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Enhancing Democratic Expertise Through Intra-Party Deliberation

Enrico Biale[1] | Giulia Bistagnino[2]

[1]Department of Humanities, University of Piemonte Orientale, Vercelli, Italy | [2]Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan, Milano, Italy

Correspondence: Enrico Biale (enrico.biale@uniupo.it)

1 | Introduction

The role of experts in contemporary democracies has become one of the most politicized and pressing issues of our time and has been deeply debated within normative political theory. Given the technical complexity of current political challenges, we have witnessed a significant shift of power from governments and politicians to technocratic institutions and experts (Radaelli 1999; Bickerton and Accetti-Invernizzi 2015; Dargent 2015). In the view of proponents of epistocracy (Brennan 2016; López-Guerra 2014), this shift is not only inevitable but necessary. As democratic systems are characterized by structural epistemic distortions (polarization, bias, short-termism), they cannot make sound policy choices (McKenzie 2016) as confirmed by the spread of populist movements (Galston 2018; Müller 2016). Epistocracy argues for limiting the role of citizens and representative institutions, while granting more power to those who have the appropriate knowledge (Jeffrey 2018). However, this shift toward epistocracy faces substantial criticism from other scholars (Gunn 2019; Moraro 2018). They contend that it is not only incompatible with the democratic framework because of its failure to recognize citizens as equals but also the cause of rather than the solution to democratic distortions (Mouffe 2018; Friedman 2019). According to this perspective, when citizens lose control over decision-making, they can only expose this democratic failure by supporting anti-establishment movements (Berman 2019, 2021). The spread of populist movements in both Europe and the United States (Muirhead and Rosenblum 2019; Urbinati 2019) and their open skepticism toward expertise, which is seen as an expression of elite attempts to curb popular power, confirm this diagnosis.

Even if we agree that the epistocratic view is incompatible with a democratic framework, this perspective is correct in claiming that current democratic systems need to provide not only procedurally fair but also epistemically sound answers to complex problems for which ordinary citizens do not have the appropriate expertise. While epistocracy might not offer the solution, a populist dismissal of expertise cannot serve as an alternative. A proper normative model of democracy, we thus contend, should rely on experts without undermining the control of citizens. To achieve this aim, it is crucial to delve into and gain a deeper understanding of how expertise can be best integrated into democratic systems while addressing the issue of how to enable ordinary citizens to evaluate and oversee expert claims. In a nutshell, it is necessary to reflect on the division of labor between experts and citizens. As recently highlighted by Moore (2021), there are three primary models for considering the relationship and the division of labor between experts and citizens in a democratic society: representative, participatory, and associational. The first model views the relationship between experts and citizens as being mediated through institutions of political representation. The second model advocates forms of engaged expertise, in which experts directly participate in public fora such as citizens' juries and minipublics. The third model leverages expert knowledge to support and advance the goals of self-organized associations and social groups.

In this paper, our contribution to this debate centers on the first model of the relation between experts and citizens, particularly emphasizing the role of political parties. The concept of representative expertise has traditionally been associated with parliaments, in line with Weber's (1994, 179) suggestion that legislative bodies should possess strong and independent epistemic resources. We seek to add another dimension by showing that a critical aspect of democratic expertise resides within political parties, operating in accordance with principles of intra-party deliberation. Indeed, when political parties are properly and normatively regulated, they can function as intermediaries between citizens and experts. Furthermore, we argue that, with intra-party deliberation involving party members

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and experts, citizens can exert control over expert proposals without needing to directly engage with experts, which can be excessively demanding. Scrutinizing expertise demands a level of knowledge, experience, and technical argumentation skills that are often lacking among ordinary citizens. Thus, our contribution aligns with recent theoretical attempts to expand the role that institutions can play in facilitating the discussion, evaluation, and contestation of science in the public sphere (Moore 2017; Pamuk 2021), albeit with a specific focus on political parties.

In this sense, the paper aims to bridge the gap between two debates within normative political theory: the one about democratic expertise and the normative discussion concerning political parties, which has recently seen increased attention (Rosenblum 2008; Muirhead 2014; White and Ypi 2016; Bonotti 2017; Wolkenstein 2020). Indeed, scholars have advocated seeing political parties as not mere factions but vital organizations that organize regulated rivalry and facilitate citizens' exercise of political agency. Moreover, they have considered the epistemic function that political parties can perform by mobilizing information and reducing both the complexity and the technical aspects of relevant policies and political projects (White and Ypi 2016; Biale and Ottonelli 2019). Yet this renewed normative interest in political parties has neglected the role they can play in fostering relations between experts and citizens and therefore their possible role as sites of democratic expertise. The normative requirements we propose, to which political parties can be subjected, can, in our view, both enhance the epistemic quality of political proposals and decisions and facilitate a reflexive exchange of reasons, thereby enabling control by ordinary citizens.

