

## **The Future of Civic Engagement in Local Governance: 2020**

### ***Envisioning a Post-Representative Democracy and Expanded Public Value in Third Party Governance***

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#### **Abstract**

The future of Civic Engagement in the United States should include a more integrated role for citizens or clients to play in the service delivery process. We envision a future in which more agencies or operations are ‘self-governing’, in which clients, citizens and government employees have the authority and responsibility to make decisions regarding services delivered in nursing homes, day care centers, youth agencies, and schools. Governing bodies of these agencies can be elected from among citizens and clients, making decisions that recognize the decentralized, site specific characteristics of governance in 2020 (Fung and Wright, 2001; Hansen, 2001). Client will typically co-produce services, assisting agency personnel in doing so. This mechanism, in addition to others, will help lead to greater citizen competence, trust, and efficacy. Important institutional, cultural, and legal barriers need to be overcome in order to achieve a more institutionalized and intensive public participation.

#### **Introduction**

Visioning a future of civic engagement in local governance in 11 years is an opportunity for creative thinking and innovation in the face of enduring economic and social challenges. At the same time, such an exercise is extremely limiting. Though instructed to not be concerned with feasibility, a short time frame restricts one’s thoughts to what is politically and culturally possible. In this proposed essay, we begin with the 11 year future restriction, but we suggest that this short-term vision is an intermediate step towards a re-visioning of democratic and administrative institutions and cultures that could take a generation or more to realize.

Contemporary public administrators are confronted with unique governance challenges, given increases in the use of non-governmental actors in the provision and production of citizen-serving services (Milward and Provan, 2000; Agranoff and McGuire, 2003). The third party governance model represents not a blurring of sectoral boundaries but rather an expansion of the “public.” A blurring of boundaries suggests the possibility of confusion and ambiguity concerning the proper values to which actors in third party governance should adhere (e.g. degrees of transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, profit, and citizen engagement). An expansion of the public suggests that values associated with “public” organizations should be transferred to organizations with other economic and non-economic motives that are not explicitly consistent with pursuit of the “common good.” These values include such aspirations as transparency, public participation, and political equality. Though there are numerous other values associated with “public” or governmental organizations (Rutgers, 2008), these are highlighted here as representing unique value objectives for governmental organizations.

Third party governance introduces significant questions concerning accountability. A principal-agent model of accountability suggests that contractors to government, as agents, are accountable to governmental managers in the bureaucracy. Bureaucratic officials are in turn accountable

to elected officials, and elected officials are accountable to voters (and interest groups of various kinds). Through the increase of distance between the ultimate principal (the voter) and the producer of service (the agent), the ability to ensure democratic accountability, or responsiveness to citizens, is perhaps nearly proportionally decreased. We might then suggest that principal-agent contracting is insufficient for increasingly decentralized authority. Accountability through hierarchical arrangements may be stretched beyond its limits.

Instead, our vision for the year 2020 and beyond for civic engagement in local governance is for an accountability based on renewed civic involvement and public mindedness by all individuals, regardless of their existence as government, non-governmental, or for-profit agency employees, or as citizen volunteers, activists, or otherwise. Central to this vision is the need for enactment of new strategies to ensure democratic institutions better represent the citizenry in policy making and implementation. It is these strategies that force us to differentiate what is more likely to occur by 2020 and what will require larger shifts in culture, politics, and institutions beyond this time period.

Ultimately the vision requires changes in values and behaviors of individuals and collectives. These changes necessitate altered institutions and rules that may at first blush appear odious. In contracting arrangements, we would seek contractors who are able and willing to engage intensively with citizens to better maintain and manage the service or infrastructure project. Shorter term strategies to achieve this end include the use of citizen oversight boards, citizen surveys and focus groups, and citizen complaint resolution systems (Lawther and Bryer, 2009). These innovations would increase the cost of a contract and may require contractors to newly respect non-“expert” knowledge in the carrying out of their charge.

