CENTER *for* ADVANCES *in* PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

OCCASIONAL PAPER / NO.5 / 2009

Democracy, Growing Up

The Shifts That Reshaped Local Politics and Foreshadowed the 2008 Presidential Election

by Matt Leighninger

PUBLIC AGENDA

Public Agenda's Center for Advances in Public Engagement (CAPE) researches, develops and disseminates new insights and practices that help improve the quality of American public life by building the field of public engagement and citizen-centered politics.

CAPE is dedicated to creating new and better ways for citizens to confront pressing public problems. CAPE is housed within Public Agenda, a nonpartisan, nonprofit opinion research and public engagement organization founded in 1975 by social scientist and author Daniel Yankelovich and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

For nearly three decades, Public Agenda has been working in communities to help citizens understand complex problems and create momentum for change by building common ground, managing differences and creating new partnerships. The Center serves the field by advancing three distinct but interrelated strands of work:

- The Public Engagement **Research Project** conducts and disseminates studies that clarify the dynamics and impacts of specific public engagement practices. Among the questions it explores are: What are the short-and-long term impacts of public deliberation on citizens, communities, leadership and public policies? What are the impacts of framing public issues for deliberation in contrast to framing them for purposes of persuasion—and what are the democratic implications of those differences for the media, political and civic leadership and civic participation? Why do deliberative democratic habits and practices take root in some communities more than others? And how can deliberation practices best go to scale, and be applied beyond the level of individual communities?

- The **Digital Engagement Project** experiments with and explores new internet-based tools and their application to engaging citizens in public deliberation and problem-solving. Guiding questions include: Can the internet only be used to link together like-minded people, or are there effective ways to produce greater "boundary-crossing" online, bringing diverse citizens together to better understand their differences? Can blogging contribute to deliberative public engagement, or only to partisan electoral or interest group politics? Is deliberation feasible within online communities?

- The **Theory-Building Project** promotes greater interplay between researchers and practitioners to improve the field's understanding of how public deliberation works and how it can work better. Principal areas and inquiry are: How does the public come to judgment? How does public deliberation relate to political and social change?

Major support for the Center is provided by the **W.K. Kellogg Foundation,** the **Rockefeller Brothers Fund** and the **Kettering Foundation.**

For more information on CAPE and Public Agenda's public engagement work, contact **Alison Kadlec,** Vice President, Public Engagement and Director, CAPE, at 212.686.6610 x 40 or akadlec@publicagenda.org. Also, visit the public engagement section of our website at http://publicagenda.org/pubengage/pe_home.cfm.

Democracy, Growing Up

The Shifts That Reshaped Local Politics and Foreshadowed the 2008 Presidential Election

by Matt Leighninger

Foreword

by Alison Kadlec, Center for Advances in Public Engagement

Few individuals, if any, are more plugged into the deliberative democracy movement in the U.S. than Matt Leighninger. Through his hands-on work in hundreds of communities as a public engagement practitioner with Everyday Democracy, his longtime association with the National League of Cities, and his current role as Executive Director of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium, Leighninger has been in a superior position to witness and report on the larger patterns in the many strands of the deliberative democracy movement that have been emerging in recent years.

In his recent book *The Next Form of Democracy: How Expert Rule is Giving Way to Shared Governance – And How Politics Will Never Be the Same* (2006), Leighninger shows how these developments are changing the face of local and now national politics. In this piece, Leighninger summarizes and updates his main arguments, and we at CAPE are delighted to have the opportunity to help shine a light on this important work.

Leighninger's broad experience and networks help him show how local public engagement initiatives reflect a broader movement towards a more citizen-centered and community-centered politics. Now that the Obama administration is experimenting with citizen input and community action as major elements in its governance strategy, the possibilities for such a shift seem more important to track and understand than ever.

We hope readers will find Leighninger's essay to be a useful guide to these new political possibilities, and that it will stimulate productive discussion about what these developments might mean for our democracy.

Introduction

In the United States, we've become accustomed to the idea that democracy is already a mature, fully formed political system. Most people seem to treat it as a fact of life, a part of the national backdrop. We may acknowledge that, throughout our history, this reliable old institution has been buffeted by vigorous social movements and periodic partisan shifts but most of us seem to assume that the basic relationship between citizens and government hasn't changed much in over 200 years.

In fact, a close look at the state of local politics suggests that our democracy is changing in fundamental ways. In many places, a shift in citizen attitudes and capacities has caused new tensions between citizens and government, produced new public actors and problem solvers, and inspired a new generation of civic experiments.

A small but growing group of practitioners and researchers has been observing and trying to assist communities as they deal with this transition. As a member of that field, I've been confronted many times by evidence of a changing democracy but one event stands out in my experience. The setting was a community meeting in Lakewood, Colorado, a suburb of Denver, in 2004. The room was full of citizens and public officials; they were talking about the lack of trust between residents and local government. The mayor and city manager couldn't understand how taxpayers could be dissatisfied with a city administration that had won awards for efficiency and innovation. Finally, someone said it: "Look, we know you're working hard for us, but what we've got here is a parent-child relationship between the government and the people. What we need is an adult-adult relationship." It was an illustration of what has been happening, in communities all over the country, over the last decade: a dramatic, generational shift in what people want from their democracy.[1]

The residents of Lakewood, like citizens everywhere else, are more vocal, diverse, skilled and skeptical than their predecessors of 20, 50, or 100 years ago. Citizens have less time for public life but they bring more knowledge and talent to the table. They feel more entitled to the services and protection of government and yet have less faith that government will be able to deliver on those promises. They are less connected to community affairs and yet they seem better able to find (often through the Internet) the information, allies and resources they need to affect an issue or decision they care about. These new attitudes and capacities were dramatically evident during the 2008 election but at the local level it has been clear for some time that citizens are better at governing, and less willing to be governed, than ever before.

The traditional, official formats for public participation in government have proven completely inadequate for dealing with new citizen attitudes and capacities.

The traditional, official formats for public participation in government have proven completely inadequate for dealing with these developments. Ironically, many of the laws passed decades ago to encourage citizen participation have actually hindered it because they mandate unworkable processes and meeting formats.[2] Most public meetings – from city council sessions and zoning board meetings to public hearings held by federal agencies – are structured in ways that preclude productive deliberation and fail to give regular citizens a meaningful chance to be heard. Moreover, traditional approaches to recruiting people to participate – which are usually limited to an announcement of the meeting in the newspaper or on a city Web site – are woefully ineffective. Depending on the level of controversy, these official meetings and hearings either attract a lonely handful of attendees or a mob of people who rail at public officials and leave more frustrated than they were before. On most public issues, the public is either angry or absent.[3]

In short, local officials are caught between more capable citizens who demand a greater voice in community decisions and inadequate processes for including residents in policy-making. To deal with this dilemma, leaders and citizens have attempted many different civic experiments – some successful, some not – to help their communities function more democratically and solve problems more effectively.

