

Annex 1: Organisational and practitioner view of dialogue

The institutional need for legitimacy in their technoscientific decision-making was one of the driving forces in the development of the dialogue literature in PEST (Bucchi and Trench 2021). According to Sturgis (2014), the proponents of dialogue have implicitly or explicitly drawn on deliberative democracy in their usage of the idea of dialogue, often misunderstanding it and overestimating the public motivation to participate. This is consistent with the fact that, in practice, practitioners have tended to name different engagement formats such as deliberative polling, standing consultative panels, focus groups, citizen juries, consensus conferences, stakeholder dialogues simply as “dialogue” or “dialogue events” (Davies et al. 2009). In this sense, it is crucial to explore how major institutions and practitioners’ communities define and characterise the notion of dialogue in order to shed light on the nuances of the concept.

According to the OECD (2020) in their newest report “Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave”, the mechanism of “citizen dialogue” would fall under the umbrella of “representative deliberative processes” that include other formats, such as citizen assemblies, panels and juries. However, in contrast to those formats, the aim of dialogue is not to produce informed citizen recommendation but rather citizen opinion on policy questions. In their account, the format of citizen dialogue involves, on average, 148 participants, over 2.1 days with the goal of producing broad ideas and recommendations. This typology is interesting in that it equates dialogue to a format of deliberation that does not produce policy recommendations.

This assimilation between dialogue and deliberation can also be traced in the European Commission since the, 2001 “Improving the Human Research Potential and the SocioEconomic Knowledge Base Work Programme” that pushed for “dialogue with the public” while listing examples of deliberative polling, standing consultative panels, focus groups, and citizen juries (Macq et al. 2020). This was later translated into the, 2002 Science and Society

Action Plan that made calls for local and regional dialogues of “Science and Society”

In the UK, the conceptualisation depicted by the OECD is reproduced and cited by DEFRA in their latest report of public engagement mechanisms (Defra 2022). Other UK-based organisations, such as Involve UK see dialogue as a component of deliberative dialogues (Involve 2011) and a component of deliberative workshops (Involve n.d.). However, they also list dialogue as a method on its own that “covers a wide range of different activities, which aim to share opinions between people and build relationships” (Involve n.d.). Under this framework, dialogue is both a process within deliberation and a method on its own that is characterised by sharing rather than decision-making.

Sciencewise (2018) operates with a slightly different notion. According to the public agency, public dialogue “is an approach to involving citizens in decision making. Dialogues bring together a diverse mix of citizens with a range of views and values, and relevant policy makers and experts, to discuss, reflect and come to conclusions on complex and/or controversial issues” (p.3). For Sciencewise, citizen juries, citizen summits and citizen advisory groups are examples of public dialogue, which is defined by the following characteristics:

- Informed
- Two-way
- Facilitated
- Deliberative
- Diverse
- Purposeful
- Impartial
- Expansive

In other words, according to Sciencewise, public dialogue includes a large category of deliberative processes that involve both sharing and decision-

making. According to the Action Catalogue developed by the Engage2020 project of the European Union (2015), the projects developed by Sciencewise can be classified as deliberative workshops or minipublics (Action Catalogue).

In the US, the Center for Public Engagement with Science & Technology of the AAAS assert a distinction between “Policy deliberation” and “Public dialogue” (Nisbet and Markowitz 2015). In policy deliberation, the stakeholders dialogue and exchange views on science policy, while the purpose of public dialogue is dialogue in itself and the mutual learning of publics and experts. This notion of dialogue is also two-fold, both as a process within deliberation and as a method on its own that focuses on learning rather than decision-making. This use of the term dialogue resonates with the descriptions of Involve in the UK.

The use of dialogue in the US is also marked by the presence of multiple private organisations with proprietary models. Organisations such as Essential Partners or Everyday Democracy provide their own models and methods (Reflective Structured Dialogue and Dialogue for Change respectively). Other US professional communities do provide characterisations of dialogue beyond trademarked methods. According to the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD), dialogue and deliberation are closely related but different processes. Dialogue is centred around sharing perspectives and experiences in order to produce understanding and learning. On the other hand, the emphasis in deliberation is about examining options and trade-offs to make better choices.

This polysemy of dialogue is also visible in other international organisations. For example, in a recent report (2022) by the World Health Organization (WHO), deliberative dialogues are taken as the general category for multiple deliberation methods, such as citizen panels and conferences. According to WHO (2022) a “deliberative dialogue convenes key national stakeholders concerned with the priority policy issue addressed in the evidence brief to: discuss factors that influence decision-making about the issue: capture the

tacit knowledge, views and experiences of stakeholders; and identify key next steps for different constituencies” (p.3). In this understanding of dialogue, we can observe a synthesis of the sharing and the deciding components that resonates with the overall framing of “deliberative dialogues”. However, the proposition that deliberative dialogue is the most general category is somewhat novel.