We also would seek alterations in how “public” administrators perform their roles. As with contractors, administrators are professionalized and technically trained experts who would need to reconsider their relationships with non-expert citizens. They can act as doctors treating citizens as patients (Bryer, 2009), or they can act as partners, willing to engage the experiential knowledge of citizens to develop policy jointly (Bryer, 2009; Lawther, 2002). Establishing cultures in government agencies along these lines requires leadership (Cooper and Bryer, 2007), as well as institutional changes (North, 1990) that provide opportunities for new engagement with citizens. The culture would be one grounded in values of transparency and accessibility.

Citizens are the reason for and need to be the source of change. An educated and engaged citizenry must be required in order to proceed through massive institutional changes that provide citizens with a greater role in policy making and implementation. Advances in civics education can certainly help in this regard. Alternatively, more controversial ideas might also be considered. For instance, public administrators might be tasked with designing and implementing a massive public education process to ensure citizens are prepared to vote, speak at a public hearing, or engage in active deliberation. Such education, made widely available, can lead to a citizen obligation test, in which citizens must demonstrate their awareness of multiple sides of an issue or different positions (or values) of a candidate for office or parties behind a ballot issue. Failing the test would prohibit the individual from voting. If this action is not taken directly, a conversation about the action is part of the vision to encourage more educated and engaged citizens.

Elected officials occupy an elite role in contemporary society. Despite advances in technology that can facilitate lower cost deliberation, elected officials maintain their authority over final policy decisions. The representative capacity of elected officials is limited, resulting in these officials serving less as descriptive or substantive representatives (Bryer and Sahin, 2008) than as proxy decision makers (with authorization from a limited number of citizens, Macedo 2005). This is a problem not only for citizen representation, but it presents a question of legitimacy for the entire Constitutional order in the United States (Rohr, 1986). Our vision here suggests the need for consideration of a revision in our representative democracy system, as we know it today. As citizens become more educated and open to engage in deliberative process, elected officials no longer need to act as trustees, who stand up and speak for their fellow citizens. Instead they can adopt an explicit role of facilitator and convener (Carlson, 2006), and citizens can emerge as policymakers and decision makers.

What we offer here is a visioning of multiple actors within governance for the purposes of renewing citizenship, (re)establishing accountability, and facilitating the expansion of public values such as transparency, public participation, and political equality. It is necessary to incorporate multiple governance actors within a vision, as to do otherwise would be an incomplete statement of the contemporary and emerging human environment. Increasingly bound by inter-dependencies, the achievement of systemic change requires co-production and co-evolution. The essay is one that will suggest critical and in some cases controversial ideas for moving all elements of the public forward; it will address barriers to change; above all, it will raise important instrumental and philosophical questions about the future of our societies.

## **Need for Change**

There is a failure in dominant participatory structures for connecting citizens with their government and for providing adequate representation to the true interests of the citizenry. Wolin (2008) suggests institutions currently in use in the United States perpetuate a managed democracy. The concept and its implications is summarized as: “Managing democracy requires a process by which ‘extreme’ views are filtered and control rests with a favored guardian group, the ‘right people,’ who have been preselected by the conquerors and rewarded with being the first to gain a foothold in power. From that strategic vantage point, and under the watchful supervision of the conquerors, they are expected to produce the political structures of a democracy in which power is distanced from the people in whose name it is to be exercised” (Wolin, 2008, p. 142).

Wolin further emphasizes the dominant republic structure which defines the people as sovereign until such time as they elect others to “represent” them. The people then lose their sovereignty, as elites become rule makers.

Elections enact a kind of primal myth in which ‘the people’ designate who is to rule them, that is, who is authorized to wield governmental power. Authority or authorization means not only that some official is enabled to perform a particular action (e.g., has the means to enforce the law) but also that he or she is entitled to assume that citizens will accept the decisions and comply. Thus an election, at one and the same time, empowers a Few and causes the Many to submit, to consent to be obedient (Wolin, 2008, p. 148).

Crenson and Ginsburg (2002) echo these general sentiments, suggesting that citizens have been de-mobilized in a political and governmental process that has become increasingly professionalized. In this environment, citizens are sidelined in the most important matters of policymaking and quality of life. Elite and professional rule makers and policymakers work in place of citizens.