From Outdated Republic to Engaged Citizenry

The proliferation of these civic experiments and the conditions that have produced them seem to signify the next step in the development of our political system. We may be leaving behind the era of expert rule, in which elected representatives and designated experts made decisions and attacked problems with limited interference, and entering a period in which the responsibilities of governance are more widely shared. "When you get down to it, what we're really talking about is whether the current form of representative government is obsolete," says Steve Burkholder, the former mayor of Lakewood and the first chair of the Democratic Governance Panel of the National League of Cities. "We seem to be moving toward a different kind of system in which working directly with citizens may be just as important as representing their interests."[4]

In addition to the stories of conflict and experimentation in places like Lakewood, scholarly research and public opinion data similarly confirm that changes are afoot in our political culture. Numerous polls have charted citizens' changing attitudes toward authority and the erosion of their trust in government.[5] Daniel Yankelovich, who inspired many people to rethink their views about citizenship with his 1991 book, Coming to Public Judgment, now argues that "In recent years, the public's willingness to accept the authority of experts and elites has sharply declined. The public does not want to scrap representative democracy and move wholesale towards radical populism, but there will be no return to the earlier habits of deference to authority and elites."[6] Some studies, such as the 2008 Civic Health Index, have confirmed that there is "overwhelming support for laws and policies that would support greater citizen engagement."[7]

These general arguments about citizen attitudes are well known and often repeated by journalists and other national observers but the pundits have largely ignored the models of civic experimentation that have been provoked by these changes. The 2008 election, and specifically the way that the Obama campaign capitalized, and indeed relied, on the talents and commitment of rank-and-file volunteers, was an expression of the same hopes, frustrations and potential that have been evident in local politics for some time.[8] Finally, it was apparent that locally rooted civic activism could be the engine for a powerful national electoral strategy.

Now, as the Obama administration seeks to continue the momentum of the campaign in the way the administration governs, we need to understand the transformation of local governance. From these local projects and initiatives, we can gain valuable lessons about how to involve citizens in state and federal policymaking. From the successes and failures of these civic experiments we can learn more about where our democracy is headed and how we can influence and improve the path of its development. From this work we can better understand how to create a more productive, respectful, 'adult-adult' relationship between citizens and government.

Laboratories for Democracy

The civic experiments now taking place at the local level are sometimes referred to as examples of "democratic governance." This term is being used to describe a whole array of projects and structures, a series of successful principles which have emerged from those efforts and, above all, a new relationship between citizens and government. Perhaps the most useful way to define democratic governance is to call it "the art of governing communities in participatory, deliberative, collaborative ways."[9]

So far, this work has taken three main forms:

- *Temporary initiatives to help citizens address a major community issue.* These have been led by all kinds of organizations and are usually supported by a broad coalition of groups. In the sessions, participants learn more about this issue, talk about how it affects them, consider some of the main policy options on the table and plan for implementation and action. Sometimes the sessions are spread over several weeks and sometimes they take place in a single day as part of a large forum.
- *Efforts to involve citizens in particular policy decisions.* These are usually initiated by governments, sometimes with support from other groups. They are similar to temporary organizing initiatives in the sense that they are tied to a policy debate that usually subsides once the decision has been made; however, they are different in that the public officials and employees may come back to the community again on the same or other issues in the future. There is a kind of ongoing commitment by government to working more intensively with the public.
- *Permanent structures such as neighborhood councils,* district councils that represent multiple neighborhoods, school councils and other standing bodies that are intended to give citizens regular opportunities to solve problems and make decisions. These usually rely on monthly face-to-face meetings though there are many different variations. The first neighborhood council systems emerged 30 years ago in cities like Dayton, Ohio, and Portland, Oregon; the current wave is much larger and more diverse, including smaller towns as well as large cities like Los Angeles and Houston.[10]

Since 1990, these democratic governance initiatives or structures have been created in cities and towns across the country, allowing hundreds and sometimes thousands of citizens to address issues such as race, crime, education, corrections, immigration, growth and sprawl, youth development, public finance, community-police relations and economic development.[11] Face-to-face meetings are still the most common type of interaction but use of the Internet as a recruitment tool and a venue for discussion and collaboration has increased dramatically. In a few places, such as Northfield, Minnesota, and Burlington, Vermont, permanent online forums have become so well established that they serve as arenas for public decision making as well as hubs for community life.[12]

Each of these three forms of democratic governance has advantages and disadvantages. Many permanent structures do not seem to emphasize recruitment adequately; over time, neighborhood councils often devolve into small sets of "professional citizens" who might not necessarily involve many of their neighbors. The recurring government-led initiatives have the strongest connection to the policymaking process but they are often narrowly focused on the policy questions of the moment and may avoid politically controversial issues. Finally, the temporary projects sometimes have greater difficulty affecting policymaking processes but their greatest shortcoming may be simply that they are temporary. Even in situations where they've been extremely successful and have produced a range of tangible outcomes, they may not lead to structured, long-term changes in the way citizens and governments interact.

Whether they are temporary or permanent, initiated by government or by some other organization, the best examples of democratic governance employ four successful principles:

1. They recruit people proactively by working through the various groups, networks and organizations in the community in order to assemble a large and diverse "critical mass" of citizens.

2. They involve those citizens in a combination of formats: structured, facilitated small groups for informed, deliberative dialogue; large forums for amplifying shared conclusions and moving from talk to action; and, increasingly, various kinds of online settings.

3. They give the participants in these meetings the opportunity to compare values and experiences and to consider a range of views and policy options.

4. They effect change in a number of ways: by applying citizen input to policy and planning decisions, by encouraging change within organizations and institutions, by creating teams to work on particular action ideas, by inspiring and connecting individual volunteers, or all of the above.

While the discussion so far has focused largely on local politics, it's worth noting that three of these principles were evident in President Obama's campaign. The campaign placed a huge emphasis on proactive, network-based recruitment, using the Internet in concert with face-to-face appeals. The Obama organizers used a variety of interactive meeting types and formats to reach a variety of people. Finally, they recognized the capacity of ordinary people to take action at many different levels. Rather than simply asking people to give money or make phone calls, they encouraged volunteers to take on difficult technical assignments and organize major field operations. For the first time in a presidential election, volunteers managed large numbers of other volunteers, thereby increasing exponentially the number of people who could work on a campaign. The Obama campaign treated voters less like passive observers and more like active, knowledgeable, capable citizens. This may have been critical to their victory; it is also a sign that the trends shaping democratic governance are now national in scope.[13]

Race and Other Catalysts for Democratic Governance

In tracing the growth of democratic governance an important turning point was the violent aftermath of the 1992 Rodney King verdict in Los Angeles. The civil disturbances in L.A. made public dialogue seem more critical than ever. Elected officials across the country realized that, while they might address racism and race relations through their work in areas like economic development or housing discrimination, they also had to deal directly with the race-related perceptions, biases and beliefs of their constituents. This kind of public outreach had rarely been done before; most communities lacked venues for people of diverse backgrounds to talk to each other about race or any other issue.[14]

Many different kinds of local leaders began looking for ways to involve people in productive discussions on race. They hoped that these efforts could help to overcome community divisions and prevent public debates from being dominated by extreme voices. A wave of local public engagement efforts swept the nation, involving hundreds and sometimes thousands of citizens in forums, trainings, workshops and small-group dialogues.[15] Big cities weren't the only venues:

some of the most influential programs were initiated in smaller cities like Lima, Ohio; Fort Myers, Florida; and Springfield, Illinois.

