Monotonous or Pluralistic Public Discourse?

Reason-giving and dissent in Denmark's and Sweden's early 2020 COVID-19 responses

Erik, Baekkeskov; Rubin, Olivier; Öberg, PerOla

Published in:
Journal of European Public Policy

DOI:
10.1080/13501763.2021.1942158

Publication date:
2021

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
Erik, B., Rubin, O., & Öberg, P. (2021). Monotonous or Pluralistic Public Discourse? Reason-giving and dissent in Denmark's and Sweden's early 2020 COVID-19 responses. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *28*(8), 1321-1343. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1942158

Journal of European Public Policy

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjpp20

Monotonous or pluralistic public discourse? Reason-giving and dissent in Denmark's and Sweden's early 2020 COVID-19 responses

Erik Baekkeskov, Olivier Rubin & PerOla Öberg

To cite this article: Erik Baekkeskov, Olivier Rubin & PerOla Öberg (2021) Monotonous or pluralistic public discourse? Reason-giving and dissent in Denmark's and Sweden's early 2020 COVID-19 responses, Journal of European Public Policy, 28:8, 1321-1343, DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2021.1942158

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1942158

JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN PUBLIC POLICY
2021, VOL. 28, NO. 8, 1321–1343
https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1942158

Monotonous or pluralistic public discourse? Reason-giving and dissent in Denmark's and Sweden's early 2020 COVID-19 responses

Erik Baekkeskov [a], Olivier Rubin [b] and PerOla Öberg [c]

[a]School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia; [b]Department of Society and Business, Roskilde University, Roskilde, Denmark; [c]Department of Government, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 outbreaks forced governments into epic policy choices conciliating democratic legitimacy and science-based policies. We examine how pervasive crises like this pandemic shape public discourses, proposing two ideal-types that discourse may tend toward. One is pluralism, which includes authoritative voices that represent viable alternative policies and credible reasons for them. The opposite is monotony, where authoritative voices offer credible reasons for one policy option only. Two crucial cases for monotony are analysed, where news media represents public discourse. In initial COVID-19 responses, Denmark pursued hard lockdown while neighbouring Sweden enacted voluntary distancing. Pluralism in public discourses could be advantaged while solutions remained uncertain and social and economic disruptions high, in polities with mature democratic and scientific institutions. The empirical analyses show that Denmark's elected leaders and Sweden's leading health scientists publicly represented their respective national responses. Yet in sampled public discourses on highly disruptive policies on school closures and crowding limits, both leaderships focused on justifying national choices rather than elucidating options. In turn, other sources skewed toward justifications for national policies rather than attention to alternatives. We suggest finally that such skews toward discourse monotony create risks to democratic legitimacy and long-term response efficacy.

KEYWORDS Pandemic response; COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2; crisis management; public discourse; democratic deliberation

Introduction

This article uses the COVID-19 pandemic context, which forced governments to balance democratically legitimate and science-based policy decisions, to

CONTACT Erik Baekkeskov erik.baekkeskov@unimelb.edu.au, @EBaekkeskov
Supplemental data for this article can be accessed at https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1942158.

examine how mature democracies' public policy discourses can be shaped during pervasive crises. Deciding between options is central to public policy-making and democracy, with uncertainty and viability of alternatives as core influences (Öberg et al., 2015). Media coverage is pivotal for public awareness of disagreements over policy alternatives, but can work differently in diverse situations and contexts. On technical issues involving experts, reporting may be imbalanced even when multiple perspectives are available (Montpetit, 2016). For example, research on 2009s H1N1 pandemic responses shows that experts can 'freeze' public policy deliberation by keeping disagreements private and appearing consensual in public discourse (Baekkeskov & Öberg, 2017). The skews in public discourse among policy alternatives and reasons for them may influence how citizens in democracies think about and deliberate over public policies, and confidence in policymaking institutions.

The article juxtaposes two ideal-types of public discourses (detailed in the next sections): monotony and pluralism. The paper extends and qualifies how various known forces in governance and society can work toward one of these ideal-types in public discourses. In turn, diverse theories of crisis discourse agree that state actors empowered by crises (such as pandemics) can exert high influence on public discourse by centralizing official argumentation to leaders. These theories also suggest why response leaders will tend to repeat justifications for their government's crisis responses, rather than fairly representing options and arguments available. That is, leaders in these situations are likely to push for monotony in related public discourses rather than pluralism. Hence, expectations about pluralism and monotony are highly relevant to understanding public discourse and deliberation over crisis responses.

The paper puts discursive monotony to a tough test by comparing two cases where conditions for pluralism should be favourable. Measures against COVID-19 in early 2020 implemented non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) centred on social distancing, changing millions of lives for many months. Contemporary democracies had previously used NPIs sparingly because medicines against infectious diseases were within reach (e.g., vaccines, antivirals, antibiotics). The emergence of COVID-19 changed that because effective vaccines and antivirals were uncertain prospects. Notably, uncertainty was great and policy options multiple in the early months of what soon became recognized as a pandemic, giving fertile grounds for scientific and political debate and active media inquiries. Two mature, neighbouring, and highly interrelated democracies, Denmark and Sweden, used NPIs in different ways in COVID-19's early months. Denmark locked down, while Sweden used looser and more voluntary social distancing. These differences were easily seen and reported on across the border, adding potential fuel to public debates. Hence, Sweden's and Denmark's early response phases were favourable contexts for wide-ranging and pluralistic discourse, and open dissent against government choices.

Empirically, the paper analyses Danish and Swedish media texts in the earliest period of COVID-19 response, particularly debate about intrusive NPIs enacted in March 2020. To capture how monotonizing forces weathered the test, analyses address two questions: (i) *were elected leaders or leading experts the official voices of COVID-19 response, and what did they say?* And (ii) *have national COVID-19 discourses represented arguments for policy alternatives evenly or skewed in favour of national policy?* It concludes that centralized monotony powerfully shaped discourses even in these conditions. While health experts were official voices of response in Sweden and elected leaders were the voices in Denmark, each national public discourse tended similarly toward repeating reasons and information supporting national policies (monotony) rather than even-handed debates about demonstrably viable and visible policy alternatives (pluralism). That is, while dissent was visible, policy justifications were markedly more visible than alternatives.

Theory

Pluralizing reason-giving and deliberation

Several strands of scholarship suggest forces that pluralize public discourses. As the ideal-type of pluralistic discourse, we mean public discourse that even-handedly represents arguments for many viable policy options.

Democratic ideals tend to emphasize that diverse voices are crucial for legitimacy of policymaking. Studies of democratic deliberation may go furthest. They suggest that public debate on complex policy options enables citizens to assess possibilities and adopt positions (Bächtiger et al., 2018; Parkinson & Mansbridge, 2012). In addition to aiming for agreements founded on reasons and common interests, the goal is to clarify and structure conflicts while not suppressing different views (Warren & Mansbridge, 2013). Deliberative researchers assert that only publicly articulated, explained, and justified public policies are likely to be perceived as legitimate (Bächtiger & Parkinson, 2019). Hence, deliberations thus understood are important in wider public spheres that consider most people's opinions (Chambers, 2009).

