Where's the public in these democracies?

Dialogue and Deliberation:
Mechanisms for Exercising Civic Engagement

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Introduction

At the core of democratic theory is a commitment to a system of governing that values and makes possible the participation of all citizens in matters that concern them. However, as the title of one article suggests, "Democracy: Optimal Illusions and Grim Realities" (Mueller 1999), while the goal may be clear, how to achieve this in practice has consistently proven to be more elusive and fraught with difficulties.

A quick survey of the different contexts in which democracy is being hailed as the ideal form of government, where talk abounds about the importance of returning voice and power to the people, it is curious to note that in the inner workings of these "democratic" systems of governance and decision-making, the public of ordinary citizens or "we the people" to a large extent continue to remain absent and invisible. A critical look at current initiatives to develop and strengthen democratic culture and systems of governance suggest a significant gap between the "espoused theories" that articulate a clear need and commitment to promote and develop civic engagement and the "theories-in-use" (Argyris 1999) that become manifest in practices that often continue to marginalize and render invisible the public[1].

In the first part of this paper I will illustrate one way in which well-intentioned efforts to become more inclusive in democratic practice can end up sustaining a system in which the people served continue to feel excluded, alienated and disengaged. In the second section, I discuss the concepts and practices of dialogue and deliberation as mechanisms which allow ordinary citizens to exercise their power and regain a sense of agency in matters that concern them. Finally, in the third section, I address some important theoretical and practical issues with which proponents of deliberation must continue to wrestle as the search for innovative ways of developing and strengthening democratic practice continue.

[1] Throughout this paper, I will use the term "the public" to refer ordinary citizens

Democratic practice that yields undemocratic results

Chris Argyris' (1999) concepts of "espoused theories" (what we say we do) and our "theories-in-use" (what we actually do) are helpful in revealing and understanding some of the contradictions that may exist between the *intent* and the *impact* of certain democratic practices. For example, the Guatemalan Peace Accords signed in 1996 marked a clear shift in official government policy towards opening up space for dialogue and participation for those that had been marginalized from political participation for decades. The clear intent of both the substance and the process emerging from the accords was focused on strengthening democratic practices of governing. A series of national forums was created to address the different substantive issues identified in the peace accords. While these could have become interesting opportunities for public deliberation and enhanced civic engagement, Kenneth Brown from the Kettering Foundation reports that "in practice, [they] failed to reach beyond a limited audience of stakeholders — established political and business powers along with a collection of public interest groups." (Brown 2003, p 10).

This example reflects a more generalized pattern of practice[2] for dealing with difficult political and social issues that affect the general public in countries struggling to transition towards more democratic ways of governing. While the expressed intent or "espoused theory" of many negotiation, mediation and public dialogue processes designed to deal with these public issues[3] emphasize the

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[2] This is based on my own observations and experience working with a number of issues ranging from health care crisis in El Salvador, top-level policy discussions on national reparations program, constitutional reforms, reforms in the educational system, land issues, implementation of peace accords, etc. in Guatemala during the past 10 years.

[3] I am referring to processes designed to deal with public issues that often relates to public policy that affects the general population, or at least a very large part of the population. My comments here do not pertain to more limited processes of direct negotiations between defined parties…such as the negotiation of

need to be inclusive, participatory and democratic, the “theories-in-use” (what is actually done in practice) appear much less democratic as these issues are largely dealt with within the closed circle of key stakeholders or “elites” (leaders, representatives, professionals, experts) with very limited or no real direct involvement of the public in general. I try to illustrate below how practices that result in what might understandably be described as “elitist” processes can at once be effective in the short term, and at the same time constitute a pattern of behavior that undermines a parallel longer term interest to strengthen democratic culture and governance.

Let me use the graphic as a way of describing broader patterns of behavior in governance and decision-making. Starting on the top left with the shaded loop illustrating common pattern of practice, an issue of public concern emerges. Specific interest groups or stakeholder groups affected by the issue begin to organize and position themselves in order to maximize their influence in how this issue is framed and resolved. Though the issue is inherently complex, stakeholders tend to talk about it in simplified, distorted and often polarizing language as a way of influencing and winning the opinions and support (votes) of ordinary citizens and the constituency they claim to represent and thus strengthening their social power base. As interest groups coalesce around their specific private interest in the issue, confrontations between groups begin to take place and the conflict intensifies and becomes a political battle.

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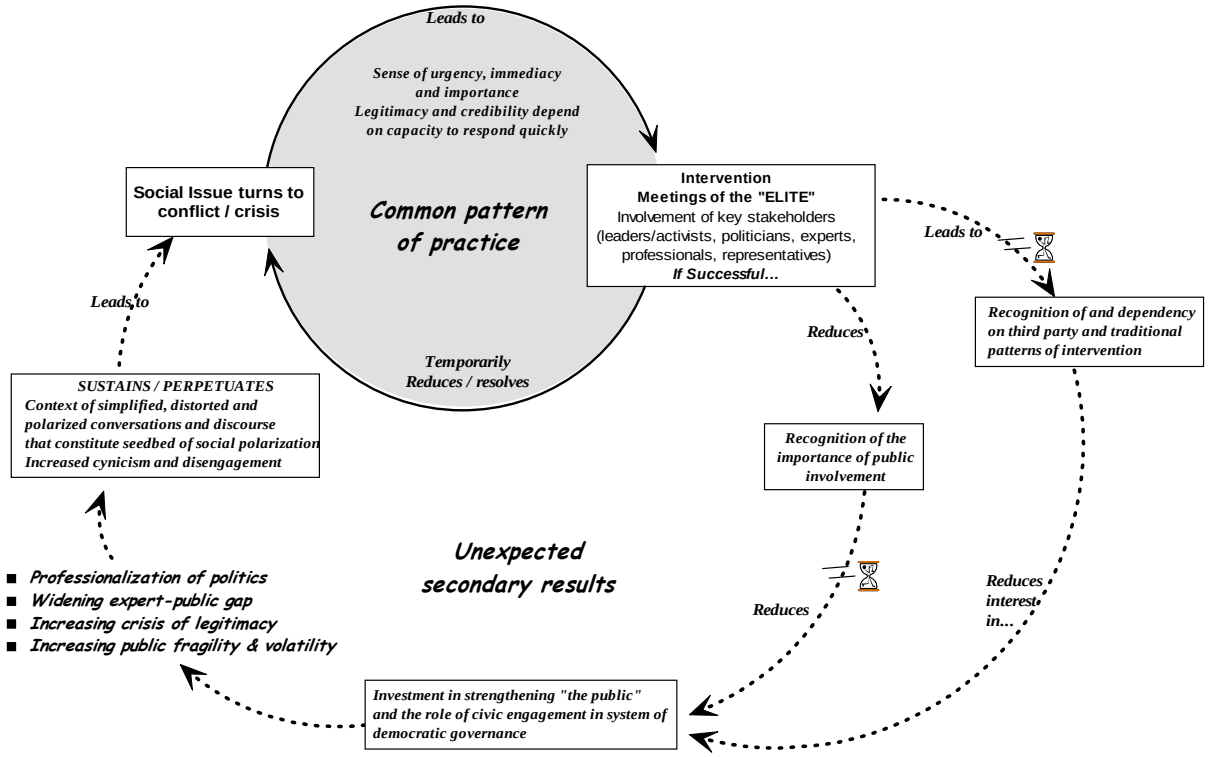
the purchase of a finca to respond to the needs of a specific community.



In the interest of preventing a crisis and further social instability, a process is designed to facilitate dialogue and joint problem solving. True to the democratic spirit, the process will be perceived as legitimate and credible to the extent in which it is inclusive and involves the participation of those affected by the issue. However, a sense of urgency and a perceived need for quick results, as well as recognition of the complexity of the issue force a design which limits participation to leaders and representatives of stakeholder groups as well as other experts and professionals with the knowledge and experience required to deal responsibly with this issue.

Sometimes the need for legitimacy and credibility require that the process be facilitated or monitored by a mutually recognized third party, such as a highly respected, well-known individual, a national institution or organization, or an international organization such as the Organization of American States, United Nations, etc. The hope is that the presence of this third party allows both the stakeholder participants and the uninvolved “spectator” public in general to trust

that the process will be fair, ethical, balanced, representative, and will yield results or decisions that are in the best interest of all involved.