As these leaders experimented with different kinds of meeting formats and recruitment methods they discovered tactics that were also being pioneered in fields like education, planning and crime prevention. School superintendents and principals in places as disparate as Kuna, Idaho; Charlotte, North Carolina, and San José, California, wanted to engage parents and other citizens in local education reform. In cities like Buffalo, New York, and Fayetteville, North Carolina, police chiefs and other law enforcement professionals wanted citizens to revitalize neighborhood watch groups and form more productive relationships with police officers. Directors of youth programs in places like Racine, Wisconsin, and Portland, Maine, wanted young people and adults to work together on youth activities and find ways to combat substance abuse. As they launched new civic experiments many of these leaders received guidance and assistance from civic organizations such as Everyday Democracy, Public Agenda, AmericaSpeaks, the Kettering Foundation and the National Civic League.

Finding Formats That Work

As they looked for new ways to work with citizens, many local leaders were haunted by their bad experiences with more traditional formats for public involvement. In particular, they were determined to avoid the mistake of using large-group meetings to achieve goals – dialogue, learning, conflict resolution, action planning – that are generally more appropriate for smaller groups. They gravitated toward strategies that emphasized small-group discussions, either on their own or as breakout groups within larger forums or workshops.

Organizers realized from the beginning, or learned by trial and error, that these sessions would function most effectively if they included four main components. First, having an impartial facilitator was critical to a successful discussion. Many organizers believed that if the facilitators tried to educate the participants, or direct the group toward a particular conclusion, the dialogue would backfire. They found that facilitators could be successful if they remained impartial: giving everyone a chance to speak, helping the group manage the allotted time, helping the group use discussion materials and managing conflicts within the group.

Second, organizers allowed groups to set their own ground rules. When the participants in a small group set their own norms for the discussion, they were more likely to abide by the rules and the sessions tended to be more civil and productive. Participants typically proposed rules about not interrupting others, maintaining confidentiality and keeping an open mind.

The opportunity to compare personal experiences was the third key component. Encouraging participants to talk about their backgrounds and experiences turned out to be a critical way to begin the discussions. It defused some of the tension, allowed participants to get to know each other better and helped people see how our policy opinions are often based on our personal experiences.[16]

Finally, using a written guide to help structure the sessions proved to be critical. Groups tended to be more effective when they followed a guide that provided discussion questions, background information on the issue and suggestions for managing the sessions. Some of the guides also presented viewpoints that mirrored the main arguments being made across society. These views were intended to present a sampling of the ideological spectrum so that participants could analyze different ideas and options and relate them to their own experiences.

While new in many respects, these techniques for successful small-group discussions had important roots.[17] In fact, they can be traced back to the civil rights movement 50 years ago and the Chautauqua adult education methodology of a century ago, among other antecedents.[18] Some of the fundamental strategies of community organizing – such as "one-on-one" discussions and house meetings – are very similar and, indeed, many of the pioneers of democratic governance are people who think of themselves, first and foremost, as community organizers. On a host of issues in hundreds of communities, organizers used some combination of impartial facilitators, ground rules set by the group,

a focus on personal experience and a guide to structure the sessions.[19] The acceptance of these techniques was an essential step in the development of democratic governance.

The Critical Need for a Critical Mass

In some cases, particularly in situations where public officials were eager to understand the public's preferences on an issue, the most logical objective seemed to be to produce a "public judgment" by a representative sample of ordinary citizens. This way of thinking was strongly influenced by people like Daniel Yankelovich and Jim Fishkin, who tried to move beyond traditional opinion polling as a way to help officials comprehend the views and priorities of their constituents. The basic question being asked in these projects was: "What would citizens want government to do if they had the chance to learn about and deliberate on the issue?" To answer this question, organizers assembled representative samples of the population for an extended period of time to deliberate on the issue.[20] The resulting recommendations were then delivered to public officials, the media and others.

In most places, however, local leaders were determined from the start to engage a large, diverse, critical mass of citizens for a host of reasons. First, since the emergence of vocal, proactive citizens is one of the factors driving local leaders toward new approaches, they have gravitated toward formats that will allow those people to channel their energy in productive ways. Whether they regarded outspoken citizens with approval or skepticism, they felt they needed those people in the process rather than outside it.

Second, public officials in particular have felt safer following citizen recommendations if a large number of voters were involved in formulating them. Acting on the ideas of a smaller group of citizens may seem dangerous to public officials, especially if those people have changed their opinions as a result of the deliberations and are therefore no longer representative of their peers.

Finally, for local leaders who wanted to tap into the problem-solving power of citizens, large numbers held the potential for greater capacity. In order to make sufficient progress on issues like racism, crime or failing schools, a critical mass of people had to be involved in volunteering, advocacy and new initiatives.

The field is only now beginning to sort out the pros, cons and situational fit of different methods. Representative-sample and critical-mass approaches present different strengths and weaknesses and the greatest potential for democratic governance may be in using them together as part of a more comprehensive strategy.

Bringing Diverse Voices to the Table

In order to attract hundreds or even thousands of citizens, organizers realized they had to frame their issue broadly, in plain terms and language that would welcome a range of views to the table. If they focused too narrowly and technically on specific policy questions, only a handful of opinionated, well-educated residents would participate. It also had to be clear to participants that this was not simply an advocacy effort masquerading as engagement; people had to believe that all kinds of opinions would be respected and that the facilitators would not try to push the groups toward any particular conclusion.

Local leaders also learned that no single group or organization would be able to recruit the large numbers of diverse participants that would make the project powerful. Outreach through the media or by public officials would help but people would be much more likely to participate if they were approached by someone they already knew. The only way to accomplish this kind of large-scale, one-on-one recruitment was to reach out to all kinds of community organizations (businesses, churches, neighborhood associations, clubs, and so on) and ask the leaders of those groups to recruit their own members.

Citizens needed to know that their discussion would be one of many, one important element of a community capable of solving its problems.

Together with the small-group discussion techniques, these recruitment tactics became key ingredients of democratic governance. Organizations with missions that focused explicitly on race, such as the National Conference for Community and Justice and the YWCA of the USA, began to popularize and promote these strategies. As some of the same lessons were learned by organizers working on school issues, groups like the National School Public Relations Association, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, and National School Boards Association began to tout them as well.[21] Local officials and city staffers became active in this work with encouragement and training from the National League of Cities and the International City/County Managers' Association. NeighborWorks America offered democratic governance courses to planners, housing builders and employees of Community Development Corporations. The National Crime Prevention Council and National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives taught these techniques to their constituencies.[22]

This new work demonstrated a tested truth: If you want to mobilize citizens, you have to make them feel that they are part of something larger than themselves. Asking people to join a fascinating discussion usually isn't enough to tempt them. In order for them to consider spending some of their free time this way organizers had to show citizens that high-profile leaders had 'bought in' to the idea and that taking part would give them a real opportunity to effect change. Citizens needed to know that their discussion would be one of many, one important element of a community capable of solving its problems.

