

Call for Submissions

Business Ethics Quarterly Special Issue on:

The Challenges and Prospects of Deliberative Democracy for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility

Guest Editors:

Dirk Ulrich Gilbert, University of Hamburg
Andreas Rasche, Copenhagen Business School
Maximilian J. L. Schormair, University of Hamburg
Abraham Singer, Loyola University Chicago

Overview:

Based on the seminal insight that legitimate political decisions need to be connected to a communicative exchange of reasons between the affected parties, the concept of deliberative democracy (Curato, Dryzek, Ercan, Hendriks, & Niemeyer, 2017) has received growing attention over the past years in business ethics as well as in management and organization studies. While the so-called “systemic turn” in deliberative thinking captured the attention of many political scientists (Dryzek, 2016; Owen & Smith, 2015; Parkinson & Mansbridge, 2012; Warren, 2012), business ethicists as well as management scholars discussed the merits of a democratization of corporate governance (Goodman & Arenas, 2015; Scherer, 2015; Schneider & Scherer, 2015; Stansbury, 2009). Reinvigorating past research on organizational and workplace democracy (Harrison & Freeman, 2004; Landemore & Ferreras, 2015), Battilana et al. (2018) argue that deliberative forms of corporate governance are particularly relevant for so-called “multi-objective organizations” (Mitchell, Weaver, Agle, Bailey, & Carlson, 2016). These organizations reject monistic notions of stakeholder value (Harrison & Wicks, 2013) and aim for multiple objectives, such as financial, social, and environmental objectives simultaneously. Starting from the assumption that deliberative decision-making processes can foster the integration of these sometimes contradicting values, deliberative democracy appears to be particularly suitable for sustainability-oriented organizations. However, the implementation of deliberative democracy within such organizations is neither without obstacles (King & Land, 2018) nor without instrumental as well as normative shortcomings (Hielscher, Beckmann, & Pies, 2014; Johnson, 2006).

The contribution of deliberative democracy for conceptualizing the growing role of corporations as global governance actors, on the other hand, has been intensively discussed within political corporate social responsibility (CSR) research. Several political CSR scholars draw on Habermasian notions of deliberative democracy and advocate stakeholder deliberations (Marti & Scherer, 2016; Patzer, Voegtlin, & Scherer, 2018)—often organized in the form of “multi-stakeholder initiatives” (MSIs). MSIs have been theorized as particularly viable global governance instruments to accommodate different stakeholder perspectives through deliberative processes (Gilbert, Rasche, & Waddock, 2011; Mena & Palazzo, 2012). For deliberative political CSR scholars, MSIs should be structured in a way that fosters mutual understanding through deliberative communicative exchanges between affected stakeholders to “facilitat[e] positive and impeded[e] negative business contributions to society” (Scherer, 2018: 394).

However, this approach has received ample criticism in the literature (Frynas & Stephens, 2015; Hussain & Moriarty, 2018; Mäkinen & Kourula, 2012; Whelan, 2012). Recent research raises serious doubts about the efficacy of MSIs as an approach to the democratic global self-regulation of business, pointing to the co-optation of sustainability goals by corporate financial interests (Moog, Spicer, & Böhm, 2015). Levy et al. (2016) contend that private regulatory regimes such as MSIs evolve through dynamics of contestation and accommodation between its stakeholders that are driven by political power dynamics that reach well beyond the conceptual boundaries of consensus-oriented deliberations. Other scholars, in turn,

criticize deliberative political CSR research from an agonistic perspective (Dawkins, 2015) arguing that the deliberative approach “will serve to effectively silence dissent, making it easier for dominant groups to claim others are being *unreasonable*” (Brown & Dillard, 2013: 181, emphasis in original). More recently, Sabadoz and Singer (2017: 196) contend that the concept of deliberative democracy is “ill-suited” for corporations since, in their view, “even if pursued genuinely, corporations themselves are poor venues for deliberation, due to how they are situated in, and structured by, the market system.” Mehrpouya and Willmott (2018: 731) in turn criticize the dominance of deliberative approaches within political CSR research for “accomodat[ing] ‘apolitical’ research methodologies and perpetuat[ing] a neoliberal orientation.” In fact, the very idea of promoting the concept of deliberative democracy for business practice is exposed to the twofold risk of instrumentalization and commodification (Lee & Romano, 2013).