Cooper , Bryer, and Meek (2006) discuss various forms of public participation, as does Rosener (1977), Fung (2006), and Lukensmeyer and Torres (2006). Of the numerous forms and techniques of participation, those that are most common are also those that are least efficacious. For instance, Cooper et al. (2006) describe the information exchange approach, or the public hearing. Limitations of the hearing to generate desired outcomes, such as trust in government, better policies, and more responsive government are written about significantly. Arnstein (1969) describes the public hearing as such: “People are primarily perceived as abstractions, and participation is measured by how many come to meetings, take brochures home, or answer a questionnaire. What citizens achieve in all this activity is the evidence that they have gone through the required motions of involving ‘those people’” (216). The hearing has also been described as “... ineffective and conflictual, and it happens too late in the process.... Therefore, rather than cooperating to decide how best to address issues, citizens are reactive and judgmental, often sabotaging administrators’ best efforts” (King, Feltey, and Susel, 1998, p. 320).

Adams (2004) observes the ritualistic aspects of the public hearing: speakers have limited time to speak (typically three to five minutes); speakers are rarely given the opportunity to ask questions or to have questions asked of them; there is often limited discussion of citizen comment. Redman (1973) considers how hearings are often scripted with invited guests to testify, with little new information introduced in the course of such testimony. Last, observers have found that participants at public hearings are not representative of the larger population (Adams, 2004), and drawing more people to the hearings is difficult given the high costs of participation (Cooper, Bryer, and Meek, 2006).

Compounding this problem and consistent with Arnstein’s (1969) observations, Innes and Booher (2004, p. 419) summarize the problem with narrowly defined minimum legal requirements for public participation:

It is time to face facts we know, but prefer to ignore. Legally required methods of public participation in government decision making in the US—public hearings, review and comment procedures in particular—do not work. They do not achieve genuine participation in planning or other decisions; they do not satisfy members of the public that they are being heard; they seldom can be said to improve the decisions that agencies and public officials make; and they do not incorporate a broad spectrum of the public. Worse yet, these methods often antagonize the members of the public who do try to work with them. The methods often pit citizens against each other, as they feel compelled to speak of the issues in polarizing terms to get their points across. This pattern makes it even more difficult for decision makers to sort through what they hear, much less to make a choice using public input. Most often these methods discourage busy and thoughtful individuals from wasting their time going through what appear to be nothing more than rituals designed to satisfy legal requirements. They also increase the ambivalence of planners and other public officials about hearing from the public at all. Nonetheless, these methods have an almost sacred quality to them, and they stay in place despite all that everyone knows is wrong with them.

Beyond the public hearing, electoral forms of participation are often promoted. These include voting, running for office, and volunteering for campaigns. However, these forms of engagement have been declining in recent decades, with occasional blips during national elections that offer young voters in particular something different and new (Macedo et al, 2005).

Recent events have demonstrated the limitations of another often-used public engagement method: the town hall meeting. If not properly moderated, these meetings can break down into what appears and what might in fact be complete madness. Health care policy town hall meetings convened around the country recently are examples of poorly structured and managed meetings. Perhaps an exemplary anecdote is from a meeting convened by a member of the U.S. Senate, when, in the course of her remarks responded to screaming citizens with a question: “You don’t trust me?” A chorus from the audience responded: “No!” A member of the U.S. House of Representatives criticized one of his constituents, comparing an effort to speak with her with an effort to speak with a dining room table. “I am not interested in either one.” Bryer (unpublished) documents ethnic divisions that can turn a town hall meeting into a screaming session in local government matters. If not properly managed, town hall meetings do not facilitate the building of trust, efficacy, or competence among either citizens or government officials.

In order to enhance public engagement and promote trust, efficacy, and competence in our governance systems, we need to consider the development of new institutional mechanisms. We begin to address this need in the sections that follow.