More Talk, More Action: Policy with a Small 'p'

Just as they learned how to recruit large numbers of people and involve them in productive meetings, local leaders also learned how to help those citizens achieve tangible changes in their communities. But the fact that none of these potential changes can be determined beforehand – that the outcomes will emerge from the discussions – has made democratic governance a difficult concept to explain. Citizens aren't used to having this kind of opportunity. They are usually asked to sign a petition, send a check or devote some volunteer labor to a cause that has already been chosen. They are also used to situations where their input is solicited but nothing seems to happen as a result. To clarify what these opportunities for democratic participation were all about, leaders learned to highlight the broad coalition of groups supporting the effort, implying that different viewpoints would be welcomed in the meetings and that the organizations involved in organizing the effort would help support the action ideas that emerged. They also pointed to the tangible outcomes of civic experiments in other communities and talked about how the process would help influence policy and launch action efforts.

The leaders of these efforts also wanted to be clear that participants would be expected to lend some of their own time and energy to action efforts – that the project would do more than just generate recommendations for others to implement. The nature of the action, to a significant degree, was up to the individual: volunteering to help organizations already working on the issue, continuing the small-group meetings to implement an idea the group had developed, working within community organizations, or taking a more active role in the policymaking process. This message also allowed leaders to talk more hopefully about the community's assets rather than focusing on problems and deficits.[23]

The Challenges of Moving from Dialogue to Action

Attempts to move from discussion to action in these projects have been fraught with failure yet have also produced some startling success stories. Communities have used various kinds of forums to focus on the action ideas generated by citizens and some have launched task forces or committees

to help implement them. One particularly successful task force emerged from a civic experiment involving more than 600 people on issues of race in Fort Myers, Florida. In the small-group dialogues participants talked about the fact that one low-income neighborhood had no grocery store, forcing residents to shop for food at convenience stores. A task force set up at the action forum began working with the city, the county, a local supermarket chain and a minority business development organization to explore the possibility of a new grocery store. The task force members, several of whom had business expertise, conducted a market survey and drafted a financing plan for the development. They found that the city and the minority business development group were arguing about how to spend their Community Development Block Grant funds. The task force helped to settle the dispute and promote the shopping center idea as a way to provide job opportunities and basic services for low-income citizens. Two years later, the Dunbar Shopping Center was built.[24]

As democratic governance initiatives proliferated, local leaders realized that the shift from dialogue to action could be aided by involving rank-and-file public employees in the events. When teachers, police officers, social workers or city planners were in the room, the solution ideas developed by the group were usually more informed and more influential. Action efforts were more likely to succeed because they were backed by stronger citizen-government relationships. Neighborhood councils have been particularly effective in this regard, because they provide regular occasions for residents and practitioners to interact.

In Buffalo, New York, one example of this kind of partnership emerged in a project on police-community relations in 2001. In one neighborhood with several halfway houses for the mentally ill, police officers and small-business owners had complained about ongoing disturbances. In the small-group meetings, people discussed how business owners often called the police about incidents involving halfway house residents. They also pointed out that officers are not trained to handle such situations. A state legislator, the director of mental health services for the county and several peer leaders who had successfully battled mental illness attended the meetings. The participants came up with the idea of a trained emergency response team, comprised of business owners, former halfway house residents and county mental health professionals, that would be on call for every neighborhood in the city.

For each success story there have been many task forces and committees that foundered once the enthusiasm of the forum subsided and the group members began to feel isolated and powerless again. But the successful examples illustrated the problem-solving power of "ordinary" citizens and presaged the outpouring of volunteer effort and ingenuity in the 2008 presidential election. Perhaps even more importantly, they demonstrated that this energy can be harnessed in the day-to-day work of governing. In a time of dwindling public budgets and decreased government capacity, they suggest a new understanding of policy – policy with a small "p" – meaning not just laws, ordinances and other governmental actions but all the things that we can do to solve public problems.

Policy with a Big "P"

Through the development of this democratic governance work a new bargain between citizens and government began to emerge. On one side of the exchange, citizens would contribute more of their time and energy to local and neighborhood problem solving. On the other side, local government would give them a stronger say in public decisions – the "big P" kind of policymaking. By engaging citizens, local officials – and, increasingly, their counterparts in state and federal agencies – have been able to break legislative deadlocks and develop smarter, more broadly supported policies.

Four types of policy questions have been addressed frequently in these democratic governance initiatives:

- **Decisions about the reform and funding of school systems.** School administrators, local education funds, parent activists and community organizers have engaged citizens in assessing the state of their school systems, dealing with questions about school finance

and redistricting and finding ways to boost parent involvement. The Community Conversations project of the school district of San José, California, which has focused on standards, expectations and achievement gaps, is one of the most visible and established examples of this kind of work. With the assistance of the national nonprofit Public Agenda, the San Jose project has involved more than 6,000 people.[25]

- **Specific land use decisions.** Zoning/land use boards and other kinds of local officials have used these kinds of processes to decide how particular plots of land should be used or whether and where to site new subdivisions, condominiums, affordable housing units, highways, drug treatment centers, shopping malls and landfills. Officials see this kind of work as a way to deal productively with "Not In My Back Yard" (commonly referred to as "NIMBY") arguments by residents.

- **Local government budgets.** Local governments facing financial crises have engaged citizens in determining budget priorities, considering trade-offs and weighing budget-balancing measures such as service cuts and tax increases. Perhaps the most influential early example in the United States was the project that took place in Eugene, Oregon; this kind of "participatory budgeting" has also proliferated rapidly in other parts of the world.[26]

- **Multiple-issue "visions" and strategic plans.** These efforts engage citizens in determining the main opportunities or challenges facing the community, setting benchmarks and formulating cross-sector action plans. The early icon of visioning was the city of Chattanooga, Tennessee, which involved 1,700 people in discussions and goal-setting sessions dealing with the economic future of the city. It is now estimated that Chattanooga Vision 2000, which began in 1984, produced 223 separate development projects, created 1,381 new full-time jobs and led to investments of $800 million in the community.[27] Many other cities followed Chattanooga's example but many of them stumbled because they failed to keep citizens and community organizations involved in implementing the visions. If a vision did not include measurable benchmarks and specific commitments by people and organizations it stood little chance of becoming reality.[28] Some of the most successful recent examples of the visioning approach can be found in Lee's Summit, Missouri; Decatur, Georgia, and Owensboro, Kentucky.[29]

Beyond these four types, there are many other kinds of policy questions or outcomes that have been addressed through democratic governance efforts. The examples include: new hiring policies for the police and fire departments in Springfield, Illinois; revisions of the comprehensive land use plans in Rochester, New York, and Moscow, Idaho; school redistricting decisions in Decatur, Georgia, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and regional economic development initiatives in Greater Kalamazoo, Michigan, and in Northeast Ohio.[30]

