. With reference to the belief-sampling model, we argue that any self-categorisation in a group context is related to the accessibility of considerations. How I see myself in relation to others might bring particular considerations to the forefront and make others less accessible.

In a nutshell, deliberation events are situations where people are confronted with different factors letting them grasp the ‘bigger picture’ of a topic and (re)locate their own evaluations. This ‘grasping the bigger picture’ is not only about gathering factual knowledge; it is also about getting more aware of the positions others have, or about sorting out own values, preferences, or interests in the course of reasoning. To be sure, a moderated deliberative debate is not a ‘normal’ discourse as it may take place at the breakfast table or on the street, and thus it does not give us insights into the ‘everyday’ dynamic dimension of attitudes: The conditions during a deliberative discourse build a setting where reasoning, reflection and discussion takes place in an ideal-typical deliberative setting. Here, people have time to discuss normative aspects, express their individual preferences, reflect potential implications, get expert information, hear others views and learn about their situation, and so on, while adhering to the rules of deliberation.

Usually, deliberative event focus on very specific and well-defined topics, such as the decision whether a nuclear power plant should be built, in order to achieve a smooth and effective decision making process (O'Doherty et al. 2012). Yet, when taking into account what we stated on the complexity of attitudes towards redistribution, such a narrow focus seems to be somewhat obstructive. Here, it is reasonable to confront participants with the various facets of redistribution principles, instruments, and outcomes in order to let them grasp the ‘big picture’. In this regard, we argue that with a few alterations to the standard procedure of deliberative forums, the ‘empirical harvest’ could be increased. In the next section, we will describe these alterations by referring to experiences from a deliberative forum that we conducted in 2015. We will illustrate our research design with a special emphasis on some conceptual aspects which we think can improve the quality of the method as a research tool, but also refer to some critical points.

3. Research design: Using deliberative forums to study attitudes to redistribution

Albeit many different forms of deliberative forums exist, some basic principles which draw on the idea of deliberative democracy apply to most of them. As O'Doherty (2012, pp. 20–23) points out, a careful and purposeful sampling should be achieved, which aims at a proportional representation of socio-demographic groups, or at covering as many different opinions as possible. Furthermore, the topics should be framed in an appropriate manner to allow for both leeway for participants to refine own issues, and realistic and manageable conclusions. The forums should be designed in a way that sufficient time for deliberation is given, that groups have an adequate size, and that expert input is included in a productive manner. Also the role of 'facilitators' (i.e. moderators) is crucial, since they need to have knowledge on the topic and good moderation skills in order to build a fruitful deliberation atmosphere and guide effectively through the debate.

In our two-day deliberative forum (DF), which took place on two Saturdays in November 2015 at the Humboldt-University of Berlin, we followed this 'standard procedure' by and large. The general topic of the event was 'The future of the German welfare state', and participants were invited to discuss scenarios, problems and potential solutions for five subtopics (see below). We recruited 35 persons according to a theoretical sampling based on socio-demographic criteria (age, gender, education, employment situation, family status, migration background, household net income, and political orientation). The aim was to assemble a 'mini-public' roughly representative of the population in Germany, with some particular groups overrepresented. The participants received a financial incentive (280 €) for the two days, and 34 of the 35 recruited persons showed up at both days of the event.

The implementation was supported by a research agency specialised on qualitative research, which organised – in cooperation with the research team – the two days of the DF with a duration of eight hours each. On the first day, before the discussions started, the participants were asked to answer a questionnaire with 46 items, drawn mainly from the European Social Survey (ESS) and the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). Both days followed the same structure: We began with a plenary session, continued with breakout sessions where the participants were split into three groups for the main debates, and then closed the day again with a plenary session (with coffee and lunch breaks during the day). The breakout groups were pre-selected and remained the same over the two days. For each group, we selected a core of five or six persons from the same social group (migration background, unemployed, and self-employed), while the rest of the group was composed of a broad mix of socio-demographic backgrounds.

The first day, the research team had only an observing role. Professional moderators of the research company took over to introduce the core theme of the event, namely the future of the German welfare state. Here, only very brief general information was given, and participants were then asked to brainstorm and collectively select five topics to be discussed during the first day. The selected topics were inequality and basic social security, labour markets and employment, families/retirement/intergenerational issues, health care, and immigration and refugees.

