

Research proposal

2a1 and 2a2. Description of the proposed research

2a1. Background and research objectives

i. Research objectives

A prominent strand of theorizing about liberal democracy maintains that liberal democratic societies are very effective at producing knowledge. Briefly, the reasoning is that freedom of speech, free inquiry, pluralism, and inclusiveness facilitate rational deliberation among citizens, which in turn leads to knowledge.

However, real-life political debates in liberal democracies tend to be mired in controversy and regularly fail to produce anything like knowledge. The evidential basis for policies frequently looks thin, expert opinions appear to have been ignored, and policies bear the marks of political compromise or can be downright irrational (Caplan 2007; Huemer forthcoming). Consider, for instance, the public debate about global warming, which has become distorted by ideological differences (Michaels 2008; Oreskes & Conway 2010). Or the ‘war on terror’: its death toll and the money spent on it outstrip the casualties and financial costs of terrorist attacks by several orders of magnitude (this website summarizes the numbers: <http://waronirrationalfear.com/facts>; Goebbels et al. 2008 give examples in a Dutch context; King & Crewe 2013 for the UK).

This project takes its starting point in the above tension. It will **evaluate and improve the knowledge-producing potential of liberal democracy**. **(A)** We will use social epistemology to articulate the normative ideal that shows how deliberation among rational citizens in a democratic society that upholds values like freedom of speech, free inquiry, pluralism, and inclusiveness is likely to produce knowledge. Next, we will investigate the two most significant challenges to this ideal: **(B)** the presence of persistent and intractable disagreements in liberal democracies and **(C)** various impairments to individual and collective human rationality. **(D)** We will evaluate to what extent the challenges undermine the ideal and propose ways to overcome them in order to make democracy better at producing knowledge.

ii. Background

Democracy might mean different things: (a) a form of government with specific institutions for voting, representation, and decision-making or (b) a culture that upholds values like freedom of speech, free inquiry, diversity, and inclusiveness (Dunn 2005). Hitler and Stalin were products of democracy in the first sense, but deeply anti-democratic in the second sense. This project is about democracy in the second sense.

Liberal democracy is often justified on moral grounds: It fits with deeply held values like freedom, equality, and tolerance. But historically there is another prominent justification, which holds that liberal democracy is epistemically superior to other ways of organizing a society: it is better at finding out the truth and producing knowledge of the truth. The central thought is that freedom of speech, free inquiry, pluralism, and inclusiveness enable a free exchange of opinions among all citizens. This, in turn, produces knowledge, because rational deliberation allows people to learn from each other and overcome their individual limitations. John Stuart Mill (1977 [1859]), John Dewey (1939), Karl Popper (1945), and Jürgen Habermas (1990 [1983]) all defend versions of this **epistemic justification of democracy**.

Deliberation has also been the focus of much recent political philosophy; models of **deliberative democracy** have become very influential over the past two decades (Cohen 1986, 1989; Dryzek 1990, 2000; Estlund 1993, 2008; Benhabib 1996; Bohman 1996; Bohman & Rehg 1997; Elster 1998; Christiano 1996; Nino 1996; Gaus 1996; Gutmann & Thompson 1996, 2004; Goodin 2003; Fishkin & Laslett 2003; Talisse 2005, 2009; Besson et al. 2005; Landemore 2012; Ingham 2013). However, the discussion there has focused on democratic authority: whether and how deliberation can grant legitimacy to political decisions that result from it.

The current project, in contrast, focuses exclusively on the epistemic features of deliberative democracy and is thus squarely situated within epistemology. Although some political philosophers have touched upon the knowledge-producing potential of deliberative democracy in the context of discussions about democratic authority (Cohen 1986, Estlund 1993, Gaus 1996, Nino 1996, Talisse 1995, Bohman 2006; Landemore 2012), their discussions are isolated from contemporary epistemology and they have tended to rely on idealizing assumptions about the rationality of deliberators and deliberation. To evaluate the tenability of an epistemic justification of democracy, then, an epistemologically rigorous and empirically informed investigation of the knowledge-producing potential of deliberative democracy is needed. The current project would be the first systematic attempt by an epistemologist to provide this.