### **Promoting an Educated Citizenry**

*“I know of no safe repository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.” –Thomas Jefferson, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson* (1903)*

Research has demonstrated that at least to some degree, government officials do not wish to engage with citizens whom they consider to be ignorant or lacking in knowledge. Harter (1997) considers the fear of commitment experts in government regulatory agencies have to ideas or decisions made by non-experts. Bryer (2008) finds that citizens, to the extent they show up to public meetings, are perceived by government officials as ill prepared to effectively influence government decision making. Bryer (2009) also finds that the bureaucratic culture of some agencies predisposes officials to acting as technical experts and treating citizens as doctors treat patients. They can describe their symptoms but cannot offer solutions or a prognosis. Agency officials instead listen to citizen problems, diagnose the problem presented, and design a solution they deem to be technically sound. Yang (2005) finds that government officials will not seek to engage with citizens if they do not trust them, and the dominance of the adversarial form of engagement in which citizens complain and protest leads not to trust but to cynical rejection of citizens and their involvement in governance decisions. Wolin (2008) suggests some government officials prefer low levels of participation, particularly from the portion of the public that is not educated. If they were to participate, their decisions might be driven more by emotion and manipulated by demagoguery. Wolin rejects this view and urges more citizen engagement, particularly at the local level.

We share the view with those whom Wolin labels republicans with respect to discouraging un-educated citizens from participating. The logic is consistent with that of requiring prospective vehicle drivers to take and pass a test before being granted a license. If prospective drivers are not trained and do not demonstrate their competence, they are potentially more likely to do harm to others while operating a vehicle. If citizens cast a ballot or speak at a community meeting or public hearing without taking the time to become educated on the full issues, might they be more likely to do harm, both to themselves and to others in their community? Their vote, aggregated with other un-educated citizens, might shift an election's outcome. Their voices, taken alone and when added to the chorus of other voices, can influence the views of others, irrespective of the legitimacy or credibility of the words they use. Un-educated citizens can be manipulated by such voices, to the detriment of communities, families, and individuals.

What we do not seek for the future of civic engagement in local governance is what Wolin labels a "managed democracy" in which citizens are willingly controlled and manipulated, content in their ignorance so long as no direct harm comes to them. However, we reject the notion that all citizens should participate openly if they do not demonstrate a willingness to learn and become informed in their participation. As the Jefferson quote above suggests, the remedy to an uneducated class of citizens is not to take their political sovereignty away but to educate them, so that they can use their franchise and their voice with great effect. This is not to suggest that all citizens will conform in their view once educated on governance process and issue complexity; legitimate differences in values and public philosophies separate citizens and should continue to do so. Education can ensure that blind adherence to ideology or attraction to the appearance of a candidate does not trump substantive reflection and dialogue in public decision making.

Citizens can be nurtured and facilitated to become more educated participants. To nurture citizens there is a need for intensifying citizen relationships with their governing and service delivery bodies, particularly at the local level. Engagement in local governance allows citizens to learn how the actions of agencies and design of institutions relates to their quality of life and everyday existence. At least two mechanisms can be explored in this realm: co-production and neighborhood councils. Citizens can be facilitated through an expanded role of two institutions: public administration and higher education. These institutions can each facilitate citizen preparedness for required testing licensing to exercise their powers of citizenship.

### ***Nurturing Citizens: Co-Production***

In the old public administration, citizen participation in agency service delivery fell into two categories: request for service, and assistance given to agency personnel. The first case resulted in agency calculation of workload and the extent to which the request fit into existing categories or classifications, for which already prescribed responses had been identified and implemented. The second case was especially relevant to agency efforts to implement new programs, such as placing garbage cans by the curb instead of leaving them by the back door, and by neighborhood watch programs to assist law enforcement. In this latter case, the degree of cooperation is a relevant measure of citizen response and assistance (Whitaker, 1980).