Against this background, this call for submissions invites for consideration papers that discuss the challenges and prospects of deliberative democracy for corporate sustainability and responsibility. Specific research questions might include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

The Role of Deliberative Democracy for Corporate and Global Governance

- What are the relationships among deliberative democracy, economic activity, and business ethics?
- Under what conditions can deliberative democracy foster responsible business conduct and sustainable development?
- How can trade-offs between legitimacy and efficiency that are associated with the implementation of deliberative democracy in corporations be managed?
- Which challenges and prospects are associated with implementing deliberative democracy at the workplace or organizational level?
- What are the implications of deliberative democracy for leadership within corporations?
- Under what conditions can corporations be conceptualized as democratic global governance actors that address regulatory voids in the common interest?
- Which global governance role should corporations take in relation to nation states and international institutions such as the United Nations?
- How can the normative aspirations of deliberative approaches be reconciled with the mixed empirical record of real stakeholder dialogues or deliberations within MSIs such as the Forrester Stewardship Council or the UN Global Compact?
- How do MSIs perform in practice? How can differences in performance be explained?
- How can deliberative approaches of corporate as well as global governance cope with value pluralism, dissent, and power imbalances among stakeholders?

Deliberative Democracy and Technology

- How can digital communication technologies contribute to the democratization of corporate and global governance? What are the implications of such democratization through digital technologies for business ethics?
- What are the challenges and prospects of digitization and digitalization for deliberative democracy within and around corporations?
- How do social media and digital communication technologies influence the adaption and implementation of deliberative democracy in corporations?
- How do digital communication technologies affect stakeholder deliberations and public discourse?
- How can digitization and digitalization foster the successful integration of multiple (e.g., economic, social, and ecological) objectives within corporations?

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Critical Perspectives

- Is the deliberative systems approach capable of giving direction to normative debates in business ethics?
- Are corporations suitable venues for deliberation?
- What, if any, role should corporations play within a deliberative democratic system?
- How can deliberative efforts by corporations deal with the global diversity of institutional contexts (e.g., authoritarian vs. stakeholder vs. shareholder capitalism)?
- Which philosophical foundations are necessary for conceptualizing deliberative democracy in business ethics research?
- How can emerging theoretical perspectives (e.g., agonistic or systemic notions of democracy) and methodological approaches advance business ethics theory?
- How can an integrative understanding of business and society be reconciled with an institutional separation of regulatory power within a deliberative democratic system?

Submission Expectations and Process:

To address these questions, we welcome a broad range of submissions, including normative, philosophical papers as well as theoretical or empirical (quantitative or qualitative) social-scientific research. We encourage contributions that make use of, and contribute to, such disciplines as organization studies, philosophy, political science, sociology, economics, management, legal theory, and cultural studies. Papers are expected to make a clear theoretical contribution to the respective stream of research that is being addressed. We are open to receiving manuscripts discussing deliberative democracy in different organizational contexts (e.g., in terms of size, organizational form, geographic location, industry, and also addressed issues). We explicitly encourage submissions that leverage recent empirical as well as conceptual developments in research on deliberative democracy within the political sciences. In addition, we welcome contributions that engage critically with the very idea of adopting elements of deliberative democracy for business ethics and corporate sustainability.

Manuscripts must be prepared in compliance with the journal's instructions for contributors: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-ethics-quarterly/information/instructions-contributors>. Submissions that do not conform to these instructions, in terms of manuscript style and referencing, will not be reviewed.

Manuscripts should be submitted after December 1, 2019, and no later than January 31, 2020, using BEQ's online submission system: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/beq>. When submitting be sure to choose the option that indicates that the submission is for this special issue.

All papers will be initially reviewed for suitability by the guest editor team, and submissions that pass initial review will undergo a double-blind review by external referees in accordance with the journal's standard editorial process. By submitting a paper for consideration, authors consent to be called upon as reviewers. Authors also agree, in the event that a submission after review receives an invitation to revise and resubmit, to resubmit within three months of that invitation.

Special Issue Manuscript Development Workshop

To help authors prepare their manuscripts for submission, a special issue paper development workshop will be held during the Society for Business Ethics (SBE) annual meeting in Boston in August 2019. Authors are invited to present and discuss their working papers during the workshop. Presentation at the workshop does not guarantee acceptance of the paper for publication in *Business Ethics Quarterly*, and submission of a paper to or participation in the workshop is not a precondition for submission to the special issue. To be considered for the workshop, please send your working paper (full papers as

BUSINESS ETHICS QUARTERLY

well as short papers up to 3,000 words including references are acceptable) to Maximilian Schormair (maximilian.schormair@uni-hamburg.de) by June 15, 2019.

Key Dates:

Manuscript development workshop deadline: June 15, 2019

Manuscript development workshop convenes: August 2019 in Boston (specific day TBA)

BEQ special issue submission window: December 1, 2019, through January 31, 2020

Publication: 2021 (est.)

More Information:

For further information on the special issue, contact guest coeditor Maximilian Schormair at maximilian.schormair@uni-hamburg.de.

For information on the BEQ more generally, contact editor in chief Bruce Barry at EditorBEQ@Vanderbilt.edu or visit the journal's website at www.cambridge.org/beq.