Contemporary epistemology has developed just the right conceptual and analytic tools for the job. Over the past two decades, epistemologists have started to investigate the **social dimensions of knowledge** (Schmitt 1994; Goldman 1999; Haddock et al. 2010): how we acquire knowledge from others through testimony (E. Fricker 1987, 2006; Foley 2001; M. Fricker 2007; Lackey & Sosa 2006; Lackey 2008; Goldberg 2010; Faulkner 2011; Zagzebski 2012), norms that govern assertion (Hawthorne 2004; Williamson 2000; DeRose 2002; Brown & Cappelen 2011; Blaauw & De Ridder 2012), the epistemic significance of disagreement (Kelly 2005; Feldman 2006, 2007; Christensen 2007; Feldman & Warfield 2010; Christensen & Lackey 2013; Machuca 2013; De Ridder 2014a), and group belief and knowledge (Gilbert 1989; Tuomela 1992, 2004; List & Pettit 2011; Lackey 2014; De Ridder 2014b).

These **advances in social epistemology can be applied to investigate epistemological questions about social practices**. Goldman's (1999) forays into the epistemology of science, journalism, law, education, democracy, and the internet are prime examples (see also Kitcher 1990; Fallis 2008; Goldman 2008; Coady 2012; Blaauw 2013; De Ridder 2013). To put epistemology to work in this way, epistemologists have to take into account empirical facts that influence their epistemic performance: institutional design, actual implementation, and the psychology of human judgment. This project will put the epistemology of liberal democracy firmly on the agenda of (applied) social epistemology.

iii. Subprojects

In line with the project's central goal, Figure 1 shows how the project can be broken down into four subprojects.

A. The epistemic ideal of liberal democratic deliberation (applicant, 24 months)

In subproject A, I will articulate **how deliberation in a liberal democracy is supposed to produce knowledge**, i.e., I will unpack the normative ideal behind epistemic justifications of liberal democracy. The core thought is that freedom of speech, free inquiry, inclusiveness, pluralism, and inclusiveness foster the sort of deliberation that is conducive to epistemic ends. Such deliberation makes it likely that justified beliefs and knowledge are acquired, and false and unjustified beliefs avoided. But this ideal already raises conceptual questions.

A1. Freedom of speech, pluralism, and inclusiveness can work in different directions. When all points of view are brought to the table, it is likely that rational and true ones will be among them

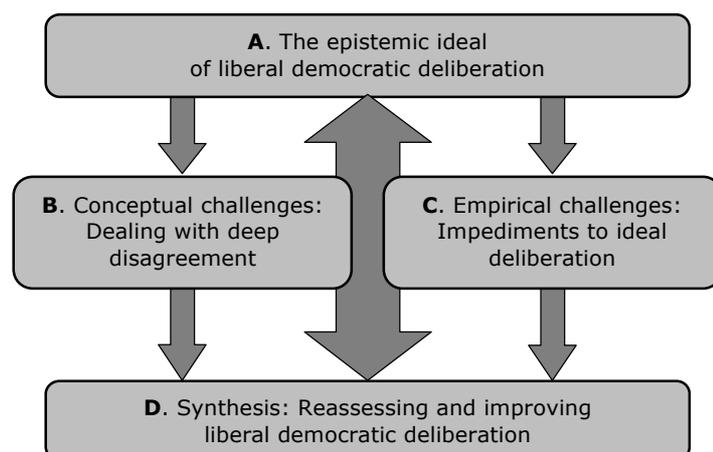


Figure 1: Subprojects and their relations

(Sunstein 2003, 2006; Hong & Page 2004; Surowiecki 2004; Anderson 2006; Bohman 2006; Solomon 2006; Page 2007; Landemore & Elster 2012). But we are all familiar with cases in which a vocal or powerful minority manages to persuade others to adopt poorly grounded beliefs, as in the case of ‘Climategate’. It cannot just be assumed that truth will prevail in a free debate among diverse perspectives (Goldman 1999, Ch. 5, 7). So **under what further conditions does deliberation lead to truth and avoid falsehood?** Further related questions are: What is the proper role of experts in democratic deliberation: how can they be identified and should their input receive extra weight (Mumpower & Stewart 1996; Goldman 2002; Matheson 2005; Coady 2006; Gelfert 2011)? Can deliberation avoid the detrimental effects of ‘epistemic injustice’, the exclusion of minority viewpoints and viewpoints that are difficult to articulate (Fricker 2007)?