Such work further suggests how scientific expert knowledge affects democratic decision-making (John & Stoker, 2019). This includes input from 'certified experts' (specialists who work for government agencies on technically difficult issues; Baekkeskov & Öberg, 2017; Dunlop, 2014). Related insights have renewed normative debates on expertise in public deliberation (Chambers, 2017; Holst & Molander, 2017). Scholars still disagree about how expert knowledge is and should be integrated in public deliberation (Bächtiger et al., 2018; Bächtiger & Parkinson, 2019). Many researchers consider high-quality public deliberation utopian (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). Others argue that decision-makers and citizens can engage in deliberation with

experts over complex issues if the context is right (Dryzek et al., 2019; Farrell & Suiter, 2019). Some deliberative theorists have emphasized the epistemic value of these contexts (Landemore, 2017); and their ability to produce 'right decisions' (Estlund & Landemore, 2018), 'track the truth' (Holst & Molander, 2017), or enhance 'truth sensitivity' (Christiano, 2012).

Scientific endeavour and inclusion in policymaking builds on open discourse and disagreement. Actual scientific process includes at least occasional updating of understandings and theories based on systematic trial and error (or at least study) (Kuhn, 1962). In turn, scientific knowledge is credible and legitimate over and above alternative beliefs because of continual validation through scientific processes. Finally, scientific experts gain their legitimacy as social authorities (at least) in issues related to their own fields because they know more than others and can argue for that knowledge. That is, debate and transparent demonstration are closely associated with science and its legitimacy as a source of authority. In turn, scientific experts can pluralize public discourse by explicating many options for action, and science-based reasons.

Pluralistic discourse with potential for legitimating complex policies (Bächtiger & Parkinson, 2019; Fishkin, 2018; Neblo, 2015, pp. 3–7) seems particularly critical when problems are complex or policies very costly, such as pandemics and effective responses may be. During COVID-19, health policy efficacy has turned on peoples' general compliance with unfamiliar and disruptive physical distancing. Previous epidemics have also intruded on people's behaviour. For instance, populations worldwide were asked to accept mass vaccination against the 2009 H1N1 pandemic influenza even when in good health. Pandemic response policies call for action at many levels of society, ranging from governments and their agencies, across civic, professional, and business organizations, to households and individuals. In turn, similar democratic and rich polities have opted for significantly different health responses to pandemics during the past several decades (Baekkeskov, 2016; Baldwin, 2005; Mereckiene et al., 2010), suggesting multiple viable policy options rather than any clear optimum.

Media can contribute to pluralism in reasoning and information, by publishing views and arguments for multiple policy options. Critical journalists seek out and report on opposing views. Their idealistic motivations include giving voice to everyone while prosaic drivers include gaining eyeballs by revealing scandal and controversy (Weingart et al., 2000). For instance, journalistic reporting has potential to comprehensively include supportive and critical voices among experts (Parkinson, 2003). Through journalism, media might collectively and fairly represent the gamut of viable pandemic responses, spurring pluralistic discourse.

In summary, pluralizing forces include democratic ideals emphasizing inclusion; scientific process; complex problems or multiple costly solutions; and critical journalism (or controversy-seeking media).

Monotonizing reason-giving and deliberation

Other literatures have identified several forces that monotonize public discourse. As the ideal-type of monotonous discourse, we mean public discourse that is skewed by only repeating one policy and justifications for it. Hence, monotonous discourse and pluralistic discourse are opposing ideal-types (these are not empirical alternatives, so we would expect actual discourses to tend toward one of these).

Crisis management studies encourage monotonous messaging, to play against media's searches for controversy and simple headlines. To create consistent messages, crisis leaders may – and may indeed be trained to – coordinate and harmonize their public utterances (Boin et al., 2013; Boin & t Hart, 2003; Drennan et al., 2015). They do so for the sake of minimal public confusion about appropriate response behaviours, coherence in meaning, and more. In turn, such unity games journalism (Weingart et al., 2000). Detecting no controversy among credible authorities, media are left with marginal voices if they want 'both sides' of the issue. Unified fronts (apparent consensus) has added force when mass media seek simple narratives to satisfy audiences' short attention spans (Boswell, 2009; Parkinson, 2006). Whereas scandal attracts many media consumers, nuance and complexity appeal to few. So, one simple message, repeated often and everywhere, attracts many.

Rallying to the flag, for instance due to crisis, mutes dissent. Powerful actors *voluntarily* stay publicly silent about their actual opposition, out of duty to the nation (Baker & Oneal 2001). Experts, politicians, social interests, and even media silencing themselves can make policy alternatives difficult to spot. Publics without special access to private debates among leaders, science, or other sources of credible information would easily think that policy stakeholders have reached a consensus. In turn, authoritative dissenters who deliberately stay quiet in public encourage the image of authoritative consensus about public problems and policies to solve them. Hence, rallying-to-the-flag monotonizes public discourse.

Dire threats to state or popular safety often suspend politics-as-usual while legitimating extraordinary powers and policies in the name of security (Buzan et al., 1998; Elbe, 2011; Rubin & Bækkeskov, 2020). Formal 'state of emergency' powers can be triggered in many polities, and executives then gain powers to take and authorize extraordinary actions. Even where this option is not on the books (as in Scandinavia), dire threats can justify extraordinary sessions of parliament to pass new emergency laws. In such threatening circumstances, debate becomes an unnecessary delay and hindrance to good policy. Hence, naming a threat as dire or existential pushes usual opponents to rally to the flag and policy-makers (now 'crisis managers') to look to a few, selected voices for instructions on what to do and to speak 'the truth' in public.

Apparent consensus essentially seeks to steer media coverage away from arena fights and toward lectures. Borrowing language from Dunlop and Radaelli's studies of policy learning, policy development can be reflexive, bargained, epistemic, or hierarchical (Dunlop, 2014; Dunlop & Radaelli, 2013). In this typology, problem tractability and actor certification determine which form characterizes policy 'learning'. Relax the assumption that publics know policy development, and accept that the four forms are alternative *images* that publics can believe in. Then, government communication management is about persuading media consumers of policymaking images that best serve government purposes. In crises, where crisis managers follow 'good practice', this becomes to communicate that responses are undoubted and will be effective. That is, playing to media logics is about moving public beliefs toward hierarchical or epistemic images of what is going on (i.e., we know the solution, or we know how to find the solution), and away from bargained or reflexive (i.e., the solution is up for grabs, or we don't know how to find the solution).

In summary, monotonizing forces include crisis management doctrine; rallying-to-the-flag; securitization; and media playing to short public attention spans.

Centralized crisis leadership spurring monotony or pluralism

Studies of forces that monotonize discourses emphasize leadership during crises and in responses. This is evident where leaders replace cacophony (in crisis management), dissent (in rallying-to-the-flag), and normal politics (in securitized issues). However, there is also leadership in pluralism. Experts can inform public cognition, offering their pros and cons while defining several alternatives. Politicians can voice preferences over explicit options, signalling directions to constituencies. Crisis response leaders thus have two strategic alternatives when publicly representing their jurisdiction's viable options for policy. They can engage in *centralized* monotony, repeating one policy option and justifications. Or centralized pluralism, representing the space of options and arguments.