Finally, according to The Open Government Partnership’s Practice Group on Dialogue and Deliberation, that partners 79 countries and, 20 local members, there are three kind of deliberative practices for informed participation (2019). These are Open Dialogue, Deliberative Analysis and Narrative Building. Open Dialogue involves asking people “to draw on their experience around an issue and to use their natural conversational skills to exchange views and propose options to solve it (p.19). On the other hand, Deliberative Analysis involves engagement that is “more formal about the rules of engagement and focuses participants’ attention on facts and arguments, and the information and data that support them” (p.19). The distinction here seems vaguer, in the sense that Open Dialogue does seem to involve decision-making but in a less structured manner. Their conceptualisation of Deliberative Analysis has an epistemic emphasis, but it is not clear how to determine what are more formal rules of engagement.

Overall, there is a diversity of uses of dialogue within institutions and practitioner organisations. However, there are also some common threads. Institutions at different levels of governance, such as the OECD, the European Commission, DEFRA, and Sciencewise have produced reports in which dialogue is constructed as the overarching category that encompasses many deliberative formats, such as citizen juries or consensus conferences. Other institutions and practitioner organisations, such as the WHO, Open Government Partnership, the AAS, Involve UK, and the NCDD have used dialogue both as a process within deliberation and as a method on its own, but with a clear emphasis on dialogue as a learning and sharing process in contrast with the emphasis given to deliberation as a decision-making and argumentative process.

An important note to make is that the existence of institutional reports using the notion of dialogue in specific ways does not necessarily mean that their commissioning institution adheres solely to that usage. In other words, it is very likely that large institutions, such as the OECD or the WHO have put their names in documents defining dialogue and deliberation in other ways. The point I'm making is not that specific institutions have epistemic commitments to specific definitions, but rather, that dialogue seems to be used very flexibly and apparently in a non-committal way across governance levels. The authors of these reports are also creative in creating grammatical labels, or bigrams, of these definitions, such as citizen dialogue, public dialogue, deliberative dialogue or open dialogue.

Annex, 2: Dialogue in other epistemic traditions

Many epistemic traditions have used the notion of dialogue within the context or "language game" of political coordination and policy action. I have so far explored its use in STS and deliberative democracy. However, there are insights from "neighbouring" disciplines and discussions that have also sought to conceptualise dialogue about the public (Heidlebaugh 2008) or a very similar phenomenon.

In communication studies, dialogue has gained a significant level of attention but often overlapping with deliberation. According to McDonald et al. (2009), dialogue methods include traditionally deliberative processes, such as citizen juries and consensus conferences. For the authors, deliberative methods "tend to overlap with dialogue methods which focus on group conversation processes to jointly create meaning and a shared understanding of real-world problems by bringing together knowledge from relevant disciplines and stakeholders" (p.194). McDonald et al. (2009) define dialogue using Franco's (2006 in McDonald et al. 2009) as "jointly create meaning and shared understanding' through conversation". This definition is curious as it establishes conversation as the medium for dialogue, without really differentiating the two.

According to Black (2008), dialogue should be understood as “as an experienced quality of interaction, rather than a structured interaction format designed to create conditions favourable to that experience” (p.95). In this sense, Black (2008) prefers the notion of “dialogic moments” that can be characterised by “momentary experiences of profound mutual awareness of the other person” (p.95). Under this framing, dialogue is compatible with deliberation, or any other form of interaction, because a moment of dialogue can occur in the midst of any interactional format.

In argumentation theory, Walton and Krabbe (1995) classically proposed a typology of dialogue, in which deliberative dialogue is a particular type of dialogue oriented to deciding over two or more different courses of action. Deliberation dialogue happens when “something needs to be done, and the problem is which choice of action is the better, or more prudent, in the given circumstances, taking account of the interests and aspirations of the whole group” (Douglas Walton et al. 2010, 7). Corredor (2020) echoes this framework and defines deliberative dialogue as “a joint activity carried out between two or more coparticipants who try to reach a common solution to a practical problem” (p.138).

In the field of Participatory Design (PD), dialogue has been understood as a key process to elicit the tacit knowledge of users (Luck 2003; Jones 2018). In its origin in Scandinavia, democratic dialogue has been used as core component of participatory design, and the design process has been understood as a dialogue between designer and user (Gregory 2003; Hansen et al. 2019). However, little conceptualisation has been devoted to the concept of dialogue itself. Important authors such as Donald Schön prefer the notion of “conversational design”, even over participatory (Binder 1996).

Nonetheless, Schön’s notion of conversational design has been defined as dialogue with stakeholders in design situations (Bannon and Ehn 2012). Pelle Ehn also preferred alternative concepts, such as the Wittgensteinian ideas of “languageing” and the “meeting of language games” (Ehn 1988). Other

models have sought to integrate dialogue further into participatory design approaches.

For instance, the idea of "dialogic design", understood as "a social conversation in which everybody is allowed to bring ideas and take action, even though these ideas and actions could, at times, generate problems and tensions" (Manzini 2016, 58). Nonetheless, this sort of description appears to be too broad to differentiate among different forms of communication.