A2. What is it about beliefs produced by deliberation that turns them into knowledge? Is it, e.g., because deliberation gathers good evidence for beliefs, or because it weeds out false beliefs, so that resultant beliefs could not easily have been false? If deliberation is supposed to produce knowledge, this must be because it produces beliefs with certain qualities. In this part, I will articulate what these qualities are, using prominent recent analyses of knowledge (Nozick 1981; Pritchard 2005, 2012; Roush 2006; Becker 2007; Sosa 2007, 2009; Greco 2010).

A3. The connection between democratic deliberation and the production of knowledge might also be more indirect. Deliberation might not produce knowledge directly, but might produce other things, which in turn lead to knowledge. Two specific hypotheses that I will investigate here are: (1) The direct goal of deliberation is to produce beliefs that are well-understood, can be publicly supported with reasons, and have withstood public scrutiny. This produces knowledge indirectly, because these sorts of beliefs are more likely to qualify as knowledge, even though they are not guaranteed to do so. (2) The direct effect of deliberation is to cultivate epistemic virtues in its participants – e.g., open-mindedness, mutual understanding, and humility (Zagzebski 1996, Roberts & Wood 2007, Baehr 2011, Carter & Gordon forthcoming). This produces knowledge indirectly, because people possessing these virtues are more likely to acquire knowledge.

B. Conceptual challenges: Dealing with deep disagreement

(Ph.D. student, 48 months)

One perspicuous feature of liberal democracies is the presence of pervasive disagreement, both factual and normative. Both ordinary citizens and experts hold conflicting views not just about moral and political values, but also about complex matters of fact, such as the causes of climate change, the effects of economic policies, or the reasons for social inequality.

These disagreements run deep. Hence, our usual ways of responding rationally to disagreement – checking our reasoning, further research, rational argumentation – fail us. **Deep disagreements** typically concern not just a single issue but a cluster of interrelated ones. Moreover, they may involve not just beliefs, but also other attitudes such as acceptance or trust. And they can involve meta-questions about epistemic norms and principles: What counts as evidence, how should evidence be weighed, who are experts? If democratic deliberation is supposed to lead to knowledge, it must deal with deep disagreements, because they can undermine knowledge. Subproject B **investigates deep disagreements and develops an account of how to respond rationally to them.**

B1. The Ph.D. student will first develop a **taxonomy of deep disagreements**. The starting point for this is the epistemological literature about ordinary (non-deep) disagreement (Kelly 2005; Feldman 2006 2007; Christensen 2007; Feldman & Warfield 2010; Christensen & Lackey 2013; Machuca 2013). But to chart different kinds of deep disagreement, literature on acceptance (Van Fraassen 1980; Cohen 1989; Engel 2000) and trust (Baier 1986; Foley 2001; Faulkner 2007, 2011; Hawley 2012; Zagzebski 2012) is also relevant. So is the literature on epistemic relativism (Boghossian 2008; Calderon 2009; Goldman 2010; Matheson 2012; Carter & Gordon 2013). The resulting taxonomy will show what sorts of deep disagreements can be distinguished.

B2. Next, the Ph.D. student will employ the taxonomy to conduct **two case studies of real political disagreements**. The distinctions developed in B1 will be applied to analyze these cases: Do they indeed involve a cluster of interconnected issues, are attitudes like acceptance and trust involved, and does the disagreement concern meta-issues about epistemic norms and principles? One case study will be about a largely factual issue, to wit climate change. The other will be a case that also involves

substantial normative questions: healthcare reform in the Netherlands. The case studies may lead to further refinements and revisions in the taxonomy.