The paper is divided into five sections. Section 2 elucidates the significance of political parties in bridging the divide between experts and citizens. Section 3 introduces our two-tier model of intra-party deliberation, emphasizing the criteria that experts and party leaders must adhere to during deliberations, which are equally essential for discussions between party leaders and party members. In Section 4, we expand upon this proposal, delineating its scope and operational dynamics. Section 5 clarifies our proposal and addresses potential objections. Finally, the paper concludes in Section 6.

2 | Why Political Parties?

Before delving into our proposal, it is crucial to address a fundamental premise regarding the significance of political parties and intra-party deliberation in bridging the gap between experts and citizens. Some may harbor skepticism toward this idea, highlighting how governmental and legislative institutions already rely on expertise in policymaking. Moreover, skeptics may claim that political parties, driven by partisanship, are ill-equipped to engage in meaningful deliberations with experts because they foster motivated irrationality and political polarization (Mason 2018; Finkel et al. 2020; Williams 2021). But while parties are not the only intermediaries between citizens and experts and intra-party deliberation will not necessarily mitigate citizens' biases or reduce polarization, it can improve democratic stability, enhance awareness of the intricate nature of political and social issues, and promote the epistemic function of political parties. Let us explore each of these points in detail.

Intra-party deliberation with experts may be important to discourage and limit the tendency for political parties to engage in perpetual campaigns. As Gutmann and Thompson (2012) argue, democratic politics comprises both campaigning and governing, and striking a balance between these activities is crucial. During campaigns, political parties aim to mobilize citizens and secure electoral victory. In doing so, they often prioritize messaging over expertise, seeking to appeal to the widest possible audience, even if it means overlooking expert advice. However, political parties aspire to govern effectively, and this requires considering expert opinions to develop reasonable political solutions that can garner public support. It is thus essential to find ways to prevent the pressures of campaigning from impeding the business of governing.

To illustrate this point, consider the case of the Five Star Movement, an Italian populist party, and its stance on vaccine hesitancy (Kennedy 2019; Paul and Loer 2019). Initially skeptical of vaccines and questioning their safety, the party later reversed its position after winning a significant number of parliamentary seats in the 2018 legislative elections and forming a coalition government. This change led to the strengthening of a vaccine mandate to address measles outbreaks, which they had fiercely opposed when campaigning. This change in perspective significantly affected the party's supporters, leaving them bewildered. Had the Five Star Movement engaged in intra-party deliberation with experts during its campaign, it might have adopted a more nuanced and informed stance on vaccines. By reducing the dichotomy between campaigning and governing, intra-party deliberation with experts can foster the stability of a democratic process and the trust citizens have in political parties.

Additionally, requiring political parties to engage in deliberation with experts could deepen citizens' understanding of the intricate nature of political issues and potential solutions. Citizens would be encouraged to recognize the significance of expertise in decision-making processes within contemporary societies, acknowledging what Kitcher (2011) terms the "fact of expertise." This concept posits that navigating complex societal issues necessitates specialized knowledge and skills that are typically beyond the grasp of ordinary citizens. Importantly, fostering this awareness does not imply that expertise is inherently neutral. On the contrary, political parties may select experts who align with their own normative and political beliefs and commitments. However, for experts to be deemed credible, they should not espouse views that starkly contradict the consensus within the relevant scientific community, as seen, for instance, in the case of the Five Star Movement and the importance of vaccines.[1]

A final rationale for emphasizing intra-party deliberation with experts pertains to the theoretical framework of the normative revitalization of political parties. As previously mentioned, a key aspect of this discourse revolves around the notion that political parties should serve an epistemic function. Notably, scholars such as White and Ypi (2016, 90–96) argue that this epistemic function is vital for mitigating power imbalances that could hinder individuals from engaging as equals in reasoning and decision-

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making. In societies characterized by social and economic inequalities, certain individuals may face barriers to accessing political education and specialized knowledge. Therefore, partisanship should actively work to dismantle such obstacles and provide pertinent epistemic resources essential for advancing the party's collective goals. Partisan platforms, ranging from party conventions to branch meetings, assemblies, protests, blogs, and websites, can thus be viewed as educational fora for citizens. These platforms empower marginalized individuals by equipping them with the necessary epistemic resources to participate meaningfully in politics and motivating them to participate in the political project they favor. If fostering the epistemic function of political parties is valuable for democratic governance, then intra-party deliberation with experts is a means to realize this objective.

3 | Intra-Party Deliberation With Experts

As previously mentioned, the representative model of democratic expertise envisions a relationship between experts and citizens that is mediated through institutions of political representation. The idea is that experts can exercise limited and delegated authority under the supervision and control of political representatives. In this model, the role of experts is to provide relevant knowledge and technical information to political representatives, who, in turn, scrutinize and oversee the conduct of experts to ensure that the political objectives of their constituents can be achieved, given the prevailing circumstances.

