Dialogue in Transition:
Navigating the Challenges of Digitalization and Social Segregation in the Parliamentary Context

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Day of the Parliamentary Research - June 11, 2025
Dialogue, deliberation, and representation under pressure

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New challenges … :
- Dialogue as the guiding principle of democratic processes is degrading and also media is under stress.
- The landscape of politicial parties got more and more divers over the past decades.
- The number of people without a voting right is continuously on the rise.
- Overall polarisation is on the rise, which leads to less satisfaction with goverments and often to shortend legislation periods.

All this factors together lead to political parties being in stronger competition and election campaigns and political communication in general becoming more and more populistic and overly emotionalizing and longterm thinking and planing gets neglected.

… need new ideas, that deliver answers to the following question/challenge:

How can we foster spaces, where political parties and citizens can foster together long-term visions incl. implementation strategies for current challenges (e.g. education)?

Solution: As initiative **BID – Strengthening education together** we are suggesting the **BID-1,000 dialogue process** as possible solution for generating this space.

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2

BID–1,000: **B**roadening, educational **I**nvolvement through systemic **D**ialogue

What is the BID-1,000?

The BID-1,000 is a year-long, nationwide dialogue process in Austria involving 1,000 participants from across the education sector and—including policymakers and representatives from all political parties in the Austrian National Assembly, educators, students, and civil society (incl. parents) for over a year.

It aims to foster the creation of a longterm strategy for the Austrian Education system through both in-person and digital formats. The process builds on the concepts of Collective Impact and Humble Policy-Making, enabling experimentation, inclusion, and systemic transformation.

What is needed to turn this idea into reality?

Among many other things a good understanding on **how to foster and keep good (constructive, involving,…) dialogue in already polarized and segregated settings,** with a special focus on existing democratic processes and the **parliamentary context.**

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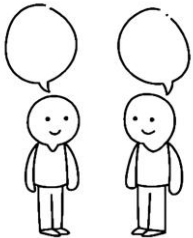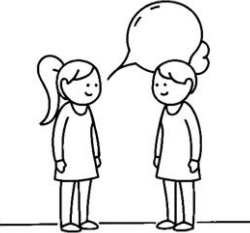
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How to understand important paramenters of dialogue/communication?

With this study we aim to generate a better understanding of constructive dialogue/communication on a theoretical level, identify conditions that strengthen or hinder dialogue in physical settings and in formats transported via media and suggest approaches that ultimately strengthen dialogue.

Research Question(s):
1. Which factors are fostering successful communication and thereby support forming an informed opinion?
   a. between two people
      a. in similar roles/in different roles (Which roles do hierachical levels play?)
      b. with similar opinion/different opinion
   b. in groups
   c. in the parliamentary context…
      a. … in a direct discussion
      b. … in a discussion transported via media
2. How does digitalization change this interactions?
3. How do people (politicans, journalists, voters) within this system currently perceive the process? (Do they notice/did they notice any changes over time?)

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4

Different types of communication between two individuals

	Dialogue	**Debate**	**Discussion**	**Monologue**
Goal of the interaction	• Understanding & Connection	• Winning an argument	• Exploring topic, solving problem	• Expressing one view
Tone during process	• Respectful, open	• Competitive	• Analytical, goal oriented	• „Lecturing"
Outcome	• Shared Meaning, Empathy	• Victory or defeat	• Decision or conclusion	• One-way Transmission of opinion/ information

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5

What is the reason for two individuales to communicate with each other?
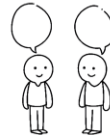
- Strengthening relationships/trust (dialogue)

- Increase of knowledge:
  - on one side (monologue)
  - on both sides (discussion)
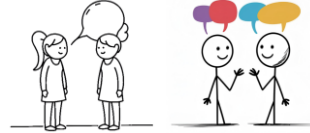
- Create together a new… (discussion):
  - … idea / hypothesis
  - … theory / mental model
  - … action / plan

- Increase of the social status of the participants (debatte)

- We enjoy the process (depends)

Which role does opinion & the strength of opinion play regarding communication types between two individuals, that do not know each other?