The design of this process, which might appropriately be characterized as "elitist," excludes the direct participation of ordinary citizens as voices of the "public" in general based on the following justifications or assumptions:

- Deliberation and decision-making on issues of public policy are complex processes that require expert or professional knowledge and experience. Those who participate in these processes (elected representatives, experts and leaders) do so because they have superior knowledge and at the same time presumably share the public's goals and values. Embedded in this assumption is another: good information leads to good judgments or decisions.

- Though directly affected by these issues, ordinary citizens are not sophisticated enough to understand the complexity of public issues and are not informed enough to participate in meaningful ways. Any direct involvement of ordinary citizens would be superficial at best and simply impractical.

- In representative democracy, citizen or "public" participation is achieved by way of the electoral system that offers the opportunity to vote for representatives or referenda. Another vehicle for citizen participation is through the organization of and affiliation with specific interest groups.

- All affected citizens are adequately and legitimately represented in one way or another in the group of identified stakeholders participating in the process. These stakeholders assume the responsibility of educating, informing and consulting with the constituents they represent.

- Public involvement is important, but given the sense of urgency and political importance of quick results, as well as limited time and resources,

this is not the time or place for long drawn out processes of public engagement.

When this process works well (and it often appears to), negotiated agreements are reached and implemented (well sometimes ☺) which yield short-term results that either resolve or at least de-intensify the level of conflict that mounted around the issue. But this apparent success is not without significant costs. Consider the secondary or unintended consequences that occur over time[4] as illustrated with the dotted arrows composing the larger loops of the graphic.

To the extent that elitist mechanisms used yield viable and important short-term results that serve to de-escalate social conflict and crisis, stakeholders and politicians alike (as well as donor and other organizations committed to strengthening democratic governance) experience relief and some measure of success in their work. In spite of their espoused theory or discourse that talks about the importance and role of the public in general, the success of this myopic or short-sighted perspective reinforces theories-in-use or actual practices that fail to recognize and place importance on forms of civic engagement that move beyond the circle of elites. Scarce resources are committed to these short term intervention designs driven by a sense of urgency, at the expense of sacrificing more strategic long term investment in the development and use of processes and methodologies for enhancing public participation.

As the outer left loop illustrates, over time learning occurs that recognizes success in and produces dependency on this more tradition pattern of intervention. When a crisis occurs or a polarizing issue emerges, what has worked in the past continues to inform what is done in the present. Driven by the same sense of urgency and the reality of scarce resources, the traditional pattern of working with “elites” is again repeated at the cost of sacrificing deeper and broader civic engagement.

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[4] The hourglass icon in these loops represents a delay in the system where consequences become manifest over time rather than immediately.

Moving to the bottom of the diagram, in spite of all the rhetoric (espoused theories) about strengthening democratic systems and being more inclusive and participatory, actual theories-in-use yield practices that ultimately invests very little time and resources in creating the possibility and opportunity for citizens to genuinely participate in that which concerns them. While these well-intentioned practices of dialogue and other forms of intervention may prove effective in dealing with important public issues on an episodic basis, the continued marginalization and exclusion of the general citizenry affected by these issues contributes to a system in which "ordinary citizens become increasingly disengaged and cynical about politics because they see it as an exclusive game for professionals and experts, such as politicians, campaign managers, lobbyists, pollsters, journalists, talking heads" (Sirianni and Friedland). These are the ones who not only define the issues, but also carry on the debate, while citizens remain on the sidelines as mere spectators of public affairs (Brown 2003).

Given the nature of this kind of democratic system, citizens wanting to have a greater voice in issues that affect them have learned to enter this game by organizing into interest groups that represent their specific interests. This increasing organization of citizens into interests groups has tended to turn politics into a competition of narrowly defined interests. The advocacy explosion of recent years has helped to democratize access of the halls of power, but has also generated a kind of "hyperpluralism" that makes it increasingly difficult to address questions of common purpose (Sirianni and Friedland). In fact, as Mansbridge notes, "there is no common good or public interest at all. Voters pursue their individual interests by making demands on the political system in proportion to the intensity of their feelings. Politicians, also pursuing their own interests, adopt policies that buy them votes, thus ensuring accountability. In order to stay in office, politicians act like entrepreneurs and brokers, looking for formulas that satisfy as many, and alienate as few, interests as possible. From the interchange between self-interested voters and self-interested brokers emerge decisions that come as close as possible to a balanced aggregation of individual interests" (Mansbridge 1984, p 5).

This system also creates an increasingly more fragile and volatile citizenry since the way ordinary citizens think and talk is largely shaped over time by the simplistic, distorted and polarizing discourses to which they are chronically subjected by those seeking to win their support and votes. Citizens become increasingly less cognizant of the complexity inherent in issues of public interest and their own way of thinking and talking begins to mirror the overly simplistic, distorted discourses of these leaders and politicians. Public superficiality and incompetence learned and reinforced by the system then continues to justify the exclusion of these ordinary citizens in elitist processes designed to decide on issues of public interest.

A vicious cycle or pattern is perpetuated in which the more citizens withdraw in anger and hopelessness, the more politicians ignore them. The more politicians act irresponsibly and ignore or marginalize their constituency, the greater the anger, cynicism and sense of hopelessness. The seedbed of polarization continues, just waiting for the next issue of public concern to emerge and present itself as yet another social crisis demanding another round of what might be called antidemocratic intervention among and with the elite.

My intent is not to invalidate what I have framed here as elitist practices of intervention, but rather to recognize their limitations and consequences over time. Indeed, I can not imagine a viable functioning democratic system that did not require such practices. Real world conditions of urgency, limited resources, and rapidly changing political landscapes require the design of participatory practices that are politically and economically viable as well as capable of yielding short-term results. The elitist practice illustrated above often does work and can be effective in reducing social tensions, finding solutions that satisfy the needs of those affected, and creating a sense that the system is democratic and works. Moreover, though impure and imperfect, these practices are more democratic to the extent that opportunities for participation extend to sectors that had previously been marginalized and excluded from such participation.

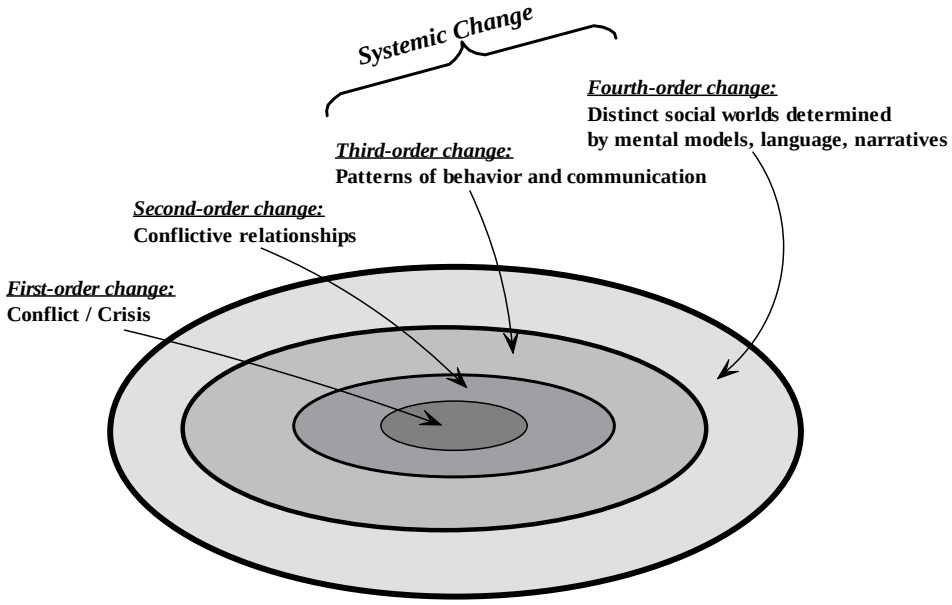
The following table frames the choice between working with what I have called "the elite" or engaging ordinary citizens more directly as a dilemma to be managed rather than a problem to be solved once and for all[5]. In other words, it is a "both and" rather than "either or" choice. The table shows the negative consequences that may arise as we begin to favor one side of the dilemma over the other. These negative consequences become mitigated to the extent we are able to begin embracing the other side of the dilemma.