New technologies have been used innovatively in many of these projects. While face-to-face meetings are still the most common type of interactions, the use of the Internet as a recruitment tool and venue for discussion and post-forum action and collaboration has increased dramatically. National nonprofit organizations such as e-democracy.org, Ascentum, and Information Renaissance have worked with communities and agencies to develop various applications of online technology. Keypad polling has allowed forum organizers to get simultaneous responses from large numbers of participants. The participatory budgeting projects in Eugene and Sacramento, California, used a detailed online budget worksheet to allow residents to weigh trade-offs and submit their own preferred package of service cuts or revenue-raising measures. Some cities began using online dialogues and bulletin boards to supplement or even replace the face-to-face meetings. The city of Winona, Minnesota, used an online forum to develop options for school reform that citizens then discussed in a series of face-to-face sessions. Rochester, New York, developed a system called the NeighborLink Network that allowed residents to track the implementation of goals set during the city's participatory neighborhood planning processes. Most recently, America-Speaks has used video conferencing with keypad polling to connect deliberative events being held in different cities as

part of the same project. In California, this approach allowed thousands of citizens at eight locations to be part of a single event on the health care reform options being debated by the state Legislature.[31]

The *Realpolitik* of Deliberative Democracy

To affect policy decisions, most of these projects require two different kinds of political capital. First, they need the credibility that comes with laying out all the main policy options that people might want to discuss in a nonpartisan fashion. Leaders who try to insert their own biases and policy preferences into the discussion materials, or into the way meetings are facilitated, risk a backlash from the media and the public. In some cases, the gap between public officials and citizens can make this a particularly difficult challenge to negotiate: In the California Speaks health care initiative, state legislators didn't want citizens to discuss a single-payer proposal because they weren't prepared to enact one but, when the meetings began, many citizens voiced their dismay that a single-payer option had not been put on the table.

Second, these efforts require a sufficiently large and diverse "critical mass" of participants to compel a serious response from policymakers. If enough voters are involved, public officials will either support the main recommendations of the crowd or at least explain carefully and diligently why the ideas may not be realistic. Surprisingly, this strength in numbers may be an even more important variable than whether or not public officials initiated or even supported the effort in the first place. Many projects that didn't have strong government support from the beginning were still able to affect the policymaking process because they achieved a large and diverse turnout. And some projects that had enthusiastic government buy-in from the beginning produced recommendations that public officials couldn't implement, mainly because the small turnout was dwarfed by the political capital brought to bear by lobbyists and policy advocates. Deliberative democracy is sometimes presented as a sort of utopian ideal. In practice, it succeeds only when it allows citizens and officials to deal with political realities.

Trying to "Scale Up" Democratic Governance

So far, attempts to include citizen voices in policymaking are far more common at the neighborhood, local and county level than at the state and federal level. One of the challenges facing the Obama administration is how to extrapolate from these local experiences.[32] The federal agencies with the most experience in democratic governance tend to be the ones that make local decisions. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency has a substantial track record in engaging citizens in issues like toxic waste clean-ups, forest management and watershed restoration – and their interactions with citizens usually focus on local policies rather than national ones.[33] However, democratic governance initiatives dealing with state and federal decisions are on the rise, partly because officials at those levels of government are starting to feel the same kinds of pressures as their local counterparts.

Though these truly large-scale projects are still rare, there are four lessons that can be learned from their successes and failures thus far:

1. It is possible to mobilize large numbers of citizens across great geographic expanses in ways that affect policy decisions. "Oregon Health Decisions," which emerged in the mid-1980s, was one of the first of these projects. Initiated by a partnership of officials and health activists, the program involved more than 7,000 people in deliberative community meetings and statewide forums.[34] In the first few years, the discussions focused on access to health care, cost control, allocation of health resources and enabling patients to make end-of-life decisions. Partly in response to this input, the Legislature enacted the Oregon Health Plan in 1989, expanding health care coverage, mandating that employers contribute to health care benefits and changing the way that health services were prioritized. The project has also helped to develop living will legislation, health care practice guidelines and a "scorecard" to help Medicaid clients select among plans. Oregon Health Decisions has since been imitated in a number of other states, including Georgia and California.[35]

Another path-breaking initiative occurred in Oklahoma where state legislators, policy analysts and members of the League of Women Voters were trying to resolve one of the worst legislative deadlocks in the state's history, over the issue of corrections reform. In 1996, "Balancing Justice in Oklahoma" involved nearly 1,000 people in 13 communities. After the meetings had concluded, the Legislature enacted a landmark corrections reform bill that upheld the main recommendations made by the participants.[36] The project also led to local outcomes such as the creation of local drug courts and youth courts.

Another project, spearheaded by the Arkansas School Boards Association, has mobilized nearly 10,000 Arkansans in democratic small-group meetings on education issues since 1998. A number of Arkansas communities, including tiny towns like Alread (population 400), have involved residents in improving the quality of local education.[37] In 2002, the association also held "Speak Up, Arkansas! on Education," in which 6,000 Arkansans met simultaneously across the state to decide what priorities they thought the state's education system should strive to achieve. Many state legislators took part in these discussions. The top three concerns that came out of the Speak Up sessions were teacher salaries, parental involvement and early childhood care and education. Since then, the Legislature has raised teacher salaries from a minimum of $21,800 to $27,500, enacted a new law requiring schools and school districts to develop and implement parent involvement plans, and passed a bill allocating $60 million to early care and education programs.[38]

2. The second lesson to be learned is that online technology can help to overcome the challenges inherent in creating a truly national discussion. The EPA used the Internet extensively as part of a nationwide effort to revise its public participation policy. After years of learning how to interact more productively with citizens, and embracing democratic principles in this work, EPA officials like Patricia Bonner figured that they couldn't formulate an agency-wide participation policy in an autocratic manner. Instead of trying to bring people together face to face, they organized a set of online discussions in July 2001 entitled "The National Dialogue on Public Involvement in EPA Decisions." The project was funded by the Hewlett Foundation and coordinated by a civic group called Information Renaissance. People took part by posting messages to a Web site either in response to questions posed by the agency or as a reply to another citizen's comment. A total of 1,166 people registered to take part, though only 320 of them actually posted comments.

   There are clearly some limitations to a project that utilizes online meetings exclusively; most of the participants seemed to be already quite knowledgeable and involved in environmental decision making. One evaluator wondered whether "moving participation online may have distanced EPA even more from those who have historically had little interaction with the agency." However, evaluations showed that participants were satisfied with the process and felt they had had some impact on agency decision making. The EPA reached a much larger and more geographically diverse group than could ever have participated in person. The precedent has helped other officials contemplating large-scale projects to see how they might use online opportunities to support and connect face-to-face meetings.[39]

3. As with local forums, the diversity of the turnout in statewide or national initiatives is a critical factor in how a project is perceived. The League of Women Voters of New York State organized "Balancing Justice in New York" in imitation of the earlier Oklahoma project. The New York League ended up with 2,700 participants in 71 communities all over the state. The project helped to develop a number of local initiatives, including new drug courts and youth courts, new programs for mentally ill inmates in Rochester and Albany, more educational opportunities for inmates and the creation of the Department of Community Justice Services in Tompkins County. However, it didn't seem to have an impact on the state Legislature. One

reason may be that the network of left-leaning activists on criminal justice issues is much stronger in New York than in Oklahoma and that set of people flocked to the project so quickly that citizens with more conservative views felt less inclined to participate. Unlike the earlier Balancing Justice, many of the small groups seemed homogeneous and fewer legislators took part. The New York Times and other newspapers in the state paid almost no attention to the project. It is clear that critical mass by itself is not always enough to affect policy. The New York experience suggests that the diversity of the turnout – and the way that diversity is presented in the media – is just as important as the total number of participants.