In practice, dialogue workshops have been widely adopted within the application of Participatory Design (Robertson and Simonsen 2012), but it seems that dialogue has been mostly adopted as an ontological framework (dialogics rather than dialogue), in which self and other as seen as co-constructing and that "recognition makes it possible to know the other's needs, which is the point of participatory design: to know from the other's perspective what is needed to improve the usability of the design" (Salvo 2001, 276).

In this sense, within the PD literature, "participatory design is one kind of dialogic engagement" (Salvo 2001, 279), in which dialogue workshops appear to be greatly influential, but in which the word dialogue has been under-conceptualised in favour of alternative notions, such as conversation and interaction. However, it is noteworthy that the use of dialogue within PD establishes a more direct connection between understanding and listening to "the other" and producing better results. Because participants are framed as engaging in a design situation, the relationship between dialogue and action becomes very porous.

There have been attempts to form a distinct discipline of "dialogue studies", led by the

Dialogue Society, the Institute of Dialogue Studies and later the creation of the Dialogue Studies Journal (Elsdon-Baker 2013; Weller 2016). Dialogue Studies (DS) is often based on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Martin Buber, and David Bohm (Cissna and Anderson 2003), as well as Gadamer & Freire

to a lesser degree (Stewart et al. 2003). The Journal of Dialogue Studies defines dialogue as: “a meaningful interaction and exchange between individuals and/or people of different groups (social, cultural, political and religious) who come together through various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increase understanding” (Elsdon-Baker 2013, 32)

In their foundational work, Cissna & Anderson (2003) refer to dialogue both as "a quality of human relationship and a mutualistic way of thinking about human beings and human relationships" (p.196). Under this framework, dialogue operates both as a phenomenon and as a philosophical stance ("a way of thinking"). Additionally, Cissna & Anderson assert that dialogue underlies many of the current enterprises of contemporary social and political thought, to the point that "political theorists turn to dialogic thought in exploring new approaches to democracy and deliberation" (p.202).

However, as Grillo (2012) asserts, there are risks in taking the concept of dialogue so broadly. It may indeed help in the diffusion of the concept. Still, "taking the concept of dialogue in too wide a sense one is led to overlook what makes dialogue so specific a verbal exchange, widely praised for its social and personal value" (Grillo 2012, 94). Grillo (2012) goes on to characterise dialogue as a "truth-conveying discursive strategy" (p.97). In this conception of dialogue as a discursive strategy under a "truth-preserving constraint" (p.96), the specificity of dialogue is defined by the co-occurrence of trust, fit (with world, facticity) and assent of individuals. In his words, “dialogue being the one among the discursive strategies we can engage in, that makes it possible to fulfil these threefold requirements simultaneously” (p.97).

In a similar fashion to the notion of dialogues as truth-conveying, Elsdon-Baker (2013) argues that dialogue is “necessarily a goal driven process” (p.35), whose particular goal seems to be understanding. Additionally, she also adds that dialogue interventions must be significant, and thus recognise the social structures that construct hierarchy and scale. This vision embeds dialogue within power and politics.

Berlin & Fetzer (2012) also draw a parallel between politics and dialogue, and then briefly define dialogue as “the act of engaging the medium of language in order to communicate a vision which listeners can agree to or reject” (p.4). This act can be placed in a continuum akin to the one of politics; one where it is truly two-way and co-produced through cooperation and common action, to one where power is just reproduced and the official positions are reproduced along prescribed paths.

Johansson (2012) makes a distinction between dialogue and political dialogue (such as the one described by Berlin & Fetzer 2012). Johansson asserts that dialogue is an abstract and theoretical notion that can broadly be understood as a human sense-making and situated action taking place in cognitive and sociocultural contexts. Political dialogue, on the other hand, is “a situated action in different domains of the public sphere. In very general terms, it can be seen as a dialogue in which actors negotiate their interests in society. This takes place in a plural and heterogeneous society in a way that dialogue has its specific characteristics” (p.49). In that sense, the difference between plain dialogue and political dialogue would lie in the fact that political dialogue occurs around the public sphere and involves actors with interests in a plural society.

Overall, across these different disciplines and traditions, there are commonalities and differences that can help to enrich the discussion about dialogue. Across many of these traditions, dialogue is seen as the overarching category that can encompass deliberation as a subset. Perhaps because of this, the literature seems less critical of dialogue in comparison with STS for instance. Additionally, even for the most specialised community for dialogue, that is, dialogue studies, there are hard difficulties in establishing a consensual characterisation. However, some things carry across epistemic boundaries, for instance, the question whether dialogue is a practice or a momentary phenomenon, or the association between dialogue and understanding. Some of this literature also brings out interesting specificities. For instance, the notion that if dialogue is about understanding, there may be

an epistemic dimension worth exploring. Or that depending on the framing of the encounter, dialogue and action, as well as dialogue and the political can be enacted as intertwined.

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