**Introduction: Towards Deliberative Policy Analysis 2.0**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this second special issue is to build on and extend the development of Deliberative Policy Analysis (DPA) 2.0 that was set in motion by the first special issue on DPA in this journal. It is set up around a symposium focused on integrating DPA’s pillars of interpretation, practice, and deliberation. We identify three key threads for interweaving these three pillars and advancing DPA 2.0 and introduce the five other contributions to this special issue along these lines. We conclude that DPA 2.0 offers a range of solid and progressive approaches for methodically engaging with the complexity, relationality and practical nature of policy processes.

**Keywords**: deliberative policy analysis, complexity, relationality, practice, deliberation, interpretation

**The reach of DPA**

The recent special issue on Deliberative Policy Analysis (DPA) published in *Policy Studies* (Li and Wagenaar 2019a, 2019b) set into motion a reflective process to articulate the unique characteristics, achievements and potential of a deliberative, practice-oriented approach to policy analysis. Li and Wagenaar (2019b) highlighted the rather peculiar situation DPA finds itself in 15 years after its conception (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003): while it “has enjoyed considerable visibility … DPA has not developed into a significant movement within the discipline of policy analysis … to [form] a coherent, let alone institutionalized, discipline or methodological approach” (580). DPA offered a timely and much celebrated message: “a more inclusive and participative form of policy analysis is better equipped to address the challenges that the dynamic, interconnected nature of contemporary society poses to policy makers” (Li and Wagenaar 2019a, 427). So why has it not had more far-reaching impact on the study and practice of public policy?

One reason might be that it was one among several landmark contributions to the then emerging field of interpretive policy analysis (IPA) (Fischer and Forester 1993; Yanow 1996, 2000; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; Fischer 2003). The contours of IPA took shape around the idea that the dominant positivist and empiricist orientation to policy analysis neglected the argumentative processes through which policy is actually made and the political values and power relations underlying these processes. Policy analysis was not to be a rational endeavor in the service of decision makers, but a communicative practice committed to democratic empowerment and social justice. This idea struck a chord. IPA kept expanding, with a second wave of landmark texts suggesting that it has now ‘come of age’ (Bevir 2010; Hoppe 2010; Wagenaar 2011; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2011; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012; Fischer and Gottweis 2012; Fischer et al. 2015; Bevir and Blakely 2018; Boswell et al. 2019). At the same time, various approaches and streams have moved IPA in different directions, so that we cannot speak of a unified field guided by a single theoretical perspective. Within this multiplicity of approaches, it is perhaps no surprise that many would struggle to clearly delineate the distinctive nature and value of DPA.

DPA itself also bears part of the responsibility for its limited reach (Li 2019; Li and Wagenaar 2019a). The three pillars of DPA that Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) identified—interpretation, practice, and deliberation—have moved apart rather than in harmony. Research falling under the broad umbrella of the interpretive pillar rapidly mushroomed and institutionalized, with DPA seen more as one of the many approaches to IPA rather than an approach that encompasses and extends a concern with interpretation of policy. Even within Wagenaar’s extensive overview of Interpretive Policy Analysis DPA only gets one brief mention (2011, 230). Studies of deliberative democracy flourished as well but did so largely separate from the field of policy analysis in general and interpretive approaches more specifically. It is only recently that the case has been made to re-establish their connection (Ercan et al. 2017). Finally, policy analysts have joined in the ‘turn to practice’ (see Bartels 2018). A practice orientation is, often implicitly, recognized as an important approach in (interpretive) studies of policy generally and of deliberative policy-making more specifically. However, in most cases it represents a shift in analytical focus to what policy actors *do* (instead of what they say). Yet, epistemologically and ethically much policy analysis, even of the interpretive kind, is still captivated by a Cartesian understanding of knowledge, research and value that is based on deep-seated, institutionalized dichotomies between observer and world, value and knowledge, affect and reason, and knowledge and action.