Our procedure involved three crucial alterations from the ‘DF standard procedure’: First, instead of narrowing down the topic as much as possible, we presented the participants a very broad overall theme (‘the future of the welfare state’). We decided to let people speak about a larger variety of interrelated topics, in order to give them the chance to capture the various links between different dimension of welfare and redistribution, and also to observe how they reflect on cross-cutting issues and whether they find an issue relevant at all. Indeed, this format proved highly fruitful, as we will show in our empirical discussion below.

The second alteration concerned the expert input. Expert input is a basic element of DFs, since they aim at informed and well-reasoned decision-making. However, we decided to provide expert input only at the beginning of the second day. Here, the idea was to see the dynamics of discussion with and without expert input and to trace the impact of information. After the first day, all participants received a six-page fact about the German welfare state and on five core themes we were particularly interested in (income inequalities, immigration, gender/family, intergenerational issues, and labour market). Furthermore, the research team gave an oral input on these aspects at the beginning of the second day, and participants were invited to ask questions. Throughout the following breakout sessions, each breakout group was accompanied by a researcher who was ready to give information and answer questions.

A third alteration to the DF standard procedure was related to the objectives of the event. While ‘standard’ DFs are often oriented towards decision making or formulating policy recommendations, our main objective was to learn more about participants’ attitudes in context. Nevertheless, we used the formulation of policy recommendations for the future welfare state as a trigger. While the first day was reserved for more general discussions, the second day aimed at identifying key problems and suggesting solutions. Here, the idea was to increase the need for deliberation in the sense of coming to joint conclusions. Nevertheless, all participants were informed that the event followed scientific and not policy-making purposes.

At the end of the second day, participants were again asked to answer the questionnaire they had answered on the first day. Afterwards, they had the chance to reflect on the two days both orally and by writing comments on cards and leaving them anonymously in a box. In general, participants were very satisfied with event and enjoyed the discussions. Some expressed that they realised how complex welfare state policies are and how weak their knowledge on the welfare state was. All discussions (plenary and breakout sessions) were audio- and video-recorded and the debates were transcribed. We coded and analysed the transcripts with the qualitative data analysis software package NVivo 11.

In the next section, we will present some findings from the pre- and post-survey as well as from the deliberative discussions. We will show that participants did indeed change their evaluative responses after deliberation. Although it is not possible to link such changes to specific instants during deliberation, in the following section we will present some examples indicating that the different facets of deliberation (knowledge, reasoning, group processes) seem to indeed influence attitudes and attitude changes.

4. Dynamic of attitudes toward redistribution

Among the survey questions the participants of the DF had to answer, were some common redistribution items from the ESS: taxation for higher versus lower earners (ESS4-2008 D35), old-age pensions for higher versus lower earners (ESS4-2008 D36), and unemployment benefits for higher versus lower earners (ESS4-2008 D37). All three items offer answers which can be understood as ranging from lower preferences for redistribution to higher preferences: In the two spending-items (pensions and unemployment benefits), respondents can choose whether they think higher earners should get larger benefits or pensions, high and low earners should get the same amount, or lower earners should get more (or whether they prefer none of these options; see also below). The taxation-question offers answers ranging from regressive to proportional to progressive taxation by referring to the share of earnings higher and lower earners should pay in taxes.

Not surprisingly, in Germany generally the support for status protection via pensions and unemployment benefits is relatively high, and redistributive preferences are moderate. As Table 1 shows, according to the EES data from 2008, 64.1 percent of Germans state that higher earners should get higher pensions, and 58.9 percent felt that higher earners should get higher unemployment benefits. With regard to income taxation, 44.9 percent of Germans preferred proportional taxation (people pay the same share of earnings), 47.3 percent chose a progressive approach (higher earners pay higher shares), and 5.9 percent a regressive one (both pay the same amount). In a nutshell, redistributive preferences are moderate for benefits and higher for taxation.

As mentioned, the participants in our deliberative forum answered the same questions. They did so before and after the event, so that we can tap attitude changes over the period of the two sessions. As we can see from Table 1, the pre-survey responses for pensions and unemployment benefits are relatively similar to the ESS-results, with a clear majority in favor of higher benefits for higher income earners. This clearly relates to the principles of status maintenance and earnings-related benefits, which are well represented in the German welfare system. There is, however, little change with regard to the pre-and post-survey. When it comes to taxation, the picture differs somewhat. In the pre-survey, the support for a strongly redistributive tax system is quite low compared to the ESS data; 55.9 percent chose the proportional option, and even 17.6 percent the regressive one. However, there is significant attitude change when we compare this results with the post-survey: Now, a significantly higher share of participants opted for the progressive answer (61.8%). As mentioned, for the benefit-items we can only observe a marginal change with a minor tendency towards 'more' redistribution.

