

A reaction for *Notre Europe* to Andrew Moravcsik's article, "What Can We Learn from the Collapse of the European Constitutional Project?"

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Moravcsik's critique of EU popular consultation concentrates especially on two causal connections he regards as dubious¹: First that "greater participation generates more informed deliberation." and second that "more informed or intensive decision-making generates greater public trust and a deeper sense of common identity and legitimacy" (p. 222). The supposed flaws in these propositions undermine the notion that "more populist and deliberative democratic forms" will "generate participation and legitimacy" (p. 221).

The basic difficulty with this critique is that it fails to distinguish "populist" from "deliberative" forms of democracy. Indeed, the argument seems to treat them as nearly interchangeable. Our research raises serious questions about Moravcsik's critique. We agree that many populist forms of participation will do nothing for deliberation. It all depends on institutional design (see Fishkin, **Democracy and Deliberation**, Yale University Press, 1991). Unthinking mobilization is not deliberation. Talking to the like

¹ These are two of the three causal connections Moravcsik focuses on. The remaining one is about whether increasing opportunities (in general) will necessarily increase participation (in general). Our point here is that deliberative participation must be distinguished from other forms.

mindful is not deliberation. Careful structuring is required for an informed and civil exchange of views. With proper design, we have found in Deliberative Polling® research that deliberation contributes to virtually all of the desired aspects of citizenship. Hence we believe that Moravcsik's third proposition is open to serious question (see Luskin and Fishkin, "Deliberation and Better Citizens" on <http://cdd.stanford.edu> for evidence of the effects of deliberation on several dimensions of citizenship). And in the 1995 British Deliberative Poll on EU issues, we found that citizen deliberation increased support for Britain's integration into the EU. Hence Moravcsik is not correct that social science research routinely supports the notion that public discussion will necessarily decrease the legitimacy of the European Union. These are open, empirical questions. Sometimes deliberative public discussion has clearly increased it.

We agree that increasing populism may not serve deliberation. If there had been something more recognizable as citizen deliberation on the constitution, then perhaps some of the other aims of EU citizenship would have been achieved. Our experiments with Deliberative Polling certainly suggest that. Hence televised microcosmic deliberation combined with appropriate strategies for extending the reach of such efforts to the broader public might have led to a different debate and perhaps a different outcome. In any case, a retreat to an elites-only discussion will not serve EU legitimacy, while movement toward deliberative involvement by the public, rather than merely populist involvement, may do so. ■

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