B3. The third step is to answer the question **what a rational response is to different kinds of deep disagreements**. This requires balancing two prima facie plausible lines of thinking. On the one hand, if you have a deep disagreement with someone – i.e., with someone who adheres to different epistemic principles or who accepts or trusts different background assumptions and experts – you may feel inclined to ignore this person’s opinions. After all, someone with a fundamentally different epistemic outlook will employ reasons and arguments you have trouble recognizing as good ones. On the other hand, it seems unduly dogmatic to disregard other people’s opinions entirely, especially when they can seem equally intelligent and reflective, in spite of their very different epistemic outlook.

Specific questions to be addressed include: To what extent can strategies for responding to ordinary disagreements be extended and modified to deal with deep disagreements? Are any of the few extant proposals for responding to deep disagreements satisfactory (Alston 1991; Plantinga 2000; Goldberg 2013; Peter 2013)? Can deep disagreements be resolved on purely epistemic grounds or must a rational response to deep disagreements appeal to non-epistemic factors (Lynch 2010)?

C. Empirical challenges: Impediments to ideal liberal democratic deliberation

(postdoc, 36 months)

Discussions of rationality in contemporary epistemology as well as extant discussions of the knowledge-producing potential of liberal democratic deliberation have mostly idealized away from actual human psychology. They assume deliberators to be unbiased, open-minded, ideally rational agents and deliberation to be unperturbed by power plays, inequalities, or other non-epistemic factors. Research in cognitive (social) psychology has shown that actual people in real deliberations fall short of these ideals. Human cognition is prone to misleading heuristics, cognitive and emotional biases, and other imperfections (some overviews are: Gilovich 1991; Plous 1993; Piatelli-Palmarini 1994; Gilovich et al. 2002; Anderson 2004; Ariely 2008; Baron 2008; Kahnemann 2011; McRaney 2011). In subproject C, the postdoc will **investigate how these imperfections of individual and social cognition affect the epistemic ideals of democratic deliberation**.

C1. First, the postdoc will survey the psychological literature to find out **which of the many documented individual and social cognitive imperfections are most relevant for democratic deliberation**. For instance, the fact that people tend to focus on information that confirms their own opinions (confirmation bias) is highly relevant to deliberation about political issues, as this affects their ability to learn from others in deliberation. So is people’s tendency to conform their beliefs about contested matters to values that define their cultural identities (cultural cognition, Kahan et al. 2011; Kahan 2014). When people are unsure what to believe about, say, climate change or health care reform, they will go with the beliefs of the cultural group they identify with, rather than conform their beliefs to the evidence.

C2. Next, s/he will analyze the selected heuristics and biases in more detail, in order to find out **how the psychological results connect with the conceptual resources of epistemology**. Since this has not been explored systematically so far, the postdoc can do genuinely innovative work in reassessing key epistemological notions in the light of the psychological literature (Gendler 2008; Kelly 2008 contain promising explorations). For instance, do heuristics and biases concern people’s beliefs, knowledge, acceptances, confidence, etc. Also, psychologists often suggest that cognitive imperfections undermine people’s knowledge and the rationality of their beliefs (Stanovich 2010). Since epistemologists have offered different analyses of these notions (Foley 1987; Stenmark 1995; Audi 2002; Mele & Rawling 2004; see also under A2 above), the exact nature of these undermining effects must be investigated. Do they make our belief-forming mechanisms unreliable, do they cause us to misjudge evidence, do they make our beliefs ill-founded?

C3. Building on C2, the postdoc will take the first steps towards **assessing the tenability of the epistemic ideals of liberal democratic deliberation**, as developed in subproject A (the applicant continues this task in subproject D1). The psychological literature on heuristics and biases referenced above suggests that both individuals and groups are inveterately irrational, but literature on the benefits of diversity and inclusiveness and the wisdom of the crowds (Surowiecki 2004; Sunstein 2006; Page 2007; Landemore & Elster 2012) insists that groups can be highly effective at producing knowledge. The results of C2 will provide the means for adjudicating this debate.