Table 1: Benefits and taxation for higher versus lower earners - results from the ESS and the pre- and post-deliberation survey¹

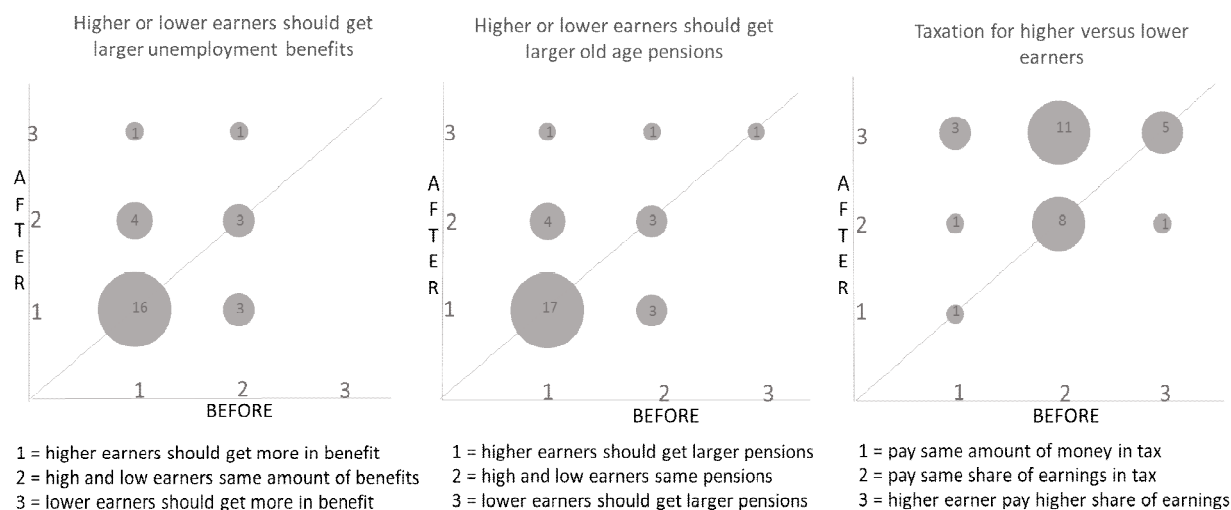
		Pensions	Unemployment benefits	Taxation
Low redistribution preferences (higher earners get higher benefits/higher and lower earners pay same amount in tax)	ESS 2008	64.1%	58.9%	5.9%
	<i>Pre-survey</i>	58.8%	61.8%	17.6%
	<i>Post-survey</i>	61.8%	61.8%	2.9%
Medium redistribution preferences (high and low earners get same benefits/pay same share of taxes)	ESS 2008	24.8%	32.4%	44.9%
	<i>Pre-survey</i>	20.4%	29.4%	55.9%
	<i>Post-survey</i>	23.5%	31.3%	29.4%
High redistribution preferences (lower earners get more in benefits/higher earners pay higher share in taxes)	ESS 2008	6.8%	6.2%	47.3%
	<i>Pre-survey</i>	5.9%	0%	20.6%
	<i>Post-survey</i>	8.8%	2.9%	61.8%
None of these	ESS 2008	4.3%	2.5%	1.8%
	<i>Pre-survey</i>	0%	5.9%	0%
	<i>Post-survey</i>	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%

Source: European Social Survey; own data

Our data also allows us to identify individual ‘attitude shifters’. Here, Figure 1 is a good starting point. It reports the frequencies of answers in the pre-survey (on the x-axis) and in the post-survey (on the y-axis) and thus shows how many participants changed from one answer to another (size of the grey dots and respective numbers). Dots on the diagonal line mean that these participants did not change answers from the pre- to the post-survey. All dots above the diagonal indicate shifters towards higher redistribution preferences, and dots below the diagonal line show those who turned towards less redistribution-friendly answers. As we can see from Figure 1, for all three items, more dots are above the diagonal line than below; but, as already the data from Table 1 indicates, particularly for taxation the changes are remarkable. 11 participants changed from regressive to progressive taxation, four persons from regressive to proportional or progressive, and only one person changed from proportional to progressive taxation.