References

- Battilana, J., Fuerstein, M., & Lee, M. 2018. New prospects for organizational democracy?: How the joint pursuit of social and financial goals challenges traditional organizational designs. In S. Rangan (Ed.), *Capitalism beyond mutuality? Perspectives integrating philosophy and social science*: 256–88. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, J., & Dillard, J. 2013. Critical accounting and communicative action: On the limits of consensual deliberation. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 24(3): 176–90.
- Curato, N., Dryzek, J. S., Ercan, S. A., Hendriks, C. M., & Niemeyer, S. 2017. Twelve key findings in deliberative democracy research. *Daedalus*, 146(3): 28–38.
- Dawkins, C. 2015. Agonistic pluralism and stakeholder engagement. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 25(1): 1–28.
- Dryzek, J. S. 2016. The forum, the system, and the polity: three varieties of democratic theory. *Political Theory*, 45(5): 610–36.
- Frynas, J. G., & Stephens, S. 2015. Political corporate social responsibility: Reviewing theories and setting new agendas. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 17(4): 483–509.
- Gilbert, D. U., Rasche, A., & Waddock, S. 2011. Accountability in a global economy: The emergence of international accountability standards. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 21(1): 23–44.
- Goodman, J., & Arenas, D. 2015. Engaging ethically: A discourse ethics perspective on social shareholder engagement. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 25(2): 163–89.
- Harrison, J. S., & Wicks, A. C. 2013. Stakeholder theory, value, and firm performance. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 23(1): 97–124.
- Hielscher, S., Beckmann, M., & Pies, I. 2014. Participation versus consent: Should corporations be run according to democratic principles? *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 24(4): 533–63.
- Hussain, W., & Moriarty, J. 2018. Accountable to whom? Rethinking the role of corporations in political CSR. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149(3): 519–34.
- Johnson, P. 2006. Whence democracy? A review and critique of the conceptual dimensions and implications of the business case for organizational democracy. *Organization*, 13(2): 245–74.
- King, D., & Land, C. 2018. The democratic rejection of democracy: Performative failure and the limits of critical performativity in an organizational change project. *Human Relations*, 71(11): 1535–57.
- Lee, C. W., & Romano, Z. 2013. Democracy's new discipline: Public deliberation as organizational strategy. *Organization Studies*, 34(5-6): 733–53.
- Levy, D., Reinecke, J., & Manning, S. 2016. The political dynamics of sustainable coffee: Contested value regimes and the transformation of sustainability. *Journal of Management Studies*, 53(3): 364–401.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

- Mäkinen, J., & Kourula, A. 2012. Pluralism in political corporate social responsibility. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 22(4): 649–78.
- Marti, E., & Scherer, A. G. 2016. Financial regulation and social welfare: The critical contribution of management theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 41(2): 298–323.
- Mehrpouya, A., & Willmott, H. 2018. Making a niche: The marketization of management research and the rise of “knowledge branding.” *Journal of Management Studies*, 55(4): 728–34.
- Mena, S., & Palazzo, G. 2012. Input and output legitimacy of multi-stakeholder initiatives. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 22(3): 527–56.
- Mitchell, R. K., Weaver, G. R., Agle, B. R., Bailey, A. D., & Carlson, J. 2016. Stakeholder agency and social welfare: Pluralism and decision making in the multi-objective corporation. *Academy of Management Review*, 41(2): 252–75.
- Moog, S., Spicer, A., & Böhm, S. 2015. The politics of multi-stakeholder initiatives: The crisis of the forest stewardship council. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 128(3): 469–93.
- Owen, D., & Smith, G. 2015. Survey article: Deliberation, democracy, and the systemic turn. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 23(2): 213–34.
- Parkinson, J., & Mansbridge, J. J. (Eds.) 2012. *Deliberative systems: Deliberative democracy at the large scale*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Patzer, M., Voegtlin, C., & Scherer, A. G. 2018. The normative justification of integrative stakeholder engagement: A Habermasian view on responsible leadership. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 28(3): 325–54.
- Sabadoz, C., & Singer, A. 2017. Talk ain’t cheap: Political CSR and the challenges of corporate deliberation. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 27(2): 183–211.
- Scherer, A. G. 2015. Can hypernorms be justified? Insights from a discourse-ethical perspective. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 25(4): 489–516.
- Scherer, A. G. 2018. Theory assessment and agenda setting in political CSR: A critical theory perspective. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 20: 387–410.
- Schneider, A., & Scherer, A. G. 2015. Corporate governance in a risk society. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 126(2): 309–23.
- Stansbury, J. 2009. Reasoned moral agreement: Applying discourse ethics within organizations. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 19(1): 33–56.
- Warren, M. E. 2012. *When, where and why do we need deliberation, voting, and other means of organizing democracy? A problem-based approach to democratic systems*. American Political Science Association 2012 Annual Meeting paper: 1–21.
- Whelan, G. 2012. The political perspective of corporate social responsibility: A critical research agenda. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 22(4): 709–37.