	Topic is for both individuals important	Topic is for one individual much more important than for the other one	Topic is for both individuals unimportant
Both individuals have a similar opinion	Dialogue & Discussion	Dialogue & Monologue	Dialogue & Stop of communication*
Both individuals have opposing opinions	Debate & Stop of communication*	Debate & Monologue & stop of communication	Stop of communication*

*Stop of Communication:
- ○ Friendly co-existing
- ○ Ignoring co-existing
- ○ Hostile co-existing

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7

In the parliamentary context the hierarchical communication between political representative and citizen is of special interest.

Why do politicians communicate/talk?
(„will of the state")

- ○ Gain trust

- ○ Transport a message

- ○ Explain why the current plans are the best to improve the situation in the country.

With the ultimate goal to stay in power / stay in government.

Why do citizen communicate/listen?
("will of the citizens")

- ○ Seeing who represents me

- ○ The promise of a good life

- ○ Information about what comes next and why it is necessary/important.

With the ultimate goal to form an opinion about the political representative / party.

Theoretical models describe for democracies the following three terms:
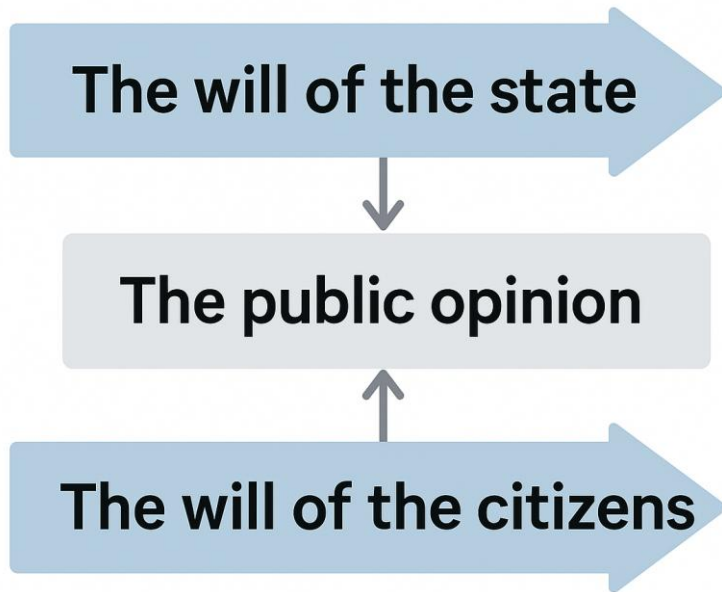
The will of the state: In a democracy, elected representatives govern on behalf of the citizens during their term, unless other democratic tools like referendums or citizens' initiatives are used.

The public opinion: Formed through debates in parliament, media, and society, public opinion bridges state and citizens. Digital media and social divides may create different versions of public opinion.

The will of the citizens: Is expressed through elections, where citizens hold sovereign power. Between elections, other democratic tools or demands for new elections may be used.

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9

Some facts and figures about or current political system

Im unteren Drittel ist die Zufriedenheit mit dem politischen System erneut gesunken

The lowest-income third is less and less satisfied with the political system.
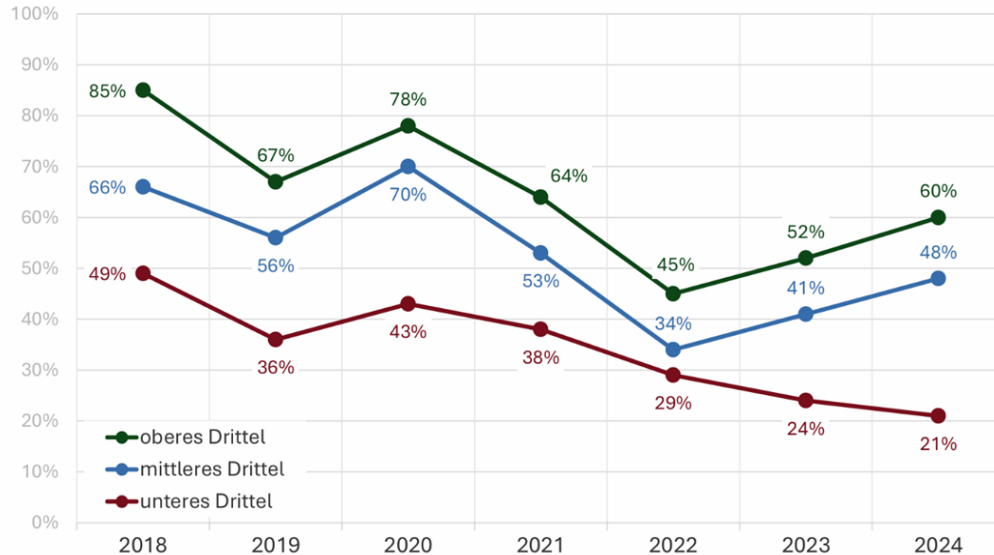
Frage im Wortlaut:
„Alles in allem betrachtet: Funktioniert das politische System in Österreich derzeit sehr gut, ziemlich gut, weniger gut oder gar nicht gut?"