DPA offered little in the way of a methodical approach and clear practice for bringing its three pillars together and overcoming the above-mentioned dualisms. The key idea was that “deliberative analysts attempt to assist and mediate between relevant policy actors, helping them to articulate their views, deal with disputes, and develop and implement possible collaborative actions” (Li and Wagenaar 2019a, 427). But guidance on how to actually *do* this, and integrate the three pillars, was lacking (Li 2019). This elusiveness was compounded by the “hegemonic cage” (ibidem, 431) that policy makers were not necessarily accustomed to policy analysts taking such roles or be receptive to the knowledge and learning they produced. It was unclear how deliberative policy analysts were supposed to deal with the problem of ‘epistemic vulnerability’ (Wagenaar, forthcoming); the desire among policy makers for neutral knowledge, which, in a democratic environment in which officials consider their representative mandate as one for self-contained decision making, they conveniently consider as non-binding. It is here, of course, that politics meets epistemology, that a particular democratic arrangement that favours authoritative decision-making accords with the dominant positivist-empiricist research ideology.

There is one interesting and unexpected exception to this trend: DPA took hold as a distinct approach in some countries with an authoritarian regime. Ya Li, for example, founded a DPA Lab in Beijing (Li and He 2016; Li 2019). In it, he brings stakeholder participants and experts together to organize deliberative forums that address policy disputes and, with the aid of deliberative analysts, to arrive at recommendations for pressing problems endorsed by a variety of stakeholders, including citizens. He then presents the written up results to government officials in charge of the issue at hand. The DPA Lab is part of the Confucian tradition of giving wise, impartial counsel to the ruler (He 2014). In the same tradition, local governments organize deliberative forums in which citizens and local officials debate thorny policy issues. This kind of deliberation that in its agenda setting, though less so in its process, is guided by the Party, and that has been dubbed “authoritarian deliberation’ (He and Warren 2011), serves several functions. It allows local officials to implement and realize national goals, it defuses citizen’s anger about the failure of officials, and it provides legitimacy to government (Niu and Wagenaar, 2018). It is no conceptual stretch to conclude that authoritarian deliberation has evolved into a commonly accepted feature of governance in China. Similarly, in Thailand several local governments make extensive use of DPA to create discretionary space for more inclusive and democratic local planning in a semi-authoritarian national governance setting (Boossabong and Chamchong 2019).

Inspired by these and other approaches, the first special issue on DPA aimed to develop a more hands-on and impactful framework that would enable policy analysts to contribute to social, political and democratic transformation. By bringing the pillars of interpretation, practice, and deliberation together again, it generated two important conceptual correctives to the initial formulation of DPA and drew the contours of a more clearly recognizable and operable approach, which we might call DPA 2.01. The first conceptual corrective was a change in tack from a *focus on* the networked nature of contemporary governance (based on macro-sociological theories of ‘the network society’) to an *understanding of* it in terms of complexity (based on complexity theory and General Systems Theory). Key to this ontological move is seeing the social and policy world as a set of nested ‘complex adaptive systems’ (CAS) constituted by dynamic interdependencies and dense interactions. The ongoing flow of interaction in CAS generate emergent properties that often cannot be predicted or controlled by policy actors, nor understood from the features and characteristics of the individual elements in the system. The second conceptual corrective was a more explicit embrace of the strong programme of practice theory (based on classical pragmatism and the practice turn in social theory). Again the idea is to go beyond a shift in analytical focus, in this case on what policy actors do in everyday settings, to an ontological understanding of policy as practice—in which policy, and our knowledge of it, is generated in the course of interacting with the situation at hand (Cook and Wagenaar 2012).