¹ Unweighted ESS-data. Results for ‘Don’t know’ and ‘No answer’ not displayed.

Figure 1: Benefits and taxation for higher versus lower earners - results from the pre- and post-deliberation survey



Source: own data

In the next step, we seek to make sense of such attitude shifts and to work out possible factors determining and facilitating attitude change. In order to understand attitude formation and transformation, we draw on the literature on deliberation and the abovementioned belief-sampling model, which contends that factual knowledge, reasoning, and group processes might influence the way how different considerations (beliefs, feelings, impressions, general values, or prior judgements of an issue; Tourangeau et al. 2009, p. 179) relate to expressed attitudes.

5. Processes of attitude formation and transformation during deliberation

This section will use the threefold distinction of knowledge, reasoning, and group processes and provide evidence on how these aspects play out in deliberation. The guiding question is: What role do they play when it comes to the formation or change of redistributive preferences? For answering this question in an exploratory manner, we pick out text sequences where ‘attitude shifters’ (i.e. participants who gave different answers in the pre- and the post-survey) deliberate on different redistribution aspects, and where information, reasoning, and group processes could be observed. These deliberation instances stand out as examples for several other similar sequences.

Information

As outlined above, expert input by the research team at the beginning and during the breakout sessions on the second day was part of the methodological approach. In addition, participants with knowledge on specific topics provided expertise when they explained details or general aspects to the group. Hence, during the debates, participants learned new facts about the issues discussed. Although we could not observe that this led to a direct attitude change in the sense of ‘now I know – then I change my mind’, we found numerous instances where information triggered for example a greater awareness of problems or higher consistency

between abstract values and concrete policy preferences (as reported in other deliberation studies; e.g. Niemeyer 2011; Isernia, Smets 2014).

The following text sequence (from the breakout group with an oversample of unemployed people) is a good example. While some participants had only rudimentary knowledge of the welfare system, one participant – Sonja, a 29-year-old female who had recently completed her studies of law and was currently searching for a job and received unemployment insurance benefits (between 1400 and 2100€) – was very well informed about the German welfare state and frequently provided explanations or clarifications to the other participants in the group. In the text sequence below, several participants indicate that they learned something and expressed their consent with a particular financing model for healthcare (a compulsory universal risk-sharing scheme) which Sonja presents as an alternative to the existing two-tier German scheme of public and private health insurance. If we take a closer look at Jessica – a 30-year-old woman who completed secondary school (ISCED 2) and works in public services (household net income 4000-5000€) – we can see that she does not only increase her knowledge, but is also able to better align her own values and preferences for welfare state activity.

FIRST DAY

Moderator: Do you feel that you have to pay too much [for health insurance and additional health services]?

[broad agreement; problem of private systems for high-earners is mentioned]

Researcher: There are two models. You either say that we have a health insurance where the healthy really have to pay for the sick, and then people might see that as unjust or unfair; or you say that the sick have to pay a slightly higher premium. [...] You have to decide what kind of system you want to have and what one sees as morally or ethically right. Is there a preference?

Jessica: I think everyone should pay the same, because it could happen to anyone. [...]

Sonja: There was this suggestion of universal health care. [...]

Moderator: Are you familiar with this idea of universal health care?

[weak knowledge; vague ideas of shared risks and everyone paying into the same system]

Claus: But isn't that the way it already is?

Sonja: There are these health insurance systems where everyone pays in. There are some systems where the state insured people pay in out of their income payments and where the employer pays for half. The suggestion is then that everyone, even the officials and doctors and the self-employed all pay in. That's the concept of universal health care.

Erika: But does everyone pay the same?

Sonja: It's percentage-based.

[confusion about financing issues]

Sonja: [...] But the idea behind this type of insurance is that one pays in, and it's never guaranteed that you'll get out as much as you paid in, but that in the case that the insured situation arises, that you are entitled to this service. Just like with retirement insurance, if you die shortly before you would have retired, then you paid in and got nothing out. But that is how it is with insurance. [...]

Moderator: When the rest of you hear this, would this be a model for the future?

Jessica: Most certainly.

Dieter: Yes, definitely.

Jessica: It sounds very good, and very right.

Alina: I agree.