An essential element of this model is that citizens are not required to possess the capacity to comprehend and evaluate experts' claims and recommendations. The idea is that, despite the technical unfamiliarity of those claims and recommendations, which can be challenging to overcome, ordinary citizens can assess the performance of experts and, through elections, remove representatives from power if their political decisions are found to be inappropriate or unsatisfactory (Schumpeter 2003; Urbinati 2006, 156–157).

However, the representative model does not need to be confined to this elitist conception, which suggests that ordinary citizens can only evaluate and respond to the effects that policies and political decisions informed by expert knowledge have on their lives. On the contrary, this model can embrace a genuine deliberative perspective, defending a process that addresses the reasons of all citizens as participants in public reasoning, thereby fostering a form of discursive agency (Benhabib 1994; Habermas 1996) capable of ensuring *reflexive control*. Reflexive control, in the deliberative ideal, is the requirement that political decisions be made through processes that enable people to exercise critical reflection about their grounds (Owen and Smith 2015; Lafont 2019). Despite its procedural nature, the deliberative perspective entails an epistemic dimension according to which citizens need to have access to epistemically sound proposals that are not only grounded in reasons but also truth-sensitive (Christiano 2012; Chambers 2017). However, since citizens need to exercise reflexive control over decision-making, they cannot be passive recipients of the information developed by experts, as the elitist model of representative expertise suggests, but need to be able to understand their content and rationales.

How can the representative model, which firmly rejects a direct interaction between experts and citizens, gain a genuinely deliberative character? We contend that political parties, with their fundamental role in crafting matters of policy, can represent proper intermediaries between experts and citizens in a deliberative perspective, provided that some version of intra-party deliberation is granted (Wolkenstein 2015; Invernizzi-Accetti and Wolkenstein 2017). To appreciate this point, consider two crucial features of political parties: *linkage* and *impact*.

Within complex democratic systems, political parties are necessary to create the conditions that allow citizens to exercise control without needing to meet excessively burdensome requirements. Political parties link citizens to democratic institutions by developing a set of proposals (programs, policies, ideological framework) that citizens can carefully evaluate to define the goals and values their polity should promote. Yet, to ensure their linkage function, parties need to affect decision-making by developing proposals that rely on experts' advice. Though the importance of experts in crafting political proposals is undeniable, parties cannot be passive recipients of their advice. If political parties lost control over their proposals, they would not be able to properly advance their goals and values because their platforms would be subordinated to technocratic suggestions. If these shortcomings were not addressed, citizens would not have the opportunities to exercise control, for they would end up being exposed either to proposals that convey political values and goals but are unachievable or to programs that can be easily realized but do not convey the party's values and goals.

To avoid these problems, we propose a two-tiered deliberative model. Initially, political proposals should be formulated through a deliberative process involving party leaders, their advisers,[2] and subject-matter experts. This solution is not only necessary but feasible, as political parties, unlike ordinary citizens, typically possess the necessary epistemic resources to engage with experts and mutually integrate their competences. Furthermore, given that parties are expected to accommodate diverse viewpoints and currents, at the first level of deliberation, party leaders advocating different proposals and their chosen experts should deliberate to refine and shape a proposal, or series of proposals, for broader consideration by the party's membership at the second level.

In the model we propose, intra-party deliberation is delineated as a process through which party decisions regarding political programs and specific policy decisions are made in accordance with four primary requirements. In what follows, we present and discuss these four criteria, which constitute the essence of deliberation at the first level, involving party leaders and their expert advisers.[3] However, these four criteria are also essential for the second level of deliberation, which involves party leaders and party members.[4] Indeed, parties should make known that these criteria serve as the basis for crafting programs and policies, thus presenting them to party members as crucial elements of discussion for testing and assessing the party's proposals. In Section 3, we focus on the dynamics of deliberation, encompassing both levels.

The first criterion is *scientific validity*. There is little doubt that the most important contribution experts can make to partisan fora concerns the knowledge they possess and the technical

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comprehension they have of particular issues relevant to the political agenda. In this sense, through intra-party deliberation, experts are to present the evidence at their disposal and be ready to answer questions and respond to doubts that may arise regarding the factual and empirical aspects of the issue at hand. In this sense, in deliberating with party leadership, experts can constrain a policy proposal, a political reform, or a part of the party's program by either indicating whether it violates key findings from natural or social sciences or pointing to its consequences.

Consider two examples: Experts can offer evidence to reject a certain pension reform that, given their empirical investigations, they understand to not be fiscally sustainable. Or experts can challenge and provide reasons to revise a proposal on the minimum wage if, given their knowledge and analysis, it would dramatically increase unemployment. In this sense, experts provide the factual understanding needed to not pursue a political agenda that is unrealistic or detrimental to society and the political aims of the party.