The upshot of these turns to complexity and practice is an approach to policy analysis that is methodical, deliberative, actionable and complexity-oriented (Li and Wagenaar 2019b). Starting from an appreciation of the complex, interactive and emergent nature of policy practice, DPA 2.0 offers a range of flexible (open-ended and adaptive) yet systematic approaches (see table 1 for an overview) “to exploring preference differences, agreeing on problem definitions, and jointly designing solutions … [that are] problem-driven and aimed at enhancing reflexivity, reshaping relations, and increasing evolutionary learning” (Li and Wagenaar 2019b, 581). It proposes an interventionist, actionable methodology, in which policy practitioners and analysts co-design deliberative processes through which they collaboratively produce changes to concrete problems and systemic injustices. By jointly enquiring into problematic situations, they become more aware of the interdependencies between policy actors, the interconnectedness of the elements of the system, and the possibilities for harnessing this relational tissue to generating innovative solutions and structural change. By involving policy officials in the formulation of the problem and the design and execution of the project from the very start, DPA hopes to overcome the problem of strategic noncommitment and epistemic vulnerability.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

**Integrating deliberation, interpretation, and practice**

The purpose of this second special issue is to build on and extend the development of DPA 2.0 that was set in motion by the first special issue. It is set up around a symposium that brings together three representatives of the pillars of interpretation, practice, and deliberation. The symposium originates from a roundtable discussion organised by Koen Bartels at the ECPR General Conference 2018 in Hamburg. The roundtable was part of a section of panels about DPA organized by the Standing Group ‘Theoretical Approaches to Policy Analysis’. In the symposium, each representative discusses the nature and development of their pillar and reflects on its value for DPA. These three contributions are followed by a reflection of one of the authors of *Deliberative Policy Analysis* on the past and future of DPA.

Selen Ercan explores “how deliberative democracy’s understanding of deliberation can contribute to DPA.” (6) She argues that deliberation, understood as a communicative practice, offers an effective way of understanding and addressing value conflicts, provides space for active listening and reflection, and helps to reveal the structural dimension of lived experiences. It is crucial to understand it as not merely a micro-practice taking place in structured forums but rather as a deliberative system: “a larger communicative process that takes place in multiple and partly overlapping spaces” (5).

Anna Durnová argues that “interpretive analysis of emotions can further deliberative policy analysis and help address the current challenges of deliberative democracy” (10). By focusing on emotions, rather than knowledge and language, when interpreting deliberative practices, DPA can advance understanding of the ways in which citizens and policy makers relate to each other. One salient example is the anger against experts that currently troubles democratic societies. “Interpreting where emotions come from – and why they become legitimized among specific actors” (14) can reveal how they frame, exclude or silence particular groups and ways of being during policy processes and in society more widely.

Anne Loeber examines how a practice approach can render DPA “of great value to policymakers to strategically address … large-scale societal transformation” (18). Understanding policy and societal systems in terms of the situated and dynamic practices through which they are enacted, she argues, can help to induce reflexivity and reveal opportunities for change. DPA can intervene in policy practice by facilitating “de-routinization of what is taken for granted” and identifying “options for re-routinization” (22) of innovative practices.

In his author reply, Hendrik Wagenaar appreciates how these three contributions further advance DPA. He warns however that DPA is not the mere aggregation of work done in each of the three domains of interpretation, deliberation and practice analysis. The two special issues are a step in the right direction in that they present methods that are specific to DPA, rooted in a form of emergent institutional design which Wagenaar calls ‘design-in-practice’ (Kimbell, 2012, Wagenaar and Wenninger, this issue). Although these methods all contain forms of analysis (in that they gather systematic, robust evidence on policy issues), they move policy analysis away from the traditional paradigm of information gathering for policy elites, which is troubled by the aforementioned problem of epistemic vulnerability (the propensity of policy makers to dismiss or ignore policy evidence when it does not satisfy their purpose or intent). DPA methods represent “an approach to policy analysis that addresses complexity head on, integrates values into its methods of analysis, and collapses the distinction between policy making and policy analysis by fashioning collaborative arrangements with policy makers and civil society actors to formulate social problems, design practical solutions and work towards their implementation” (33).