New Public Management or Managerialism highlights a distinction between citizen and client. Clients are those who choose to receive a service, and participate by expressing preferences to the extent

that they make that choice. Clients can choose to purchase tennis lessons at a county park. The number of lessons all clients engage in over a specified time period can be counted, recorded, and used to judge the acceptance of the service. Citizens play a different role: they engage in a public decision making process through their elected representatives and by attending public meetings that result in a decision to offer the service along with budgetary support. In doing so, citizens express a public value or will that the service should be offered. The roles of clients and citizens can overlap, as one individual can play each role either concurrently or at different times.

Because of the emphasis on performance measurement, in its most simplistic form counting the number of clients, adoption of the NPM approach by public agencies risks focusing only on clients to the exclusion of the citizen. Public value is not determined by the process leading to the decision to offer tennis lessons but by the number of clients who choose to receive a service. Often inadequate efforts are made to elicit citizen input, and the professional or even personal biases of agency personnel determine the choice of service provision. The issue of citizen satisfaction may be ignored (Kelly, 2005).

The Post managerial period focuses on a new paradigm labeled governance. Key features relevant to citizen participation include: decentralized negotiation and persuasion; a focus on community level outcomes as accountability measures; and policies that are decentralized and place sensitive (Frahm and Martin, 2009). The future of civic participation in public administration activities must 1) focus on the citizen, not the client; and 2) integrate the participation of the client in ways that go beyond simply choosing to receive a service (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000).

Citizen co-production (CCP) is one means of identifying civic participation. With CCP, it is recognized that the client also plays a role of citizen in that both private or personal values and public values are motivating factors.

CCP is any active behavior by anyone not employed by a government which:

- Is part of or assists agency production, or is independent of such production but prompted by agency efforts;
- Is at least partly voluntary;
- Either intentionally or unintentionally creates private and public value, either in form of outputs or outcomes (Alford 2009)

There are countless examples of CCP. Writing a zip code on a letter helps the post office expedite mail. Researching relevant data when filing tax returns not only results in faster processing of tax refunds but also helps the Internal Revenue Service become more efficient. When members of a local community assist the local planning department in determining the design of future housing developments, they are helping to legitimate the resulting decisions.

#### *What Motivates Clients to Co-Produce*

There are five reasons, values or rewards that motivate clients to co-produce. In each case, the client acts expecting a reward in exchange. There are often several motivations working in combination that produce client coproduction in a given situation. Government agencies should understand what motivations are important in each situation, and encourage them to the extent possible.

Sanctions: these are organizational actions that are punishments. They often are not effective and are costly to administer. Their application does not cause long term internalization of other values or reasons as they diminish trust and will cause clients to contribute minimally. The threat of sanctions, however faint, can enhance other motivating rewards.

Material rewards: these are benefits that the agency offers to clients that are private, tangible and often financial. These work best when the task co produced is simple. If the task or action is complex, the link between rewards and participation weakens. behavioral transformation for job seekers

Intrinsic rewards: these are actions or behaviors that enhance client self satisfaction. These are gained through the completion of tasks that increase further self confidence and the acquisition of additional skills and abilities.

Solidarity incentives: these enable clients to associate with and receive esteem from others. Job seekers who engage in training designed to increase interview skills are likely to benefit from others in the training class. Social interaction with other clients in the coproduction process also provides these incentives.

Normative appeals: these are communications from the government agency that support or help clients identify with principles such as improving the quality of life or reputation of a community. These appeals tend to provide the greatest amounts of public value.

### *How can Agencies Improve CCP*

In order to choose the best approach to improving CCP, agencies should understand that it is useful to separate client motivation from client ability to coproduce. These two aspects are closely linked, as increasing ability may provide intrinsic rewards, for example, and increase the likelihood of future coproduction. Training the long term unemployed to improve job interviewing skills, for example, may increase the viability of the job search process, thereby increasing complementary efforts by job counselors and the job seekers, leading to job attainment.

Assessing whether clients have the ability to coproduce requires agencies to first identify possible areas of coproduction. It is useful to first separate outcomes from process or production related roles involving inputs, process or outputs. If the outcome of a job creation process is the short term employment of as many as possible, then an appropriate coproduction role of clients is to focus on the job search process. If the outcome is longer term employment, e.g., more than six months, then the focus should be on job related skills training rather than on how to search for a job.