[topic is closed; debate on wages for medical personnel follows] [...]

Researcher: On the other hand, if you say the state should regulate and have a hand in this and make sure the doctors get better pay, then people have to pay more in health fees to finance that.

Jessica: Well, but then we have this point with the universal coverage system, because then everyone is paying in – everyone, even the people who are now privately insured. And then there’s much more available.

SECOND DAY

[topic: pension; dependency ratio and different systems for different professions are problematized, moderator asks about measures] [...]

Jessica: We make a law about that so that everyone has to pay in. There’s no private retirement insurance anymore, everyone pays into one fund.

(day 1 & 2, breakout unemployed)

At the beginning of the sequence on the first day, the participants are confronted with two different models based on different distributive principles (shared vs. individual risks and contributions). Here, Jessica expresses her preference for flat-rate contributions but justifies it with equally distributed risks. She does not seem to be aware that ‘paying the same’ would imply a higher burden for those with lower income (which is also exhibited by other statements of her). Sonja then mentions the idea of a universal health insurance and the proportional contributions it would be based on. Jessica does not only strongly agree with this model, she also brings it up later, when financing problems in the healthcare system are discussed.

Jessica is among the ‘attitude-shifters’ from Figure 1. While she does not change her evaluations of spending on pensions and unemployment (she supports that higher earners should get higher benefits), her answers to the taxation-question differ between the pre- and the post-deliberation survey. Before the event, she favoured the regressive model (‘pay same amount in tax’), while after deliberation she chose the progressive option (‘higher earners pay higher share’). Without claiming to prove a causal chain, we can understand Jessica’s switch from regressive to proportional taxation in the light of such processes of deliberation and argue that she might have realized some general aspects of (risk) redistribution structures, and is now able to better align her own principles of justice and preferences for policy measures.

What is also remarkable is that Jessica establishes links between different issues discussed during the two days (e.g. “Under the heading of private vs. public, many other topics could fall under that.”; Day 2, topic educational inequality) and seems to transfer the idea of universal risk-sharing based on proportional contributions to the pension system during the second day. We could observe such a ‘knowledge transfer’ for other participants, too; and in fact some of them also reflected that during the deliberative forum they significantly increased their knowledge on the functioning of the welfare state as a whole. Again, while we do not claim to have explicit evidence that this triggered higher redistribution preferences, our data nevertheless suggest that for instance a better understanding of the revenue- and spending-side if redistribution could make people more supportive of progressive taxation.

Reasoning

The second mode refers to forms of reasoning and justification, which may resonate with the participants and lead them to alter their views. The data show that participants often brought

up a problem or expressed a more general ‘feeling of injustice’ by referring to own experiences or specific examples. However, these ad-hoc expressions were mostly relatively vague when it comes to attitudinal stances. Nevertheless, in the course of the debate, participants were then confronted with questions, objections or other reactions from moderators or other participants and were ‘forced’ to justify, specify, weigh or rethink their position. Often this led to a discursive exchange of views with reference to and on the basis of normative principles, interests and policy experiences. A good example of this quite frequent pattern of reasoning is the following sequence, where Lydia – a 21-years-old female university student who has a household net income below 1400€ per month – joins a debate on wages with a rather general statement on ‘injustice’ and then further develops her position with regard to income inequalities, governmental responsibility and her conception of justice. Her position is particularly challenged by statements from Selim, a 24-years-old male banker (household net income between 2100 and 2800€) with Turkish migration background and completed A-levels, and from Ulf, a retired 66-years-old male who completed secondary school (ISCED 2) and has a household net income between 2100 and 2800€.

Lydia: [...] For instance my cousin works in a bakery, and they earn very little money, and I find it to be really unfair. Those who achieve more should get more, but for those who still work hard and make something of themselves, they should be better supported. Those are [...] things we should try to change.

Selim: Fine, but then the consumer has to be willing to pay a different price. [...] You’d have to pay 50 cents for a roll in order to support that.

Lydia: There’s support and subsidies given to other industries as well, and we could do that there.

Selim: [...] What I’m saying is you can’t have both suitable pay but keep the products cheap. That won’t work for food products anyway. [...]

Lydia: I think the state should take responsibility for this. [...]

Selim: In the end, the consumers decide this [...] There has to be an awareness created among consumers [...].