4. Finally, two statewide examples demonstrate one of the key limitations of these projects: since they are temporary, their impact on policymaking may be temporary as well. It has been 20 years since Oregon Health Decisions mobilized thousands of citizens in health care discussions and, since that time, key elements of the Oregon Health Plan have been dismantled. Among them was the employer mandate to contribute to health care benefits, which was repealed in 1997.[40] Oklahoma legislators scaled back on corrections reform in 1999, removing some offenses from the truth-in-sentencing requirements and turning the community corrections initiative into a 10-county pilot project. It may be that citizens would have approved these changes had they been intensively involved in the decisions but that is impossible to tell. Both projects seem to have had a lasting impact on their states – for example, Oklahoma is now one of the national leaders in community corrections – but it is also clear that the invitation they offered citizens was a temporary opportunity rather than an ongoing role in policymaking. "My main regret is that we lost track of the process," said a judge who was involved in the project. "We didn't realize that the way we got people involved was as important as what they said in those discussions. We should've recognized the true value of Balancing Justice – that citizens and government were working together – and found ways of making that a regular, permanent part of the way we made decisions and solved problems."[41]

Glimpses of the Future of Politics

As civic experimentation continues at the local and state levels, we find ourselves at a critical crossroads nationally. The 2008 election has given us an interesting opportunity, for three reasons: it made the electoral power of the new citizenship so apparent; it reinforced the idea that online and face-to-face methods and tools should be used in concert; and it placed in the presidency a public official with a deep understanding of the political, moral and democratic power of organizing.

But the election could distort and impede the development of democracy by giving people the perception that active civic engagement is a purely partisan strategy or an approach that belongs to the left rather than to the right. This would be an ironic twist since the local work has been pioneered by a wide variety of people and has almost always been described and viewed in strictly nonpartisan terms.

Some of the issues tackled by democratic governance efforts – like race or urban sprawl – are nearer to liberal hearts than conservative ones. However, the outcomes of these projects can't be easily categorized as serving right-wing or left-wing interests, Sometimes they pave the way for tax increases or victorious school bond issues; in other cases they have resulted in nonprofit groups or business associations taking over functions that had previously been filled by government. If the experiences of these communities are any guide, active citizens cannot be stereotyped as supporters of big government nor as advocates of independent volunteerism. They seem to pick whatever philosophy suits their circumstances and their practical read of the political situation.[42]

Among the local elected officials who have been advocates of democratic governance there are Democrats and Republicans in almost equal numbers. Pundits and commentators across the political spectrum have all tried to stake out the civic turf, establishing their own claims to the principles of citizenship and democracy. Presidential candidates from both parties have used populist language about increasing the role of citizens in decision making. In 2008, this was primarily the domain of Barack Obama and John Edwards; John McCain's 2000 campaign used civic language much more aggressively than his 2008 effort.

The latest developments in the citizen-government relationship challenge the credos of both liberal and conservatives.

The latest developments in the citizen-government relationship challenge the credos of both liberals and conservatives. This is particularly true of public officials, policy wonks and other political insiders. Many of the Democrats in those positions still seem to believe that the public sector could eradicate injustice, provide all necessary services and solve all our problems if we only gave it enough funding to do the job. This blind faith in government even comes across in conversations about citizenship; many liberals seem to assume either that public officials are already as "responsive" as they need to be or that avenues for dissent are already adequate and open to those with the commitment to use them. Many conservative insiders, on the other hand, cling to the belief that democracy is nothing more than a tool for the defense of liberty. They seem to advocate not only limited government but limited governance. Both parties will need to rethink their core assumptions in order to understand the changes now emerging at the local level.

The Will of the People

The early days of any administration are rife with grand plans and ideal visions. And even in normal times, the people who think and write about democracy are prone to this kind of daydreaming, continually developing visions of utopian political systems – how citizens ought to participate, how governments ought to respond. The danger of being so focused on how democracy *ought* to be is that we fail to notice what it actually is and how it is changing. Furthermore, we cannot assume that these changes are unambiguously positive; when done well, this democratic governance work solves old problems but it also presents new ones.

Dealing with these complexities is easier said than done. One of the most experienced leaders in this work is William Johnson, the former mayor of Rochester, New York, who initiated the city's path-breaking Neighbors Building Neighborhoods initiative in the early 1990s. "Other mayors would say to me, 'Have you lost your mind?'" Johnson recalls. "Because to them, the powers of government were very clear, finite and not to be shared. To them, the will of the people was an abstract theory." But thanks to changing citizen attitudes and capacities, added to the hard realities of dwindling public budgets and persistent public problems, this abstract theory is becoming much more tangible.

As a result, we seem to be on the cusp of a truly dramatic shift in the structure of government, perhaps as significant as any in the last hundred years. It is a prospect that is both thrilling and terrifying. It is likely to be a painful transition as citizens and public servants negotiate new rules for their relationship. But it also represents the opportunity of a lifetime, as we shape and are shaped by these changes, to establish forms of governance that are efficient and egalitarian, deliberative and decisive. The "will of the people" is becoming a daily force in local and national politics; the question is how we design institutions that can accommodate it.

[1] This essay is adapted from the author's book, *The Next Form of Democracy: How Expert Rule is Giving Way to Shared Governance – And How Politics Will Never be the Same* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2006). The author worked as an employee of Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center) from 1994-2001, providing free technical assistance on local citizen involvement projects and, since then, as a consultant to SCRC, the National League of Cities, the League of Women Voters, the Centers for Disease Control, and other groups.

[2] See Ruth Ann Bramson, *The Deliberative Public Manager: Engaging Citizens in Productive Public Conversations* (unpublished manuscript); also Lauri Boxer-Macomber, "Too Much Sun?: Emerging Challenges Presented by California and Federal Open Meeting Legislation to Public Policy Consensus-Building Processes," Report to the Center for Collaborative Policy, September 2003.

[3] Cheryl King, Kathryn M. Feltey, and Bridget O'Neill Susel, "The Question of Participation: Toward Authentic Public Participation in Public Administration," *Public Administration Review* 58, 1998.

[4] Steve Burkholder, "Is Representative Democracy Obsolete?," *Listening to Lakewood,* December 2004. A similar quote emerged recently from a project in Ventura, California. After participating in the "Ventura Economic Summit," which was organized to help the community sort through budgeting and planning priorities, resident Marie Lakin wrote in an op-ed for the local newspaper that "I think we've hit on a new form of representative government here in Ventura and I'm kind of amazed about it." Lakin, "Power to the People," *Ventura County Star,* May 2, 2009.