However, DPA, turning from a response to the changing topography of the landscape of public policy towards a response to complexity as a human predicament, still leaves important issues unresolved. As Wagenaar explains in his Reply, what is needed is a further articulation of the nature and effects of complexity in policy making, a grounded ethics of policy making, a specification of DPA’s contribution to deepening democracy, and a theory of social transformation. He considers these an intellectual and practical road map towards the further development of DPA as a collaborative, inclusive and humane approach to policy analysis and democratic, sustainable policy development. In pragmatist terms, DPA’s ambition is the reconstruction of reason in policymaking and policy analysis (James 1978; Fesmire 2003).

Following the symposium, the other five contributions to this special issue help to further draw out and advance the threads through which the three pillars of DPA are interwoven to advance DPA 2.0. We will discuss these five contributions along three key threads we have identified:

1. critical engagement with communicative practices at the interface of the deliberative and interpretative pillar;
2. the shared ambitions of the deliberative and practice pillar for a more systemic approach to transformative change; and
3. the distinctive contribution of the practice pillar for materializing a relational approach to intervening in the face of hegemony.

*Critical engagement with communicative practices*

Ercan and Durnová both argue that critical engagement with communicative practices lies at the interface of the deliberative and interpretative pillars. Carefully crafted deliberative designs and skillful practices can address deep value conflicts by providing space for active listening, reflection and engaging with the lived experiences of participants (see e.g., Forester, 1999; Ercan, 2014). But interpreting deliberative practices can also reveal how policy actors enact communicative practices that silence and exclude ‘Others’.

A good example is the fascinating case that Roy Heidelberg and Sarah Surak present: the ‘threat’ posed to the New York recycling program by what DSNY, the responsible public agency, labels ‘scavengers’. Heidelberg and Surak carefully unpick the claims and assumptions underpinning the discourse created around recycling in the context of the institutionalization of recycling in the USA and New York in particular. Their analysis reveals “how current administrative practices construct the space for recycling as well as the identity of the recycler”. (25) This ‘administrative making of recycling’ is not just a claim to power and authority to act in the public interest, but more subtly defines what are legitimate practices in public spaces, who is (not) allowed to participate in these, and how the institutional order of the capitalist production system is to be preserved.

Lotte Krabbenborg takes us in a similar direction with her analysis of the deliberative partnership between environmental NGO EDF and chemical company DuPont. This unusual and delicate collaboration between the corporate world and civil society (no state actors were involved throughout the process), aimed to develop a regulative framework for health and environmental risks involved with engineering nanoscale materials. The tightly prescribed focus and confidentiality agreement bounding the collaboration delineated the scope of the deliberations and relationships between the participants. But it also excluded other stakeholders from forming what John Dewey called a ‘public’. Thus, Krabbenborg demonstrates that “inclusive deliberative governance of newly emerging technologies” (21) cannot be expected to naturally evolve and begs critical analysis of its communicative practices.

Krabbenborg’s paper also raises the important question, similar to deliberation in authoritarian settings as we described above, to what extent constrained deliberation can still be called authentic deliberation. Deliberative theorists recognize that they might have to relax the procedural criteria that justify the outcomes of authentic deliberation when the latter occurs in real-world political settings (ideal Type 1 versus real-world Type 2 deliberation in situations of conflict (Bächtinger et. al. 2010)). This has led deliberative theorists to shift their attention from the process to the context of deliberation. Certain deliberative-like forms of communication serve purposes such as collective learning or understanding and appreciating the position of other parties – forms of “Type 2” deliberation that are common in approaches to DPA such as Designed Deliberative Platforms or Enhancing Deliberative Capacity (Wagenaar, forthcoming) – might be a more realistic and attainable form of deliberation.

However, in such real-world settings, which are ruptured with power differentials, there is always the danger of concept stretching. In their reflections, Heidelberg and Surak highlight the critical function of the interface of the interpretive and deliberative pillars: whose interpretive power in deliberative processes of policy-making prevails? Critically engaging with communicative practices almost instantly drives policy analysts to align with the actors whose interests, practices, knowledge and emotions are excluded and marginalised. But as the article by Catherine Allen and colleagues on systemic co-inquiry (which we discuss in more detail below) indicates, we also need to engage on collaborative terms with the institutional order if we are to obtain the support needed to sustain transformative efforts and enable systemic reform. The dilemma, however, is that those in positions of power at best only tentatively support transformative approaches such as systemic co-inquiry, while eschewing the institutionalisation of systemic change.