Democratically elected political leaders or scientifically certified epistemic leaders might respectively be expected to follow deliberative norms associated with democracy and science, and encourage pluralism. Centralized monotony pushes to unify perspectives but also introduces tensions with democratic and scientific norms that help solve problems and legitimate leadership. Silencing alternative policies and arguments creates strong risks that more effective or appropriate solutions remain unconsidered in policymaking. Moreover, if neither science nor democratic processes support the policy, then its legitimacy suffers. The conclusion returns to these concerns. The key point for the present is that what government leaders say pushes

public discourse toward pluralism or monotony, particularly when leadership voices are centralized such as for responses to pervasive crises.

Research design

The empirical analyses that follow gauge whether public COVID-19 pandemic response discourses in Denmark and Sweden tended toward pluralism or monotony. They also analyse which voices were loudest in these discourses, with focus on how visible elected and expert leaders were and whether these leading voices argued for single or multiple viable policy options.

Crucial cases for monotony and pluralism

The previous discussion shows that monotonizing forces can be particularly strong in public discourses during crises. The Swedish and Danish discourses during initial responses to COVID-19 also had favourable conditions for pluralism, and hence, both provide tough test (i.e., crucial) cases for monotony (Gerring, 2007).

Firstly, closeness and integration between polities work in favour of pluralizing public discourses. The mutual legibility of Scandinavian languages mean that elite participants in discourse and many members of the public can relatively easily pick up information across these national borders. Media coverage in the two countries also regularly compares policies (and much besides) across the Nordic region. Hence, discourses on related subjects easily bleed into each other.

In turn, when Denmark and Sweden pursue different policies to fight similar pressing and complex issues (such as a pandemic), any single line of reasoning or information is put to the test. Potential critics, from enterprising journalists to lay readers, simply read the news from across the border to discover equal but different policies unfolding. Across the Danish-Swedish border, viable alternatives were starkly visible. Hence, public discourse that is skewed in favour of government policies should be relatively surprising if different policies are pursued across the border. In addition, policies across the border that are more different than others could lead to wider and more diverse discourses. These were rich grounds for active debate rather than passive deference. In summary, the *policy differences* between these interconnected contexts could enhance forces of pluralism because they were visible and present examples of viable alternatives to government policy.

Secondly, the analysis focuses on two kinds of highly disruptive social distancing interventions. This ensures high public stakes and plausible grounds for mobilization. The selected policy types are school closures and public assembly restrictions. School closures encumber family lives and hamper

workforce participation. Restricting public assembly suspends a fundamental democratic right as well as social life. The interventions also contrast with more common public health policies, which include vaccinations and other pharmaceutical treatments that are far more targeted and confined in how they impact populations. Hence, these social distancing interventions offered strong motivations for opposition to mobilize and journalistic media to find and report on critical voices.

Finally, the analysis focuses on how leadership influenced COVID-19 discourses. As reviewed, a key idea about public discourses is that successful leadership is associated with monotony. But as suggested by pluralizing forces reviewed, leadership could shape discursive spaces more broadly by framing many available options and arguments surrounding them. At least in principle, clear leadership can be associated with clear presentations of alternatives rather than repetitions of one option.

This critical research design allows for generalizations in one form: if pluralistic deliberative dynamics are not found in the initial phase of the pandemic in these conducive conditions, then pluralistic deliberative dynamics are unlikely in less ideal settings (Flyvbjerg, 2006). At the very least, we can conclude that monotonizing forces are significantly important if Danish and Swedish discourses are skewed toward argumentation for national policy. If results diverge and expectations are met in only in one case, nuanced theory development might be called for. If discourses in both countries resemble the pluralistic ideal-type more in these favourable conditions, monotony is weaker than proposed in the theory section.

Media data on initial COVID-19 responses in Denmark and Sweden, content coding, and analyses

The study identifies arguments about initial COVID-19 response policies published in Denmark's and Sweden's most prominent daily newspapers between 1 March and 4 April 2020 (when Easter holidays began). Newspapers present information and views across multiple formats (articles, editorials, columns, letters). Using Boolean search terms related to school closures and crowding limits, a corpus of 381 texts was selected (see Appendix for included newspapers, search terms, and parameters). The study coded policy arguments contained in this. Arguments include clear statements, such as 'closing schools is good' or 'limiting assembly is bad'. Some also include logics, such as 'because it saves lives' or 'because it threatens business', and facts. Finally, coding focuses on arguments sourced to named individuals. In reporting, these are cited sources. In opinion pieces, sources are typically authors. For multi-authored opinions, each author is coded as making a separate argument. The paper uses these data to count arguments supporting, critiquing, or offering nuance on Danish and

Swedish school closures and crowding limits. It also gauges their sources' relative credibility, and whether such quality counteracts or enhances simple numbers.

The analyses focus on newspaper texts for three reasons. Firstly, they are comprehensively and systematically searchable and codable through online databases (e.g., whereas social media searches are limited in numbers and periods). Secondly, news media are broadly accessible, and without algorithmic control (e.g., social media algorithms decide what information people see). Thirdly, newspaper texts use journalistic research, criteria for source and content credibility, and acknowledged opinions of many kinds (e.g., whereas social media postings rely passively and indiscriminately on inputs from random and often anonymous voices). Hence, newspaper databases offer relevant, codable, comparable, and credible information about public discourses.

As monotonous and pluralistic discourses are ideal-types, we cannot expect that only one voice with one message is communicated in media. Neither is a cacophony of infinite numbers of voices and policy options likely. In addition, there are no obvious indicators for distances between ideal-types. Therefore, the paper interprets data to evaluate whether findings indicate more resemblance to one of the ideal-types, and hence, whether expectations are met.

Political and epistemic leadership in discourses

Crisis contexts push leaders into the limelight. As reviewed previously, this enables response leaders to shape public discourse in their jurisdictions on what should be done. Political leaders and leading scientific experts are likely to be prominent responders to epidemics such as COVID-19 became. Who were the leading official voices of initial COVID-19 responses in Denmark and Sweden? Did they contribute to monotony or pluralism in public discourses?

Elected leaders and leading appointed experts in Denmark

Records support that Danish COVID-19 outbreak responses during early 2020 were decided and controlled by elected leaders rather than leading public health scientists. The associated contributions to public discourses similarly suggest political response leadership.