[5] For example, see "Trust in Government Remains Low," Gallup Poll, September 18, 2008 (http://www.gallup.com/poll/110458/Trust-Government-Remains-Low.aspx).

[6] Daniel Yankelovich, "How to Achieve Sounder Public Judgment" in Daniel Yankelovich and Will Friedman, *Dialogue, Deliberation and Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World* (forthcoming from Vanderbilt University Press).

[7] The Civic Health Index is an annual publication of the National Conference on Citizenship (NCOC), and is designed and analyzed by Tufts University's Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). See www.ncoc.net and www.civicyouth.org.

[8] Harry Boyte has described the civic elements of the Obama campaign in several of his writings including "The Work Before Us is Our Work, Not Just His," *Minneapolis Star Tribune,* May 3, 2009.

[9] This was the definition adopted by the Democratic Governance Panel of the National League of Cities in 2004.

[10] For more on the earlier examples, see Jeffrey Berry, Kent Portney, and Ken Thomson, T*he Rebirth of Urban Democracy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1993), pp. 47-53. On the more recent examples, see Terry L. Cooper and Pradeep Chandra Kathi, "Neighborhood Councils and City Agencies: A Model of Collaborative Coproduction," *National Civic Review* 93, 2004, pp. 43-53; and Ken Thomson, *Neighborhood to Nation* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001).

[11] See Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland, *Civic Innovation in America: Community Empowerment, Public Policy,* and the *Movement for Civic Renewal* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); John Gastil and Todd Kelshaw, *Public Meetings: A Sampler of Deliberative Forums That Bring Officeholders and Citizens Together* (unpublished manuscript, Kettering Foundation); Gwen Wright, Lena Delchad, and Matt Leighninger, *The Rise of Democratic Governance* (Washington, DC: National League of Cities, 2004); Martha L. McCoy and Patrick L. Scully, "Deliberative Dialogue to Expand Civic Engagement: What Kind of Talk Does Democracy Need?" *National Civic Review,* Summer 2002; "Speak Up! Engaging Policymakers with Educators and Communities in Deliberative Dialogue," *Insights on Education Policy, Practice, and Research,* October 1999; Edward C. Weeks, "The Practice of Deliberative Democracy: Results from Four Large-Scale Trials," *Public Administration Review* 60, pp. 360-372; Katherine Cramer Walsh, *Talking about Politics: Informal Groups and Social Identity in American Life.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Walsh, *Listening to Difference: Race, Community, and the Place of Dialogue in Civic Life* (unpublished manuscript); Simone Chambers, "Deliberative Democratic Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 6, 2003, p. 316.

[13] Harry Boyte, "Beyond the Knowledge Wars: Lessons from the Obama Campaign," Report for the Kettering Foundation, forthcoming.

[14] See Harlon L. Dalton, *Racial Healing* (New York: Doubleday, 1995); Maggie Potapchuk, Steps Toward an Inclusive Community (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political & Economic Studies, 2001).

[15] See Walsh; Ilana Shapiro, "Training for Racial Equity and Inclusion: A Guide to Selected Programs." (Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute, 2002); " President's Initiative on Race, Pathways to One America in the 21st Century: Promising Practices for Racial Reconciliation." Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1999); Paul DuBois and Jonathan Hutson, *Bridging the Racial Divide: A Report on Interracial Dialogue in America* (Brattleboro, VT: Center for Living Democracy, 1997); Patricia Reichler and Polly B. Dredge, *Governing Diverse Communities: A Focus on Race and Ethnic Relations* (Washington DC: National League of Cities, 1997).

[16] See Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2000); Nicola Thompson and Derek R. Bell, "The Deliberative Fix: The Role of Staged Deliberation in a Deliberative Democracy," Paper presented at the Political Studies Association conference, 2004.

[17] See John Gastil and William Keith, "A Nation That (Sometimes) Likes to Talk: A Brief History of Public Deliberation in the United States," in The Deliberative Democracy Handbook, eds. John Gastil and Peter Levine (Jossey-Bass, 2005); Kristina Smock, "Building Effective Partnerships: The Process of Structure and Collaboration," *Shelterforce Online,* May/June 1999; John Gastil, Democracy in *Small Groups: Participation, Decision Making, and Communication* (New Society, 1993); Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[18] See Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002); Sara Evans, *Born For Liberty* (New York: The Free Press, 1997); Hannah Fenichel Pitkin and Sara M. Shumer, "On Participation," *Journal of Democracy* 2, 1982, pp. 43-54.

[19] See Chambers, p. 320; Archon Fung, "Deliberation Before the Revolution," *Political Theory* 33:2, June 2005, p. 414; Cass Sunstein, "The Law of Group Polarization," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10, pp. 175-195.

[20] One of the early examples of this type of project began in Texas in 1996, when Fishkin's team at the Center for Deliberative Democracy produced a series of Deliberative Polls® (DPs) on energy issues. All eight of the regulated electric utilities in the state sponsored DPs with the cooperation of the Texas Public Utility Commission. Stakeholder Advisory Groups representing consumer groups, environmental groups, advocates of low income customers, and the large customers approved the briefing materials, the questionnaires and the agendas for the weekend DPs. All eight of the DPs were broadcast on local television. Averaging over eight DPs, the percentage willing to pay more on its monthly utility bill to support renewable energy went from 52 to 84 percent. These results were incorporated into "Integrated Resource Plans" that led to increasingly large investments in wind power and helped establish the Renewable Energy Portfolio later approved by the Legislature. Before the DPs, Texas had the lowest usage of wind power on a percentage basis of any state in the U.S. The DP results led directly to Texas becoming the leading state in the U.S. in wind power, surpassing California in 2007.

[21] Public Agenda developed a specialty in public engagement in education, developing discussion materials on a dozen education topics and working on scores of community-level, statewide and national initiatives.

[22] For some examples, see Michael Resnick, *Communities Count: A School Board Guide to Public Engagement* (Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association, 2000); Jeffrey Kimpton and Marcia Sharp, *Reasons for Hope, Voices for Change* (Providence, R.I.: Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 1998; Carolyn Lukensmeyer, Joe Goldman, and Steve Brigham, "A Town Meeting for the 21st Century," in Deliberative Democracy Handbook, edited by John Gastil and Peter Levine (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005); Matt Leighninger, *Building Communities: The ABCs of Public Dialogue* (Washington, DC: League of Women Voters, 2004); Wright, et al, *The Rise of Democratic Governance*; and Sandy Heierbacher, Tonya Gonzalez, Bruce Feustel, and David E. Booher, "Deliberative Democracy Networks: A Resource Guide," *National Civic Review* 93, 2004, pp. 64-67.

[23] This work was inspired by, and helped to embody, the theory of asset-based community development popularized by John McKnight and John Kretzmann in the mid-1990s. Kretzmann and McKnight argued that past neighborhood revitalization efforts had failed because they emphasized needs and deficits – crime, poverty, inadequate housing – rather than assets such as historic buildings, cultural heritage, and the skills and talents of residents. See Kretzmann and McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out* (Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1993).