[short debate on spending capacities, consumers’ choice and the role of information]

Lydia: You can’t just look at it that way. We all live together and we should make decisions that support agreeable coexistence with one another, and that might mean making compromises that allow those people to have more as well. This idea that one person is counting their pennies and the other takes home millions – I think that’s totally unfair. We really have to work on that. Maybe that is wishful thinking, but I think it’s right.

Ulf: Then you’re in the wrong country. We have a free market system, that’s our basic principle, and we have a minimum wage – whether this wage is good or bad is another question, but...

[short debate on minimum wage]

Ulf: Then we come back to education. If their education had been better and more focused, then maybe they wouldn’t need to do this job. Regardless of what we’re talking about, there will always be some people who earn very little and others who earn a lot.

Lydia: [...] I’m not saying the baker has to earn just as much as someone who works themselves to death or difficult work that is mentally very challenging, but still they should try to make it fairer.

Ayaz: Raising the standard is a rather German way of thinking. Dissatisfaction. You should try to maintain the standard that you have rather than raise it, because that is really rather difficult.

Lydia: Those who have a lot don’t need to raise it, they have enough. [...]

(day 1, breakout migration background)

In her first statement, Lydia draws on own experiences to illustrate her feeling of injustice with regard to a purely performance-based remuneration. Although she sees a need for action, she does not express clearly how this should be done. However, when confronted with a liberal market logic, she then states that she sees a governmental responsibility for regulating the market, and – triggered by a counterargument from Selim – also draws a link to existing measures in other areas (subsidies). In a next step, she then develops a clear position regarding the normative underpinnings of her plea for governmental activities. When confronted with individual responsibility (awareness and education) and the necessarily existing inequalities in a market-based system, she defends and specifies her more collectivist approach and explicitly criticizes large inequalities at a more general level. Redistribution for her is not a sole matter of social security schemes, but does also (or particularly) include wages. She defends this position again at a later state.

The text sequence evinces the argumentative development of attitudes via reasoning and justification. While interacting with other participants, Lydia seems to get more aware of some of her preferences and evaluations and also connects different aspects of redistribution and related statutory responsibility. Her different responses in the pre- and post-survey can also be interpreted in the light of these observations. Lydia is among the ‘switchers’ from proportional to progressive taxation, and she also changes from “higher earners should get larger pensions” to “high and low earners should get same pensions”. Furthermore, while in the pre-survey, she expressed her agreement to the statement that large differences in people’s incomes are acceptable to reward difference in talents and efforts, in the post-survey she disagreed to this statement.

Group processes

The third mode underlying possible shifts in attitudes is related to group processes. Here, the literature mentions different aspects, such as other-regarding, group polarization, or informational cascades. Indeed, we could observe all of them in our deliberative forum. Other-regarding in the sense of taking into account others’ positions and situations when making own judgements or voting happened quite frequently, but is not very explicit in discursive sequences due to its subtler character. Other group-processes such as ‘groupthink’, or group polarization are more explicitly identifiable in our data.

For instance, a pattern of polarization can be observed in the breakout group with an oversampling of self-employed. Here, Rolf-Phillip, a 55-years-old self-employed lawyer (HH-net > 5000 €), who dominated the group, often expressed strong redistribution preferences, which were frequently supported by various other group members and became to some extent a majority opinion. However, Clemens, a 46-year-old self-employed (HH-net income 2800 – 4000 €), holds a different position and does explicitly not follow the group, while his own positions seem to become more extreme. He is isolated with his more individualist and liberal opinions. Although not very salient in the beginning, his reluctance to greater redistribution and statutory regulation seems to gain increasing relevance for him in the course of the discussions (e.g. “it’s not good to always dictate what people must do”, “And who’s to say that it’s good or bad? Let people decide for themselves, right?”). The following text sequence from the breakout session during the first day illustrates some of these observations:

Rolf-Philip: For me with the subject of retirement, I think of injustice. For instance, paying into the lawyers' retirement fund, which is unjust, because later I'll get a higher pension than the normal federal pension, because mine doesn't need to cover unemployment factors and absenteeism, inability to work insurance, etc. There are also the architects, the doctors, etc.; they all have their own pension organizations, which are very privileged. [...] It would be sensible that everyone pays into one fund.

Clemens: I don't see it that way at all, because paying in means you have claim to something as well [...] If you pull them into the federal system, then they'd get a disproportionately high pension out of that, because they earn more. They also have to be financed.