Key Danish expert agency recommendations were used selectively or not at all in initial outbreak responses. Prime Minister (PM) Mette Frederiksen announced Denmark's first social distancing policies on 6 and 11 March (Frederiksen, 2020). Border closings, stay-home orders, crowding limits, and school closures ensued in the interest of public health. Yet investigative journalists and independent reviewers have since shown that these exceeded

what Denmark's Public Health Agency (PHA) had advised (Grønnegård et al., 2021; Rytgaard & Seidelin, 2020). For instance, PHA Director Søren Brostrøm reiterated recommendations for proportional measures immediately before the PM's 11 March announcements (Friberg, 2020) and publicly criticized border closures on 13 March as 'a political decision with no scientific merits' (Mølgaard, 2020). In addition, Parliament took just one day to unanimously pass new laws enabling lockdown. Yet changes were opposed by PHA and other expert bodies, which argued that the outbreak was not severe enough to justify them (Danish Parliament, 2020). Finally, the cabinet interfered repeatedly in expert agencies' independent assessment and response efforts (Findalen & Weichardt, 2020; Grønnegård et al., 2021; Rasmussen & Larsen, 2020). Taken together, these actions indicate political rather than expert response leadership.

PM Frederiksen also appeared significantly more in media than the most prominent national expert, PHA Director Brostrøm (Figure 1). Both were relatively absent from COVID-19 media coverage during the outbreak's first two months (January and February 2020, Figure 1). Frederiksen's presence escalated markedly after her press briefings on 6 and 11 March that introduced Denmark's extensive lockdown. Articles mentioning Brostrøm increased much less. Frederiksen appeared in at least four times as many daily articles as Brostrøm throughout the period studied.

Looking more broadly at leading politicians and experts mentioned in Danish media on early COVID-19 response shows that the most prominent

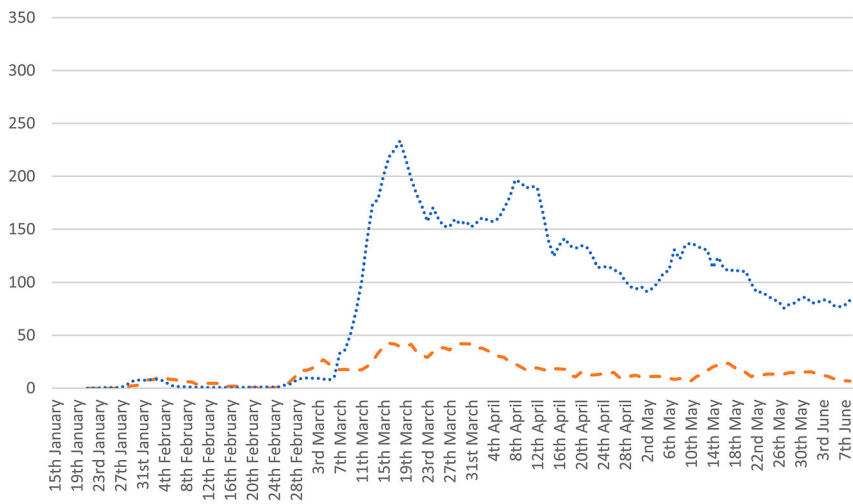

Figure 1. Prominence of Denmark's Prime Minister and its leading health expert in early Danish COVID-19 reporting. Stripe = PHA Director Søren Brostrøm; dot = PM Mette Frederiksen. Source: Infomedia. # articles with mentions, seven-day moving averages, January 15 to June 8, 2020 (search terms in Appendix).

national experts (PHA Director Brostrøm, and Kåre Mølbak, chief epidemiologist at SSI) were mentioned in one article for every five articles that mentioned the most prominent political leaders (PM Frederiksen and Minister of Health Magnus Heunicke; analysis details in Appendix). Hence, Denmark's political leadership appears to have been far more prominent than its leading experts in the first several months of public discourse on COVID-19 responses.

Elected leaders and leading appointed experts in Sweden

Sweden's response has relied explicitly and heavily on expert agencies, particularly its Public Health Agency (PHA). While Swedish politicians exercised formal powers, records leave no indications that they took decisions against PHA recommendations during early COVID-19 response. Similarly, leading appointed experts were the public voices of Sweden's response.

The National Board of Health and Welfare's crisis management head, Johanna Sandwall, and the PHA's State Epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell, became Sweden's public faces of response starting in February 2020 (FHM, 2020). Their agencies briefed media daily between 6 March and 5 June, and never with Cabinet Ministers present. These briefings explained and defended Sweden's strategy. The agencies early and publicly signalled the key social distancing policies (e.g., FHM, 2020). In turn, the government explicitly based formal COVID-19 response decisions on PHA recommendations (DN, 2020; Sveriges Radio, 2020; Swedish Television, 2020). This division of labour is consistent with Sweden's constitutional order, which assigns central agencies quasi-decisional autonomy and independence from ministries (Ahlbäck Öberg & Wockelberg, 2016). In addition, new epidemic legislation introduced in March 2020 to enable social distancing measures preserved strong expert agency roles in pandemic management. Indeed, a leading member of parliament for the governing party stated that parliamentary approval assumed government's continued attention to expert authorities if use of newly legalized instruments was considered (Swedish Parliament, 2019, p. 106, Kristina Nilsson). Hence, admirers have praised Sweden's approach for being archetypically evidence-informed; opposition parties have criticized ministers for 'hiding behind agencies' (AB, 2020) to avoid blame for mistakes. No one disputes that leading experts led.

General media attention in Sweden to Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and State Epidemiologist Tegnell (Figure 2) reflects this power division. Tegnell was mentioned in more Swedish COVID-19 media coverage than Löfven from the outset of outbreak response (a reverse picture of media attention in Denmark, see figure 1). Tegnell also appears to have been visible in public discourse weeks before Löfven. However, the gap between the leading health expert and the PM declined after March, converging during in early June 2020 (also unlike in Denmark).

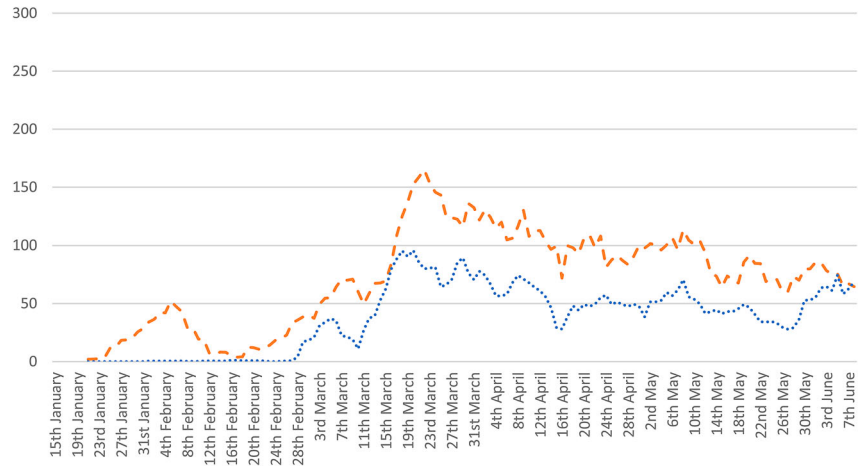

Figure 2. Prominence of Sweden's Prime Minister and its leading health expert in early Swedish COVID-19 reporting. Stripe = State Epidemiologist Anders Tegnell; dot = Prime Minister Stefan Löfven. Source: Retriever Research. # articles with mentions, seven-day moving averages, January 15 to June 8, 2020 (search terms in Appendix).