Interventions limited to the "elite"	**Involving ordinary citizens in Deliberations**
Positive Benefits	***Positive Benefits***
• Well known and understood way of functioning • Quick, controllable, predictable • Respects established leaderships • Perceived as more legitimate and relevant • International pressure because it's the only game known…. • Has decision-making authority	• Recognizes and involves the general public ("we the people") • Promotes civic responsibility • Enriches information base, recognizes complexity • Limits the political game • Frena o limita el juego político • Promotes and strengthens critical skills (one learns to reads and listens more critically Promotes dialogue at all levels and generates curiosity
Risks, Disadvantages	***Risks, Disadvantages***
• Excludes the general public, fails to recognize "we the people" • Information becomes distorted • Fails to recognize complexity, discourse becomes simplistic • Perpetuates political game, reduces general public to mere spectators • Atomization of issues • Deterioration of critical skills • Fosters polarizing debate and the desire to "win" and "not lose"	• Innovation and sense of chaos is perceived as risky, less predictable, loss of control of results • Key issues become diluted due to long, show processes • Runs risk of reaching poor and misguided decisions • Undermines established leaderships • Not practical or realistic • May be considered culturally inappropriate • No one es "neutral or imparcial" everyone is a stakeholder

When mapped unto the following diagram, interventions limited to the elite may prove effective in dealing both with the public issues causing conflict and crisis as

[5] Barry Johnson describes a dilemma or "polarity" as a situation that is ongoing and involves two poles that are interdependent…both one pole and its opposite depend on each other and neither can stand alone. These situations, according to Johnson, can not be "solved" but must be "managed" by carefully balance the tension between the poles. I find this distinction a useful way of framing the need to balance carefully the roles and function of representatives and "elite" in representative democracy with the ongoing role and function of ordinary citizens in deliberative democracy. For further discussion of polarity management as an analytical framework see: Johnson, B. (1996). Polarity management : identifying and managing unsolvable problems. Amherst Mass, HRD Press.

well as improving or strengthening relationships among and between these key stakeholders. These are valuable first and second-order changes that often permit quick and visible results. However, failing to build into the design broader public engagement on these issues results in a limited capacity to effect systemic change, represented by the third and fourth-order changes illustrated in the outer layers of the graphic. As mentioned above, patterns of simplistic, distorted and polarizing conversations continue as these interventions invest little in intentionally shaping how the public thinks about and talks about issues of common concern.



The reality in each layer is shaped by, as well as shaper of, the reality in its exterior layer.

For some, such as Mueller (1999), this kind of democracy works and is good enough…the best we can do. He thinks not much more can be expected of ordinary citizens who have neither the time, interest nor the competence required to participate more actively in public affairs. Kaplan (1997) goes even further to say that the "enlightened despotism is preferable to democracy: the masses require protection from themselves." Brown notes that many officials "cannot see how average citizens could play any useful role in the decision-making process when it comes to the all-important steps at the beginning: the naming

and framing of issues, and the defining of possible approaches for solving them. Private citizens, most public officials seem to believe, lack the necessary experience and expertise for making a responsible choice" (Brown 2003, p 18).

If the espoused theories of democracy articulate a system of governance in which power is truly vested in the people, it is troubling to see how many theories-in-use ultimately suggest real distrust in the competence and efficacy of involving the public more directly in matters that concern them. While Mueller may be right in recognizing the impossibility of a pure and perfect democracy, I do not agree with him that current democratic practices are good enough. In fact, many democracies (both old and new) around the world are suffering significant legitimacy crisis that are putting the very task of governing in jeopardy. Citizens today, as Brown notes, "feel increasingly alienated from the institutions and agencies that are allegedly designed to serve them. In an increasingly global world, they feel they lack agency: control over not only their future, but their everyday lives as well. Feeding that sense of frustration is a constant list of problems that refuse to go away: everything from poverty and education to racial tension and drug abuse" (Brown 2003, p 4).

Overcoming these problems will require not just better government, but new ways of understanding the task of governing. Deliberative democracy (Fishkin 1991; Bohman and Rehg 1997), Strong democracy (Barber 1984), Unitary democracy (Mansbridge 1984) are all forms of democracy that explicitly recognize the importance of and believe in the possibility of devolving power and voice to ordinary citizens. They point to a democracy in which "people are no longer viewed as mere users and choosers of policies and technologies, they become active 'makers and shapers' of the realities that affect their lives (Pimbert and Wakeford 2001).

These theories have been instrumental in renewing interest in civic engagement, especially in the forms of public dialogue and deliberation, concepts and practices that are as old as democracy itself. Over the past decade, a broad

range of innovative ideas and practices have been developed for engaging the public and offering them viable mechanisms for exercising their power and becoming true “makers and shapers” of their public life.

Fishkin has pointed out that the choice between thoughtful but antidemocratic competence of elites on the one hand, and the superficialities of mass democracy on the other is, in fact, a false dilemma. “The fact that our present quiescent, disengaged public has not bothered to think enough about politics to have public opinions (rather than political preferences) worthy of the name, does not mean that it might not arrive at more informed and more deliberative opinions under conditions designed to truly engage it” (Fishkin 1991, p 58). I now turn to the concepts and practices of dialogue and deliberation as key mechanisms for enhancing civic engagement.

Dialogue & Deliberation: Tools for Enhancing Civic Engagement

I have highlighted the limitations and consequences of dealing with public issues exclusively within the closed circle of elites. Let me now offer ten reasons or possible outcomes that justify investing scarce time and resources in order to involve the public (ordinary citizens) more directly in processes designed to deal with important public issues that concern them.

1. *The expert-public gap is reduced:* As the political process becomes more professionalized and dominated by expert knowledge and what Yankelovich calls a “culture of technical control” (1991), the language used to frame and talk about issues becomes more technical and inaccessible, deepening that gap between these experts and the general public. “Expert knowledge” is privileged over “mere public opinion,” viewing the latter as simply less-informed expert knowledge. As Pimbert and Wakeford point out, Dewey was quick to recognize the dangers that arise whenever a gap is created between experts and the general public. “[Dewey] proposed that experts could never achieve monopoly control over knowledge required for adequate social planning because of the extent to which ‘they become a specialized

class, they are shut off from knowledge of the needs they are supposed to serve.' When insulated and unaccountable, he argued, this 'cadre of experts' became not a public resource, but a public problem. While accepting that citizens must often depend on experts for the gathering of facts and construction of scenarios, Dewey attacked those who dismissed the public's capability to participate in policy-making (Pimbert and Wakeford 2001).

Perceptions of both the problem and the solution regarding social issues are value laden and differ greatly among different sections of the population. The traditional 'expert institutions' are seen as no better equipped or mandated to decide upon profound questions of values and interests than any other assemblages of citizens (Holmes and Scoones 2000). Involving the public more directly reduces the expert-public gap by enriching and making more accessible the different discourses or language used to talk about these issues. By refocusing attention on the underlying values embedded in the different kinds of expert information being provided and the decisions to be made allows the public to engage with the issue without forcing them to adopt the uncomfortable and unnatural language of experts. Engaging the general public also offers experts and expert institutions the opportunity to monitor and evaluate to what extent their work and positions are aligned with the values of the general public.

2. *Complexity is unmasked:* When citizens are involved more directly in dealing with important public issues, they are forced to move beyond simplistic, fragmented and distorted ways of thinking to recognizing the complexity inherent in the issues being discussed. When complexity is embraced, rather than ignored or avoided, the possibility of reaching wiser more sustainable agreements is greater. Commenting on complexity endemic in issues of public policy, Dahl notes the following:

    - It is a profound mistake to believe that complex issues can be properly decided by experts relying on technical or "scientific" analysis and

judgments.

- Every complex decision therefore rests on assumptions not only about facts but also, though these are usually implicit, about equity, fairness, justice, security, community, freedom, and other values.