D. Synthesis: Reassessing and improving liberal democratic deliberation

(applicant, 36 months)

The final subproject will synthesize the results from the other subprojects in order to evaluate the knowledge-producing potential of deliberative liberal democracy.

D1. The first step will be to revisit the ideal, as elaborated in subproject A. **To what extent is the ideal undermined by the conceptual and empirical challenges investigated in subprojects B and C?** This question can be broken down in accordance with the three parts of subproject A. (1) Do the challenges show that the conditions required for democratic deliberation to be epistemically efficacious are very difficult or impossible to realize? E.g., if knowledge-producing deliberation requires a shared epistemic framework, deep disagreement will cause trouble. (2) Do the challenges show that beliefs formed through democratic deliberation are unlikely to meet the conditions required for knowledge? E.g., does confirmation bias make beliefs insensitive to the truth? (3) Do the challenges undermine indirect connections between deliberation and knowledge? E.g., deep disagreement and cultural cognition may lead to dogmatism and stubbornness rather than open-mindedness and humility (cf. Alfano & Fairweather forthcoming).

D2. It stands to reason that the challenges threaten the ideal to some extent. The final subproject therefore investigates **how liberal democracy can become better at producing knowledge.** First, by being made aware of their cognitive biases, individuals and groups can be ‘debiased’ to some extent and become better at avoiding biases. The psychological literature is divided. Some psychologists suggest that there are effective debiasing strategies (Larrick 2004; Stanovich 2010; Soll et al. forthcoming). But others contradict this and maintain that people can hardly be made better at remedying their cognitive imperfections (Kruger & Dunning 1999; Pronin et al. 2002; Dunning et al. 2003; Sieck & Arkes 2005; Ehrlinger et al. 2008). Claims on both sides require careful epistemological analysis (as in subproject C2), which needs to take into account the specific circumstances of liberal democratic deliberation. Second, by changing the circumstances and design of deliberative processes we might be able to counteract the imperfections of individual and social cognition. For instance, research suggests that people with a positive self-image are more open-minded (Sherman & Cohen 2002; Correll et al. 2004). People also are more responsive to evidence when they are shown how the evidence could fit into a personal narrative that makes sense to them (Kahan et al. 2011; Kahan 2014).

iv. Methods

The overall methodology of this project is best summarized as **scientifically informed epistemological theorizing** (Goldman 1999 is an exemplar). We will employ the traditional methods of analytic philosophy and mainstream (social) epistemology: **conceptual analysis** informed by common sense, intuitions, and thought experiments (Daly 2010). This method is particularly suitable for addressing conceptual and normative issues about rationality, justification, and knowledge. In addition, we will make use of empirically oriented methods to address the descriptive epistemological issues in the project:

- analysis of **case studies** (subproject B2);
- **normative-theoretical analysis of empirical literature** (subprojects C and D; cf. Radder 1996 Ch. 8 for this method)

Employing different methods protects against one-sidedness that could result from relying exclusively on a single method. The different methods will be combined through a process of **reflective equilibrium**, which will seek to balance normative epistemological demands and empirical findings about human cognition. The result will be an elaboration of the knowledge-producing potential of liberal democracy that is both normatively well-grounded and empirically adequate.

v. Feasibility

The project has an ambitious scope in bringing together issues in epistemology, political philosophy, and empirical psychology. It is by all means feasible. All subprojects involve substantial work in social

epistemology; a field in which I have already done a lot of work over the past years. In previous research, I have also sought to bring conceptual analysis in contact with relevant scientific literature. This approach, then, is familiar to me. The postdoc will have to be familiar with psychology and/or the philosophy thereof, to engage the psychological literature.

As co-director of the ‘Science Beyond Scientism’ project, I have experience in directing a large research project. I have also supervised several Ph.D. students, both as ‘co-promotor’ and day-to-day supervisor. I believe, then, that I am competent to carry out this project successfully.