Looking more broadly at leading politicians and experts mentioned in early 2020 Swedish media on COVID-19 shows that key experts (Johan Carlsson, Director of the Public Health Authority, and Tegnell) were mentioned in 1.4 articles for every one article that mentioned either PM Löfven or Minister of Health Lena Hallengren (see Appendix). Hence, while public presences of politicians and experts were more equal in Sweden than in Denmark, Sweden's political leadership nevertheless appeared significantly less than its leading experts in initial public discourse on COVID-19 responses.

What the leading responders said

To illustrate how response leaders in Sweden and Denmark voiced arguments for COVID-19 responses, this section looks at what they said about responses enacted in March 2020 (methods described previously). The content analyses navigate the public discourse ideal types summarized previously. Leaders can seek to sway public opinion and behaviours by consistently presenting arguments for their own choices only, as advised by crisis management scholars and predicted by securitization theory. Alternatively, leaders can present reasoning and evidence for different policies, to acknowledge that there are viable policy alternatives (as there visibly were against COVID-19 in its early months), and to encourage democratic deliberation and public agreement.

Looking at arguments made by response leaders and mediated by Danish and Swedish national newspapers shows that seeking to sway opinion won

out over encouraging deliberation. As previously described, the content coding shows whether arguments made about policy were supportive, critical, or included nuance (such as: 'I think that closing schools saves lives, but damages businesses'). For the school closures and crowding limits in March 2020, coding shows uniform argumentation by elected and appointed officials sourced in newspapers. None offered arguments for alternatives to national policy. That is, elected leaders and appointed experts who led response or voiced arguments publicly sought monotony rather than pluralism (the next section discusses members of parliament (MPs) and other kinds of leading voices).

Denmark's school closures discourse in March 2020 included two instances of argumentation by elected ministers and four by leading government experts. Among these, the only policy-ambivalent instance was a 9 March projection that school closings were likely (they were announced subsequently, on 13 March), from Bolette Søborg, a senior medical specialist at Denmark's PHA. Sweden's parallel discourse on school closures contained eight instances of argumentation by elected leaders and five by leading experts, all justifying the government's choices to keep all schools open, and later to lockdown only secondary and tertiary instruction (from 18 March).

Similar uniformity characterized how government leaders presented argumentation related to public assembly restrictions. For Denmark, the analysis showed four instances of elected leaders and three instances of leading experts justifying such policy, which involved introducing a crowd limit of 100 and later tightening it to ten. For Sweden, the analysis showed 13 instances of elected leaders and ten instances of leading experts justifying policy, in that case limiting crowds to 500, and later tightening to 50. The analyses identified no dissenting or neutral argumentation presented by national response leaders in either public assembly discourse.

Monotony and pluralism in public discourses

In conditions without single and superior policy options, evident when looking across borders in the early months of COVID-19 response, media could convey even-handed reason-giving for multiple policy options, counterbalancing the public-facing unity of government's elected and epistemic leaders. Or, they could give greater weight to how their domestic response leaders were seeking to sway debates to support specific choices. So, how pluralistic or monotonous were public discourses in these cases?

Argument numbers and directions

Figure 3 shows relative shares of arguments in sampled discourses (previously described). Of 33 arguments identified in Danish daily newspapers,

20 (61 per cent) supported universal school closures, 12 (36 per cent) were critical, and one took a more neutral stance. Of 40 arguments about school closures in the Swedish sample, 28 (70 per cent) supported generally keeping elementary schools open, 11 (28 per cent) criticized the policy, and one was neutral. Similarly, for crowding limits, of 55 arguments in the Swedish sample, 37 (67 per cent) supported the various policy stages, nine16 per cent) criticized them, and another nine (16 per cent) offered nuanced perspectives. Less similarly, among the 65 Danish arguments about assembly limits, 27 (42 per cent) supported policies, 13 (20 per cent) criticized, and 25 were nuanced (38 per cent). Hence, most arguments about school closures or crowding limits argued in favour of the respective government's respective policy. This consistent skew indicates that monotonizing outweighed pluralizing forces.

While Denmark and Sweden pursued different COVID-19 related policies in March 2020, they had similar shares of arguments supporting school closure policy (61 per cent and 70 per cent, respectively). While arguments were more diverse in both countries around crowding limits, particularly in Denmark, supportive arguments were most numerous (42 per cent and 67 per cent, respectively). Notably, crowding limit policies were *more* similar across the border than school closures. This suggests that visible and viable policy alternatives had limited effect against response leaders' public-facing unity.

Figure 3. Share of arguments supporting, criticizing, or nuancing national policy.

Danish coverage of crowding limits had more nuance than the other three sampled public discourses. This included arguments juxtaposing public health benefits to civil rights risks, and calls for debate about rationales underlying restrictions. Example headings are 'have we run amok with sanctions in Denmark during the corona crisis?' (Serup, 2020); and 'the corona-crisis is not a blank cheque for Mette Frederiksen – we need to look after our democracy' (Rubin, 2020). Also, critical experts tended to be in law or economics rather than health sciences, suggesting marginal issue knowledge (the next sub-section returns to these qualities).

Who argued what

Simple numbers indicate that early public discourses on COVID-19 responses tended toward monotony. Plausibly, however, contributions' quality may outweigh numbers. Arguments from more credible sources could count for more among audiences.

Assuming that arguments about social distancing responses to COVID-19 made by experts are more credible than those made by other sources seems particularly plausible for the COVID-19 outbreak. COVID-19 was new and unfamiliar in early 2020. Sources who specialize in infectious disease medicine, epidemiology, or virus biology are credible authorities on questions about how to manage emerging viral diseases. Hence, to distinguish levels of credibility, the study coded types of sources. This includes journalists (writing editorials or columns; not when reporting), members of the public, elected representatives (including cabinet members), generalist civil servants (in departments, agencies, or local government), experts outside government (any research-level staff in universities, think tanks, etc.), experts inside government (specialists working for agencies, departments, etc.), and interest organization representatives (e.g., from unions or businesses).

The top sources in sampled discourses about school closures were experts inside and outside government. They made 16 of the 33 identified Danish school closure arguments, and 16 of the 40 Swedish arguments. Swedish politicians also figured prominently on schools, with 10 arguments. With three arguments, Danish politicians were less visible (they are less present because many addressed lockdown generally rather than specific measures). The top sources on public assembly were politicians, journalists, and experts inside and outside of government. In Denmark, 18 of 65 arguments were made by politicians, 18 by experts inside and outside government, and 15 by journalists. In Sweden, 14 of 55 arguments were made by politicians, 15 by experts inside and outside of government, and 18 by journalists.

Figure 4 illustrates what sources argued. Civil servants and experts working for government made arguments supporting government policy. Coding identified one critical expert with ties to government. Åke Gustafsson, former head of clinical microbiology for regional governments in Gävleborg

and Uppsala, co-authored an op-ed with seven other experts that argued against Sweden's open schools policy (SvD, 2020). That is, clearly a health sciences specialist, yet local rather than national, and retired.