*A more systemic approach to transformative change*

In line with the turn to complex adaptive systems and interventionist practice in the first special issue, both Ercan and Loeber stressed the importance of moving towards more systemic understandings of ‘local practices’ and achieving transformative change. One illustration is the way Lotte Krabbenborg situates the problematic deliberative partnership between EDF and DuPont in a wider deliberative system. Interactions in the public sphere can address the exclusions generated by small-scale problem-driven deliberative processes in what she calls “protected spaces”. Therefore, she argues that “the next required step is to enhance the deliberative capacity of the policy system as whole by making the outcomes of joint inquiries available to the public sphere” (21; See also West et.al. 2019).

The question is how this can be done proactively in the design of deliberative systems. For this purpose, Hendrik Wagenaar and Florian Wenninger borrow the notion of ‘design-in-practice’ and attempt to develop complexity theory for policy making. They notice two features of complex systems that have large consequences for policy makers. The first is the combination of the dense interconnectedness of dynamic systems, that inevitably results in unpredictable consequences, and the intrinsic positionality of actors that follows from co-evolution and that precludes any actor to have a comprehensive overview of the system. The second issue is that higher order emergent effects cannot be reduced to lower order effects. That is, higher order effects have features and qualities that require concepts and explanations that are commensurate to their level of aggregation. For example, although laws, budgets, and organizations involve communicative interactions between individuals, we cannot arrive at the characteristics of political institutions by extrapolating the interactions in small groups. Wagenaar and Wenninger call this the reductionist fallacy; to ignore it results in the risk of institutional irrelevance. Institutional change requires interventions at the appropriate institutional level.

How to deal with interconnectivity and the reductionist fallacy? How to design a modicum of integration in policy making and effectuate this at the institutional level? Wagenaar and Wenninger decide to address this question empirically. Some policy makers are better in integrative governance than others. How do they do it? Their case is integrative housing policy in the city of Vienna. This policy was developed by the socialist administration that governed Vienna between 1919 and 1934, and is known historically as “Red Vienna”. Against all odds, the officials of Red Vienna developed a highly effective and robust set of integrated policies that addressed housing, (public) health, education, youth services, cultural development, and art and architecture. This systemic institutional change was based on

1. “a pragmatist conception of institutions” as “flexible yet guided” (28) aggregations of meaning,
2. a progressive-humanist vision that functions as “a navigational aid with generative qualities” (29), and
3. “scaffolding … [that] create[s] (provisional) stability in the ongoing stream of events, interventions and backtalk” (30).

Although the officials of Red Vienna did not consciously practice DPA, and did not practice participatory forms of governance, they did engage, as the authors demonstrate, in a ‘design-in-practice’ approach that enabled them to address “the integrated, complex nature of the world of public policy” (10).

An approach with similar ambitions, although from outside the institutionalized policy system, is systemic co-inquiry, as discussed in the contribution by Catherine Allan, Ross Colliver, Ray Ison, Laura Mumaw, Moragh Mackay, P.J Wallis, and L. Perez-Mujica. The authors formed a research consortium to capitalize on the collaborative and participatory features of Natural Resource Management (NRM) in Australian that continue to be frustrated by hegemonic hierarchical institutions and positivist-empirical epistemology, along with lacking capacities to reflect on and improve relationships. Systemic co-inquiry is a well-established action research approach for “bringing people together around a situation of concern to understand possibilities and constraints, and to design and test alternative institutional arrangements and practices” (5). Using a set of reflexive and visual methods, it can transform long-established patterns of governance by moving through a cycle of “framing the inquiry; focusing in to select opportunities where governance could work better; and, moving from what is to what a system could be” (7).