- Advantages and disadvantages are never distributed equally among citizens

- How great the advantages and disadvantages are likely to be is a matter of considerable uncertainty

- All government policies and decisions result in disadvantages that may or may not be outweighed by there advantages (Dahl 1997, p 2).

Polls used to gather public opinion from a marginalized and uninvolved public will often yield unstable, incoherent responses that reveal the overly simplistic fragmented way of thinking about these issues that allow citizens to offer opinions without requiring them to accept their implied consequences. For example, when asked whether they favor better and broader healthcare system, the response may be yes even though the same person responds later to another question in a way favoring tax cuts. Other opinions may favor protectionist policy while at the same time favoring a market system that offers the highest quality products for the lowest prices. Involving the public allows them to recognize the complexity of these issues and reality that tradeoffs are often necessary. They move from simplistic ways of talking about their own private interests as wish lists without consequences to talking in more sophisticated ways that reflect the issue's truly complex nature.

3. *Discourse accountability:* To the extent that civic engagement yields a citizenry more capable of recognizing complexity and thinking in more sophisticated ways about public issues, it will become more difficult to rely on simplistic, distorted information typical of political discourse as a way of

reaching and winning public support. The public will begin to demand from its leaders and politicians more thorough and well-thought out positions that reflect rather than mask the complexity of a given issue. The seedbed of ongoing conflict and social polarization may wither as the public becomes less prone to manipulation and begins to demand more from its leaders and representatives.

4. *Movement from "I" to "We":* Rather than simply aggregating individual desires rooted in self-interest, civic engagement challenges citizens and representatives alike to think not only as "I," but also as "we." As Mansbridge points out, "democracy involves public discussion of common problems, not just a silent counting of individual hands. And when people talk together, the discussion can some times lead the participants to see their own stake in the broader interests of the community. Indeed, at its best the democratic process resolves conflict not only by majority will, but by discovering answers that integrate the interests of minorities. Thus a "deliberative democracy" does not simply register preferences that individuals already have; it encourages citizens to think about their interests differently" (Mansbridge p 1).

5. *Promotes public use of reason*: Related to the previous movement to the collective "we," engaging citizens in public deliberation forces participants and interested stakeholders to justify their views by appealing to reasons that are convincing to other participants if they are to convince them of the validity fo their views. Rather than interest-based politics founded on the aggregation of private interests, here policy is developed through public deliberation founded on the public use of reason. "Reasons backing a political decision are public when they are convincing enough to motivate each citizen, even a dissenter, to continue to cooperate in deliberation even after the decision has been made (Bohman 2000). As Tom Atlee says, "Not only do we need to work with others to get what we want, but what we want evolves as we interact with others. It seems that some of our deepest

human needs cannot be addressed outside of public life…Citizenship doesn't mean giving up our interests for the sake of others – it means learning to see our self-interests embedded in other's self-interests" (Atlee, edited writings of Lappe, Du Bois).

6. *Tighter alignment between public values and policies:* One of the assumptions of elitist practice mentioned earlier holds that good solid information leads to good decisions. This is a fallacy. While accurate and complete information is necessary, and facts are taken into account (at least as they are understood by the people), decisions are ultimately based on a set of moral values and ideas or assumptions about what is best for others and one's self. For example, referring to how people come to judgment on the issue of capital punishment, Yankelovich says "their social values and personal morality, their interpretation of the meaning of life, and whatever statistics they happen to know about crime rates are all aspects of a single, indivisible judgment" (1999, p 179). Involving the public is important in order to insure that policy decisions are more closely aligned with values citizens consider most important.

7. *Increased civic competence and greater sense of political efficacy*[6]*:* Lupia articulates this argument in the following way. "Assembling groups of people with diverse abilities into setting that are designed to generate new information flows results in the less-knowledgeable participants gaining a broader and more accurate understanding of the consequences of their actions; participants not only learn more by increased exposure to the ideas of others, but the specter of public justification—having to justify one's own claims before an audience of equals—induces speakers to constrain the extent to which their arguments reflect their self-interests; thus, not only do deliberation participants receive new information, but they also receive

[6] See Gastil, J. (2000). Is Face-to-Face Citizen Deliberation a Luxury or a Necessity for Democracy? Seattle. As well as Fishkn & Luskin, 1999 for research linking deliberative activity with increased sense of political efficacy.

content that is different from that which the media—or purely self-centered introspection—would provide." (Lupia 2002, p 135).[7]

8. *Establishes relationships and rebuilds credibility and legitimacy*: Engaging the public creates opportunities to establish meaningful connections between and among citizens, issues, institutions and the political system. To the extent relationships between these four are created and strengthened, citizens become more informed on the issues and more connected among themselves as well as with the institutions and the general political system designed to serve them. As citizens perceive greater voice and agency in issues that concern them, the system gains greater credibility and legitimacy.

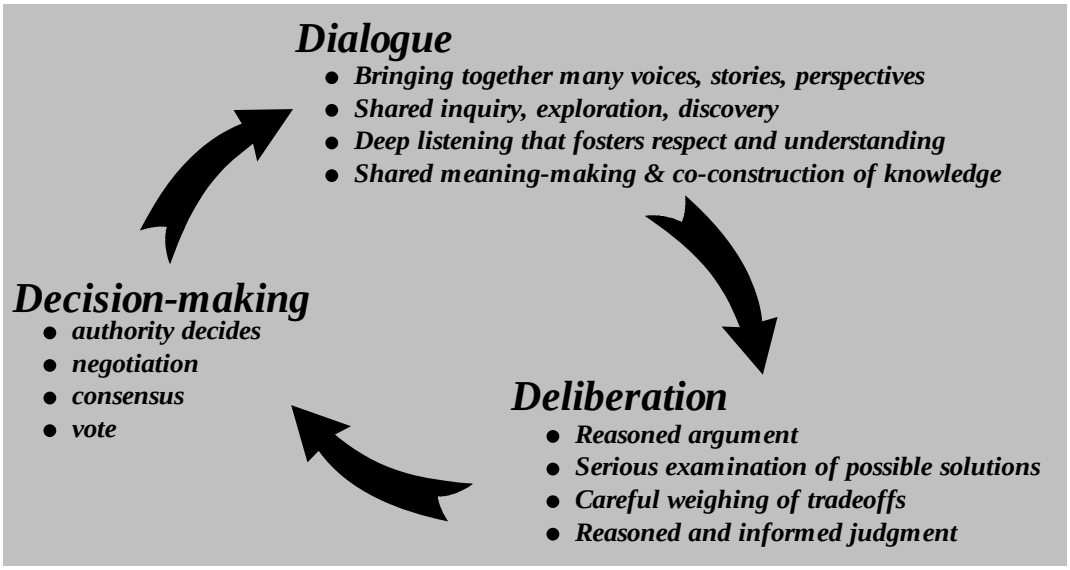
9. *Assumed responsibility for tough decisions:* Engaging the public on issues of public concern seeks not only to discover what the public thinks and values about an issue, but also asks and expects citizens to acknowledge and assume responsibility for the consequences of their opinions and the important tradeoffs the decisions they endorse require.

10. *Transformative learning – systemic change:* Involving citizens in dialogue and deliberation processes is ultimately a learning process for all involved since no single human individual or group can possess all the information deemed relevant for a decision. Dewey (1966, p 57) was clear on the transformative learning potential of involving citizens in participatory processes in which they deliberate on issues of public concern. "To formulate [one's own] experience requires getting outside of it, seeing it as another would see it, considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be got into such form that he can appreciate its

[7] For a more exhaustive account of what is required for deliberation to yield greater civic competence, see Lupia's article where he share's Schroeder's concern about problems with equating public deliberation with the analogy of legal deliberations, but does not share Schroeder's conclusion that deliberative mechanisms in politics can not be justified. See Christopher H. Schroeder, *Deliberative Democracy's Attempt to Replace Politics with Law*, 65 Law & Contemporary Problems 95,95 (Spring 2002).

meaning." The process of communication carries the potential of transforming one's own perspectives or understandings of his/her life experiences. Learning is ultimately transformative to the extent that it leads to third and forth-order changes in the outer two layers in the graphic presented earlier where mental models and core narratives that shape how we make sense of our social worlds are revised and new patterns of collaborative behavior and more sophisticated robust communication emerge. Systemic changes such as these serve to strengthen democratic culture and practice and minimize the polarizing and conflict-producing tendencies more characteristic of a chronically alienated and marginalized citizenry ripe for a good fight.