The choice of outcomes and clarification of goals may also assist the agency in offering normative appeals to increase client motivation. If the client approves of the agency goal, e.g., improving city parks, then increased CCP is likely.

### *Nurturing Citizens: Neighborhood Councils*

For local elected officials, the most salient issues of concern to community and neighborhood organizations are service delivery issues, such as trash pickup, street paving, tree trimming, and traffic mitigation (Yates, 1977). Rather than observing power over local service delivery and policymaking as residing with a centralized set of elite actors (Mills, 1956), Dahl (1961) first suggested that power is distributed in a pluralist form of democracy. Citizens identify with interest groups, such as neighborhood associations, and those associations represent neighborhood concerns to decision makers in an open forum in which ideas, pleas, and demands are exchanged and negotiated.

Overall, Thomas (1986) reported a resurgence of local government interest in neighborhood level citizen engagement as part of a “more vibrant brand of urban politics” (p. 155). Governments, such as in Cincinnati (Ohio), created new programmatic incentives for the creation of neighborhood associations or similar bodies to become part of the pluralist power-sharing arrangement in local governance. Along with such incentives came changed attitudes and values of local elected officials and the continued tendency of local elected officials to “succumb to pressure rather than risk open conflict” (Thomas, 1986, p. 157). Such trends in cities around the United States allowed neighborhood associations to gain power and take advantage of more permeable access walls to decision-making processes in local governments.

Berry, Portney, and Thomson’s (1993) landmark study of neighborhood councils in San Antonio (Texas), Birmingham (Alabama), Dayton (Ohio), Portland (Oregon), and St. Paul (Minnesota) further revealed the importance of neighborhood associations as part of a pluralist model of democracy and participation. A primary finding of their analysis was that city officials were responsive to the associational representatives of neighborhood residents due to the fact that residents trusted the associations to speak on their behalf. Specifically, 88.5 percent of residents in the five cities studied believed that no group besides the neighborhood association truly spoke for neighborhood interests. Without this trust, the pluralist model would be without substance, as there would be a potential disconnect between association demands and resident priorities. Officials in the five subject cities recognized the democratic and representative legitimacy of the neighborhood councils, thus were willing to be responsive to demands and requests. Given this recognized legitimacy, failure of administrators to be responsive to the associations “can be damaging to one’s career” (Berry, Portney, and Thomson, 1993, p. 288).

Other studies have identified factors that contribute to local public official—elected or career—responsiveness to neighborhood councils and associations. Oztas (2004) found in his study of City of Los Angeles neighborhood councils that the strength of relational ties and structure of relational networks within councils and between councils and city offices was related to the ability of councils to achieve their neighborhood service and policy objectives. Specifically, councils that maintained low density relational ties within their bodies but high density ties to city offices were most efficacious in pursuit of their goals. This finding is consistent with the observations of Thomas (1986) and Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993) that conflict with neighborhood councils is not deemed to be desirable. The greater the strength of relations between council members and city officials, the less likely officials may want to engage in conflict.

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The ability to forge strong relationships between council members and city officials may hinge, however, on the perceptions regarding the proper role of city officials in relation to neighborhood councils and council members. Thomas (1986), for instance, observed a culture change in Cincinnati among city officials, thus opening the door for greater citizen empowerment and influence in governmental affairs. Overall, research on neighborhood councils suggests that they have the potential to be institutions through which citizens can engage and interact in a highly influential manner. Through the process, citizens can become more competent in their dealings with their fellow citizens as well as with government officials.

### ***Facilitating Citizens: Public Administration and Institutions of Higher Education***

In introduction to this essay, it was suggested that citizens might be required to sit for a test, much as prospective drivers do, in order to protect themselves and those around them. Whether such a citizen competence test is implemented is not as significant as the need to develop mechanisms for ensuring citizens are fully informed and are, indeed, interested in being fully informed about candidates for office and issues affecting quality of life. To address this need, it is important to consider the expansion of the civic mission of institutions of higher education, as well as the educative potential of public administrators in their day-to-day activities.