Importantly, our first criterion does not seek to circumvent or ignore the fact that experts often hold differing, sometimes vastly conflicting, opinions regarding their findings and evidence supporting or opposing certain policies. We do not posit the existence of absolute scientific validity that is universally accepted among scientists nor do we advocate that political parties exclusively consult mainstream experts who endorse commonly held views within their fields. Indeed, it would be naive to view expertise in purely objective terms as simply a technical means to solve political problems. The reality of the scientific world is not neutral or conciliatory. As Julian Reiss argues, "In the social sciences, judgments about legitimate expertise are inextricably bound up with membership in schools of thought, which are often strongly associated with politics" (2019, 187). And, as often argued in the philosophy of the social sciences, value judgments are a significant component of scientific investigation (Longino 1990; Mongin 2006; Dupré 2007).

Accordingly, we acknowledge the reality of expert disagreement and assert that political parties have the autonomy to select experts based on their value commitments and objectives. However, genuine experts, as opposed to pseudo-experts, are obligated to provide evidence and reasoning that are recognized as valid by the relevant scientific community, even if such evidence or perspectives are not widely shared or are in the minority. For instance, a political party may advocate a minimum wage reform despite a prevailing consensus among economists that such legislation would increase unemployment, provided that credible evidence is presented to support the alternative perspective.

Furthermore, as we elucidate in the subsequent section, within the first level of deliberation, different party leaders may enlist and endorse various experts to contribute to the formulation of the party's political program or preferred policies. In this regard, we view disagreement among experts as an inherent aspect of our model, one that fosters thorough exploration of competing viewpoints and their integration.

The second deliberative criterion for intra-party deliberation between experts and party leadership is *acceptability*. Since one of the crucial functions of political parties is to develop and sustain a partisan perspective—with a particular worldview, narrative, identity, and ideal of the just society (White and Ypi 2016)—party leadership can challenge the proposals of experts when these are incompatible with their partisan perspective. If the aim of political parties is to translate their partisan commitments into policies that can affect decision-making, policy proposals and political programs cannot be grounded in values that are not acceptable to partisans and that contradict the party's fundamental tenets and history, as committing to those tenets and history is fundamental to maintaining the allegiance of party members. Importantly, in challenging experts on the basis of acceptability, party leadership should not ask for an unrealistic representation of facts nor for a picture of reality more suitable for those political proposals they consider most desirable, given the partisan perspective. And experts should not mystify reality in an attempt to meet the requests of party leadership. The idea is that as long as experts' proposals are not acceptable from the partisan perspective, party leadership can reject those proposals and demand to modify them. Indeed, party leadership knows better than experts the party's guiding principles and which interpretation of them is most prominent and shared among partisans and nonaffiliated supporters. So, in deliberating with experts, party leadership can contribute to shaping a certain political proposal by constraining it to conform with its normative and partisan underpinnings.

The third criterion for intra-party deliberations with experts is *political feasibility*. The notion of feasibility concerns what can be realized in practice. It involves those constraints that may prevent a certain project from being realized or enacted; it thus shapes the realm of practical possibilities. A political proposal or policy has to satisfy a number of constraints (economic, political, sociological, organizational) in order to be feasible. From the perspective of policy analysis, the political feasibility of a policy proposal concerns the relevant actors involved, their motivations and beliefs, their political resources, and the arena in which the relevant decisions are made (Meltsner 1972; Weimer and Vining 2011, 274–285). Accordingly, political feasibility is strictly related to the distribution of power within a given society and how power resources can be used in a given political context to reach a certain aim (Galston 2006, 543–556). In the context of intra-party deliberation with experts, party leadership should challenge the expert proposals' political feasibility—that is, they should evaluate not only whether the party has enough political resources to pursue the policy proposals but also what their possible effects on the political arena are more generally, given that other political actors may oppose them. In this sense, party leadership may reject a proposal and ask experts to revise it if partisans cannot be mobilized to support it or if the proposal might generate political conflict that would endanger the party's alliance with other parties or interest groups and so jeopardize the success of the policy.

The last criterion we envisage for deliberations between party leadership and experts is *political opportunity*. While experts are legitimately concerned with a single issue, parties need to adopt a more inclusive perspective that considers the possible impact of a policy on those interventions that are already in place in a given society. In this sense, party leadership may reject and ask experts to revise the policy as long as it would either curtail other parts and proposals of the party's political program

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or contrast with other policies important for both citizens and partisans.

Consider a group of experts designing a basic-income policy and proposing it to a social-democratic party. The policy may be scientifically valid, acceptable, and politically feasible, as the party may have the political resources necessary to pass the policy. However, for the policy to be enacted, it would be necessary, for economic reasons, to dismantle the country's universal health care system. Although it might be possible to divert economic resources from that system to the basic-income policy and to have the necessary political support for it, party members may legitimately consider the former more valuable than the latter.

To clarify how our model of intra-party deliberation works, in the following section, we explain who is subjected to these criteria and how.