Rolf-Philip: No, there's a cap on that. There's a limit of 5,000 euros per month. Just like the federal system. If I earn 10,000, then I still only pay from the basic 5,000.

Clemens: But how are you going to generate that [money]? [...] We're pushing this system right up against the wall, and if there is not a major change or a well-managed and well-integrated immigration, we can help things along a bit, but if not, this will be a very different country. [...]

Rolf-Philip: But doesn't it make sense to let the good contributors like lawyers, architects and doctors in too?

Clemens: Why? They take care of themselves.

Rolf-Philip: No, it's an obligatory payment. I have to pay into it, just like with normal retirement insurance.

Clemens: Of course, I'm required as an employee to contribute as well. But you're being served out of my pot then.

Margot: But he paid in for that.

Rolf-Philip: Right, those are good contributors. Most lawyers don't get more out than they paid in. It's a zero-sum game. It's a difference of maybe 600 euros.

Clemens: First they pay disproportionately more into it, then they get less out. They're never going to play along.

Rolf-Philip: Well, if they're obligated, so they have to pay in.

Clemens: But then they'll get less out than if they were paying into their own scheme.

Rolf-Philip: But that's good for the pension fund.

Clemens: But they shouldn't be forced to give that up for the majority in this way.

(day 1, breakout group self-employed)

In this passage, Rolf-Philip enters the debate with a normative claim regarding the redistributive design of the public pension system. Although he illustrates his statement with individual experiences, he argues at a rather abstract level and makes more general suggestions for solving the problem he identified. This solution would contradict his individual interests as a lawyer, but be in line with his (frequently expressed) collectivist and solidary values. Clemens clearly rejects the suggestion of a universal pension insurance scheme. In the course of the debate, he then refers more and more to individual/group interests. Confronted with the normative claim of universalism, he argues that this should not be hierarchically induced and thus favours lower degrees of governmental involvement in this regard. Here, we can observe how Clemens links interest, liberal values, and an assessment of the degree of governmental activities. In fact, his straightforward arguments in favour of an individualist and liberal pension model seem to be clearly triggered by Rolf-Philip's strong claim for greater redistribution. Clemens is well aware of the problematic dependency ratio in Germany, as he showed throughout the DF; and he also sees a general statutory responsibility in this regard. However, in the exchange with Rolf-Philip and other group members, his positions seem to become an antipode to the polarized redistribution affinity in his group.

With this reading of Clemens' attitude expressions, we can also interpret his answers in the post-survey against the backdrop of polarization. While his answers in favour of less governmental *spending* in most policy areas² remained the same between the pre- and the post-survey, there is a remarkable difference in all items on government *responsibility*. He expressed a preference for high responsibility in all mentioned areas in his answers in the pre-survey, but his answers in the post-survey clearly indicate a preference for lower responsibility in all areas except health care. After having discussed and reflected welfare state issues for two days, Clemens most probably was better aware of the functioning of the system as a whole and the interplay of governmental responsibility and governmental spending. Furthermore, irritated by the strong demand for collectivism, he seems to deem a need for 'correcting the course against the mainstream'; a feeling which might have influenced his answers in the post-survey.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper set out to link welfare attitudes to the literature on public deliberation and the dynamics of attitudes. We analysed data from a two-day deliberative forum on 'The future of the German welfare state' with 34 participants held in Berlin in November 2015. The participants answered survey-questions on welfare attitudes before and after the two days. The results showed that several people not only gave markedly different answers in the pre- and the post-survey, but also shifted their preferences towards greater redistribution. In fact, attitude change is frequently reported from deliberative forums or other deliberation events. However, while usually deliberative forums are held on very narrow and precisely formulated topics, our format confronted the participants with a broad variety of welfare-related issues. We could observe that indeed some aspects – such as redistribution via progressive taxation – were much more subject to change than others; a finding which clearly deserves greater attention in future research on the dynamics of attitudes in the context of deliberation.

A dynamic notion of attitudes corresponds to the more context-focused concepts of survey psychologists, and we hence analytically linked the underlying mechanisms of attitude construction as outlined by Tourangeau and colleagues (Tourangeau et al. 2009, p. 179) to aspects which had been identified in the literature on deliberation as being decisive for attitude change: information, reasoning, and group processes. Attitudes are understood as being based on different considerations which are retrieved when making an attitudinal statement. Information might add new considerations, reasoning might 'sort' the considerations and hence lead to greater consistency, and group processes might influence the accessibility of particular considerations. In our empirical data, we found numerous instances for all three factors; and we presented three examples which illustrated the different dynamics of construction and calibration of attitudes against the backdrop of deliberation practice as well as individual predispositions such as values or interests.

