

SYMPOSIUM INTRODUCTION: DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AND PARTICIPATORY PRACTICE

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I am very pleased to introduce this special symposium as its guest editor. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to serve given to me by the editorial board of *Public Administration and Management*. The call for papers was distributed internationally through various networks of public administration scholars, generating a large body of contributions, some of which were better fitted to other venues and some of which made their way through double blind peer review and the subsequent editorial process. My heartfelt thanks go to the twelve scholars who volunteered their time to this effort, although they must remain anonymous. I am personally very appreciative of their help in this endeavor, and believe their sage advice combined with willing authors has produced a very strong group of articles.

As described in the call for papers, this symposium focuses on deliberative democracy and participatory practice, including the tools of collaborative governance used in democratic nations around the world. What are the theoretical underpinnings of these practices? What enables successful implementation? What factors contribute to their sustainability? How do such practices fit within various representative systems of government?

Many scholars and practitioners in public and nonprofit management seek to include the widest circle of stakeholders in the governance process. It is becoming customary to promote collaboration in governance, from identifying problems and opportunities, to crafting alternatives for collective action, to implementing and evaluating effective outcomes. However, collaboration

often reaches beyond inter-agency partnerships, inter-jurisdictional operations, and multi-sector policy networks to include those most impacted by governance processes and outcomes: *people*. Here we find participative policy making, civic engagement, co-production, and other forms of citizen/resident planning and implementation. It is on these forms of people-centered collaboration that this symposium focuses.

Theories such as deliberative democracy and communicative action ground the study of collaboration. However, public service practitioners also need concrete examples of how these ideas play out in practice in order to experiment and build pragmatic, sustainable policies and procedures for integrating collaborative action into varying representative systems of government. To support strong linkages between theory and practice, *Public Administration and Management* called for research papers on exemplars. Papers were expected to explore specific policies and practices which engage citizens and residents in governance processes, noting the philosophical commitments and theoretical foundations driving these approaches. Recommendations for broader application or institutionalization were of particular interest.

What has resulted is a set of eight articles that explore participatory practice in a highly analytical manner, in many cases expanding theoretical understanding as a result. All utilize a case study approach to explore practice—including singular, multiple, and comparative studies. Both Maria Veronica Elias and I use a unique story-telling approach and perspective—rather than manager’s stories informing theory (already a somewhat radical proposition for administrative science)—here we see *neighbors’* stories informing both theory and practice.

The first contribution by Maria Veronica Elias (“Governance from the Ground Up”) provides a broad theoretical foundation for collaborative self-governance.

Her case study of self-organizing neighborhood associations in Akron, Ohio illustrates the accuracy of Mary Parker Follett's theory of community as process and Hannah Arendt's democratic *polis*. Together, these notions of practical politics provide a model from which administration can learn—at least at the local level—that truly collaborative governance is possible. However, it requires two key elements of citizen empowerment—power *to* participate and power *with* in governing. Elias suggests the two are related in a particular causal direction—that shared power can lead to the power to effect change in one's community. A more traditional interpretation of Arendt's *power to* means having the political freedom to actively participate in the polis. This freedom, in turn, is necessary to express Follett's understanding of power *with* as opposed to power *over* in governance as typically exercised by the Administrative State. Regardless of the causal direction, the two concepts are clearly interrelated in the formation of a more Democratic State. Furthermore, sufficient amounts of both types of power create the political capacity to effect change.

Such political efficacy is shown in the case study of Tempe, Arizona that I add to the symposium ("Climbing the Ladder of Participation"). Like residents in the Ohio neighborhoods, northwest Tempe neighbors organized in a power sharing manner to generate the power to participate in policy making processes and to co-create community change with local government. This is not like a typical special interest group using pressure politics to lobby the Administrative State. The rules of engagement are wholly different in community mobilization in that citizens leverage an egalitarian grassroots movement to demand the freedom to express their democratic sovereignty both in terms of self-organized efforts as well as through their elected representatives and government staff.

In the Tempe case such mobilization led to the eventual creation of participatory policies that are meant to ensure appropriate democratic empowerment. But if past experience is any predictor of efficacy, the lesson to be learned is that the issue of power cannot be ignored in policy implementation—power must be shared to make the shift from a Political/Administrative State to a Democratic State. A lack of attention to this issue can lead to participatory practice having a converse effect—technique becomes obfuscated tyranny rather than democratic empowerment. Rather than being an entrée to the Democratic State, participatory practice can become a tool of control by the Administrative State.

This problem is most clearly shown in the African and Canadian case studies highlighted in the article by Sally deLeon and Curtis Ventriss (“Diamonds, Land Use and Indigenous Peoples”). The multi-national mining companies utilizing participatory practices appear to do so in a manner meant to co-opt indigenous peoples as opposed to actually empowering them. Because most policy decisions remain *off* the table (e.g. the option not to mine or not to use particular technologies), participation appears to serve no other purpose than providing rhetorical legitimacy to powerful corporations and their host governments. While extreme and potentially polemic, the strident warning this article provides is important—sometimes no participation is more honest than hollow participation that conceals actual purposes. Such transparency is an important factor of democratic governance.