4 | The Dynamics of Intra-Party Deliberation

Since intra-party deliberation encompasses crucial tasks, such as defining electoral programs, making major policy decisions when in government, and formulating important and alternative proposals when the party is in the opposition, our model requires deliberative processes to not be marginal within party decision-making and therefore requires a multilayered structure that allows for the involvement of party leadership, experts, and members. Party leadership and experts formulate political proposals within electoral programs and policy proposals, which will then be discussed, evaluated, and reviewed by the members, enabling them to exercise full deliberative control without incurring excessive epistemic costs. Let us clarify this dynamic, starting with the interactions between experts and party leadership.

Since intra-party deliberation is concerned with defining complex and far-reaching proposals, they can only be formulated by the party leaders together with the experts they have selected.[5] Party leadership will not only have the executive power to make these decisions but, by selecting internal advisers with the proper background, gain the epistemic resources with which to discuss matters with these experts.[6] Since there are likely to be divisions within a party on important issues, the deliberative process will be characterized by confrontation between the various leaders and their experts. Deliberation will serve to mediate between the different positions or clarify them before they are discussed with the members. We now discuss in more detail how this first level of discussion functions while also showing the impact on it of pluralism within parties.

Since our criteria are grounded in both epistemic and political values, the participants in our deliberative procedure need to acknowledge the importance of both of these dimensions and be committed to defining a set of proposals that is epistemically sound and politically viable. While a deliberative setting usually ascribes epistemic peerhood to every participant independently of her competencies, our model cannot embody this ideal, given the clear asymmetries among those involved in the deliberative process. To achieve a division of labor between experts and party leadership without undermining the freedom and equality that are constitutive of deliberation, our model requires that all participants in this deliberative interaction be free to challenge the proposals of others. Yet it recognizes their epistemic authority in their respective field of expertise.

Indeed, party leadership must defer to experts' understanding of the scientific validity of political proposals and, thus, the proposals' empirical soundness. Experts need to be free to provide the most accurate information to party leadership, which has to trust their evaluation of the scientific validity of their suggestions and craft political proposals accordingly. Additionally, experts need to be able to challenge the requests of the parties if these are incompatible with their own evidence. If they are incompatible, then party leadership should revise its proposals to make them compatible. At the same time, experts must recognize that party leadership is in a superior epistemic position to evaluate political circumstances and understand partisan values. And party leadership should have the opportunity to raise concerns regarding the suggestions of the experts if their proposals are incompatible with political criteria. Moreover, experts have to carefully consider this feedback and revise their suggestions to develop proposals that are not only scientifically accurate but politically viable. Even if this operation is needed, our model acknowledges priority to epistemic accuracy. As a consequence, experts need to accommodate partisan requests provided this does not undermine their commitment to scientific validity, which is the first criterion to be met.[7]

Importantly, the plurality of perspectives within a political party and among its experts will inevitably influence the manner in which the epistemic and political requirements highlighted above are used in intra-party deliberation. While all experts must adhere to the criterion of scientific validity, it is plausible that they will present empirical evidence that is, at least partially, at odds with other experts' evidence. Similarly, leaders of different factions within the party will differently understand the compatibility of their proposals with the party's core values or the political constraints imposed by intra-party deliberation. The discursive interaction will make these differences explicit and allow the party to formulate a set of proposals that are epistemically robust and politically viable.

Consider a discussion within a left-wing party on energy-requalification policies. Let us assume that several proposals are currently under consideration, including income-related aid, rehabilitation of public buildings, and tax deductions for private ones. The relative merits of these proposals may be evaluated in terms of their effects (such as an increase in public debt and an ecological impact), their ideological implications (such as the priority given to the environment, fairness, or economic efficiency), or their political costs (such as potential loss of consensus in upcoming elections). Those engaged in the deliberative process will challenge each other on both an epistemic and a political level. On the former, they will attempt to highlight the shortcomings of the empirical evidence presented by others, while on the latter, they will argue that a particular proposal is incompatible with the values of the party or too politically costly. If the discursive confrontation enables the party to identify the most suitable proposals on both an epistemic and a political level, these will be presented to the members of the party. If an agreement cannot be reached between leaders and experts,

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the intra-party deliberation will have excluded those proposals that are clearly incompatible with the deliberative standards we presented. This will enhance the epistemic and political quality of the proposals about which members will then have to express themselves.

Although our model holds that only the party leadership is required to interact with experts to define policy proposals, it envisions a second discursive level that necessitates that these proposals be presented to and discussed with members so that the members can support the proposals reflexively and not passively accept them. To ensure that this level of partisan accountability is granted without imposing an excessive burden on partisans or embodying a populist approach, it will be necessary to organize partisan fora through which party members have access to the proposals developed, time to discuss them, and, eventually, the opportunity to raise their concerns.[8] As the members are aware that the proposals submitted to them had to meet the deliberative requirements outlined above, this second level of discussion will also draw on these same criteria (scientific validity, acceptability, political feasibility, and political opportunity).