Boyte and Kari (2000) identify the need to renew the democratic spirit in American universities. In calling for this renewal, they associate higher education with public work. Consistent with Salamon's (2005) notion of professional citizenship, Boyte and Kari suggest that universities should promote citizenship values amongst the faculty, staff, and students, while also promoting citizenship in the larger community. To be a professional citizen, from Solomon's perspective, is to apply one's professional craft in furtherance of some common good.

Specifically, we might look to universities to open their halls and faculty resources to communities surrounding campuses. In pursuing research, faculty might be expected to explicitly seek to better communities or community organizations while at the same time educating citizens on social and governing institutions. To prepare citizens to be effective co-producers or participants in town hall meetings, for example, universities can strategically consider how to extend themselves in pursuit of a publicly focused mission.

Practicing public administrators might be called on to do the same. In performing their technocratic functions, they can seek to translate their technical-speak into language understandable by lay citizens. Doing so can enhance citizen competence, develop more trusting relationships between citizens and government officials, and allow for mutual understanding across expert and experiential knowledge. As communication improves, citizens can become more competent.

Not all citizens will care to take advantage of educational opportunities through interactions with universities or public administrators. Some will remain burdened by intensive lack of trust and thus unwilling to give benefit of the doubt. The intensive lack of trust may be well founded, based on the factors identified in introducing the need for change above. However, by making citizen education a central and institutionalized part of the work of administrators and universities can begin breaking down these walls, leading ultimately to more intensive, deliberative forms of participation for citizens, administrators, and other societal members.

## **Post-Representation: A Long-Term Vision**

Deliberative democracy has been offered as a means to bridge the “gulf of suspicion separating citizens from their government” (Weeks, 2008, p. 296). To accomplish this hefty goal, Weeks suggests four components of public participation that are necessary: (1) participation needs to be broad, (2) the public needs to be informed, (3) the process needs to be deliberative, and (4) the results of the discourse need to be credible and acceptable by the general public, interest groups, policymakers, and the media.

Nabatchi (2008) suggests two reasons why deliberative democracy should be taken seriously by public administrators. If done well, deliberative democracy has the potential to replenish the citizenship and democratic deficits that exist in the United States. These deficits are defined by the failures of the loop model of democracy discussed previously. Primarily, citizens feel disconnected from their government, and citizen preferences are not reflected in policy action. Deliberation—large or small scale—can help address both of these issues.

The idea and practice of deliberation has been treated in various ways in the literature. They are summarized by Cooper, Bryer, and Meek (2006, p. 82):

Deliberative and consensus-based approaches . . . include efforts that seek joint action across sectors of society, classes of people, or types of individuals. They seek consensus in action through lengthy, sometimes tedious deliberation. The core components of these approaches to engagement are dialogue among different types of people, joint action, and shared responsibility for outcomes.

An example is the National Issues Forums sponsored by the Kettering Foundation (Mathews, 1999). These forums bring citizens together to inform decision-makers. A larger-scale example is the 21st Century Town Hall meeting facilitated by AmericaSpeaks (Lukensmeyer and Torres, 2006). Additionally, there are numerous other process innovations including ChoiceWork Dialogues, Deliberative Polling, Citizen Juries, Consensus Conferences, Study Circles, and Citizen Assemblies. These and other examples are described in an edited volume by Gastil and Levine (2005).

These deliberative processes largely are citizen-centered and often are exclusively citizen involving. To the extent that public administrators serve as participants in these dialogues, it is as experts to inform, rather than as full participants to engage in deep dialogue and education. Bryer and Sahin (2008) suggest the idea of *deliberative representation* in which administrators and citizens, both fully informed and interested in being further informed, engage each other in dialogue regarding the delivery of services and development of new policies, and potentially new institutions. With deep trust in each other’s technical and experiential knowledge, public administrators will be collaboratively responsive (Bryer, 2007), meaning they will abide by the decisions of the citizenry once citizens have engaged in deliberative process with administrators and other societal officials.