In the following diagram I identify three different moments in the decision-making process, dialogue, deliberation and decision-making. Often times, processes dealing with public issues may involve a number of iterations of this cycle in different stages of the process. For instance, as an issue emerges, this cycle of dialogue, deliberation and decision-making may occur in the process of naming and framing the issue itself. Another iteration occurs that considers and decides upon possible solutions. And yet, more iterations may occur in processes designed to monitor and evaluate the implementation of policy decisions.



The pattern of practice critiqued in the first part of this paper tends to privilege the moment of decision-making itself, while ultimately investing very little in dialogue and deliberation processes that ideally ought to precede the moment of decision. The Stakeholders are identified and invited to participate in what may be referred to as a dialogue process. However, the nature of these processes often seems less about dialogue as it is understood here, and might be better described as bargaining or negotiation processes where each comes to the table to advocate for his/her respective interests.

While the actual moment of decision might more appropriately be considered the domain of key leaders, representatives, experts and politicians mandated with the authority to make decisions, both within these elitist groups as well as with the public in general, the important functions of dialogue and deliberation are too often neglected or simply sacrificed due to competing urgencies, scarce resources and perhaps unfamiliarity with viable, innovative mechanisms and methodologies for promoting public involvement.

Democratic culture is best measured not against the quality of decisions made, but the quality and inclusiveness of dialogue and deliberation processes that feed into and shape these decisions. As seen in the critique above, while decisions and agreements might be reached that end or reduce conflict and tensions in the short term, the continued marginalization and exclusion of “the people” sustains and perpetuates a weak and fragile democracy, prone to high levels of social polarization and the generation of new conflicts in the future.

Deliberative theories of democracy do not promote and emphasize public involvement in deliberative processes as a way of substituting the more formal structures and processes of decision-making. Rather, the goal is to complement, enrich and strengthen these formal mechanisms in a way that yields better and wiser decisions while at the same time strengthening democratic culture characterized by stronger and broader democratic practices in general. This is accomplished by bringing the public into these processes using

methodologies that promote citizen dialogue and deliberation, in addition to work that continues to be done with the stakeholders in the more formal structures and procedures. Though the dialogue and deliberation often merge into one process (either "dialogic deliberation" or "deliberative dialogue"), let me briefly describe the core concept for each separately.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Over the past decades, dialogue has developed into a robust field of theory with a rapidly increasing field of literature dedicated to both the concept and practice of dialogue (Gergen, McNamee et al.; Buber and Kaufmann 1970; Bohm and Nichol 1996; Anderson and Cissna 1997; Pearce and Littlejohn 1997; Isaacs 1999; Saunders 1999; Yankelovich 1999; Pearce and Pearce 2000; Pearce and Pearce 2002 Unpublished as of yet). It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the different conceptual approaches and understandings of dialogue. At the risk of being overly simplistic, I would like to offer a rough understanding of dialogue that I think is at least minimally compatible with the different theories that currently exist.

Dialogue is a way of relating and conversing with others in which one holds the critical balance between sustaining and expressing one's own views and perspectives while at the same time remaining profoundly open to the views and perspectives of others. Dialogue, as it is understood here, is not another way of referring to debates or negotiations where different sides are invested in persuading or convincing each other in order to reach their own desired outcome. Rather, as Louis Diamond says, "In dialogue, the intention is not to advocate but to inquire; not to argue but to explore; not to convince but to discover."[8]

Innovation over the past decade has lead to the creation of a diverse array of different methodologies and approaches for engaging citizens in public dialogue.

[8] Quote taken from thataway.org website, http://www.thataway.org/resources/understand/what.html#dialogue

In the appendix is a list of many different organizations that design and facilitate public dialogue processes. Included are their websites where details about their methodological approaches can be found. Though varied in their approaches, the following are some of the principles taken from McCoy and Scully's article on Study Circles Resource Center's methodology (McCoy and Scully 2002), which many of other methodologies share in common.

1. *Multiple forms of speech are encouraged rather than requiring individuals to speak in a single, particular way.* Reflection on personal experiences, storytelling, brainstorming are examples of devices used to help individuals participate in their own voice, rather than being required to restrict themselves to more overly rational ways of conversing.

2. *Connect personal experience with public issues.* "The single most effective way to overcome people's initial hesitancy to discuss public issues is to ask them to share their personal experiences and talk about how the issue at hand affects their daily lives. However, all too often public engagement processes ask people to leap into a discussion of policy options without giving them adequate opportunity to reflect on the relevance of the issue to their own personal experience" (McCoy and Scully 2002)p 121). The stories people tell and the personal experiences they share as a way of connecting the issue with their own lives often reveals important values at play that may or may not be reflected in the language used in the closed circle of experts and professionals. In fact, how issues are named and framed among experts can be quite different from how citizens talk about and frame the same issues grounded in their own life experiences.

3. *Make listening as important as speaking:* Drawing on research from the Kettering Foundation, McCoy and Scully say that "processes that promote listening reduce pressure on people who may be reluctant to expose their feelings or ideas before strangers. Good listening also increases the

chance that people will truly understand—and even empathize with—each other, thus increasing the odds that they will find common ground from solutions to the public issues being addressed" (2002, p 121). Because people are often more interested in speaking than listening, skilled facilitation plays a crucial role in many public dialogues.

4. *Explore a range of views about the nature of the issue:* The common pattern in many stakeholder dialogues or negotiations is to quickly narrow in on the search for possible solutions. In contrast, dialogue, as it is understood here, seeks to broaden out, rather than narrow in, based on the assumption comes with only a partial vision and depends on others for a more complete understanding of the issue. Consider an example of an issue that arose between the Media and the Government regarding freedom of speech. Within the closed circle of experts and stakeholders positions centered around the rights of the media to report how and when it wants to, and on the other side, the right of the Government to privacy. However, when asked, citizens talked about their right to be adequately and responsibly informed, thus framing this issue in yet a very different way.

Through different mechanisms of public dialogue, "a different kind of citizen voice is introduced into public affairs that is quite distinct from raw public opinion, simple voting narrow advocacy, or protest from the outside. It promises to cultivate a responsible citizen voice capable of appreciating complexity, recognizing the legitimate interests of other groups (including traditional adversaries), generating a sense of common ownership and action, and appreciating the need for difficult tradeoffs" (Sirianni and Friedland). Public dialogue and deliberation become a key source of legitimacy, and hence an important resource for responding to the crisis of governance experienced in so many democracies today.

PUBLIC DELIBERATION

While dialogue is an openning, emergent process in which visions expand and understanding deepens as multiple voices, stories and perspectives are brought together in process of shared inquiry, exploration and mutual discovery, deliberation is the narrowing process immediately preceding the moment of decision in which the different concerns, interests and underlying values at play are carefully framed in a concise analysis of the issue, and alternative proposals are developed. It is a process that is “reflective, open to a wide range of evidence, respectful of different views. It is a rational process of weighing the available data, considering alternative possibilities, arguing about relevance and worthiness, and then choosing the best policy of person” (Mendelberg and Oleske 2000, p 170).

Deliberation seeks to “provide the public with alternative visions of what is desirable and possible, to stimulate discussion about them, to provoke reexamination of premises and values, and thus to braoden the range of potential responses and deepen society's understanding of itself” (Reich 1990, p 8). By creating a context in which different options and possibilities for the future can be carefully considered, the deliberative process helps us move beyond the 'thoughtless adherence to outmoded formulations of problems...policy-making should be more than and different from the discovery of what people want; it should entail the creation of contexts in which the public can critically evaluate and revise what it believes" (1990, p 8).