Although the four subprojects are interrelated and build on each other, the project as a whole has a modular structure, so that problems in one part do not automatically make trouble for the whole project.

vi. Originality and innovation

While the knowledge-producing potential of liberal democratic deliberation has received attention in political philosophy, epistemologists have hardly considered this topic. As a result, none of the relevant ideas and conceptual tools from contemporary individual and social epistemology has been brought to bear on the question how effective liberal democracy is at producing knowledge. Hence, it remains to be seen whether an epistemic justification of liberal democracy is ultimately feasible. This project would constitute the first attempt by epistemologists to provide a systematic and detailed evaluation of the knowledge-producing potential of deliberative liberal democracy.

Epistemologists have worked hard at clarifying conceptual questions about the social dimensions of knowledge, but – with some promising exceptions (Goldman 1999; M. Fricker 2009; Coady 2013) – have not brought these conceptual issues into contact with real-life epistemic processes and practices. This project would thus open up an important and fruitful new area of research for (applied) social epistemology.

Another striking feature of much mainstream epistemology – notwithstanding some exceptions (Goldman 1986; Bishop & Trout 2005; Gendler 2008; Kelly 2008) – is that it analyzes central notions such as rationality, justification, reliability, and belief-forming process without much regard for empirical psychological literature about these notions. Both epistemology and psychology could profit from more mutual interaction. This project, particularly subproject C, is also original in investigating the epistemological import of psychological findings. This is reflected in the project’s innovative combination of methods – conceptual analysis combined with case studies and normative-theoretical analysis of empirical literature. This, too, paves the way for fruitful future research in epistemology.

2a2. Research plan

i. Work plan, time table

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Subproject A	Applicant				
Subproject B		Postdoc			
Subproject C		Ph.D. student			
Subproject D			Applicant		

ii. Institutional embedding and collaboration

The project will be embedded in the **Theoretical Philosophy group** in the Department of Philosophy of the **Faculty of Humanities of VU University Amsterdam**, led by René van Woudenberg (epistemology, metaphysics). In the last national QANU research visitation, this group was the best group in Theoretical Philosophy, scoring ‘very good’ to ‘excellent’ on all criteria.

My colleagues are all active researchers: Lieven Decock (philosophy of science, philosophy of psychology), Helen De Cruz (philosophy of cognitive science, philosophy of religion), David Ludwig (philosophy of science, philosophy of mind), Rik Peels (epistemology), Henk de Regt (philosophy of science), and Jan-Willem Wieland (epistemology). The group holds regular colloquia to discuss work in progress, organizes international workshops and conferences, and hosts international speakers. Currently, the group has four Ph.D. students, as well as five external Ph.D. students.

Additional collaborators at VU University include:

- Martin van Hees (political philosophy);
- Paul van Lange (social psychology).

National collaboration will take place through Theoretical Philosophy section of the **Dutch Research School of Philosophy**. The Ph.D. student will participate in the School's education program.

Confirmed **international collaborators** include:

- Alvin Goldman (Rutgers)
- Jennifer Lackey (Northwestern)
- Duncan Pritchard, Mikkel Gerken, Adam Carter (Edinburgh)
- Klemens Kappel (Copenhagen)
- Kristoffer Ahlstrom-Vij (Kent)
- Jan de Winter, Laszlo Kosolosky (Ghent)

The Ph.D. student will spend one semester abroad to work with the collaborators at Rutgers, Northwestern, or Edinburgh — three world-leading departments for epistemology. The applicant and postdoc will also make at least one research visit to one or more of the collaborators. We will participate in activities of European Epistemology Network.

iii. Output

We are committed to publishing **papers** in leading peer-reviewed philosophy journals. I will publish at least eight papers; the postdoc six papers; and the Ph.D. student two papers, in addition to completing her/his dissertation.

Furthermore, I will summarize the project's findings in a **monograph**, to be published by a good academic press. (As part of the utilization efforts, I will also write a **popular book** with practical advice for better democratic deliberation, see below.)