Arguments from experts working outside government were less uniform than from those tied to agencies and departments. On school closures, several health sciences specialists in both countries voiced supportive arguments. But experts working for universities and other non-governmental institutions also offered arguments against policy, such as costs associated with school closures (in Denmark) or public health risks of keeping schools open (in Sweden).

Particularly prominent policy critics in Sweden's COVID-19 debate during 2020 were several high-profile health scientists (very prominent was one commentary by 22 experts in Sweden's most-read daily broadsheet, DN, 2020). Our sample includes a critical commentary co-authored by seven senior experts (SvD, 2020; counted as seven cases in figure 4). These authors included prominent infectious diseases physicians and

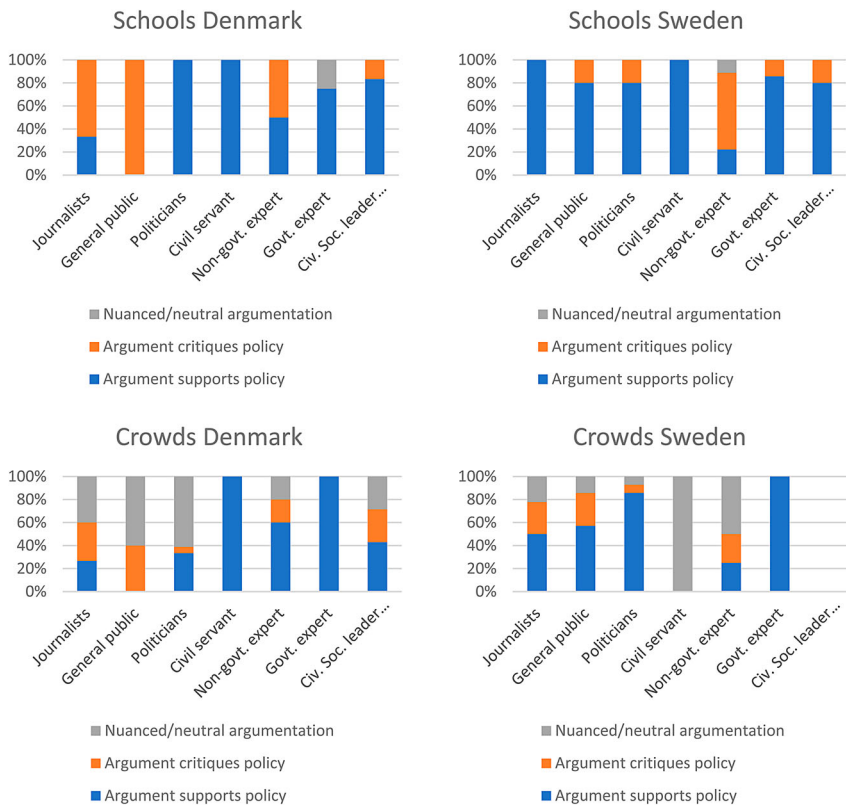

Figure 4. Share of arguments by type of source.

epidemiologists at Sweden's leading universities and teaching hospitals (and Åke Gustafsson, see above). They directly and extensively argued that Sweden should shut all schools. Hence, these arguments had high credibility given many senior and relevant experts speaking publicly with one voice; yet they had just one published contribution, suggesting less chance of gaining wide public attention.

On crowding limits, experts outside government made more arguments in Denmark (15) than in Sweden (4). Yet these Danish experts tended to justify national policy. In addition, Swedish academics who offered nuance or spoke against limits were lawyers (SvD, 2020) or economists (DN, 2020), and hence, less knowledgeable than health experts about how to mitigate COVID-19. This mirrors the previously described pattern in Denmark, where nuanced or critical reasoning about crowding limits focused on general principles rather than specific policies, from experts outside of health sciences. So, sources offering critiques no doubt understood economic or civil liberty costs of crowd limits, but probably had little credibility on public health benefits.

Finally, politicians usually disagree publicly and vociferously. Yet their arguments about how to address COVID-19 were generally aligned despite the uncertainty and openness of the initial response stage. On schools, Danish MPs said little specifically (as noted) while Swedish MPs generally agreed. The exception was Jimmie Åkesson, leader of the opposition Sweden Democrats, who argued that Sweden should follow its neighbours in Denmark, Norway, and Finland and shut all schools. On crowds, politicians in both countries were active. Some Danish politicians offered nuance, mentioning public health benefits along with economic costs and civil liberty risks. Some opposition politicians to the left and right of the Danish government also questioned limits (Domino et al., 2020; Domino & Bloc, 2020). But most refrained from arguing against COVID-19 responses, consistent with rallying-to-the-flag or extraordinary politics. Hence, the credibility of contributions does not appear to plausibly outweigh or balance out the quantity in any of these four discourses.

Conclusions

This article asked how public discourse on public policy in mature democracies can fare in pervasive crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. To answer, it identified two ideal-types of public discourse, and summarized forces that drive discourses toward these. It empirically compared two cases selected to favour public discourse pluralism. These show that discourses on early COVID-19 responses tended toward monotony rather than pluralism. This is consistent with conclusions on public discourses about other crises, particularly 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic responses (cf. Baekkeskov & Öberg, 2017). It

more generally supports that monotonizing forces identified in crisis management studies and international relations are powerful in crisis conditions.

Denmark's and Sweden's early COVID-19 response media coverage gave elected leaders *or* leading experts important voices. In sampled discourses, these national response leaders uniformly presented arguments justifying policies their government had chosen. That is, whether leadership was epistemic or political, it took the form of repeating reasons for selected policies, rather than encouraging public debate over options. In line with expectations of normative crisis management and securitization theories, pandemic response leaders worked for monotony in public discourse.

Perhaps more surprisingly, media coverage gave more echo than counterweight to response leaders' arguments. Publicized non-government sources, whether they were opposition politicians, independent experts, columnists, news editors, or lay publics, in the early COVID-19 period often repeated the official arguments rather than voicing counter-points. Hence, potentially credible alternatives gained marginal places in each discourse. National newspapers repeated leadership justifications rather than moderating them, giving less space to arguments from outside than inside of government ranks. Some reported voices did point to neighbouring countries with alternative policies or other reasons for alternative policies. But such arguments were in the minority. Looking at sources' credibility to gauge quality, dissenting experts mostly had weaker claims to public health expertise than policy backers. This suggests that their arguments' quality could not compensate for low quantities. Instead, public discourse in every analysed case was skewed in favour of government policies and reason-giving.

From these findings, monotony repeatedly overcame pluralism in public discourse on the early COVID-19 responses in Denmark and Sweden. This illustrates that mixes of crisis management doctrine, threatening and securitized issues, political and social rallying to the flag, and media searches for easy narratives may outweigh combinations of democratic ideals, scientific disagreements, problem complexity, stark disruptions, and journalism's search for controversy, even in the presence of evident and viable alternatives. This result in contexts that should favour pluralism supports that leaders who appear consensual in domestic representations of policy can reliably marginalize dissent if they succeed in framing circumstances as a crisis.