[24] Kristin Houlé and Rona Roberts, *Toward Competent Communities* (Lexington, KY: Roberts & Kay, Inc., 2000).

[25] "Sustaining Public Engagement: The Case of San Jose Unified School District" (Prepared for the Kettering Foundation by Public Agenda, 2006).

[26] Weeks, *ibid.*

[27] John Parr, "Chattanooga: The Sustainable City," Bruce Adams and John Parr, eds., *Boundary Crossers: Case Studies of How Ten of America's Metropolitan Regions Work* (College Park, MD: Academy of Leadership, 1998).

[28] See Paul Epstein, Paul Coates, and Lyle Wray, with David Swain, *Results That Matter* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

[29] See Matt Leighninger, "Funding and Fostering Local Democracy," *Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement,* 2009.

[30] For more on each of these examples, see Leighninger, *The Next Form of Democracy.*

[31] See Fung et al, "Public Impacts: Evaluating the Outcomes of the CaliforniaSpeaks Statewide Conversation on Health Care Reform," *CaliforniaSpeaks*, 2009.

[32] For a comprehensive discussion of this challenge, see Will Friedman, "Deliberative Democracy and the Problem of Scope," *Journal of Public Deliberation,* 2006.

[33] See Carmen Sirianni, *Investing in Democracy: Engaging Citizens in Collaborative Governance* (Brookings, 2009).

[34] The participation in the project seems to have been skewed toward health care workers, however. See Archon Fung, "Recipes for Public Spheres: Eight Institutional Design Choices and Their Consequences," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 11:3, September 2003, pp. 338-367.

[35] Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland, *Civic Innovation in America: Community Empowerment, Public Policy, and the Movement for Civic Renewal* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 152-162. Peter Wong, "State of Health Care Troubles Oregon's Ex-governor, *The Statesman Journal,* July 18th, 2004. Ellen Pinney, "Oregon Health Plan: Boon or Bust?," *Alternatives,* Winter 1997.

[36] Matt Leighninger, "Enlisting Citizens: Building Political Legitimacy," *National Civic Review,* Summer 2002.

[37] In Alread, roughly 100 people took part in a 1998 project – a percentage of the community which is unlikely to be matched. In the sessions, the school board was able to resolve an issue that had caused contention for years: whether to allow parents and other citizens to use the gym and other facilities after school hours. Participants also put on a school-community play, revised the student handbook, and raised the funds to build a computer at the school which students use during the day and is open to the public after school hours.

[38] Pers. comm. with Heather Gage-Detherow, Arkansas School Boards Association, May 7, 2005; also "Arkansans Speak Up! On Education," Report to the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Education, April 17, 2002.

[39] Thomas C. Beierle, "Democracy On-Line: An Evaluation of the National Dialogue on Public Involvement in EPA Decisions," *Resources for the Future (RFF) Report,* January 2002.

[40] Wong, ibid., and Pinney, ibid.

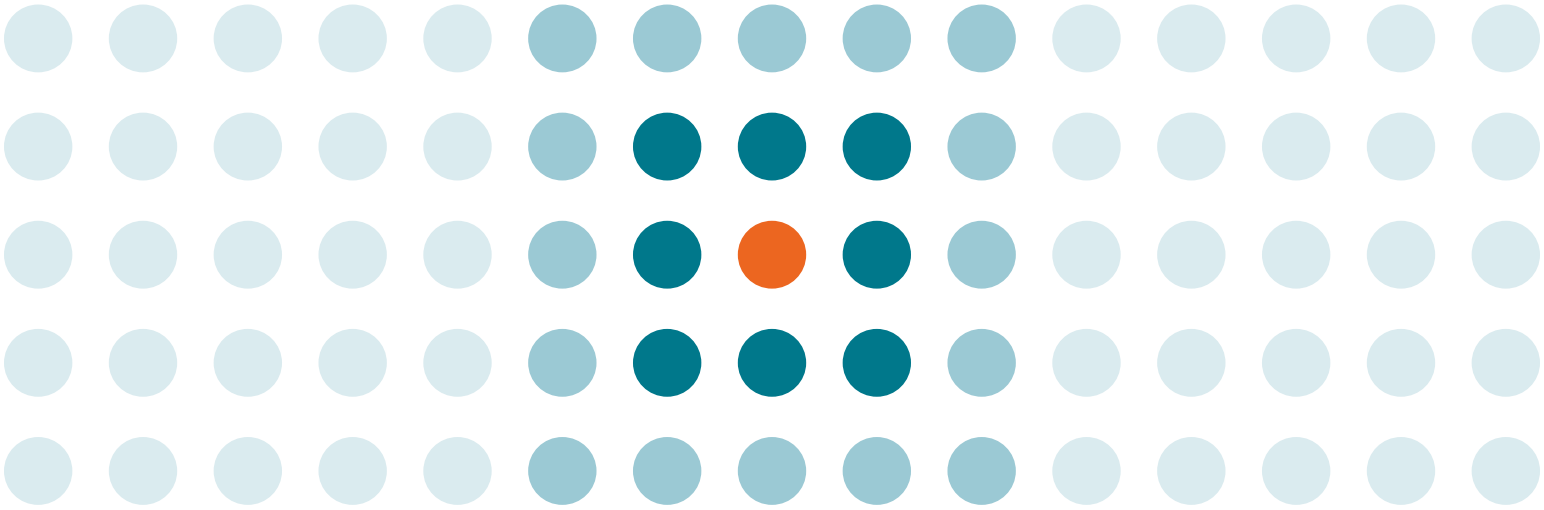
[41] Leighninger, "Enlisting Citizens," ibid.

[42] See Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland, *Civic Innovation in America: Community Empowerment, Public Policy, and the Movement for Civic Renewal* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), p. 261.

Publication's Author

Matt Leighninger
Executive Director, Deliberative Democracy Consortium

PUBLIC AGENDA



Public Agenda's Center for Advances in Public Engagement (CAPE) is at the forefront of efforts to research, develop and disseminate new insights and best practices that build public engagement's capacity.

Public Agenda is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public opinion research and civic engagement organization. Founded in 1975 by former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Daniel Yankelovich, the social scientist and author, Public Agenda is well respected for its influential public opinion polls, balanced citizen education materials and ground-breaking community-based engagement initiatives. Its mission is to close the gaps between leaders and the public.

Visit Public Agenda Online – www.publicagenda.org. Webby-nominated Public Agenda Online has been named one of Time Magazine Online's 50 Coolest Websites. It is a Library Journal Best Reference Source and is a USAToday, MSNBC and About.com recommended site. Public Agenda Online is the go-to source for unbiased facts, figures and analysis on issues ranging from education to terrorism to abortion to illegal drugs.

Public Agenda

6 East 39th Street
New York, NY 10016
t (212) 686.6610 f (212) 889.3461

1100 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 1090
Washington, DC 20005
t (202) 292.1020 f (202) 775.8835

www.publicagenda.org