But the dilemma of the ‘hegemonic cage’ that Li and Wagenaar (2019a) identified remains. While Allen et al. conclude they enhanced the ability of participants to challenge the endless “pendulum swing” between top-down and participatory governance, they wonder whether they really managed to jump off the “treadmill” of ongoing change and activity that impedes systemic transformation. They particularly stress the challenge of sustaining institutional support for a transformative approach like systemic co-inquiry and institutional commitment to reform. In other words, the fundamental challenge to the reach of DPA remains: how to intervene in the face of epistemic vulnerability and institutional hegemony?

*A relational approach to intervening in the face of hegemony*

Clues about what to do in such pressing, indeterminate situations are most readily found in the practice pillar. Following conceptual arguments in the first special issue (Bowman 2019), Loeber argues that an interventionist methodology can be advanced by turning to DPA’s origins in classical pragmatism. DPAs “pragmatist epistemology is interventionist and transformative and therefore intimately tied to an (actionable) methodology of co-producing inquiry and social intervention with all relevant stakeholders” (Li and Wagenaar 2019a, 432). For example, Allen et al. explain how they adopted a practical starting point: rather than generating knowledge about NRM that could lead to action, they started their inquiry in the midst of practice, jointly probing stakeholders’ experiences with NRM governance and possibilities for doing it differently.

Pragmatism is the common source of DPA and action research. Koen Bartels, Davydd Greenwood and Julia Wittmayer argue that recognizing these shared foundations is one way in which action research can make DPA more transformative. Doing so takes us beyond merely adopting action research as a methodological repertoire for DPA; both are steeped in a *critical and relational* *worldview* that is committed to transforming socio-political institutions. Or more precisely, to transform, in the face of resistance, the hegemony of institutions that impair the relational fabric that is a precondition for the flourishing of democratic societies. But action research also helps to systemically analyze the structural challenges to positive change that are created by political-administrative systems as well as the academic environment in which most policy inquiry occurs. Finally, action research provides a heuristic framework for engaging in the critical-relational dynamics of generating policy change and sustainability transitions: 1) negotiating the starting point, (2) enacting multiple roles and relationships, (3) addressing hegemonic structures, cultures, and practices, and (4) evaluating reflexivity, impact, and change.

Hence, we believe that a turn to relationality can help to further advance DPA 2.0 as a more methodical and transformative approach. Relationality was less explicitly appreciated as a key conceptual foundation of DPA 2.0 in the first special issue. Relationality helps to acknowledge how DPA steers policy analysts and practitioners to “keep an eye on the interconnectedness of issues” (Li and Wagenaar 2019b, 581-2) and practice ‘integrative governance’ (Stout and Love 2019). It marries the focus on interdependence and emergence in systems thinking (see e.g. Allen et al.’s references to relationality) with the concern for re-creating thriving democratic relationships in classical pragmatism (see e.g. Krabbenborg’s use of Dewey). And it helps to further explicate how DPA 2.0 is not exercised *outside* and *against* the institutional order, but *in relation to* the multiplicity of ways in which hegemonic and transformative practices interact. In addition to the four areas Wagenaar identified in his Reply, a relational understanding of policy (analysis) is thus a fifth issue in advancing DPA towards its next iteration.

**Transforming DPA, transforming policy**

DPA has undergone a rapid process of rejuvenation and transformation. It now has more of a methodological program than Li (2019) gave it credit for only very recently. It provides a range of approaches that enable policy analysts to methodically engage with the complexity, relationality and practical nature of policy processes. Grounded in a solid and progressive ‘theory-methods’ package (Nicolini 2012), we believe these DPA approaches are up to the challenge of generating humane policy changes and sustainability transitions in the face of the multiple crises besieging our world. We strongly encourage policy analysts to adopt DPA more widely and systematically and to continue to share their approaches, experiences, struggles and achievements towards the further development of DPA 2.0.

**Endnotes**

1 In analogy with Li’s article “Think Tank 2.0 for Deliberative Policy Analysis” (Li, 2015), in which he used the moniker “think tank 2.0” to support DPA in contrast to the “think tank 1.0” model which undergirds traditional policy analysis.

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