Recognizing limitations of the study reported here, future research should add how discourses provide reasons and how participants engage in exchanges (Jennstål et al. 2021). We have presumed that more pluralistic debate increases possibilities for citizens to reflect critically on policy options, an assumption that should be tested. In addition, this article assessed whether sources' credibilityy could plausibly outweigh quantities of arguments. Future analyses of more argument qualities are warranted.

Finally, the analysis does not show that uniform messaging is inappropriate in all circumstances. The conclusion is rather that risks of monotony should be explicated. Uniformly held ideas about what to do may help avoid public confusion and poor coordination among responders, and hence, steer clear of bad outcomes in acute crisis situations. But simplifying public discourses comes with risks, for democracy and sustained policy efficacy.

The short-term advantages clear messages give for coping with acute crises may simultaneously produce longer-term democratic legitimacy problems and exclude better policy options from being publicly deliberated. Pluralism in public reasoning and information enables people – whether members of elites or the lay public – to consider for themselves and fairly weigh whether compliance and support for policy are good ideas (Neblo, 2015; Fishkin, 2018, p. 6). Supporting such public reasoning is also consistent with democracy. Further, when other options are viable, debating them enables better policies to gain public consideration and reach political agendas. Conversely, uniform reasoning and information means that governments rely on public deference, based on blind faith or, at best, bias (Lafont, 2019). It also increases chances of repercussions such as mobilizing opposition to responders and public non-compliance with policy, as deference and initial shock give way to widespread suffering and public realizations about disinformation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Erik Baekkeskov is a Senior Lecturer in Public Policy at The University of Melbourne. He researches and teaches policy-making at the intersection of public health and crisis management. His theoretical work has particularly focused on discourses, ideas, roles of science and experts, and related logics of decision-making and reform. His empirical work has focused on cases of pandemics and other health threats, including the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, 2014 Ebola, 2020 COVID-19, and the growing antimicrobial resistance crisis. His work is published in leading public policy, public administration, and public health journals and volumes.

Dr. Olivier Rubin, Professor at the Department of Social Sciences and Business, Roskilde University, is a disaster expert specializing in exploring the governance and socio-economic dynamics associated with disasters and major crises. Rubin is currently in the steering committee of the Copenhagen Center for Disaster Research, and he has 15 years of experience in disaster and health crisis research. With a background in political science, his research focus is on the political and bureaucratic dynamics of slow-onset disasters such as famines, climate-induced disasters, pandemics, and antimicrobial resistance. Rubin has received several highly competitive

multiyear grants on disaster research and has published widely in international outlets pertaining to disasters, politics & public administration, public health, and international development.

PerOla Öberg is Professor of Political Science at the Department of Government, Uppsala University, Sweden. His research interests include expertize and public policy, learning and policy diffusion, interest group politics, and deliberative governance. He has published in journals such as the Journal of European Public Policy, Governance, Policy Sciences, and Policy Studies Journal, Public Administration, Public Administration Review and West European Politics. He is currently PI for the international collaborative research project "Expert government agencies' contribution to public deliberation: balancing the need for expertise with political equality".

ORCID

Erik Baekkeskov http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9028-9570
Olivier Rubin http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2364-6782
PerOla Öberg http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3522-4966

References

AB [Aftonbladet]. (2020). Regeringen styr riket, jag leder regeringen, vi fattar besluten.

Ahlbäck Öberg, S., & Wockelberg, H. (2016). Nordic administrative heritages and contemporary institutional design. In C. Greve, Lægreid, P., & Rykkja, L. (Eds.) *Nordic administrative reforms* (pp. 57–78). Palgrave Macmillan.

Bächtiger, A., Dryzek, J. S., Mansbridge, J., & Warren, M. E. (Eds.). (2018). *The Oxford handbook of deliberative democracy*. Oxford University Press.

Bächtiger, A., & Parkinson, J. (2019). *Mapping and measuring deliberation: Towards a new deliberative quality*. Oxford University Press.

Baekkeskov, E. (2016). Explaining science-led policy-making: Pandemic deaths, epistemic deliberation and ideational trajectories. *Policy Sciences*, *49*(4), 395–419. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-016-9264-y

Baekkeskov, E., & Öberg, P. O. (2017). Freezing deliberation through public expert advice. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *24*(7), 1006–1026. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1170192

Baker, William D., & Oneal, John R. (2001). Patriotism or opinion leadership?. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *45*(*5*), 661–687. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002701045005006

Baldwin, P. (2005). *Disease and democracy: The industrialized world faces AIDS*. University of California Press.

Boin, A., Kuipers, S., & Overdijk, W. (2013). Leadership in times of crisis: A framework for assessment. *International Review of Public Administration*, *18*(1), 79–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/12294659.2013.10805241

Boin, A., & t Hart, P. (2003). Public leadership in times of crisis: Mission impossible? *Public Administration Review*, *63*(5), 544–553. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6210.00318

Boswell, C. (2009). Knowledge, legitimation and the politics of risk: The functions of research in public debates on migration. *Political Studies*, *57*(1), 165–186. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2008.00729.x

Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & De Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Chambers, S. (2009). Rhetoric and the public sphere: Has deliberative democracy abandoned mass democracy? *Political Theory*, *37*(3), 323–350. https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591709332336

Chambers, S. (2017). Balancing epistemic quality and equal participation in a system approach to deliberative democracy. *Social Epistemology*, *31*(3), 266–276. https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2017.1317867

Christiano, T. (2012). Rational deliberation among experts and citizens. In J. Parkinson, & J. Mansbridge (Eds.), *Deliberative systems: Deliberative democracy at the large scale* (pp. 27–51). Cambridge University Press.

Danish Parliament. (2020). L 133 Forslag til lov om ændring af lov om foranstaltninger mod smitsomme og andre overførbare sygdomme. Legal amendment approved March 12, 2020. Retrieved November 26, 2020 https://www.ft.dk/samling/20191/lovforslag/l133/index.htm.

DN [Dagens Nyheter]. (2020). Så gick det till när regeringen gav taktpinnen till expertmyndigheten, Folkhälsomyndigheten har misslyckats – nu måste politikerna gripa in. Professor: Åtgärderna kan bli ett hot mot välfärden och folkhälsan.

Domino, S., & Bloc, C. (2020). Kort efter en optimistisk tale fra statsministeren blev Magnus Heunicke udsat for skarp kritik på et lukket videomøde. Berlingske. https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/kort-efter-en-optimistisk-tale-fra-statsministeren-blev-magnus-heunicke.

Domino, S., Rohde, T., Bloch, T., & Reinwald, T. (2020). Midt i forsigtig optimisme vil regeringen igen vedtage lov mod coronasmitte uden faglig anbefaling: »Vi vil ikke løbe en risiko«. Berlingske. https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/midt-i-forsigtig-optimisme-vil-regeringen-igen-vedtage-lov-mod.

Drennan, L. T., McConnell, A., & Stark, A. (2015). Risk and crisis management in the public sector. In *Risk and crisis management in the public sector* (2nd ed.).

