

Chapter 1

Introduction

After more than a decade of intense debate, the normative idea of deliberative democracy has established itself as a viable foundation for designing democratic institutions. Yet the debate continues. The more diverse the social context, the more difficult it is to develop a sustainable framework for deliberative democracy. Some difficulties stem from the usual predicaments any project about democracy faces, such as existing power relations and inequalities in various forms; others are generated by ambiguities in deliberative theory itself.

Development of the idea of deliberation as a practical programme requires, in the first instance, further investigation of the increasingly diverse nature of modern societies. This is particularly true for those societies sharply divided on religious, ethnic and cultural lines. The issue is how to establish a properly functioning deliberative environment when those divisions represent a fundamental barrier to resolving differences over controversial issues.

Deliberative theory presupposes that in order to guarantee proper rules of engagement during deliberation, basic individual rights – freedom of expression, freedom of religious practice – have been established as governing normative principles. This is so not only for the deliberative process itself but also for the society at large. An established liberal culture is a prerequisite for the success of deliberative practice. Yet if deliberation requires a well-established, mature liberal culture, deliberative theory offers little to improve the conditions of those societies divided and trapped in a cycle of non-democratic rule. The first question for deliberative theory is whether it has a place in such societies at all. If the answer to this question is yes, the theory needs revisit its major assumptions in this context.

For example, insufficient attention paid to the internal differences of deliberative theories and the tension this insufficiency creates in the design of a deliberative framework. The internal difference question can be associated with the different phases of deliberation as decision-making and social learning. Deliberation is generally treated as a decision-making procedure. This inclination overlooks another important phase of deliberation. It is oriented to social learning and understanding rather than decision-making. An aim of this book is to explore and advocate the importance of recognising the social learning phase of deliberation and to argue that for development of democratic governance in divided societies, social learning is as important as decision-making.

The first task of this study is to establish the differences between social learning and decision-making stages of deliberation. Social learning needs to be acknowledged in its own terms, with its own claims, in order to free its

deliberative potential from the terms of decision-making. This analysis forms the basis of a comparison of the theories of Habermas and Rawls. A dialogical account of deliberation is essential to appreciate the concept of social learning. A monological account of deliberation, as in Rawls, does not grasp the different dimensions of deliberation sufficiently because it neglects the fact that individual preferences could only be formed in relation to the preferences of others. Hence a monological account of deliberation fails to conceive deliberation as a continuing learning process. Habermas's theory of communicative action, by contrast, provides important insights into the social learning aspect of deliberation. Despite his emphasis on social learning, Habermas, nevertheless, does not sufficiently elaborate its role in deliberative practice. Instead he subordinates the social learning dimension of deliberation to an analysis of the formal role that decision-making procedures play in institutional settings. This shortcoming largely derives from his requirement of strict rationality in deliberative settings. This consideration of social learning also embraces the work of other theorists such as Gadamer, McCarthy, Benhabib, Young and Dryzek.

The questions under study in this book are vividly illustrated in Turkish politics. In Turkish politics there is a relentless contest between secular and Islamic ideas. Chapter 3 provides a background to the existing conditions in the Turkish political sphere where secular and Islamic ideas are contested relentlessly. Turkey is one of those societies where ethical, religious and cultural divisions cut deep. It is one of the very rare examples in the Islamic world where Islam successfully coexists with a secular system.

In Turkey, a country of diverse social fabric, Islam sits in the background of the secular regime established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923. In this regime the paradigms of the Qur'an have no visible influence in the conduct of public affairs. Kemal's dramatic steps towards secularisation transformed the circumstances in which religion and politics interact in Turkey. Having lost its dominant position, for the first time, Islam had to play a defensive role against an unfriendly state. This required a different type of interaction between Islamic and Kemalist secular forces of the society, changing continuously according to the social and political circumstances of the time.

It is the dynamics of this interaction that makes Turkey a unique case study of the different ways in which deliberative processes can function. The divisions between secular and Islamic lines in Turkey have become increasingly antagonistic following the rise of the Islamic Refah Partisi (RP) – Welfare Party, into the ranks of government during the 1990s. Tensions between the army and the RP leadership led to the resignation of the RP from the government in 1998. Instead of a decline, however, Islamic politics made a strong comeback in the 2002 general elections following formation of a new party, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) – Justice and Development Party, founded by a group of elite RP members disenchanted with the orthodox Islamic politics of the RP.

The AKP owes its electoral success to a paradigm shift towards a democratic rights discourse in Islamic politics. This shift, apart from its fundamental effects

on democratic development in Turkey, testifies to the importance of social learning in divided societies. A healthy dialogue oriented to social learning and mutual understanding between Islamic and secular forces within the Turkish public sphere could enhance the possibility that an adequate framework for reconciling differences can be established. Chapter 2 will start with a preliminary discussion about the relationship of Islam and democracy. It will include some thoughts on how a Habermasian framework might offer a remedy for reconciling the principles of a democratic polity with some Islamic concepts and will conclude with an outline of the evolution of Islam's relationship with the Turkish secular state.