There are several functions that discussion among the party members can serve. If the members converge on one of the proposals presented, the discursive confrontation within the deliberative fora will have clarified to the members the reasons on which a policy is based and provided the party with resources to use in confronting its opponents. As the proposals will be based on reasons that are genuinely accepted by the members, when they are presented to the public and defended against criticism from their political opponents, the partisan confrontation will be a confrontation between proposals based on reasons, thereby improving the quality of public debate.

It is possible that the confrontation between the members will not culminate in an agreement but rather engender criticism of the proposals presented by the leadership. If the objections are not particularly relevant and primarily involve the political implications of the proposals, the party leadership will have to consider the objections of the members, revise the proposals, and then resubmit them for approval. If the criticism requires a more significant revision, the party leadership will have to revert to the previous level of deliberation and, together with the experts, formulate a revision to be approved by the members. One can think of our model as resembling the method of reflective equilibrium, which roughly consists in going back and forth among one's considered judgments about a particular case, the principles that should apply to it, and other pertinent theoretical considerations in order to arrive at a stage with acceptable and reasonable coherence among them (Rawls 1971).

Similarly, intra-party deliberation goes back and forth among experts' epistemically grounded judgments, party leadership's political considerations, and party members' commitments, motivations, and expectations. Accordingly, its aim is to arrive at proposals that are epistemically valid, politically reasonable, and accessible to all in a coherent manner. Moreover, since our idea of intra-party deliberation should be considered as an ongoing process capable of changing political proposals and adapting them to new political situations and contingencies, in our model, the relation between experts, party members, and citizens can be characterized as what neo-institutionalists call an "incomplete contract." Such an arrangement, which is not necessarily juridical, is pursued when it is not possible to foresee all the possible obstacles that may prevent its enshrinement and it is thus necessary, after some time, to adjust it to new situations (Williamson 1985; Milgrom and Roberts 1992).

The discursive dynamic established between the two levels of intra-party deliberation ensures reflexive control for members and the formulation of proposals that are politically and epistemically robust. Since these discussions are public, all citizens will also be put in a position to critically evaluate the different proposals and exercise reflexive control. Publicity does not require full transparency of all the discursive interactions that take place within the party. If it did, there would be a risk that discussions would be geared toward convincing potential voters as parties campaign in a form that does not allow the proposals to be analyzed on their merits. To overcome these difficulties, the first level of discussion must involve only managers and experts, but summaries of the proposals discussed in each session must always be accessible to members. The second level of discussion will be partially open to all, as guaranteed by the publicity afforded by party congresses and debates in the media. However, other discussions will be reserved for members only, although summaries must always be available to all. While comments and reconstructions of the stages and discussions within intra-party deliberations may be made public by party members, by media coverage, and through the diffusion of reports, the discussions themselves should remain confined to the party.

There would be potential benefits to citizens in general if our model was enacted and spread among the various political parties. Given the different political values and commitments of parties and the different factual judgments among experts, establishing public interactions between experts and party members would expose every member of the polity to a plurality of reasoned perspectives. These perspectives would be not only epistemically sound but politically viable and accessible, empowering citizens to make informed choices and exercise their agency effectively.

5 | Possible Objections and Further Clarifications

Now that we have laid out our model of intra-party deliberation with experts, we respond to some worries that may arise. First, our proposal may appear unrealistic, as many political parties seem to oppose recourse to expertise in politics; they consider it as antidemocratic and curtailing their chances to advance winning proposals (thus detracting from their campaigning). Second, our model may seem to justify an antiscientific take on public policies by allowing political parties to pick and choose as experts individuals who lack competence but are aligned with the parties' values and political ideals. Finally, we do not adhere to a sharp fact-value distinction. In what follows, we address these issues.

As previously noted, our model ensures that parties retain control over their programs and policy proposals while relying on expertise and expert knowledge. Our proposal aims to constrain

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the messaging of political parties during campaigns by requiring that their proposals align with scientific evidence, potentially rendering them less immediately appealing to the public. However, why would parties willingly forgo populist appeals in favor of heeding expert advice? We believe they have two compelling motives for relying on experts. First, as already noted, political parties seek not only to garner public support but to effectively govern and implement political reforms once in power. Expert guidance is indispensable for accessing the knowledge required to conceptualize, construct, and refine policymaking. Second, expert knowledge not only constitutes an important contribution to policy but is a *legitimizing mechanism* (Boswell 2009). A political party can enhance its credibility and bolster its claims in particular policy areas by supporting them with reliable and relevant knowledge. By relying on knowledge, political parties can create the perception and confidence that their decisions are well founded. In this sense, they have reason to rely on experts in order to gain and maintain power.