London, defining deliberation as “the formation of will, the particular moment that precedes choice,” goes on to say that deliberation is rooted on the idea of self-governance in which “political truths emerge not from the clash of pre-established interests and preferences but from reasoned discussion about issues involving the common good” (London 1995, p 2). Because of its reliance on reasoned discuss, Fung and Wright distinguish the deliberative process from “bargaining procedures (in which outcomes are determined by the powers that parties bring to negotiations), hierarchical procedures (in which outcomes are determined according to the preferences of the highly placed), markets (in which money

mediates outcomes), or aggregative voting (in which outcomes are determined according to the quantity of mobilized supporters)." It is a process "regulated according to the lights of reason rather than money, power, numbers, or status." (Fung and Wright 1999, p 4).

Pearce and Littlejohn (1997, p 173) describe deliberative democracy as having "a logic with seven elements: *Actors* make *choices* by *deliberative dialogue* to come to *public judgment* and thereby establish a *public voice* through *common ground* and *complementary action*" The table below presents the National Issues Forum's elaboration of these concepts as presented in (Pearce and Littlejohn 1997, p 174).

Deliberation is something we all do daily. As we nagivate through life, we are often forced to make difficult choices that often involve competing values. For instance, multiple commitments to family, church, work, school and self compete for the limited number of hours in a day. How I ultimately decide to divide and invest my time is tightly related to how I rank these competing values. These are tough choices that, though hopefully informed by the best information possible, are ultimately not based upon information, but values. Navigating public life also requires us to make difficult choices that privildge certain values while accepting the consequences in terms of tradeoffs required by these choices. For instance, in the United States, some policies that respond to what might be characterized as a culture of fear seem to be moving in the direction of providing a greater sense of protection and security from world terrorism at the cost of giving up certain civil liberties.

The Logic of Deliberative Democracy

1. For "politics" to work as it should—to have the qualities we want it to have—citizens have to be **ACTORS**. The political system won't change by itself. People have to claim their responsibilities and act on those responsibilities, both by setting directions for government and by joining together in public action.
2. People can't act together, either to set directions or to join together as citizens, without making **CHOICES**, or decisions, which are always difficult because choices about what kind of community or country we want to have force us to deal with the pulls and tugs of all that is deeply valuable to us.
3. This "choice work" requires a **DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE**. Deliberation is that particular form or reasoning and talking together in which we weigh carefully the costs and consequences of our options for action—as well as the views of others. Forums have to be deliberative if they are to lead to sound decisions.
4. Deliberation changes first opinions into more shared and reflective **PUBLIC JUDGMENT** about how we should act. Deliberative forums create public knowledge (new information about the public) and a **PUBLIC VOICE**.
5. The information or public voice that comes from a forum about how citizens see issues and what they are or aren't willing to do to address them is essential information for officeholders. When governments act in accord with public judgment they acquire public legitimacy.
6. Deliberation also helps people find connections among varied purposes and a shared sense of direction. Though not complete agreement or consensus, this **COMMON GROUND** FOR **ACTION** that deliberative forums create is the basis for public action, which is a rich array of citizen-to-citizen actions that are mutually reinforcing or **COMPLEMENTARY** because they serve compatible purposes. Public action makes government action effective.

Such decisions about how best to shape public life together must move beyond the limited and often closed circle of professionals, experts, politicians and activists and incorporate the voice of ordinary citizens as a way of discovering and honoring the collective wisdom of society. Mansbridge goes so far as to say that "the quality of deliberation makes or breaks a democracy. Good deliberation produces, along with good solutions, the emotional and intellectual resources to accept hard decisions. Active participation in decisions makes it easier to bear—and understand the reasons for—the losses some decisions entail." (Mansbridge)

One of the underlying assumptions identified in the pattern of practice examined in the first part of this paper states that "ordinary citizens are not sophisticated enough to understand the complexity of public issues and are not informed enough to participate in meaningful ways. Any direct involvement of ordinary

citizens would be superficial at best and simply impractical." Experiences accumulated over the past several decades with various innovative approaches to public deliberation show that ordinary citizens are very capable of understanding and dealing with complexity and reaching informed and reasoned judgments on issues of public policy.

Approaches to involving ordinary citizens in processes of public deliberation range from working with small groups of citizens…to massive town meetings[9] involving thousands of citizens working together in one room; from relying on face-to-face encounters…to working virtually with online deliberations (Barabas; Gastil 2000; Winkler 2001; Witschge 2002; Girard, Polletta et al. 2003); from creating temporary councils (Rough 2002; Atlee and Zubizaretta 2003) that form to deliberate on a specific issue and then disband…to creating more permanent ongoing structures;[10] from having an official advisory capacity to authorities and decision-makers…to having no direct relation with the formal structures for decision-making. In other words, there are a number of different models to choose from, depending on the context, issue and resources available. For information on these different approaches, see the list of organizations and websites dedicated to deliberation in the appendix. I would like to briefly discuss the work of the National Issues Forum and the use of CDC's (Citizen Deliberative Councils) since I find them particularly interesting and useful.

The National Issues Forum produces issue booklets, which are short study guides on specific public issues. Through a rigorous and comprehensive methodology involving interviews with experts and professionals represent the range of perspectives regarding the issue, as well as carefully facilitated focus groups with ordinary citizens, NIF produces a concise statement of the issue and analysis of the concerns, interests and values shaping the different perspectives on the issue. Three to five alternative proposals are clearly articulated, along

[9] See America Speaks model at www.americaspeaks.org
[10] Some DIPs are framed as more permanent structures to deal with ongoing issues in a given context such as community policing issues or ongoing environmental issues.

with a careful analysis of their respective benefits and costs. Having more than two alternatives helps reduce the risk of polarization that often occurs when just two positions are presented, while having no more than five helps avoid introducing too much complexity and confusion due to information overload.

These issue booklets are effective in gathering and presenting in a single document a number of diverse perspectives around an issue. Seeing the different perspectives and corresponding analysis of costs and benefits juxtaposed in this way helps the reader quickly grasp the complexity inherent in the issue and the reality of touch choices. These booklets serve as effective tools for helping the public think in a more sophisticated and informed way about public issues and wrestle more responsibly with the reality of tradeoffs. These study guides are often used in small group processes such as those promoted in the Study Circles Resource Center.[11] Usually there is a pre and a post survey included in these study guides that help track and document changes in personal preferences that take place after having given more careful consideration to the issue.

Citizen Deliberative Councils offer yet another interesting way for thinking about how to involve the public in deliberative processes. Tom Atlee describes these CDC's in the following way[12]:

> They are made up of ordinary citizens whose diversity embodies the diversity of the population from which they were drawn. They are, in essence, an ad hoc microcosm of a community, state or country, convened to reflect the views and concerns of that community, state or country, in an interactive setting. Participants may be selected randomly or scientifically -- or by a combination of both methods. But they differ from participants in most other forms of citizen deliberation in that they are not chosen as representatives, stakeholders or experts. They are themselves, and they show up simply as peer citizens. In their role as a citizen council, however, they may consult with representatives, experts or

[11] http://www.studycircles.org/

[12] Taken from his writings on the following webpage: http://co-intelligence.org/P-CDCs.html

other stakeholders, to improve their understanding of the issues they're exploring.

There are many varieties of citizen deliberative councils, but they all share one purpose and seven characteristics.

The purpose of a citizen deliberative council is to inform officials and the public of what The People as a whole would really want if they were to carefully think about it and talk it over with each other.

The seven characteristics shared by every citizen deliberative council are:

1. It is an organized face-to-face assembly.

2. It is made up of people selected so that their collective diversity fairly reflects the diversity of the larger community from which they were chosen. (In this context, "community" means any coherent civic population, whether a block, a citizens' organization, a city, a province, a country, or any other such public grouping.)

3. It is convened temporarily, for a limited number of days -- almost always for more than a single day -- usually a few days to a week of actual meetings, sometimes distributed over several weeks.

4. Its members deliberate as peer citizens, setting aside any other role or status they may have.

5. It has an explicit mandate to address public issues or the concerns of its community.

6. It uses forms of dialogue, usually facilitated, that enable its diverse members to really hear each other, to expand and deepen their understanding of the issues involved and to engage together in seeking creative ways their community might address those issues.