Chapter 4 provides a background for a Q study conducted in Turkey prior to the 2002 general elections to analyse the discourses of the Turkish public sphere. Developed by William Stephenson from the 1930s, Q methodology is a useful tool to map out a typology of different perspectives pertinent to the area of research deriving from its focus on systematic examination of personal experiences. Through this typology it becomes possible to examine the relationship between different perspectives, and thus to identify the points of convergence and/or divergence among them.

This is the main reason that Q methodology has been chosen to analyse the varying relations between the perspectives of the Turkish public sphere. The aim of the Q study was to determine the kinds of discourses about democracy, Islam and secularism in the Turkish public sphere and then identify how they converged and/or diverged from each other. The critical moments of convergence and divergence on how each discourse perceives and identifies a problem reveals important clues that can lead to development of a new framework in which differences can be reconciled. This framework will then be used to map possible ways of developing an understanding between discourses.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the Q study in Turkey. After factor analysis, the Q study indicated the existence of four main discourses present in the Turkish public sphere: Kemalist Discourse, Nationalist Discourse, Liberal Left Discourse and Islamic Discourse. The chapter analyses the findings about each discourse by examining the meaning of each statement for each discourse. Before interpreting statements, background of each discourse relevant to the findings of the Q study is explained. This is a historical account aiming at tracing the roots and evolution of each discourse in the Turkish public sphere in order to display the complexity of the relationship between discourses. The link between past and present of each discourse is explained in this section. Combining the historical origins of each discourse with their present position in relation to the topic at hand provides important insights as to why social learning and understanding aspects of deliberation are crucial to relating each group to the common ground to which they belong. Discovery of potential moments of reconciliation is closely tied to development of a healthy dialogue between opposing sides. The competitive disposition that decision-making procedures prompts between conflicting groups does not usually allow development of the kind of dialogue that is necessary for establishing trust and/or empathy. Historical origins of each discourse testify to

the fact that there are, indeed, more commonalities between secular and Islamic discourses of Turkey than is usually thought.

The Q study findings provide important clues about why in a divided society such as Turkey, deliberation oriented to social learning and understanding could play a vital role. The findings show that divisions between secular and Islamic discourses in Turkey are not necessarily insurmountable. Even so, achieving an understanding of commonalities between discourses requires an emphasis on implementation of the right deliberative framework – deliberation oriented to social learning and understanding. Analysis of the findings demonstrates why divisions of the Turkish public sphere can be better reconciled within the social learning dimension of deliberation rather than processes oriented to decision-making.

Chapter 6 analyses each discourse from a different perspective. This time similarities and differences between discourses will be looked at in comparison to their attitudes towards some themes that commonly appeared in the statements such as dialogue for mutual understanding, the scarf, Kemalism and secularism, the state and the army, the media, democracy and Islam. Through this topic-based analysis, points of convergence and divergence from one discourse to another can be further clarified.

Chapter 7 elaborates on the prospects of democratic development in Turkey on the basis of an important finding of the Q study. As revealed in Chapter 4, the Q findings detect some similarities between liberal left and some Islamic groups. These two groups show signs of converging in conceptualisation of a democratic order based on the protection of individual rights. The basis of this proximity between Islamic and liberal left groups is a paradigm shift that occurred first within the left and then among Islamic groups. In the period after the 1980 coup, some sections of the left, trying to recover from the relentless onslaught of the army, switched from their traditional class-based politics to a new paradigm based on acknowledgement of basic individual rights. A similar shift occurred in the late 1990s within the ranks of Islamic politics, ironically again caused by the army. In 1998, following an ultimatum by the army indicating that the political manifestation of Islam reached an intolerable level of threat to the secular system, some groups within mainstream Islamic politics decided not to use Islam as the basis of their political discourse. Instead, they redefined the vision of their politics on the basis of individual rights, as in the case of liberal left groups. The paradigm shift by both groups represented a vital turning point for the future of democratic politics in Turkey. The fact that two different sections of Turkish society, traditionally hostile to one another, are now able to develop a similar view of democratic politics is of fundamental importance for the future forms of democracy in Turkey. The reflections of this move in the public sphere, in the form of broad alliances, are not yet commonplace. The genesis of an alliance between these groups is, nevertheless, already at work. Therefore the purpose of Chapter 7 is to analyse this crucial development within the ranks of the left and Islamic politics. An historical account on how the concept of individual rights has evolved in both Islamic and leftist ranks is tested in the case of Barış İçin Sürekli Kadın

Platformu (BSKP) – Women’s Platform for Peace, an anti-war alliance formed with the participation of a very diverse political and cultural representation of groups, ranging from Muslim women and Kemalists to leftists and homosexuals. The case of the BSKP provides a real life experience of how the social learning aspect of deliberation can bring about a better understanding between conflicting perspectives by establishing trust and enhancing general acceptance of democratic principles.

Chapter 8 returns to the principal theoretical theme of the book. It first evaluates social learning one more time in the light of Seyla Benhabib’s *The Claims of Culture* (2002). A preliminary framework, the Binary Deliberation Model, is then introduced to argue for an alternative way of institutionalising social learning. It investigates how social learning can be linked to formal decision-making procedures in a collaborative and productive way.