It is important to clarify that while our model is realistic, it is also profoundly transformative as it imposes a radical change on how political parties are currently organized. The procedural requirements imposed by intra-party deliberation do not set impossible standards for party organization, nor do they specify a single-party model, thus acknowledging freedom of association, which is the basis of any good functioning democratic system.[9] However, these requirements set normative standards that are in tension with many of the practices routinely adopted by parties; they define how parties should organize themselves to ensure that both party members and citizens are empowered to exercise full democratic control. While it is true that parties already rely on experts to define their policies, our model calls for this to be done continuously and in a public manner that leaves ample room for contestation by members and scrutiny by citizens. The party leadership has a role to play in interacting with the experts but cannot in any way impose their decisions on the party. Instead, these decisions have to refer to a shared framework of values, which is often lacking in many current parties and has to be defined by the political reference community. Therefore, our model is realistic because it does not deform political parties or impose standards that they cannot meet. However, it does require significant transformations to grant that the interaction with experts ensures the definition of epistemically robust and politically sustainable proposals. Indeed, while it is true that the number of political parties employing deliberative practices is increasing (Gherghina, Soare, and Jacquet 2020; Jacquet 2023) and that parties are seeing deliberation as a means to strengthen their connection with the public (van Haute and Gauja 2015; Scarrow et al. 2017), it is also true that parties tend to focus on direct inclusion strategies such as primaries or internal referendums (Scarrow et al. 2017; Wuttke, Jungherr, and Schoen 2019; Oross and Tap 2021). Moreover, deliberative practices are usually cantered on internal matters (i.e., candidate selection) and external aspects (i.e., coalition arrangements), and little attention is given to the relationship with experts, except when included in some minipublic (Fishkin 2011). In our analysis, we have attempted to envision a deliberative model and framework for interaction with experts, starting from the evidence that political parties are increasingly adopting deliberative practices. This can be considered a first step toward thinking about deliberative practices with experts within political parties.

Since intra-party deliberation may be performed also by appealing to pseudo-experts, who mimic expertise to generate legitimacy for views that have been discredited by the scientific community (Sorial 2017) or rely on data that have been thoroughly debunked by the scientific community, it is important to clarify how we conceive of expertise. Following Goldman (2001, 91), we consider experts "people who have … a superior quantity or level of knowledge in some domain and an ability to generate new knowledge in answer to questions within the domain." Accordingly, expertise is a comparative matter, so experts in a given domain have more true beliefs than ordinary people because they "possess a substantial body of truths in the target community." Moreover, experts are considered as such not only because they have true beliefs with regard to a certain matter and are familiar with ideas and arguments present within their specific scientific community but also because they are able to exploit such evidence and true beliefs to solve puzzles and answer questions pertaining to their domain of expertise: "An expert has the (cognitive) know-how … to go to the right sectors of his information-bank and perform appropriate operations on this information" (Goldman 2001, 91–92).

In this sense, pseudo-experts are by definition not experts, and thus they are not eligible for collaboration and deliberation within political parties. The experts among whom political parties are to choose their collaborators cannot be pseudo-experts but should be members of the scientific community who are recognized as relevant and reliable sources in their fields, given their scientific background, participation, and contribution. Indeed, importantly, since they have within their organization intermediate figures who can directly interact with experts, parties are better equipped than ordinary citizens to recognize genuine expertise by considering and evaluating its evidential sources, such as the argumentative performance of experts, the agreement of fellow experts in the field, the experts' track records, and the experts' interests and biases (Almassi 2007; Anderson 2011; Goldman 2001; Lane 2014).

A related worry concerns the fact that defending the role of experts within parties may induce ordinary citizens to be prejudiced against expertise and one-sided in grounding their political opinions on partisan understandings. We respond by stating that our model (1) ensures visibility of and accountability to a feature, the role of experts within political parties, that inevitably characterizes contemporary parties; (2) grants that the relationship between experts and party members is constrained and can be assessed by their communities and the public at large; and (3) does not entail that the only experts participating in public debates and discourse should be those collaborating with parties. Let us briefly focus on these points.

First, political parties inevitably rely on experts to craft their policies and programs, but they might pursue this task without providing details to the public at large, who will be exposed only to the final product. In this case, citizens will not have access to the rationales that justify the choices made by experts and parties, and a proper division of labor will not be achieved because the citizens will be treated as recipients of decisions made by others. Our model ensures, instead, that the public at large will have access to the reasoned exchange between experts and citizens to ensure accountability and control.

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Second, since our model constrains the interactions between experts and parties, citizens are aware that what is presented to them is the outcome of a reasoned exchange between equals and not the imposition of party members on passive experts. Within this context, trust in experts will be fostered because citizens will clearly see their active role in crafting policy proposals and improving their epistemic quality. Our perspective entails, moreover, that experts are accountable to the scientific community and make visible to the public whether some members of this community raise some concerns regarding the experts' partiality. These features not only grant that citizens are exposed to epistemically sound proposals but also ensure that citizens can evaluate these proposals on their merits, namely, their balance between partisan values and epistemic soundness.

Finally, we do not claim that the only experts participating in public debates and discourse should be those collaborating with parties. On the contrary, experts who are not engaged with a political party may contribute to public opinion with their knowledge and judgments, enlarging the evidence present in public discourse. As already explained, the aim of this paper is to uncover a layer of democratic expertise that is not usually considered, without neglecting the importance of other forms of it.