In the first example, we highlighted the role of information. In the text sequence, Jessica, a participant with only rudimentary knowledge of the German social security system increased

² standard of living for unemployed, low-wage earners, working parents and paid leave for parents with pre-school parents

her knowledge on healthcare financing. After having learned about the possibility and functions of a universal scheme in contrast to the existing scheme, she strongly favours such a different form distribution of risks and resources. Later, she is also able to transfer her knowledge to other social security schemes. It is observable that she is able to better align her underlying values and the expressed policy preferences due to the information she got; we could also say that due to the new information she adds new considerations to the existing ones. The changes in Jessica's answers between the pre- and the post-deliberation survey towards greater redistribution can be understood as being linked to such new considerations which serve as a basis for her answers in the post-survey.

Similarly, in the second example, another participant, Lydia, increases her ability to align own predispositions and policy preferences in the course of deliberation. However, here it is not increased factual knowledge, but a certain 'revelation process' (Smets, Isernia 2014, p. 395) based on reasoning which seems to influence the considerations for attitudes. The participant is constantly forced to justify, weigh, and specify her position in interaction with others, and by this comes to much more fine-grained and elaborated judgements. Again, we could interpret her changes in the pre/post-survey in the light of such processes and assume that her existing considerations have experienced a certain 'sorting' which led to evaluations allowing for greater consistency of values and policy preferences.

The third example refers to group polarization; a repeatedly observed pattern of group processes. Here, a third participant, Clemens, becomes much more extreme in his liberal and individualist positions when confronted with a group majority – represented by one dominant participant – favouring redistribution and collectivist approaches. It seems that the 'liberal participant' feels the need to 'correct the course against the mainstream' by emphasizing liberal and individualist aspects; and we could also interpret some of his answers in the post-survey in this regard. When confronted with the strong group majority, some of his existing considerations might have become more salient and hence more accessible when answering the post-survey.

To be sure, these findings are exploratory, and we cannot claim any causal relationship between discussions during the deliberative forum, and answers in the surveys. Nevertheless, we think that the empirical examples demonstrate the dynamic side of attitudes and the role of information, reasoning, and group processes in influencing the different considerations which underlie attitude expressions. These findings are a fruitful starting point for future research on the micro-mechanisms of attitude change; a perspective which is so far missing both in the literature on deliberation and on welfare attitudes. Future research could strongly benefit from drawing closer links between survey psychology and deliberation research when looking at individual dynamics of attitude formation and attitude expression. As our study illustrates, deliberative forums can provide a highly useful format in this regard, since here people are confronted with expert information, group processes, and the need for argumentation or justification in a very condensed way. Our data suggests (as already highlighted by in the deliberation literature; e.g. Niemeyer 2012) that discursive processes and increased knowledge during a deliberative forum can lead to a greater awareness of one's own preferences, and to a better sorting of values and interests; a finding which is most decisive

for the welfare attitudes literature, which constantly seeks to disentangle the role of these factors (among others: Kulin, Svallfors 2013).

In this regard, the observation that people became more redistribution-affinitive (particularly with regard to taxation) is of crucial relevance. Although more in-depth evidence on people's considerations is necessary, our exploratory data nevertheless suggest that a greater awareness of own preferences and of the functions of the welfare state as a whole play a role. Of course, this raises the question how stable such increased redistribution preferences are. Can we speak of 'the true revealed preference' which came out through deliberation? Or is the post-survey answer just a snapshot that has to be understood in light of the deliberation experience? While our data does not allow us to go beyond speculation in this regard, a more theoretical reflection suggests that the stability of attitude change probably depends on the underlying discursive pattern. Jessica learned new facts about the German healthcare system and she will probably not forget about these facts very soon, suggesting that her 'new' attitude might remain rather stable due to this added consideration. On the other extreme, Clemens' opinion was strongly triggered by his group experiences, and hence the accessibility of the consideration which drove his answer in the post-survey was probably quite context-dependent and not very stable. Yet, here again further research is needed in order to provide broader evidence on the stability of attitudes in the context of deliberation.

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