Indeed, the next article by Suzanne Piotrowski and Erin Borry explores how open meeting law ensures transparency (“An Analytic Framework for Open Meetings and Transparency”). Drawing from theoretical literature on the democratic purpose of transparency in governance, they generate a set of eight characteristics that will help ensure transparency in open meetings required of local

governments by statute. Using detailed case data on New Jersey, along with a survey analysis of open meeting law throughout the 50 states, they find great variance among laws, but an overall vagueness on implementation. They suggest that given this ambiguity, municipalities might use their theoretical framework to assess and improve open meeting laws to achieve greater levels of transparency and thereby improve democratic outcomes. Thus, they refrain from providing specific prescriptions for practice, but offer the eight components of transparency as objectives to pursue in the local crafting of open meeting law.

Concurring with the theoretical value of an objectives approach, Maja Holmes finds that goals do not necessarily drive the choice of participatory techniques. In her analysis of Army Corp of Engineers case data (“Translating Goals to Practice”) using three principal types of public participation rationale—normative, instrumental, and substantive—she finds that while these rationales shape the goals and objectives established for participatory practice, they do not appear to guide the choice of techniques used to engage the public. However, participatory goals do appear to be linked with how public managers view their role in democratic governance, either as an expert “on top or on tap” as the old saying goes. Holmes points out that the field of public management as a whole would benefit from further research in clarifying these diverse roles and their associated implications. In other words, the real purpose of participatory practice based on administration’s role in democratic governance must be clear prior to the establishment of associated techniques.

Exploring public participation in another federal agency dealing with environmental policy, the next article by Eric Austin (“The Possibility of Effective Participatory Governance”) explores a theme evident in the Ohio and Arizona case studies as well—a shared sense of place

fosters the social bond necessary for effective and robust participatory practice. While perhaps more obvious or assumed in the shared fate of neighborhoods, the case study of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) practices in Montana provides evidence of how the individual and shared experience of place generates conscious and unconscious elements of identity that are crucial to the social bond. Not dissimilarly to Robert Putnam, Austin argues that this social bond is necessary for effective, meaningful participatory practice. However, rather than suggesting (as Putnam perhaps does) that a return to traditional activities that build these social bonds is necessary to re-create a stronger polis, Austin draws on environmental psychology and recommends utilizing shared connections to place to generate the social bond amidst the fragmenting conditions of late modernism.

Such a recommendation has vast implications for public policy ranging from the very local (e.g. community development and land use planning) to the global (e.g. climate change and pollution). Regardless of our many differences, humanity shares a social bond based on our mutual reliance on physical places for our very existence. Austin suggests that administrators might utilize a Jungian psychoanalytical model for understanding how a sense of place is generated both consciously and unconsciously to shape participatory experiences that might foster a shared sense of place as a basis for a new social bond. With this in mind he examines BLM practices, identifying ways that the agency does, in fact, employ practices that illustrate these principles. Specifically, through practices such as storytelling and field trips among diverse groups of individuals, shared experiences of particular places generate a social bond that facilitates later participatory management decision making. Such practices are easily replicable and do not require an in-depth understanding of the

psychological elements of the activities to be of value to participatory practice.

More traditional practices are described in Thomas Bryer's article ("Living Democracy in Theory and in Practice") describing a Florida case study in which participatory practice is being used to explore the question of incorporation. Bryer continues work done with colleagues exploring the use of participatory practice to create both better citizens and better government in a Florida community considering incorporation as a municipality spanning two counties. Noting that statutory requirements for public participation in such efforts are very vague (as similarly found by Piotrowsky and Borry), he considers how better institutional guidance on such practices might improve the quality of participation in a manner beneficial to citizens and their governments alike. Using lessons learned about a number of principles of participatory practice, Bryer recommends objectives-oriented statutory language that enables local specificity and creativity, while better achieving the dual goal of developing better citizens and better government.

Continuing with the theme of purpose over technique seen in most of the articles, David Campbell's analysis of case data from multiple California counties ("Democratic Norms to Deliberative Forms") calls for transcending a technique-oriented mindset and instead focusing on the democratic purpose of participation as a partnership with citizens. However, he notes that these two concerns exist in tension with one another, with trade-offs occurring between the practicalities of participatory practice and the moral ideals of deliberative democracy. In so doing, he adopts a conceptualization of citizenship as *public work*—demanding a common expectation of co-creation among administrators and citizens, and a mutual respect for all types of knowledge. Based on this foundation, Campbell offers four strategic understandings

that can help inform both theory and practice in a manner that seeks to balance the tradeoffs of technique and democratic purpose in a context-sensitive manner. While techniques and empowerment purposes are to some degree linked, he cautions against assuming that techniques necessitate intended outcomes. Deliberative tools are only as strong as the civic relationships on which they depend (as pointed out by Austin) and so participatory practices often fail because they do not take the time necessary to forge consensus on particular issues, let alone social bonds and mutual understanding. A theory of citizenship as ongoing public work—work done as co-creators with public administrators—can help to escape this transactional approach to practice.

Taken together, a message emerges from these articles about how deliberative democracy and participatory practice can improve. As practitioners, we cannot focus so heavily on technique that we forget the democratic purpose of engaging the public. In so doing, we must be honest with ourselves and transparent with the public about our goals, how we perceive our role in democratic governance, and how our choices of technique reflect these rationales (or not). We must also recognize that deliberative processes require time to develop requisite social bonds and mutual trust and understanding to enable effective and robust participation. In all, re-conceptualizing public administration and citizenship alike as co-creative public work may steer us toward more democratic deliberative and participatory practice. However, all of this requires a desire to empower citizens in the policy making process. Without such intent, it may indeed be better *not* to engage the public beyond informing them for traditional electoral participation. At this level, following the advice provided herein on transparency would be beneficial.

With that introduction, I urge you to read and use the following articles in practice, research, and pedagogy!