Furthermore, we want to emphasize that we are indeed advocating a form of *partisan expertise*. As previously outlined in elaborating the principle of scientific validity, from our standpoint, political parties should engage experts and policy advisers who are, in some way, aligned with the party's values and normative framework. This should not be surprising or alarming. In fact, there is a growing empirical literature demonstrating the increasing politicization of political advice, even within governmental and executive spheres (Craft 2015). It appears increasingly vital in policy advice that the substantive and technical aspects be complemented by procedural and political considerations (Craft and Howlett 2013) to address the growing demands for legitimacy, representativeness, and effectiveness in governance (Hustedt and Veit 2017). Similarly, we argue that political parties' programs and policies require technical guidance that aligns with their normative commitments.

This consideration enables us to offer a final clarification: the interaction among experts, party leaders, and party members does not constitute a division of labor in which leaders and partisans establish goals and objectives while experts devise the means to achieve them. The two-tier model is specifically crafted to advocate a more nuanced and interactive exchange.

6 | Conclusion

In this paper, we have endeavored to contribute to the ongoing debate on the issue of democratic expertise, namely, how expertise can be effectively integrated into democratic systems and how citizens can assess and supervise expert claims, from the perspective of normative political theory. We hope to have accomplished this by elucidating the potential role of political parties, provided they are subject to normative constraints.

We have proposed a form of intra-party deliberation that, in our perspective, enables citizens to exercise reflexive control over experts through party members while also allowing experts to meaningfully influence political decisions and proposals. Thus, our contribution aligns with the recent normative reevaluation of the role of political parties, which calls upon political theorists not to neglect the vital function that parties can fulfill in democratic societies by organizing regulated rivalry and striving for the common good. We contend that the role that parties can play when it comes to democratic expertise should also not be neglected.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Endnotes

[1] This issue is extensively elaborated upon throughout our argumentation.

[2] It is plausible that party leaders might engage in deliberations with experts, possibly with the assistance of internal party advisers. These advisers could serve various roles: providing political guidance in evaluating expert proposals or offering their expertise to help party leaders better understand and engage with experts on key proposal issues. We revisit this topic in the following section.

[3] The term *party leadership* encompasses both the leaders themselves and their advisers. This designation is used to differentiate these groups from the ordinary party members, who participate in the second level of deliberation.

[4] For clarity and ease of understanding, we use the terms *party leadership* and *experts* when introducing the four deliberative criteria. These criteria delineate the interactions between these two groups at the first level of deliberation. However, these criteria are equally central to the second level of deliberation, which includes participation from all members of the party.

[5] Since there is a plurality of perspectives even among experts, those who best represent the different positions within the party will be involved.

[6] This does not preclude the possibility of envisioning procedures by which members could suggest some of the priorities or issues that should be discussed. However, the assumption that it is only the members who play this role is erroneous. Indeed, a party will also have to develop policy proposals in response to what occurs within the political

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debate. Consider a government party that is tasked with drafting an economic-planning document or managing a military crisis, or consider an opposition party that must define an alternative economic program to the one proposed by the government. The leaders must consider the proposals of the members or provide reasons when this is not done, thus ensuring a form of critical reflexivity and control for the members.

[7] Experts have their own community to whom they are accountable. The scientific community represents an external constraint that reduces the chances for experts to not meet the criterion of scientific validity because it can discredit experts who violate this criterion to satisfy the requests of the parties. If this violation occurs or new evidence is discovered, then experts have to revise their proposals and deliberate with party members to define a proposal that takes into consideration this new information. Experts involved in policymaking harbor divided loyalty between their responsibility toward their scientific peers and their commitments toward their political sponsors. However, as Alfred Moore notes, "those claiming expertise will typically … be concerned to maintain credibility in the eyes of the relevant expert community—indeed, their effectiveness may depend on this" (2021, 554).

[8] To achieve their aims, partisan fora cannot be reduced, as sometimes seems to be suggested (e.g., by White and Ypi 2016; Wolkenstein 2015), to the meetings that occur within local branches of the parties. Critically, the discussion is not peripheral and limited to a select few individuals but reaches all members and puts them in a position to engage in discourse on significant matters. To achieve this, it is necessary to envisage congressional moments or deliberative arenas that are developed ad hoc, in which the various proposals can be discussed and voted on by the delegates. To enable all members to exercise a form of reflexive control, it is then necessary to extend the discussions to the media and organizations close to the party. At least on the final proposals, all members should be able to express their views by voting. Only this interconnected system of interactions can ensure that party members have the resources (epistemic, material, and temporal) to properly elaborate their proposals.

[9] This makes it possible to return to the center the need to develop horizons of values that give meaning to the political action of citizens and act as a common background for the set of political proposals that they will have to discuss and choose. This confirms how intra-party deliberation can counteract the depoliticization that has undermined the control of citizens and the democratic spirit of current political systems.

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