This process is a departure from the representative democracy we know today at all levels of government and whose limitations are summarized above. To move to a model of deliberative representation will require the development of educated and trusting citizens. The mechanisms identified above—co-production, neighborhood councils, and citizenship testing—can help move people and

institutions in this direction. However, there are barriers that need to be overcome in order to achieve even the short-term objectives identified herein.

### **Barriers to Vision Realization**

Citizen co-production is best viewed along a continuum of task complexity from low to high. For the coproduction of simple tasks, little training may need to be offered and material rewards can be offered as incentives. Over a longer time period, such tasks, such as taking garbage to the curb instead of leaving it by the back door, may become so ingrained that they become an expected aspect of daily service delivery. For tasks more complex, for which training must be offered, clients are trained to directly assist law enforcement, for example, through neighborhood watch programs.

The most significant challenge for the future of citizen coproduction, though, may be in establishing mechanisms and structures that provide clients more decision making authority. In 1988, Illinois passed a law that created 560 Local School Councils for the city of Chicago, each consisting of six parents, two community members, two teachers and a principal. These councils have authority and responsibilities that includes selection of principals; creation of a school improvement plan; and approval of school budgets (Fung and Wright, 2001). Clearly these bodies deal with much more complex client coproduction issues than hauling household garbage to the curb.

Providing local boards, especially those that are elected by communities, with sufficient training as well as resources will require legislative support and approval. In addition, performance measures will need to be created to determine levels of accountability and effectiveness.

An additional barrier concerns the lack of trust in societal institutions, including government, by citizens. Recent survey research conducted by the Council for Excellence in Government (1999) shows diminishing trust in government. Bryer (unpublished) offers observations on lack of trust and the damage it can do in a local government incorporation process:

Observationally, trust has been a particularly challenging barrier to overcome, particularly in the gated community environment. The inherent lack of trust in government damages the credibility of the process initiator even before work begins and despite good intentions. Comments from one resident on the project website exemplify these challenges. "We have seen on a national scale that financial contributions to politicians' campaigns can negatively influence the best interest of the voters. We are wary. We are skeptical. Our trust has not been earned." The individual goes on to state: "Please keep in mind, that we have learned from the politics on a National Level that we cannot trust the politicians or those associated with them. And both parties have demonstrated that our lack of trust is well founded." It seems particularly troubling to observe lack of trust generalized liberally even to academic contractors hired to conduct an objective study. The lack of trust among some residents (by no means all, or even the majority) prevents residents from seeing the study as an objective, fact driven process. "You do in fact have a dog in this hunt, we know it, and you need to admit it."

The embedded lack of trust might be overcome through an educational mechanisms, such as those suggested here. Alternatively, local ordinance or state statute can be crafted in such a way as to

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facilitate participatory processes that generate desirable citizenship outcomes, rather than establish minimum thresholds for action (Bryer, forthcoming). Otherwise, legal requirements for participation can be used to restrict innovation and the achievement of enhanced trust, competence, and efficacy among citizens (Innes and Booher, 2004).

Finally, both political and bureaucratic cultures can interfere with the advancement of a more intensive form of public engagement. The culture of agencies can predispose government officials to treat citizens as second rate and ill informed, thus unable to effectively contribute as partners. This is a doctor-patient styled relationship (Bryer, 2009). Politically, citizens may not be willing to accept responsibility in a co-production relationship or something more intensive; rather, citizens may be dependent on others as a habit for providing things for them. This barrier can be overcome, potentially, by treating the public engagement process itself as a co-production process through which citizens share in the responsibilities of designing, recruiting for, and implementing an engagement activity or campaign.

## Conclusions

Ultimately, we can suggest hope for a revitalized citizenship in local governance. Tools are available, such as co-production, to institutionalize and enhance the role of citizens in the policy making and implementation that daily affects their qualities of life. However, important legal, political, and cultural problems need to be overcome to realize any vision for enhanced citizenship. Through partnership and innovation, these barriers can be overcome.

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