7. At its conclusion, it issues findings and/or recommendations to concerned officials and to the larger community from which its members came and to which they return when their reports are submitted. Usually there is an expectation of further community dialogue stimulated by the report, and this is sometimes intentionally included as part of the overall process.

There are many variations on how these councils are formed and how their mandate is framed. In some cases, while the results of the council may not be binding for local or national authorities, an expectation may be placed on the

authorities to hold a formal press conference and explain why the findings of the council will not be accepted.

Citizen Deliberative Councils have been used effectively in a number of countries around the world. The Danish government has made successful use of consensus conferences that involve ordinary citizens in deliberations of complex policy issues regarding technology (Sclove)[13]. *Maclean's*, a well known Canadian journal, dedicatd the July 1, 1991 issue to "The People's Verdict," the results of a one time nationwide experience with a citizen deliberation on the future of Canada during a critical time in that nation's history[14]. Citizen councils have been proposed for evaluating candidates and ballot initiatives (with their recommendations distributed to every voter and reflected on the ballot, itself) and also to generate public judgment about controversial legislation before it is voted on (Gastil 2000).

It is not possible to literally involve every citizen in issues that affect them. Moreover, many, if not most, citizens may not even want to be involved, given the many other priorities and commitments that tug on them from all directions. Public deliberation, to be effective, does not require the participation of all. The results of these small samplings of citizens whose diversity reflects the diversity of the contexts from which they are drawn can be considered representative of what other citizens would also want, if they too were to undergo an intense and rigurous examination of the issue and alternative proposals. For citizens who simply do not have the time to stay informed on issues they consider important, these deliberative councils can become an important and influencial point of reference at the moment they are asked to exercise their right to vote.

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[13] www.loka.org/pubs/techrev.htm

[14] This issue of *Maclean's* can be accessed at http://co-intelligence.org/S-Canadaadvrsariesdream.html. The story is also told in chapter 12 of Atlee, T. and R. Zubizaretta (2003). The tao of democracy : using co-intelligence to create a world that works for all. Cranston RI, Writers' Collective.

Conclusion

I started this paper talking about the gap between commonly espoused theories that articulate the central role of citizen involvement in democracy and the theories-in-use that result in practices that continue to marginalize and alienate the public. Limited time and resources, as well as dynamic political contexts often driven by a perceived sense of urgency and crisis are all factors used to justify the decision to not include the public, but rather limit those involved in these important processes to experts, professionals, activists, leaders and politicians…the elite. While these processes may prove effective in the short term, patterns emerge over time that ultimately undermine these short-term achievements. As politics becomes increasingly more professionalized, ordinary citizens feel more and more alienated, frustrated and cynical. The crisis of legitimacy that jeopardizes the very task of governance is deepened.

In the second part of this paper, I discussed the important benefits or reasons that justify investing more time and effort in bringing ordinary citizens into these processes that deal with important public issues. Many of these benefits point to 3rd and 4th order changes that pertain to patterns of behavior and communication, and ways of thinking that can bring about deeper more systemic change. I then discussed the concepts and practices of dialogue and deliberation as key moments for public participation prior to that moment of decision-making itself. I discussed some of the many examples of innovative methodologies for involving the public as a way of not only affirming how important public involvement is, but also showing how possible and viable it can be. Hopefully some of these ideas will help close the gap between our espoused theories and theories-in-use and we will find ways of acting into conflictive situations on tough social issues in ways that yield strong viable solutions in the short term while also creating and strengthening new patterns of behavior that serve as the solid foundation of a true and vibrant democracy. In the end, democracy means little unless we learn to act democratically.

Appendix

Websites of groups working in dialogue and deliberation[15]

The Co-Intelligence Institute (www.co-intelligence.org) and the National Conference on Dialogue and Deliberation (www.thataway.org) are two organizations dedicated to the practice of dialogue and deliberation. Their websites offer comprehensive lists of resources and links for those who wish to inquire more into these two rich and robust fields of theory and practice. See also the "Citizen Science Toolbox" which offers a broad list of group processes and community involvement tools, with additional links for each one (http://www.coastal.crc.org.au/toolbox/alpha-list.asp)

DIALOGUE[16]

Common Ground www.tulane.edu:80/~so-inst/commong.html
The Common Ground program is an interracial discussion program designed to help communities confront racial and ethnic problems and find solutions. Common Ground also trains current and future leaders in dialogue skills that foster prejudice reduction and interracial conflict resolution. They are currently involved in working with journalists and developing talk show programs for television and radio based on the principles of dialogue.

Community Relations Service www.usdoj.gov/crs
CRS, an arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, is a specialized Federal conciliation service available to State and local officials to help resolve and prevent racial and ethnic conflict, violence and civil disorders. CRS helps local officials and residents tailor locally defined resolutions when conflict and violence threaten community stability and well-being.

Conversation Cafés www.conversationcafe.org
Conversation Cafés are lively hosted conversations among small groups of people with diverse views but a shared passion for engaging with others. Held in public spaces like cafés, restaurants and bookstores, Conversation Cafés provide an open forum to talk about important topics over a cup of coffee or tea.

DIA-*logos*, Inc. www.dialogos-inc.com
DIA-*logos* promotes the spirit and practice of dialogue for strategic use at all levels of leadership within and across organizations. They work with client organizations to meet their business objectives by transforming taken-for-granted limits in ways of thinking and acting.

The Faith & Politics Institute www.faith-and-politics.org

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[15] Most of the text used here to describe these groups is taken from their respective websites.
[16] In some cases, the work of these organizations could be appropriately classified as either dialogue or deliberation…and so the division is only tentative at best.

The Faith and Politics Institute is a non-partisan, interfaith organization which fosters community and conscience in and among U.S. political leaders. The Institute supports the Congressional Exchange, a Study Circles Resource Center program which supports members of Congress who want to involve citizens in discussion and action on race in their home districts.

Future Search Network www.futuresearch.net
The Future Search Network initiates future search conferences, innovative planning conferences used world-wide by hundreds of communities and organizations. The conferences meet two goals at the same time: helping large diverse groups discover values, purposes, and projects they hold in common; and enabling people to create a desired future together and start implementing right away.

Hope in the Cities www.hopeinthecities.org
In a number of communities across the country, Hope in the Cities initiated a process of healing which involves honest conversations on race, acceptance of responsibility and acts of reconciliation. Hope in the Cities encourages participants in conversations to go to the next steps of responsibility and reconciliation. Hope in the Cities offers its experience, resources and a process of community change.

Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy www.imtd.org
Established in 1992, IMTD promotes a systems approach to peacebuilding and facilitates the transformation of deep-rooted social conflict around the world. IMTD is based in Washington, DC and has 1237 members in 31 countries.

Interfaith Action for Racial Justice www.iarj.org
Baltimore, Maryland-based IARJ promotes understanding and tolerance among people of diverse backgrounds and traditions and strives to end racism and ethnic prejudice by fostering dialogue, creating community and engaging in action for justice.

Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington www.interfaith-metrodc.org
IFC brings together the Bah'ai, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, Latter-day Saints, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Sikh faith communities in the Washington, DC region in order to increase understanding, dialogue and a sense of community among peoples of diverse faiths from different races and cultures, and to address issues of social and economic justice in defense of human dignity.

Karuna Center for Peacebuilding www.karunacenter.org
The Karuna Center provides education and training to transform conflict by promoting dialogue and reconciliation. In regions torn by war or conflict, they work with local groups in their own efforts to strengthen conditions for peace and justice.

National Coalition Building Institute www.ncbi.org
NCBI offers a unique prejudice reduction methodology, based on years of development, which has been taught to thousands of leaders worldwide. NCBI-trained leaders work together in multicultural teams and empower others to

eliminate the harmful effects of institutionalized discrimination, enabling groups from diverse backgrounds to work together toward shared goals.

The National Dialogue on Standards-Based Education
www.nationaldialogue.org
A nonpartisan partnership of community groups, teachers, parents, and education research organizations began this 2-year national dialogue program in April of 2001. Dialogue events will be held in other cities across the U.S., and online via the Dialogue's website.