Dryzek, J. S., Bächtiger, A., Chambers, S., Cohen, J., & Druckman, J. N. (2019). The crisis of democracy and the science of deliberation. *Science*, *363*(6432), 1144–1146. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aaw2694

Dunlop, C. A. (2014). The possible experts: How epistemic communities negotiate barriers to knowledge use in ecosystems services policy. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, *32*(2), 208–228. https://doi.org/10.1068/c13192j

Dunlop, C. A., & Radaelli, C. M. (2013). Systematising policy learning: From monolith to dimensions. *Political Studies*, *61*(3), 599–619. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2012.00982.x

Elbe, S. (2011). Pandemics on the radar screen: Health security, infectious disease and the medicalisation of insecurity. *Political Studies*, *59*(4), 848–866. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2011.00921.x

Estlund, D., & Landemore, H. (2018). The epistemic value of democratic deliberation. In A. Bächtiger (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of deliberative democracy* (pp. 113–131). Oxford University Press.

Farrell, D. M., & Suiter, J. (2019). Reimagining democracy: Lessons in deliberative democracy from the Irish front line. *Cornell Selects*.

FHM [Public Health Agency of Sweden]. (2020). https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/nyheter-och-press/.

Findalen, J., & Weichardt, B. (2020). Regeringen bremsede positive coronatal. Ekstrabladet. Retrieved November 26, 2020. at:https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/danskpolitik/regeringen-bremsede-positive-coronatal/8139077.

Fishkin, J. S. (2018). *Democracy when the people are thinking P: Revitalizing our politics through public deliberation*. Oxford University Press.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *12*(2), 219–245. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363

Frederiksen, M. (2020). Pressemøde om COVID-19 den 11. marts 2020. Retrieved November 26, 2020. https://www.stm.dk/_p_14920.html.

Friberg, M. (2020). Mail afslører: Søren Brostrøm frarådede at lukke skoler kort før pressemøde. B.T. Retrieved November 26, 2020. https://www.bt.dk/samfund/mail-afsloerer-soeren-brostroem-fraraadede-at-lukke-skoler-kort-foer-pressemoede.

Gerring, J. (2007). Is there a (viable) crucial-case method? *Comparative Political Studies*, *40*(3), 231–253. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006290784

Grønnegård, J., Askim, J., Gyrd-Hansen, D., Madsen, H., & Østergaard, L. (2021). *Håndteringen af covid-19 i foråret 2020*. Independent evaluation report. Retrieved March 16, 2021. https://www.ft.dk/-/media/sites/ft/pdf/publikationer/haandtering-af-covid19-foraar-2020.ashx.

Hibbing, J. R., & Theiss-Morse, E. (2002). *Stealth democracy: Americans' beliefs about how government should work*. Cambridge University Press.

Holst, C., & Molander, A. (2017). Public deliberation and the fact of expertise: Making experts accountable. *Social Epistemology*, *31*(3), 235–250. https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2017.1317865

Jennstål, J., Uba, K., & Öberg , P. (2021). Deliberative civic culture: Assessing the prevalence of deliberative conversational norms. *Political Studies*, *69*(2), 366–389. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719899036

John, P., & Stoker, G. (2019). Rethinking the role of experts and expertise in behavioural public policy. *Policy & Politics*, *47*(2), 209–226. https://doi.org/10.1332/030557319X15526371698257

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

Lafont, C. (2019). *Democracy without shortcuts: A participatory conception of deliberative democracy*. Oxford University Press.

Landemore, H. (2017). *Democratic reason: Politics, collective intelligence, and the rule of the many*. Princeton University Press.

Mereckiene, J., Cotter, S., D'Ancona, F., Giambi, C., Nicoll, A., Levy-Bruhl, D., & O'Flanagan, D. (2010). Differences in national influenza vaccination policies across the European Union, Norway and Iceland 2008–2009. *Eurosurveillance*, *15*(44), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.2807/ese.15.44.19700-en

Mølgaard, C. (2020). Det sagde Søren Brostrøm om grænselukninger. Altinget. Retrieved November 26, 2020. https://www.altinget.dk/sundhed/artikel/det-sagde-soeren-brostroem-om-graenselukninger.

Montpetit, É. (2016). *In defense of pluralism: Policy disagreement and its media coverage*. Cambridge University Press.

Neblo, M. A. (2015). *Deliberative democracy between theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Öberg, P., Lundin, M., & Thelander, J. (2015). Political power and policy design: Why are policy alternatives constrained? *Policy Studies Journal*, *43*(1), 93–114. https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12086

Parkinson, J. (2003). Legitimacy problems in deliberative democracy. *Political Studies*, *51*(1), 180–196. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00419

Parkinson, J. (2006). *Deliberating in the real world: Problems of legitimacy in deliberative democracy*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Parkinson, J., & Mansbridge, J. (Eds.). (2012). *Deliberative systems: Deliberative democracy at the large scale*. Cambridge University Press.

Rasmussen, L., & Larsen, J. (2020). Departementschef bad Broström om at tilsidesætte sin faglighed, Politiken. Retrieved November 26, 2020. www.politikensundhed.dk/nyheder/art7805381/Departementschef-bad-Brostr%C3%B8m-om-at-tilsides%C3%A6tte-faglighed.

Rubin, M. (2020). Coronakrisen er ikke en blankocheck til Mette Frederiksen. Vi skal passe på folkestyret. Politiken. https://politiken.dk/debat/ledere/art7727770/Coronakrisen-er-ikke-en-blankocheck-til-Mette-Frederiksen.-Vi-skal-passe-p%C3%A5-folkestyret.

Rubin, O., & Bækkeskov, E. (2020). Expert-led securitization: The case of the 2009 pandemic in Denmark and Sweden. *Politics and Governance*, *8*(4), 319–330. https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v8i4.2982

Rytgaard, N., & Seidelin, M. (2020). Det skete der i de vilde dage, da Danmark lukkede ned. Jyllands-Posten. Retrieved November 26, 2020. https://jyllands-posten.dk/premium/indblik/Indland/ECE12152206/det-skete-der-i-de-vilde-dage-da-danmark-lukkede-ned/.

Serup, S. (2020). Er vi gået bemyndigelsesamok? BT, 5 April 2020. https://www.bt.dk/samfund/soes-marie-serup-er-vi-gaaet-bemyndigelsesamok.

SvD [Svenska Dagbladet]. (2020). Ett beslut Sverige inte upplevt i modern tid. Fler åtgärder krävs för att bromsa smittspridning.

Sveriges Radio [Swedish Radio]. (2020). Nu kan regeringen stänga skolorna. https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/7433809.

Swedish Parliament, [Riksdagens protokoll]. (2019). torsdagen den 16 april.

Swedish Television [SVT Nyheter]. (2020). https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/stefan-lofven-utesluter-inte-karantan.

Warren, M. E., & Mansbridge, J. (2013). Deliberative negotiation. Mansbridge and Jo Martin (Eds.) *Negotiating agreement in politics*, APSR, Task force report.

Weingart, P., Engels, A., & Pansegrau, P. (2000). Risks of communication: Discourses on climate change in science, politics, and the mass media. *Public Understanding of Science*, *9*(3), 261–283. https://doi.org/10.1088/0963-6625/9/3/304