Dargestellt:
sehr + ziemlich gut

Die Drittel werden auf Basis des Äquivalenzeinkommens und der Einschätzung der finanziellen Absicherung für die Zukunft berechnet.

- oberes Drittel
- mittleres Drittel
- unteres Drittel

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7

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10

Citizens/People are interested in the work of the parliament

Über die Arbeit des Parlaments wollen die Menschen mehr erfahren

	bin gut informiert	würde gerne mehr wissen	interessiert mich nicht besonders	w.n. / k.A.
wie in Ö Gesetze zustande kommen	31	52	12	5
wie das Parlament an EU-Gesetzen mitarbeitet	16	59	18	8
wie das Parlament die Regierung kontrolliert	22	57	14	7
welche Vorschläge für neue Gesetze diskutiert werden	15	66	12	6
wie ich mich bei Vorschlägen für neue Gesetze einbringen kann	16	57	20	7

Frage im Wortlaut:
„Fühlen Sie sich über folgende Dinge gut informiert, würden Sie gerne mehr dazu wissen oder interessiert sie das nicht besonders?"

A majority of people would like to know more about how legislation is generated, who is participating in the process, …

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11

How to increase interest, trust and participation?

In a **citizens' assembly**, people come together who are meant to represent a specific group (for example, the population living in Austria) and have been randomly selected from that group. They gather to discuss specific problems, negotiate possible political solutions, formulate recommendations, and communicate these to political decision-makers

What are the positive aspects of citizens' assembly?

- *Direct interaction*: Exchange with those affected helps identify values, interests, needs, potential conflicts, and the impacts of proposed measures.
- *Legitimacy of decisions*: Participation increases the legitimacy of decisions by better reflecting society as a whole, including marginalized or otherwise excluded groups.
- *Fostering mutual understanding*: Participatory processes allow for equal dialogue, balanced negotiation of interests, and help prevent manipulation or one-sided framing.
- *Acceptance and implementation*: Early identification of value and distribution conflicts, as well as integration of local knowledge, increases the acceptance a implementation probability of proposed measures.

What are the unwanted effects of citizens' assembly?

- *Limited Democratic Legitimacy*: Citizens' assemblies involve small, unelected groups, which can lead to skepticism about their authority—especially if their recommendations influence major policy decisions.
- *Risk of Tokenism*: They may be used symbolically, without real political commitment, leading to frustration if citizens' input is ignored or only selectively implemented.
- *Representation Challenges*: Despite random selection, practical barriers (e.g. time, income, childcare) can exclude certain groups, undermining true diversity and inclusiveness.
- *High Resource Demands*: Well-run assemblies require significant time, funding, expert input, and facilitation—making them costly and difficult to scale or repeat frequently.

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12

We asked different politicians about what they think of the BID-1000 participatory process…

In general the feedback about the idea of an one year long Austrian-wide dialogue in order to generate a longterm strategy for the Austrian education system was perceived very positively.

Further informtion can be found on: Youtube: BID - Bildungspolitik im Dialog

Next steps:

- Interviews with politicians, journalists, scientists and citizens about their experience with political discourse as well as the effects of digital media on political dialogue.
- Developing a model that explains the transformation of political discourse in the digital age.
- Deriving suggestions for qualitative improvement of the political discourse as well as the structure of the BID-1000.

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13

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Looking forward to some interesting dialogue, constructive discussion and maybe also some respectful debate with you under:

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14

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