Public Conversations Project www.publicconversations.org
In addition to their groundbreaking grassroots dialogue work, PCP provides trainings, presentations, and workshops on such things as the power of dialogue, inquiry as intervention, and the architecture of dialogue. Much of PCP's work has centered on tough moral conflicts such as abortion, homosexuality, capital punishment. They offer a powerful methodology for dialogue on polarized issues that preserves the possibility for disagreement while also building and strengthening relationships and the possibility for collaborative action.

The Public Dialogue Consortium **www.publicdialogue.org**
PDC's approach to dialogue is grounded in the Coordinated Management of Meaning theory of communication that recognizes the central role of language and narratives in the construction of multiple social worlds in which we live. Much of their work is designed to make explicit these different social worlds within a communication system and elicit ideas on how the system might move forward in new and productive ways.

The San Mateo Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group
www.igc.org/traubman/faq.htm
Len and Libby Traubman have been organizing Jewish-Palestinian dialogue in the San Francisco area for over a decade. Their website features a 'how to' page on initiating Jewish-Palestinian dialogue groups, as well as many great articles and links. On request, they have mailed free dialogue background and guideline materials to 980 interested individuals representing 597 institutions, 402 cities, 38 states, and 32 nations. The Traubmans have spawned a number of similar, yet diverse groups in the Bay area, and their ideas are spreading into new cities and campuses.

Study Circles Resource Center www.studycircles.org
SCRC promotes and supports study circles (small-group, democratic, peer-led discussions, or dialogues, on important social and political issues). Their website provides downloadable copies of many of their top-notch dialogue guides and other resources.

Sustained Dialogue www.sustaineddialogue.org
The process of sustained dialogue is a conceptualization of two decades of experience with dialogues among citizens outside government in conflictual relationships. Sustained dialogue focuses on relationships—relationships that may

have torn a community apart; relationships that may be dysfunctional because of the way they have evolved over time; relationships that may appear calm on the surface but are undergirded by destructive interactions for a variety of reasons. Sustained dialogue therefore works on a dual agenda: (1) Of course, it focuses on practical problems and issues of concern to all participants. They are what cause people to come together. (2) It simultaneously and explicitly focuses on the relationships that create and block resolution of those problems.

Web Lab www.weblab.org
Web Lab's Small Group Dialogue (SGD) process fosters intimate, high-quality online exchanges about common concerns and issues. By limiting group size and life span, Small Group Dialogue emphasizes each member's value, encouraging a sense of belonging and an investment in frequent visits. The result is a structured experience requiring minimal intervention, and an signal-to-noise ratio unmatched in any conventional online dialogue model.

The World Café www.theworldcafe.com
The World Café is a metaphor. It is a guiding image, a scenario of possibility, and an innovative set of tools and methods for evolving collective intelligence and creative futures. As a guiding image, the World Café helps us appreciate the importance and connectedness of the informal webs of conversation and social learning through which we discover shared meaning, access collective intelligence and bring forth the future.

DELIBERATION

America Speaks www.americaspeaks.org
AmericaSpeaks' 21st Century Town Meeting™ creates engaging, meaningful opportunities for citizens to participate in public decision making. This unique process updates the traditional New England town meeting to address the needs of today's citizens, decision makers and democracy.

The 21st Century Town Meeting focuses on discussion and deliberation among citizens rather than speeches, question-and-answer sessions or panel presentations. Diverse groups of citizens participate in round-table discussions (10-12 people per table), deliberating in depth about key policy, resource allocation or planning issues. Each table discussion is supported by a trained facilitator to ensure that participants stay on task and that each table has a democratic process. Participants receive detailed, balanced background discussion guides to increase their knowledge of the issues under consideration.

Technology transforms the individual table discussions into synthesized recommendations representative of the whole room. Each table submits ideas using wireless groupware computers and each participant can vote on specific proposals using a polling keypad. The entire group responds to the strongest themes generated from table discussions and votes on final recommendations to decision makers. Before the meeting ends, results from the meeting are compiled into a report, which is distributed to participants, decision makers and the media as they leave. Decision makers actively engage in the meeting by participating in table discussions, observing the process and responding to citizen input at the end of the meeting.

Citizen Juries www.jefferson-center.org
The Citizens Jury process is a method for gathering a microcosm of the public, having them attend five days of hearings, deliberate among themselves and then issue findings and recommendations on the issue they have discussed. No deliberative method has been more carefully designed or thoroughly tested than this method.

The Co-Intelligence Institute www.co-intelligence.org
CII promotes awareness of co-intelligence (a shared, integrated form of intelligence) and of many tools and ideas that can be used to increase it. CII organizes open space conferences, listening circles and other forums. This website is well maintained and offers up-to-date links and news regarding new technologies and experiences in dialogue and deliberation.

Deliberative Polling *http://cdd.stanford.edu/ or http://www.la.utexas.edu/research/delpol/*
Citizens are often uninformed about key public issues. Conventional polls represent the public's surface impressions of sound bites and headlines. The public, subject to what social scientists have called "rational ignorance," has little reason to confront trade-offs or invest time and effort in acquiring information or coming to a considered judgment.

Deliberative Polling® is an attempt to use television and public opinion research in a new and constructive way. A random, representative sample is first polled on the issues. After this baseline poll, members of the sample are invited to gather at a single place to discuss the issues. Carefully balanced briefing materials are sent to the participants and are also made publicly available.

The participants engage in dialogue with competing experts and political leaders based on questions they develop in small group discussions with trained moderators. Parts of the weekend events are broadcast on television, either live or in taped and edited form. After the weekend deliberations, the sample is asked the same questions again. The resulting changes in opinion represent the conclusions the public would reach, if people had a good opportunity to become more informed and more engaged about the issues.

Forums Institute Policy Forums www.forumsinstitute.org
Over the past 10 years, the Forums Institute for Public Policy has developed Informed Contemplative Dialogue, a successful method of engaging stakeholders in not only talking about an issue, but also learning new perspectives and sharing information with others beyond the forum itself. Unlike most group gatherings whose goal is to support cohesive group effort, the goal of a Policy Forum using Informed Contemplative Dialogue is to provide participants what they need to think about an issue and to take action within their own sphere of influence. This includes providing:

The knowledge base (Informed)

- Timely choice of emerging public policy issues
- Clear, balanced, researched Issue Brief offering original policy analysis and bibliographic resources
- Invited speakers representing national and local perspectives

- Participants from executive and legislative branches of government and the private sector

The range of possibilities (Contemplative)

- Away from the demands of the office
- Off-the record discussion so “what ifs” and “maybes” can be aired
- Policy implications included in the Issue Brief

Opportunities to build alliances (Dialogue)

- Ground Rules ask people to listen, consider and explore topic
- Social time before and after the formal session
- List of participants and contact information provided
- Range of stakeholders interested in the issue

National Issues Forum www.nifi.org

NIF is a nationwide network of educational and community organizations that deliberate about nationwide issues. NIF publishes deliberation guides on a wide variety of issues. These guides contain a concise analysis of the issue along with 3 – 5 alternative proposals for dealing with the issue. Each proposal includes an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses as a way of helping public come to grips with the reality of tough decisions and the trade-offs they often require. NIF has a comprehensive methodology they use that involves both experts and the public throughout the process, from naming and framing of the issues to drafting the alternative proposals.

Wisdom Councils *www.ToBE.net*

The Wisdom Council is a newly invented structural approach to achieving genuine democracy in cities, unions, associations, counties, or nations … and even in corporations. No matter how many people are in the system, it structures a creative, thoughtful, system-wide conversation about the most pressing issues. It facilitates everyone to form a unanimous "We the People" viewpoint.

The Wisdom Council involves a public lottery every four months or so, where about twelve participants are randomly selected to meet for a short period, like two half-days. The group meets with a "dynamic facilitator," (see www.ToBE.net) identifies key issues, works on them creatively, and develops unamimous statements of what everyone feels or thinks. These "Statements of the People" have no coercive authority, but are presented back to the whole system in a ceremony, like a "State of the Union" message. Everyone is invited to hear the statements in person or through video or the media, to dialogue in small groups about them, and to report on their conclusions. These small groups usually report that they support both the statements and the process.

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