We will organize **one workshop** about deep disagreement and **one conference** about the epistemology of liberal democracy. Selected papers from these events will be published in either a special journal issue (e.g., *Synthese*, *Erkenntnis*, *Episteme*) or as an edited volume with a good academic publisher.

Finally, we will organize one or two **symposia** on the project at larger recurring conferences (e.g., European Epistemology Network meeting, or Dutch Research School of Philosophy conference).

2b. Knowledge utilisation

Relevance to society

A number of events in recent years, both internationally and nationally, have given rise to a sense that democracy is in crisis and that citizens' trust in democracy is waning. The international financial crisis, the shutdown of the American government, the rise of euroscepticism, growing numbers of swinging voters, and fragmentation in the Dutch political system — all of these have been taken as signs that democratic institutions are failing. While the empirical data do not offer unambiguous support to the idea that there is crisis of faith in democracy (Thomassen et al. 2014), it remains prominent in the media.

This project aims to address one aspect of this crisis by evaluating the knowledge-producing potential of liberal democracy is at generating justified beliefs and by proposing ways in which liberal democracy can become better at producing knowledge. This is important, even if the notion that there is a genuine crisis of faith in democracy turns out to be overblown. Regardless of whether or not faith in democracy is declining, democratic institutions will be better (all else being equal) if they are more likely to produce knowledge.

Implementation plan

In principle, this project is relevant to all citizens of liberal democracies, but we will focus the communication and dissemination of its results to citizens, administrators, and politicians who are (or aspire to become) involved in government at the local, provincial, or national level in the Netherlands. To do so, we will use the following means.

1. We will write at least three op-ed pieces or articles in **national newspapers** or **periodicals for a broad audience**, responding to topical political goings-on. These pieces will explain elements of the epistemic justification of democracy, how deep disagreement and cognitive biases might threaten this justification, and what people can do to make democracy epistemically better.
2. Towards the end of the fourth year of the project, we will organize a **symposium for a general audience** on how democracy can be made more knowledgeable. This will be a collaborative effort with debating center De Rode Hoed in Amsterdam. Through my work in the ‘Science Beyond Scientism’ project, I have been in touch with the director of De Rode Hoed, Ton van Brussel. He is keen on organizing symposia and debates in which relevant scholarly work is presented for and discussed with broader audiences. De Rode Hoed has a lot of experience in organizing such events and a large network from which it can recruit potential participants and attendants.
3. We will collaborate with **ProDemos**, an organization in The Hague that offers various educational programs to citizens and students about democracy and the rule of law. Results of this project could be incorporated in some of their programs, which would secure more permanent long-term impact of the outcomes of this project.
4. I will write a **short popular book** on the results of the project, which will give concrete advice on how democratic deliberation can be improved, based on the empirical literature and philosophical theorizing that are central to the project. The working title for this book is *Democratie wijzer* (the pun is lost in translation, but this title is ambiguous between ‘democracy (made) wiser’ and ‘a guide to democracy’). This book should come out in the fall of 2020, a few months before the national parliamentary elections in March 2021 are scheduled. I will put the book proposal to several major Dutch publishers of non-fiction books. I am confident that at least one of them will be interested. I have already been in touch with the publishing house *Uitgeverij Balans*, who expressed interest in publishing such a book. My experience with writing books and articles for broader audiences (see below under 5b, popular writing) will help to complete this book successfully.

Relevance to other academic disciplines

The project is first and foremost an epistemological one, but its results are obviously relevant to **political philosophy** and **political theory**, because they touch on fundamental questions about justification of liberal democracy and its institutions.

Implementation plan

To make sure that the results reach political philosophers and political theorists, we commit to publishing at least three articles in prominent journals in these disciplines (preferably *Ethics* or *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, but other options include, e.g., *Journal of Political Philosophy*, *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, *Political Theory*, *Theoria*, or *Critical Review*).

In addition, political philosophers and political theorists will be invited to participate as speakers in the workshop and conference that we will organize (see above under Output).

2c. Number of words used

Section 2a: 3997 (out of 4000 words)

Section 2b: 748 (out of 1000 words)

2d. Literature references

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